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Robert Morrison in Southhook (Kilmaurs parish) 1920s

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AANHS President	Stanley Sarsfield
AANHS Secretary	Sheena Andrew, 17 Bellrock Avenue, Prestwick KA9 1SQ Tel. 01292 282109 <i>work</i> , 01292 479077 <i>home</i>
AFHS Chairman	Stuart Wilson
AFHS Secretary (acting)	Rob Close, 1 Craighbrae Cottages, Drongan, Ayr KA6 7EN Tel. 01292 590273

Cover illustration

Robert Morrison (1873–1946) and his pomeranian ‘Prince’ at his house in Southhook, parish of Kilmaurs, in the 1920s.

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A few notes on old Kilwinning Town and the biography of Robert Morrison, Crosshouse

Introduction by Neil Dickson

Robert (or 'Bob') Morrison was born on 26th August 1873 in Lamont's Row, Fergushill Road, Kilwinning, the fourth of the five children of James Morrison (1837-1905), a limestone miner, and Jane Calderwood (1833-1919). He received his elementary education in Corsehill Public School and the Eglinton Iron Works School, commencing work at the age of 11 on the construction of a new railway line which ran through Kilwinning. In 1884 at the age of 12 he began working alongside his father as a limestone miner, but apart from a further period of five or six years in a limestone pit near Dalry, he spent the rest of his working life in coal mining. In 1896 he married Margaret Muirhead (1874-1962) and they had four daughters and one son. He had been working in various collieries near to Fergushill, a mining hamlet to the east of Kilwinning, first as a miner and then from about 1898 as a colliery fireman, and it was at the miners' rows at Fergushill in which he commenced married life and where the children were born. In July 1900 he attended a mission held there by the Christian Brethren and he experienced an evangelical conversion. A few weeks later he was baptized by immersion in the Lugton Water in front of a crowd of some 200. He was thereafter a member of the Open Brethren, first in Kilwinning and then later in Plann, near Crosshouse. In 1915 he moved with his family for employment as a colliery fireman to Southhook, near Knockentiber in the parish of Kilmaurs, and subsequently lived in nearby Hayside and then Crosshouse. He retired in 1940 after fifty-six years working in the mines; he died on 28th July 1946 at the age of 72 and is buried in Bridgend Cemetery, Kilwinning. One of his daughters, Mrs Elizabeth McKinnon (b.1901), is still alive and is the oldest inhabitant of Crosshouse.

Robert Morrison composed his notes on Kilwinning in 1943, and they were evidently begun with possible publication in a local paper in mind. They were preserved as a typescript compiled by a granddaughter and the text below follows this version. The notes give an insight into working-class life in the late nineteenth century after it had been transformed by the second phase of industrialization involving heavy industry, and at the point when new mass leisure pursuits were in their nascent phase and before they were transformed by professionalization. The population of the town of Kilwinning in 1871 was 3,598, falling a little to 3,469 ten years later. Although this represented a large increase in population during the century which had led to its constitution as a burgh in 1889, Kilwinning still retained a small-town spirit and conserved remnants of the earlier phases of the lives of working people and of their leisure pursuits going back to medieval times. The notes reach in time is further extended by Morrison's recollections of his parents' memories. He had a precise and careful mind and liked to preserve exact dates and facts of interest to him, and he kept his memories of Kilwinning fresh all his life. After he moved to the

Knockentiber area, he frequently revisited Kilwinning on his bicycle on the Saturday half-holiday and he continued to return to the town after his retirement, composing several poems inspired by his visits in this latter period. He preserved these poems in a small commonplace book that he kept from the 1930s and in which he also kept notes on various local and family events as well as poems from the local press and quotations which had appealed to him.

These literate traits were probably reinforced by his membership of the Brethren which was a lay-led body, composed principally of skilled working class and lower-middle class individuals. To supply the frequent and lengthy preaching at its services, it encouraged literacy in its adherents, among which coal miners probably constituted the greatest proportion of the members in any single occupation during Morrison's lifetime. However, the Brethren advocated a puritanical lifestyle which, given his later disapproval of mass leisure pursuits, makes his testimony to the enthusiasm for emergent spectator sport the more trustworthy. His notes make it evident that he shared the disapproval which popular contemporary evangelicalism had for alcohol, but again he faithfully records its easy availability in his youth. But the notes also record a decrease in the number of businesses which sold alcohol in Kilwinning, incidentally demonstrating how this particular aspect of rough culture was being modified in the late Victorian period due to the influence of evangelicalism and working people's movements that embraced temperance. In his convictions Morrison is again typical of many in this period. Through his notes he emerges as a remarkably fair-minded and sympathetic witness. In them, late nineteenth-century Kilwinning is perceived from the perspective of an observant working-class individual, a type of account which was relatively rare before the rise of mass literacy.

Robert Morrison's Notes

Being a native of that old historic town, famed through all the world as the birth place of Free Masonry,¹ I am surprised that there is not more said about it by some clever writers through the press of our local papers. It cheers the heart of the old, I believe especially, when they can sit in their old arm chairs and read from the pages of their weekly local paper, something that concerns the old times and the customs of their old native town.

I notice from the pages of the 'Kilmarnock Standard', a Mr Christie has been giving us a very interesting report concerning the life of his forebears, informing us about their habits and manners of life from now and back nearly 100 years ago, and I can tell you as one who remembers his old father well, I enjoy his remarks.

Now being a native of Kilwinning, and my forebears there as well, I just like to recall a few incidents relative to my old native town. I am now above the allotted span,² retired from work about three years ago, having completed 56 years down in the bowels of the earth in a few different pits that surround my native parish, namely, the Diamond Pit near to Fergushill, and No. 28 Pit, belonging to the Misses Finnie,³ also a short time in Mr. Kenneth's wee pit for supplying coal and clay for the brickwork that was situated below the old Corsehill.⁴ I was a short time in big Redburn, a pit that belonged to the Messrs. Baird.⁵ There were two pits, big and wee alongside each other producing much coal for the furnaces, but I may say my first experience of work began before I was 12 years of age, and

that was on the new railway then in construction.⁶ The big steam navvy as we called it then was working near to a farm, namely the Wallcot holes, and the dirt it produced had to be taken away by a steam pug driven by a big rough man named Bob Bonnar. So my work was to shift two points to conduct the empty wagons into the navvy, and allow the full ones to be taken out. My wage was 9/- per week, and I can tell you I was a proud boy when I put 18/- in my mother's hand in Lamont's Row where I was born 71 years ago. So that was my first experience as regards work before I was 12 years of age.

Now as we know, everything comes to an end down here, so the big navvy finished his job and I was knocked out of work after having wrought 12 weeks to the great Mr. Robert McAlpine, railway contractor.⁷ I may say, I went away down lately and had a walk away up the old Blair Road as far as the Pear Tree Bridge that spans the railway and it acted like a tonic to me to stand and view the old scene of my boyhood and manhood days. Previous to the railway being made from Barrmill to Ardrossan, the old pear tree grew at the top of the hill. But owing to the railway coming through below it, the old pear tree was removed. But still there will be many in my old native town who will remember the very spot where it grew, especially those who walked hand in hand with those they loved up that old romantic road, namely the old Blair Road.

My father, James Morrison, born and bred in old Kilwinning in the year 1837, was a limestone miner. He was born on the main street near to the old Post Office between that point and Oxenward. He wrought above 20 years in a limestone pit called Clonbeith, about three miles north east of the old town where he was born. The limestone was required to keep the furnaces open, so that the burning mass would keep moving down the inside of the furnace. He left his home in the morning at five o'clock and returned home at 6 p.m. after having wrought a hard day's work amongst powder smoke so dense that they could scarcely see one another from morning till night. I was an eyewitness of these conditions, so you can rely on what the writer records. I wrought in that pit three or four months with my Father. I may say that there are few to the fore who wrought or remember the old Clonbeith Pit and the wee raw of houses built to accommodate a few of the workers. I know of one still to the fore in Kilwinning, Archibald McNeish by name, who wrought with his brother and his father 57 and nearly 60 years ago. I may say the remuneration for that laborious work in the year 1887 was 4/- per day. I was paid 2/- at the age of 15 years. My father removed from Clonbeith and went up to work in a small coal and limestone pit situated about 1½ miles from Dalry namely Kersland Colliery. There were about 20 miners producing coal and my Father wrought in the limestone seam, a working about 6 feet high. It was wrought in the stoop and room principle, rooms about 15 feet wide and stoops to support the roof. So it was there I learned to

houk and bore and blaw
the limestone oot to be taen awa',
to mak the furnaces burn and blaw
till iron and slag ran oot sae braw.⁸

I continued there with my Father six or seven years until I was introduced by Tammy Morrison to a job in No. 28 Pit as an oncost worker.⁹ I call him Tammy we never

knew him by Thomas. He was a good hearted soul and known all round for a distance of 10 miles, fond of all kind of sport. So I was taken up with that work for five years until I gave up and removed from No 28 to the Diamond Pit to produce Lady Ha' Coal,¹⁰ and be a help to my old Father who was beginning to show signs of going down the Brae. Eight hutches per man was the darg and for that work you received the sum of 4/- per day. That was in the year 1895, and that wage remained from 1894 till 1898, when wages began to take a turn and since that time until now, wages never went back to a starvation point. Father left the Diamond Pit, and gave up the pits, and indeed his laborious life, by taking an easy job down in Kilwinning Iron Works, attending to the chemists, and there he ended his days in the Bridgend where he died at the age of 68. By that time I was back to No 28 again working as a colliery firemen,¹¹ married and residing in Fergushill and I remained in that job for 17 years.¹² But my old companion through life from boyhood days, being a colliery manager, George Paisley, got me advised to leave and engage as a fireman under him in Southhook Colliery.¹³ So in the year 1915, we removed away from old Fergushill up to Southhook where I wrought for 25 years under the managership of George Paisley, W. Bertram and John Gibson, having completed 56 years and health beginning to show signs of weakness, I left firemanship, and was engaged as bottomer in one of Mr. Howie's pits for a short time before retiring in the year 1940.¹⁴



A brick from Southhook (see note 13)

I will now return to the scenes of my boyhood, in and around my native town, being born in Lamont's Row. All the boys in that part of the town frequented the lower part more so than the higher, yet we were acquainted from one end of the town to the other. The most of my boy companions were schooled in the parish school, but I was educated in the ironworks school under Mr. James Brown and Mr. Wm. Blair, headmaster.¹⁵ So I was thoroughly acquaint from the Byres to the Corsehilleid, and to the Barrel Row, and right on to the sanny hills, not forgetting the Kenneth's Row, the five roads, the big planting, the Ridy Stidy and right on past the Kennels up to good old Fergushill. I may say before I get away from school days, I would just like to say I started my school days in the Corsehille under an old man named John McKechnie. He had been a pit engineman and met with an accident whereby he lost his leg. So he was started in this little school under the school board. I began with him at the age of 4½ years. But poor old Jock died about six months

after I began. The house he resided in is still to the fore, so that is near to 80 years since old Jock died.

It was at Jock's school that I met George Paisley who became my companion for 55 years. We worked together, courted our girls, got married shortly after one another and got gloriously saved by the Grace of God, about 2½ years after one another.¹⁶ He became a mine manager and died following that occupation in the year 1930, aged 59.

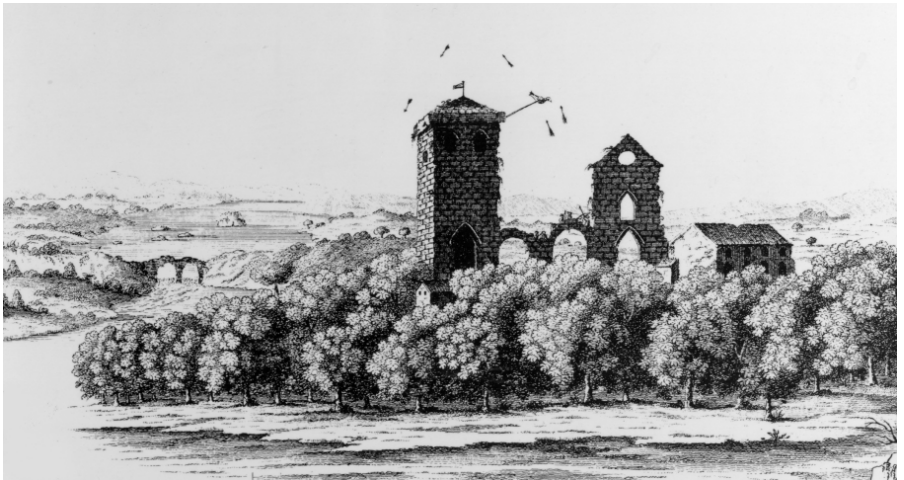
Now I would just like to remind you as boys about the old brigend where we had our sport. There was cricket playing, football, and playing below the lamppost at the bools. Jock Conn, Davock Service, and Jimmie Swire were experts at the bools. The cricket, I think, was a game we played at because there was a cricket team of young men named the Segton, who played in a field belonging to the Redstone Farm.¹⁷ There were a few good players whose names I remember well. Big Sanny Stirrat, Big Sanny McGowan, John Woods, Johnnie Reid, James Reid, and a few others who were very good players at cricket. As boys we tried to do our best taking them for our example. We played out at Kenneth's old Brickfield and on what we called the Watering Green, a little piece of ground in the centre of the Garnock coming from the Meal Mill Dam. So many a hard game was spectated from the old bridge by a few who delighted to watch the boys nearly 60 years ago. Where is now the merry party?

Then there were the old Monkcastle football team.¹⁸ My first recollection of it was when the games were played in the field round at the Butts and also in a field at West Doura. I believe it was at the Butts where the great J. Sloan appeared first to Play with Kilwinning, and we used to think as boys when we knew that J. Sloan had arrived down from old Killie, all would be well. After this the Claremont field come into prominence and the great old Monkcastle played some of its hardest games in that field. The players by name were A. McIlroy, A. Dods, John Brown or A. Anderson, H. Dunlop, A. Black, Wm. Morgan, J. Morgan, Punch Campbell, D. Devlin, A. Ralston, H. Howie, D. Service and the famous John Allan of international fame.¹⁹ I can tell you these men were hard to beat. The old song they used to sing was

search the hale of Ayrshire and Scotland through and through
you would not get a team to beat Monkcastle team the noo.

I have omitted to mention old J. Sloan. He was a good player of football. I think he would be a native of Kilmarnock. But before I finish with football, I must remind you of the famous John Allan. He was swift and sure and one of the finest players of football that ever played the game. He had no dirty tricks and for a good distance all around the old town, men flocked to the Claremont field when they knew Allan was going to play. First to see his gentlemanly play and how he could handle the ball. And now I refer to the old sport when gentlemen from all parts of the country come together once a year to shoot with bow and arrow up to the heights of the old steeple, and whichever one of them shot down the wooden pigeon was made Captain for that year. So each year there were the Gentlemen's Papingow, and the working man's and the boy's as well. If my memory serves me right the last time the boys engaged in that sport, the boy who was made Captain was Robert McGowan by name. He resided in Kenneth's Row. I remember following the band and him

up to his home. I might be wrong but I will take it as a compliment if I am. So the old town was famed for its Archers. But of course these stirring times of men with bows and arrows were before my time, but I have read and heard much about it.²⁰



Kilwinning papingo shoot, from Armstrong and son's map of Ayrshire 1775

Now for the industry of the old town. Above 100 years ago it was principally weaving and mining. I have heard my Father say that he remembered when there were 500 weavers in and around the old town.²¹ So the sound of the shuttles was heard from the Byres to the Corsehillhead at that time. I can remember myself two looms in Corsehill. Old Wm. Ralston and John Conn were the weavers, then there were was one in the Green and one in the way going to the Green from the Dovecot Lane. Old Andrew McCartney was the weaver. In Dalry Road Peter McGinn had a loom. He was the first Irish weaver in the old town. I have heard my Father say that he remembered when there were just a few Irish families in the old town altogether. I may say that the building of the furnaces brought a good many from Ireland and they remained and increased as the work advanced.²²

Now for the old worthies that all of my age remember well. There was old Wull Dickie, a native of the old town. We knew him as whistling Wull Dickie; he was a strong whistler. He put in coals to different people and received as much for that sort of work as fed him. Wull ended his days by dying in the Gas work. Mr and Mrs Craig were very kind to Wull.²³ He had many quaint sayings and actions and we as boys were all amused by them. One of his actions was to dive into the Mill Dam to give himself a good wash. Then there was old Jock McCartney who was a native and who was very fond of a dram. Then there was James Lynch, another native a confederate of Jock's. Then we had interlopers such as the Lintie, Billy Cook, and Johnny Hawkins. The Lintie was a quarry man to trade, but owing to being too fond of a dram, the Lintie became a nuisance. Billy Cook was a miner but owing to his mind giving way, he gave up the pits and became a wanderer about the old town. There was Johnny Hawkins, where he sprang from I could not say. That I

remember him when he first came about the town delving gardens and cutting corn for John Train. Poor souls, they all got their little time ended in the poorhouse,²⁴ with the exception of Wull Dickie. I would like also to bring to your remembrance Wee Peter Watt, a native of the Corsehill who lived and died there. Peter would be between 4 and 5 feet high, and as boys we tormented Peter when he came down to the town to do messages. Being a little weakling we used to cry after Peter that there was a sodger. As Peter was afraid of sodgers, we got good fun annoying him as he passed by the brigend.

Three weeks ago I gaid awa' doon jist to hae a bit walk roon ma auld native toon.

So starting awa' at the auld brigend I stood for a moment and took a look roon.

But I am sorry to say the auld hooses that used to be there have only left their mark to tell us. They all had been tain doon.

There is still a wee hoose, a but and a ben where auld Nanny Curdy leaved to her end.²⁵

She kept a wee shop and selt black man,²⁶ and when as callans we played at the auld brigend, we aye got a wee bit o' Nanny's black man. Oh how we used to steal doon the burn or through auld Johnny Wylie's entry doon to the Garnock to hae oor dook. I would like to bring to your remembrance auld Willie Service with his shop of all attractions for the children. How we used to look in the window at these prizes which were to be obtained by draws ½ pennies each. Very often it was try again we got instead of a prize, and we came away from Willie's shop disheartened at receiving for our halfpenny a try again instead of a prize. Then there was Mary Sheddan's grocery where Davock, Jamie, Tam and Rab sprang from. They turned out grocers, doctors and engineers and joiners, all natives of the brigend. I remember on a New Year's Night I received a severe black eye from Tam while playing at guesses and running across from his mother's window to Jenny Auld's, I met Tam and owing to me being a little taller I received the blow from Tam's head, and I can tell you it closed my eye for a time.

Dr. Milroy's home is still to the fore where I got my first tooth extracted by the doctor. He was a fine man and clever in his profession. He laboured in Kilwinning for nearly 40 years and then retired and died in the town of Ayr at the age of 86.²⁷ He was ably assisted by Dr. Gage, a native of Montrose in the East coast. He died in Kilwinning and was buried in his native town, Montrose; a clever wee man and had his profession at heart. He began his career in Dr. Milroy's shop and went on with his studies until he got capped as a doctor.²⁸ Then I remember old Dr. Auld, a native of the old town, a canny going man. I used to hear my mother speak of him when he began as a young lad learning shoemaking, but he got away from that and then went on to study to come out to be a doctor. He lived and died in Kilwinning. I also remember two doctors who were natives of the old town namely Dr. Craig and Dr. Andrews. Then there were Dr. Service and Dr. Milroy who followed him. I don't remember Dr. Service, he died shortly after I was born. So these are men who looked after the weak to endeavour to make them strong.

Now I will tell you how the old town was watered before the introduction of the gravitation water, which I remember was introduced when I was a boy. It was conveyed in metal pipes from the Munick reservoir near to Dalry. Before this there were a few principal wells, two in the Corsehill, one in the Woodwynd, one in Kyle's well street, one in the Howgate, one in the Byres. Then there were a few private wells and one I will not have to forget was St. Winning's well, the oldest in the town. It was cut away when the new railway was passing on to Ardrossan and to Irvine.²⁹ These were all spring wells, but in process of time, some of them had pumps erected, such as the Howgate, the Byres, the Woodwynd, and Kyleswell. But the two we were most acquaint with were the two in the Corsehill, Gordy's by name and the Dyets. Even after the introduction of the gravitation water, in the summertime when it was extra hot, we often went up to Gordy's well for a cold refreshing drink. I might say taking it as a whole the old town was well watered from Byres to Corsehillhead. Another form of supplying them in the town who were thirsty was by shops who sold strong drink such as ale, porter, and whisky. From the five roads to the South West station including the ironworks store, there were no less than twenty. But glad to say a few of these have been done away with now. However, I remember the twenty when they were in full swing. One of them could say their liquor was good and impaired none, refresh and pay and travel on, that remained above the door for a long time. Good for some of us that we became Rechabites and afterwards became 'New Creatures in Christ'.³⁰

Now I would like to bring before you the men who supplied us with that which was beneficial for our body, namely bread. I would just like to mention a few whom I revered as decent honest men. We will start with Mr. Babinton at the head of Oxenward and Mr. Robert Crawford and wee San Nairn and Tam Lynch, James Crawford and John, all bakers in Mr. Crawford's bakehouse, and I can tell you it was a treat to get one of their pies on a Saturday night, also the baking society and old Baker Youngs in the centre of the town, a fine energetic old man looking after the interest of the town and his own business as well.³¹ Further down on the brae was old Wattie Howie. These men were all natives of the town, that is how I like to mention them. The most of their vans supplying bread went over a distance of four or five miles each day.

Returning to the industries of the town, the furnaces began nearly 100 years ago, and after came engineer shops and foundry, and in my boyhood, the wool spinning mill came into prominence. I remember when the steam boiler came down through the town being conveyed to where it was going to be built in its place, by a traction engine, and we thought as boys it was a great affair.³² I remember while it was being built I received my first checked nail in between two bricks,³³ that is, I believe, about 65 years ago. When building operations were completed the machinery was installed and girls from as far away as Irvine and all round the town were engaged, wages for their labour ranging from 5/- to 8/6 per week, labouring from 6.30 a.m. until 6 p.m. with an hour and a half deducted for meals. No wonder that socialists and communists sprang up to defend their cause.³⁴

I will now conclude my reminiscences of bygone days, by bringing to your remembrance the dooking hole opposite the mill, further up the river the Cobblers' Hole, where old cobbler Johnstone fell into the water while in the act of fishing along with Sanny Paterson of Lamont's Row. His body was carried down the river as far as the Lumford

Bridge where it was found and brought back to the town for interment. I remember it well. Then there were the wee dam stones where we congregated on the long summer days and had our baths, better known by us as dooking, and learning to swim and dive from the big stone in the centre of the stream. So being wearied with the day's proceedings, we made our way home, climbing the Jellyfloor Banking and toddling doon the auld Blair Road and through the field where the hospital now stands; we reached oor destination Lamont's Row and the brigend. These were the days of no thought nor care, we just lay doon at nicht efter having said oor wee prayer, and slept till the morning, coming forth to prepare, to play at these games that are noo sae rare.³⁵

I have given you an account of school days and the sport than engaged in, both on land and water. I have also mentioned the names of a few of the sportsmen such as footballers and cricketers and I would like to recall the names of a few swift men, such as W. Steel, John Allan, David Service, Wm. Cully, Hugh Howie, all swift at 100 yds, ¼ mile, and a mile race. It was a treat to see them run. I have also given you an account of the medical profession as far back as 1872, also the industries engaged in from before my time and up to the present. These took in weaving, mining, ironworks, foundries, engineers, spinning wool and local joinering and baking. Speaking of joinering, I remember as boys whose parents kept pigs, we frequented the joiner shops in the morning to clean up the shavings off the floor for bedding for our pigs, and the joiners we frequented were namely, James Reid, better known as the Colonel, and I knew him well, and his eldest son especially, James by name. His joiner shop was in the old tan yard. Then there were Tom Brown's, Mr. Arnot's, and old James Robertson's of St. Winning Square. All these shops were called on for shavings.

I would like to bring to your remembrance the old coal carters. I will begin with old Hughie Boyd, a native of the town; he resided in the Green Dovecot Lane. Then there was old John Baird who resided in the Loch, and old John Lynch who resided in the Green, and old Neil Horney whose stable was in the Lane. James Mackie of Kennet's Row with his cuddy and John Bakies and Willie Rolley who resided in the port and stabled his wee hairy pony in the back of his house. One of his sayings to it when it inclined to go too much to the left side was 'Come out of the sheuch on to the hard road'. These men supplied the old town with coals, carting them from Fergushill pits and Kennet's wee pit out Irvine Road. Now that puts me in mind of one whom I would not like to forget, namely John Conn better known by Jocky Conn. He was a carter and wagoner to R. Kennet a civil wee man and a good horse man. We all respected him and the reason for that was that he loved boys and delighted to give them a hurl in his cart. Many a time when he came with coals to Mr. Smith or Mr. Hunter up Fergushill Road, we all got into his cart and were hurled as far as the Brickwork. But poor Jocky, good horseman though he was, one day he received a kick from the big horse he was driving and so that ended Jocky's career as a carter. He was a native of the old town and resided in Lamont's Row where I was born and brought up, a few doors from his.

I have mentioned about the joiners, now I would like to say a word about the blacksmiths. When we were boys, Johnny Wilson's of Woodwynd was our favourite for getting our girrs welded together and bogies sorted when they gave way.³⁶ He was a nice,

quiet, civil man and had a place in his heart for the boys who frequented his shop. Then the strongest man and the heaviest man in the town wrought with him, a mighty man was he. His name was James Muir, better known as big Jamie Muir, also Johnny Bain, a grand horse shoer. These were natives of the old town. Then there was old Sanny Lang's smithy in Oxenward a fine quiet old man. He excelled in sharpening tools such as mason's irons. When my Father and I and old Tam McGowan wrought in Dalry at the limestone, we brought some of our tools to old Sanny to sharpen them and to repair the face of our limestone mells. He was good at them. Then there was a shop belonging to Mr. Nairn the wire fencer at the beginning of the Whitehurst Road, where big Jamie Muir's father and his brother Tom wrought. They were mainly taken up with fencing and iron gates and railings, which are in many places owing to the war, now being removed to help to supply iron to make bullets to kill the Germans. So that concludes my remarks concerning the village smiths who had arms as strong as iron bands.

I may say though I am a native, and all belonging to me were natives of the old town, I have only once been up on the top of the steeple, and that was the night of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. The steeple is 100 feet high to where people can stand and look over. It gives one a grand view for miles around.³⁷ I may say the old graveyard is spread out in front of it, where lies the dust of the natives of the old town and surrounding parish. I attended three interments, one was my old Uncle John Calderwood, and the others were a brother and sister who were entitled to be buried there. I have still a cousin who claims to be interred there if she desires. In the centre of the old graveyard stands the church where as boys and girls we attended the Sabbath School and from its precincts we made our first exit towards Eglinton Policies on a Saturday. We marched along Irvine Road with our wee tinnies hanging in front of us from a ribbon round our neck, and when we arrived at the field in front of the stables the day's sport began. When the day's sport came to an end, we were marched through the gardens to view the fine flowers and fruit that was growing in abundance there.³⁸ I remember another trip we got up to Blair, going with the train to Dalry and when we arrived we were marched up to the Policies where we enjoyed ourselves to the full. I remember we were presented to the Old Captain before the day finished.³⁹ My teacher in the Sunday School was George Jack, a mason to trade. He resided in the Byres near to the Railway Bridge and he and old Robert Baillie wrought together as masons and builders, but not on a large scale. The minister at that time and up to 1902 was Mr. Lee Kerr, a very fine man.⁴⁰

Edited by Neil Dickson⁴¹

¹ Free Masonry in Kilwinning goes back to medieval times, possibly being associated with the building of the Abbey in the twelfth century, and until early modern times the town's lodge was the principal lodge in Scotland. This status was acknowledged by the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1807 when it circumvented readjusting its earlier numbering of the Scottish lodges by designating the Kilwinning Lodge as No. 0. The Brethren disapproved of Free Masonry and thus Morrison's opening sentence represents the triumph of local pride in him.

² The 'allotted span' is a reference to Psalm 90:10 where it is stated that 'the days of our years are threescore years and ten'.

- ³ Messers Archibald Finnie & Sons were one of the largest coalmasters in Ayrshire who had opened the first railway line in the Kilwinning district in 1831, initially a horse-drawn one, for the transport of coal from Fergushill to Saltcoats. The firm was owned latterly by the Misses Finnie of Springhill House, Kilmarnock. John Finnie Street, Kilmarnock, is named after another member of the family.
- ⁴ Archd Kenneth & Sons were coalmasters who also owned the Eglinton Engineering Works and the Eglinton Fireclay Works. Their colliery at Fergushill ceased production in 1921.
- ⁵ The Bairds of Gartsherrie, in Lanarkshire, were the greatest coal and iron dynasty in nineteenth-century Scotland. The firm was composed of seven brothers who were invited by the Earl of Eglinton to extend their influence into Ayrshire to take advantage of the local deposits of ironstone, limestone and coal that were needed in the production of iron. They formed the Eglinton Iron Company in 1845 and the furnaces at Kilwinning, to the south of the town and near the present public park, went into production the following year; they also had four collieries at Kilwinning and eventually had ironworks at Blair (Dalry), Muirkirk, Lugar and Portland (Hurlford). By 1870 William Baird & Co. owned over half the blast furnaces in Ayrshire and was the largest pig-iron producer in the world. In 1900 they employed over 1,000 people in Kilwinning. However, the company failed to adapt to the coming of steel and it consequently declined. The Eglinton Ironworks went out of blast in 1921 and the closure in the 1920s of their ironworks in Kilwinning and the remaining ones elsewhere virtually meant the demise of coal mining in north Ayrshire. By 1938 only one colliery in the Kilwinning area was still operational.
- ⁶ The Caledonian Railway Company received royal assent for a new railway line, known as the Barrmill to Ardrossan railway, in 1883 and it was completed in 1888. The new line was to link the Lanarkshire furnaces to the harbours at Ardrossan and Irvine by joining the Glasgow, Barrhead and Kilmarnock joint line with the main Glasgow & South Western Railway at Kilwinning. The East Station in the town which served the line closed in 1930 and its site is presently occupied by Caley House, Howgate, and parts of Kilwinning Academy, Dalry Road.
- ⁷ Robert McAlpine (1847-1934) was a self-made working-class man who established a highly successful building contractor's business and whose constructions included the West Highland railway line and Wembley Stadium. He was nicknamed 'Concrete Bob' due to his use of the new material and was created a baronet in 1918. The most prominent landmark which he gave to Kilwinning was the viaduct to the north of the town which carried the railway over the River Garnock.
- ⁸ These lines are the fourth verse of a poem entitled 'Lines written by Robert Morrison' and preserved in his commonplace book.
- ⁹ An oncost worker was a colliery labourer who was paid at a fixed rate.
- ¹⁰ Lady Ha' was a coal seam found in north Ayrshire.
- ¹¹ A colliery fireman was the first tier in colliery management (below the overman, undermanager and manager) and the responsibilities of the post included firing explosive charges.
- ¹² According to James Brown's report of 1913 on miners' housing in Ayrshire, the seventy-eight houses in Fergushill had among the worst conditions because of its muddy streets due to the lack of paving stones, open sewers, and lack of brick built wash houses or coal houses and for having only one water pump to serve a population of 373. However, Mrs Elizabeth McKinnon (Robert Morrison's surviving daughter) remembers the interior of the houses as being 'spotless'.
- ¹³ The Southhook colliery supplied the brickworks at Southhook and it closed in 1971. George Paisley (1872-1930) was a co-religionist of Robert Morrison. They were boyhood

friends from their schooldays. Paisley had an evangelical conversion in 1897 and was instrumental in Morrison's conversion. He later became a pit manager and subsequently lived at Dreghorn, Plann and Kilmarnock.

- ¹⁴ This last colliery was at Fergushill in Kilmaurs parish (not to be confused with the place near Kilwinning) and was known as the Bouching Pit. A pit bottomer worked at the bottom of the mine shaft and was responsible for loading and unloading the coal hutches into the lift.
- ¹⁵ The parish school perhaps had its origins in the medieval school which probably existed at the Abbey and it later became Kilwinning High School and then Kilwinning Academy. The Eglinton Iron Works School, built in 1857, could hold 431 pupils and was maintained by William Baird & Co. for the benefit of its employees, being financed partly by the pence deducted from the workers' wages. In 1890 it became the Eglinton District Public School under the management of the district school board and then later became Blacklands Primary School, Davids Crescent.
- ¹⁶ Robert Morrison was converted (usually referred to as being 'saved') through a mission held by John Ferguson (1865-1940), a former merchant seaman and a full-time itinerant evangelist who was at that time one of the Scottish Open Brethren's leading revivalists. The Open Brethren are not to be confused with the Exclusive or Close Brethren, for although the two groups had a common origin in the 1820s, after their division in 1848 the Open Brethren, eventually by far the larger grouping, were a less separatist and introverted body than the Exclusive Brethren. They were a radical Protestant evangelical movement that was made distinctive by its ecclesiology which rejected any distinction between clergy and laity and which consisted in self-governing congregations with no central institutions. Recent historiography has stressed the strength of working-class religion in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Scotland, and the Brethren were remarkably pervasive in Ayrshire by the late nineteenth century. Morrison had been a member of the Church of Scotland, and it was not without his doubts about revivalism that he attended the Brethren mission. He was obviously not without his initial doubts after, for in July 1900 Ferguson gave him a book published by the Religious Tract Society entitled *The Gospels: why are there are four, why do they differ and are they fully inspired?* (London, n.d.).
- ¹⁷ Cricket was imported into Scotland by English workers and soldiers in the early nineteenth century and it was very popular between about 1860 and 1914. It was promoted in the Cunninghame district of Ayrshire by the 14th Earl of Eglinton who offered a number of prizes to foster the game and maintained an XI consisting of English professionals and experienced amateurs. By the mid-1870s many Ayrshire mining communities had a team and the Kilwinning one was playing in local leagues by 1884, but it apparently failed to survive to found the Western District Cricket Union in 1893. Segton (or Segdoune) is an early place name associated with Kilwinning and it has been speculated that it was the original name of the town.
- ¹⁸ Kilwinning Monkcastle, one of Kilwinning Rangers' predecessors, was formed as a senior team in 1883 and played cup football and, after it was formed, in the North Ayrshire Senior League, winning it in season 1896-7. The team was disbanded in 1900 due to mounting debts and the defection of their president to Kilwinning Eglinton Seniors. Claremont Crescent, off Dalry Road, Kilwinning, is on the site of their former football ground.
- ¹⁹ James (not John) Allan, born at Monkcastle, near Kilwinning, played successively for Monkcastle, Kilwinning and Queen's Park; while with the last club, he also appeared occasionally for (Glasgow) Rangers. He was a lively inside or centre forward whose most successful season was in 1887 when he was capped twice for Scotland and scored

two goals in a match against England. He was President of the Scottish Amateur Athletic Association in 1911-12.

- ²⁰ Longbow archery practice was common throughout Scotland by late medieval times, and famously an edict that 'the futeball and golfe be utterly cryed downe and not to be used' was issued by Parliament in 1457 because they were interfering with it. The records of the Ancient Society of Kilwinning Archers date to 1688 but the society was probably founded in 1483. The papingo is a wooden parrot which was mounted high on a pole on the Abbey tower and was shot at vertically. By the eighteenth century the competition was divided into three: the Gentleman's, the Tradesmans' and the boys' papingo. It was discontinued in 1871, partly perhaps because of hostility to the class division, but it was briefly revived in 1882-4, evidently the period to which Morrison's memories relate. The tradition was reinstated in 1951.
- ²¹ In 1841 fifty per cent of the Kilwinning workforce was engaged in weaving, but by 1891 it had reduced to less than ten per cent by around which date it had finally collapsed.
- ²² Irish immigration into Scotland, already under way on a marked scale after 1800, dramatically increased after the Potato Famine of 1846, and by 1851 eleven per cent of the Ayrshire population was Irish born. The immigrants, who were most often Roman Catholics, were used in the dirty jobs associated with industrialization: mining, ironworks and labouring (in, for example, the construction of railways), all of which there was a demand for in the Kilwinning area. In addition, among ironmasters the Bairds of Gartsherrie were pioneers in importing Irish labour to suppress wage demands and they continued to recruit Irish labour for their ironworks and collieries. These various factors led to tensions between the immigrants and the largely indigenous Protestant population and there was a sectarian riot in Kilwinning in 1907 after the arrest of James McDonald, a Protestant orator. For the building of the furnaces, see above n.5.
- ²³ Mr Craig was the manager of the Kilwinning gasworks.
- ²⁴ Cunninghame Combination Poor House, opened in 1853, was in Irvine. Earlier the Union Poor House had existed in Dalry Road, Kilwinning.
- ²⁵ This passage exists in 'Lines written by R. Morrison in 1942 in the month of December' preserved in Morrison's commonplace book. There are minor differences between the two versions, the most significant one being that the third line quoted above reads in the commonplace book version: 'But sorry to sae the auld hooses that used to be seen, awe roon. Has left only their mark to tell us they have all been taen doon' which at least preserves the rhyme.
- ²⁶ 'Black man' is hard, brittle treacle toffee.
- ²⁷ Morrison's commonplace book gives Dr Milroy's age at death in 1937 as being 88 and as having retired about 1907.
- ²⁸ Dr David Gage (d.1930) was Kilwinning's Medical Officer between 1913 and 1928. He came to Kilwinning in 1886 and was known for campaigning against insanitary housing conditions. He owned one of the town's first motor cars: a picture of him sitting in it is given in James Kennedy, *Kilwinning in Old Picture Postcards*, vol.1 (1983)
- ²⁹ St Winning's well was in the minister's glebe and was reputed to have miraculous qualities. It probably predated the coming of Christianity, but it was destroyed by the laying of the Barrmill to Ardrossan railway line.
- ³⁰ The Independent Order of Rechabites was a temperance-based friendly society which was founded in Salford, Lancashire, in 1835 and its first Scottish 'tent' (as the local society was called) was formed in 1838. It took its name from the biblical Rechabite family, who abstained from wine, and it had a ritual and regalia similar to some other friendly societies such as the Oddfellows and the Forresters. It proved immensely popular due to its pageantry and comradeship and the efficiency of its funeral and sickness

payments for relatively modest contributions. 'New Creatures in Christ' is an allusion to 2 Corinthians 5:17 and is a reference to Morrison's subsequent evangelical conversion.

- ³¹ William Young had a baker's shop in Main Street and was the provost of Kilwinning in 1900-3.
- ³² The Busby Spinning Company later became the Bridgend Mill which produced carpet yarn. The factory closed in the 1990s.
- ³³ A 'checked nail' is Scots for a bruised finger nail.
- ³⁴ The Brethren were opposed to union membership and political affiliation (because of the 'worldly' commitments such association might entail), and therefore for Morrison to make this comment represents how strongly he felt about the plight of working people. Kilwinning received criticism from late nineteenth-century trade union leaders because of its non-unionism. Like other areas with low levels of membership, ironmasters were important colliery owners and the town contained a substantial proportion of Irish miners and ironworkers, employed because they were more dependent on the owners. However, eventually radical left-wing politicians such as Keir Hardie and James Maxton held rallies in the town and recruited for their causes. Morrison had a brother-in-law, Matt Muirhead, who was a member of the Fabian Society and another one, Jimmy Muirhead, who had to emigrate to Australia for employment as he had been ostracised by employers because of his trade union activities.
- ³⁵ This last sentence occurs in 'Lines written by R. Morrison in his 71st year' preserved in his commonplace book.
- ³⁶ 'Girrs', a round metal hoop, were used along with a 'cleek', a short pole with a hook, to make them run along like a wheel; a 'bogey' is a home-made children's car: both were very popular children's amusements.
- ³⁷ By the nineteenth century the best preserved part of the twelfth-century Benedictine Abbey at Kilwinning, one of the most notable medieval ecclesiastical buildings in the west of Scotland, was the tower on the north side of the west front. However, it collapsed in 1814 and was rebuilt in 1814-16, becoming the town's most prominent landmark. Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee was celebrated on 20 June 1887. Not long after writing these notes, on 25 September 1943, Morrison reascended the tower accompanied by a grandson.
- ³⁸ Eglinton Castle was the seat of the Montgomeries, the Earls of Eglinton, one of Ayrshire's most influential aristocratic families. By the later nineteenth century the family were impoverished and the castellated mansion was unroofed in 1925. During World War II it was used for gunnery practice and was eventually demolished in 1973. What remained of the policies (Scots for a gentleman's pleasure park) became Eglinton Country Park which is now open to the public as part of Irvine New Town.
- ³⁹ Blair, near Dalry, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited mansions in Scotland and it stands in extensive wooded policies. The bulk of the mansion is of seventeenth-century construction although it incorporates an earlier castle and some later elements. It is the home of the Blair family whose recorded history goes back as far as the Scottish Wars of Independence when they supported the patriotic cause.
- ⁴⁰ William Lee Ker (1834-1902), a native of Peebles, served as minister in the parish church (now the Abbey Church) from 1866 until his death in 1902, the last minister admitted by the patronage of the Earl of Eglinton before the abolition of such appointments. He was a devout individual who supported contemporary changes in Presbyterianism worship, being an advocate of 'grandeur, and beauty, and refinement' in church services. A scholarly individual, he produced *Kilwinning Abbey: the Church of St Winning* (1883), *Short Studies on St Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (1889), *Mother*

Lodge, Kilwinning (1896) and a history of the town, *Kilwinning* (1900). Given the Brethren's anti-clericalism and their disapproval of mainline denominations, Morrison's tribute is a significant testimony to Ker's character.

⁴¹ The editor is grateful for the assistance of Mrs Elizabeth McKinnon, Mrs Ella Jack, Mr Paul Crankshaw and the staffs of Ardrossan Public Library and the Dick Institute, Kilmarnock.

Thomas Duncan, Electrical Engineer – A Pioneer Inventor 26 December 1865 (Girvan) – 21 January 1929 (Lafayette, Indiana)

With current nationwide interest in the achievements of the enterprising Scot it is timely to bring forward into the spotlight, one Thomas Duncan, a name currently more familiar in the U.S.A. territory of Lafayette, Indiana, than in South Ayrshire, and Girvan, the town of his birth. His achievements are well-documented in Lafayette, and while his bequests there to town and university are still cause for celebration his early years in South Ayrshire are hardly known apart from the statutory registrations and are, to a considerable extent and despite much searching, still conjectural.

Thomas Duncan was born in Drumranny¹ in the parish of Girvan on the 26th December 1865. His father was Robert Duncan, a ploughman, and his mother was Elizabeth, daughter of Hugh Hannah and his wife Agnes, who farmed at the nearby farm of Enoch. At the time of their marriage at Drumranny in June 1863 Robert and Elizabeth were both aged 22, and Robert's usual residence was given as Kirkmichael, and his occupation as 'sawyer.' With his father-in-law farming at Enoch - in the 1871 census returns he is recorded as cultivating 150 arable acres and employing six labourers and one boy - it seems probable that Robert Duncan's employment as ploughman at the time of his son Thomas's birth could well have been at Enoch.

It seems that Hugh Hannah and his family moved into Enoch farm following the departure of Thomas Anderson – the previous farmer and fossil collector – probably in the early 1860s. The Anderson's daughter Elizabeth would have left Enoch on her marriage to Robert Gray in 1856, returning to the family home for holidays and to add to her collection of Girvan area fossils.

Thomas Duncan's Drumranny home was a small settlement off the Old Dailly road, on west facing hill slopes to the north east of Girvan. The nearest school would have been about one mile away and from five years of age Thomas could have been attending school classes for infants at the parish school in Henrietta Street, Girvan, built in 1832 and still functioning today as Invergarven school. Another possibility would have been the Free

Church School off the Plumb Street (today's Ailsa Street East), on the site of the present-day British Legion hall, set up by members of the Free Church following the disruption of 1843. There appear to be no surviving admission or attendance registers, and where the log books do survive, they concern themselves more with general matters, such as the effect of the weather on attendance, Girvan fair holidays, staff appointments and summaries of the annual reports of the school inspector.

The registration of the birth of a third son to Robert and Elizabeth Duncan on 4th July 1871 shows that they had moved from Drumranny to Enoch Lodge, Culzean.² Robert Duncan was now employed as a baron officer, working with other employees on the maintenance of the extensive Culzean estates. With Enoch Lodge located just inside Maybole parish, for the young Thomas school attendance would still involve a one mile walk each way, probably to the Maybole Parish school. The school log book has an entry for 11th August 1876 reporting the opening by the School Board of a new public school in Maybole,³ and it is possible that Thomas Duncan spent at least a few years in this establishment.

Many years later Thomas Duncan's own recollections of his schooldays were recalled by Frederick Holmes, the Vice-President of the Duncan Electric Manufacturing Company, in a speech in November 1931 at Purdue University, on the occasion of the dedication of the Duncan Memorial addition to the Electrical Engineering Building. Apparently when only ten years old Thomas became fascinated with the study of electricity as taught in Scottish schools and made many experiments in the dark closet under the stairway of his home. Amongst these was the generation of sparks from rubbing together coarse brown paper and the friction-generated glow from rubbing pieces of loaf sugar together, while another of his experiments ended in explosion and damage.

The surviving school log books of 1870 to 1880 covering Thomas's schooling years have little direct evidence of science as a particular curricular subject, but occasional comment is of interest. An entry in the Girvan Free Church School log book for 22nd January 1872 reads: 'Got 1 ton coal for school and paid 4s 10d to railway Company for box of chemical apparatus from Messrs Griffin & Son, London, on which aid was granted by the Science and Art Department.'⁴

According to the report by William Boyd⁵ attempts were made to include subjects relating to their scholars' likely future occupations so that in Girvan, schoolmaster Hugh Dickie, appointed in 1861, was also required to teach Navigation along with Geography, Mathematics, English Reading and Grammar, Writing and Arithmetic, French, Latin and Greek. In Maybole, a 'Schoolmaster Wanted' advertisement for the Parochial School in 1845 carries the note: 'It will, moreover, be a strong recommendation if he is versant in the principles of Agricultural Chemistry and prepared to teach them in the School.'

The Ayrshire schools which Thomas Duncan attended between 1870 and 1880 can be assumed to be those within nearest walking distance of the family home. While there is little particular record, the Special Subjects listed in the Log Books for the more senior pupils may have contained elements of the science teaching that so inspired the young Thomas and his spark-generating experiments. Since Robert Duncan and his family were no

longer recorded as resident at Enoch Lodge in the 1881 Census, it is possible that young Thomas completed his final years of schooling elsewhere.

While there is limited actual detail as to Thomas Duncan's early life in Scotland, the Carrick countryside known to him can still be recalled in one of Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Essays of Travel - A Winter's Walk in Carrick and Galloway'. Setting out from Ayr in January 1876 Stevenson walked to Dunure and from there to Maybole and Girvan: '*Some way beyond Dunure ... a wide bay ... opened out. Colzean plantations lay all along the steep shore, and there was a wooded hill towards the centre, where the trees made a sort of shadowy etching over the snow. The road went down and up, past a blacksmith's cottage that made fine music in the valley.*' On the last slope up, and turning into the Culzean-Maybole road, Stevenson's walk would have taken him past the Duncan home in Enoch Lodge – he could even have crossed paths with young Thomas on his way back from school.

With the end of formal schooling, Thomas is reported by Frederick Holmes to have been apprenticed, aged 16, to an apothecary in a neighbouring city, where he continued his study of chemistry and electricity. The apprenticeship was not uneventful for, as related by Holmes, there was a mishap whereby the unplugging of a barrel of molasses – unobserved and forgotten while other customers claimed his attention - led to the molasses draining away. It is possible that discontentment with his situation prompted Thomas's decision to emigrate to America and, at the age of 17, and without notice to either his family or his employer, he embarked for the U.S.A.

According to Holmes, Thomas arrived in America with hardly a penny to his name. From a report in the Lafayette Journal & Courier of 5th April 1997: '*Thomas Duncan's adventurous spirit led him to stow away on a boat from his native Scotland in 1882 to seek his fortune in America. About the only thing he brought with him was an active curiosity in electricity.*'

Some three years earlier Robert Louis Stevenson had also left Scotland for America - his experiences recorded in letters home and in 'The Amateur Emigrant - Essays of Travel' In a letter dated August 1879 to Sidney Colvin from '*on board ss Devonian an hour or two out of New York*' he writes '*the hand writing is not good because of the ship's misconduct: thirty-one pages in ten days at sea is not bad.*' In recounting his experiences in 'The Amateur Emigrant' Stevenson observes that '*these, the bread which was excellent and the soup and the porridge which were both good formed my whole diet for the voyage. As it was with a few biscuits and some whisky and water before turning in - I kept my body going and my spirits up to the mark.*' There were stowaways on board the *Devonian*: according to Stevenson '*when the stowaway is discovered and appears on deck he has but one thing to pray for: that he be set to work, which is the price and sign of his forgiveness. After half an hour with a swab or a bucket, he feels himself as secure as if he had paid for his passage.*' Steerage fare for *Devonian* passengers in 1879 was six guineas - with such a short spell in employment as apprentice, Thomas Duncan may well have found it necessary to try his luck as a stowaway, but once disembarked he soon found employment in a Boston drug store.

Three years later Thomas Duncan returned to Scotland for a two-month visit – presumably to family and friends – but then went back to the United States where he sought employment in the newly developing field of electrical engineering. (1879 saw Edison's

invention of the incandescent lamp), thereby reactivating earlier interests in electricity which remained the focus of his life's work.

From the Sun Electrical Company of Woburn, Massachusetts, he moved in the following year (1886) to the Fort Wayne Jenny Electric Light Company as Superintendent of the Incandescent Lamp Department. On the 11th January 1888 he married Nora Dalton, a Fort Wayne resident: the marriage lasting until her death in April 1921.

Duncan's next move was to the Thomson Houston Electric Co., of Lynn, Massachusetts – a forerunner of the General Electric Company. Working here under the direction of Professor Randall he became foreman of the pump room where lamp bulbs were evacuated using old-style mercury pumps and the tips sealed off in a gas flame. However, with his interests turning more towards the measurement of electricity rather than the uses of it, Duncan accepted a considerable drop in pay for the opportunity of a transfer as a tester to the company's Meter Laboratory.

In 1890 he returned to the Fort Wayne Electric Company as head of their meter testing laboratory and developed the first induction single disc watt-hour meter – his first patent was applied for in 1892. In 1898 Duncan left Fort Wayne to work for Siemens & Halske in Chicago, where he remained for two years, before leaving to set up in 1901 his own Duncan Electric Manufacturing Company in Lafayette, Indiana, some 125 miles south-east of Chicago, well-served by railroads for supply and despatch of materials and products. Continuing development, improvements and modifications to meter design were protected by the Duncan patents – the source of his financial success and subsequent benefactions.

In 1922, Thomas Duncan stepped down from active management of his company and, with a colleague Dr R. B. Wetherill, set off in November 1922 to realise a long-dreamed-of African safari – a traverse of some 10,000 miles from Cairo to the Cape. In early 1923, from the banks of the Nile, Duncan writes: 'Hippos are as thick as the sparrows around home.'⁶ Accompanied by some 40 native guides and interpreters the travellers returned after eight months, with a notable collection of photographs and artefacts. Exhibitions were set up, slides were made, and lectures given. It was the lack of suitable space for such purposes that prompted Thomas Duncan to fund the building of Lafayette's Community Hall.

In December 1927, an open meeting convened by the National Electric Light Association Meter Committee and the Great Lakes Division Meter Committee was held at Purdue University, across the Wabash River in West Lafayette. This meeting was intended to pay tribute to Duncan's standing in his field, and to honour the achievements of his life. Leading meter engineers across the country attended and it was for Thomas Duncan one of his life's happiest occasions.

Two years later, following his death from heart-related problems, there were many beneficiaries of his will. Amongst these was the Lafayette Community House Association, of which his second wife, Sarah Ely, was a member. The Duncan bequest provided for a new civic building, subsequently opened in 1930 as the Thomas Duncan Community Hall and still in use today for a variety of civic and cultural purposes. In April 1997, following completion of a refurbishment programme co-ordinated by Executive Director Aura Emsweller, representatives from Girvan were invited to join in the celebrations. In Girvan

the association with Lafayette is commemorated in the Thomas Duncan Memorial Lectures sponsored by the Friends of the McKechnie Institute.

For Purdue University, the Duncan Bequest provided an extension for the Electrical Engineering Department. The new building was dedicated on 5th November 1931 in a ceremony attended by Sarah Ely and by Thomas Duncan's relations from Scotland. A stone carved inscription over the doorway reads: 'Thomas Duncan Electrical Measurements Laboratory/ Erected to Honour/ A Pioneer Inventor/ A Builder of Industry/ A Leader of Men/ A Benefactor of Purdue University/ 1930.' Within the building – where a historical collection of meters is maintained – there is a portrait of Thomas Duncan and a bronze plaque carrying the text: 'This laboratory is dedicated to the memory of Thomas Duncan/ Girvan, Ayrshire, Scotland, December 26 1865/ Lafayette, Indiana, January 21 1929/ "Man is the Measure of all Things."' Purdue University today has a campus of some 35,000 students and is proud of its record as the 'cradle of astronauts', with so many of its graduates, including Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, involved in missions to outer space.

The Duncan Electric Manufacturing Company was taken over in 1976 by Landis & Gyr of Switzerland – the Duncan name itself only being replaced by Landis & Gyr some ten years later. In 1998 Siemens Engineering Company bought out the metering division, renamed it Siemens PT&D and constructed a new electronic meter plant on adjacent land at Duncan Road. A few years on, Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co., based in London, purchased the Lafayette business of Siemens, reinstating the Landis & Gyr name for the company and its products.⁷ In Britain, many thousands of Landis & Gyr meters are made at their factory in Shropshire and used by operators such as Dataserve UK and Scottish Power to meter domestic and small commercial requirements.

The name of Thomas Duncan, the enterprising Scots engineer from Girvan, is one that deserves to be remembered: a man who made a real contribution to scientific and technological development.

Margaret McCance

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Acknowledgements:

Ayrshire Archives Centre, Carnegie Library, Ayr, Registrar's Office, Girvan and Registrar's Office, Maybole, for assistance in researching Duncan family and school records. Dataserve UK and Scottish Power for information on electric meters.

- ¹ Drumranny is so spelt on 1856 Ordnance Survey map. Census Returns and the modern O.S. map use the spelling Drumrannie.
- ² Michael Moss, *The Magnificent Castle of Culzean and the Kennedy Family*, Edinburgh, EUP, 2002, pp 146, 149.
- ³ Ayrshire Archives, Maybole Parish School Log Book 1869 - 1911.
- ⁴ McKechnie Institute, Girvan, Girvan Free Church School Log Book 1863-1873.
- ⁵ William Boyd, *Education in Ayrshire through Seven Centuries*, London, University of London Press, 1961, pp 161 and 180.
- ⁶ Kathy Matter, 'Duncan Hall Open House gives Founder's Photos their Due', in *Lafayette Journal and Courier*, 5th April 1997.
- ⁷ Max Showalter, 'Duncan Road Plant is Landis+Gyr again', in *Lafayette Journal and Courier*, July 2002.

Poetry Corner

The poem below, by Ebenezer Smith, Ayr, was published in the Ayr Advertiser of Thursday, 29th November 1888, 8d.

James Baird of Cambusdoon (1802-1876) was a member the wealthy ironmaster family, originally from the Monklands of Lanarkshire. Despite his wealth and position in society, he never surrendered his broad Scots manner of speaking. See "Historic Alloway" (AANHS, 2000, p.29). For the poet, Ebenezer Smith, see John MacIntosh, *Poets of Ayrshire*.

Our Iron King (Composed on Visiting his Grave at Alloway)

Noo free frae fash, an' sleepin' soun',
Here lies the Laird o' Cambusdoon,
Long wearer o' the iron croon –
King o' his kind;
Whose like in a' these lands aroun'
'Twere hard ro find.

When James to Nature's mind was made,
She gave to him both pen and spade;
A genius born to toil or trade,
He was Her care:
What wonder that he here was laid,

A Millionaire!

Our Laird was, doubtless, sell or buy,
Or take or give, or live or die,
Conservative instinctively;
But was it strange!
What tree of growth so grand and high
Is given to change?

An oak that blossomed not like weed,
Nor so profusely shed his seed,
Baird's motto was 'grow slow, come speed' –

Old-fashioned style;
And he did credit to his creed
As 'King' in Kyle!

The crowd is sure to criticise
Him who hard circumstance defies,
And dares o'er 'destiny' to rise;
But let loons ban –
In James Baird's lair, beneath me, lies
No common man!

No laggard, who believes in luck –
No dullard, in disaster stuck -
No roarer tailing from the ruck
In life's long spin, -
Such prince, endowed with pith and pluck,
Was bound to win!

Success which would have turned the head
O' half a score o' boors ill-bred,
But made Baird tramp wi' firmer tread
His native earth;
He scorned the dunce who owned wi' dread
Scotch, Burns-like birth!

Without pretence to modish grace,
In speech or manner, form or face –
Of basalt built from cope to base,
Firm and four-squared –
Of weakness there was not one trace
In brave James Baird!

The scion o' a sturdy stock,
Whose Scotch pride only vice could shock –
More self-reliant than the rock
In all his aims –
Blue blood was but a bastard joke

To homely James!

As Burns by song, James Baird by skill
An' industry an' force o' will,
Asserted manhood's right to fill
Life's loftiest seats;
An' proved that castes an' ranks are still
But vain conceits!

James reached his throne – a king confessed –
A Briton equal o' the best
That ever vaunted velvet vest;
Yet 'hodden grey' –
When worn across no bumpkin's breast –
He loved alway!

Our Country's commerce grows from such:
Auld Ayr an' Scotlan' owe Baird much;
From where I muse his master-touch
Delights my gaze,
An' makes me impotently itch
To pour his praise.

The form and face – the voice and style
Familiar long to loving Kyle,
Come back to fond remembrance while
This simple stone
Recalls, as could not portlier pile,
Our Monarch gone!

No portlier pile James Baird requires;
So long as blaze our furnace fires,
An' up to heaven an' o'er these shires
Their glare is sent
He will have all such king desires
For monument!

August 1888

Book Reviews

Michael Moss, **The 'Magnificent Castle' of Culzean and the Kennedy Family**, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2002.
ISBN 0 7486 1723 X., £19.99, paperback; 0 7486 1722 1, £35.00, hardback.

Sometimes you can be too close to something to see it properly. Such must be the case for a lot of people in Ayrshire when it comes to the 'magnificent castle' of Culzean, and its equally splendid gardens and policies. For nearly 60 years now we, the people of Ayrshire, have been accustomed to Culzean as a piece of 'public property', somewhere that we can visit and wander about, more or less at will. We perhaps fail to realise that in Culzean we have, on our doorsteps, one of the most attractive estates in these islands. It is also an estate with a complex history. The buildings and the family - the Kennedys - have both left unanswered questions.

Now Michael Moss has, in the most 'magnificent' way, helped us to re-evaluate Culzean, and has reminded us what a treasure we have in our midst. He, and his publishers, have produced a book which is a excellent companion to Culzean and its history. As befits one of Scotland's best known archivists, Moss has managed to combine a well-written and well-illustrated text with all the evidence of close scholarship. Using material from the family papers which has not previously been made available to researchers, he has been able to look afresh at the people who have made Culzean what it is to-day. The bulk of the book, as might be expected, deals with the late 18th century and the early 19th century, the years when Culzean grew and largely took on the form with which we are familiar.

While Moss's focus is mainly on the family themselves, there is much on the development of the castle, and of the estate. Everyone with an interest in Culzean will find that this is a book which they cannot do without. It is one of the most important books on Ayrshire to have been published for some years, and is likely to remain a standard reference to this wonderful estate.

Jean F Stoddart, **Barbieston: The Story of an Ayrshire Hamlet**. Privately published by the author, from 3 Barrhill Drive, Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbrightshire DG5 4RJ. Price, inclusive of postage, £6.50.

The Federation has as a long-term aim the production of a comprehensive Ayrshire bibliography. This is a difficult task: many small and ephemeral books appear, and perhaps disappear, without anyone much beyond the author knowing of their existence. We were alerted to the existence of Mrs Stoddart's book by a brief notice in the Ayrshire Post. For anyone interested in the small clachan of Barbieston, which lies in a corner of Coylton parish close to Drongan, it is, as they say, a must. But it is, in fact, better than that: though the focus is on Barbieston and its neighbouring farms, and the families that lived in the various cottages, what Jean Stoddart has produced is a book that does say something of the

wider picture, and also shows what can be done in terms of book production. It is worth £6.50 for the illustrations alone.

Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies

Annual General Meeting

This year's Annual General Meeting of the Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies will take place at 2 p.m., on Sunday 25th May 2003, at Hansel Village, Symington. The meeting will follow the usual format: once the hopefully short formal business has been transacted, there will be a chance for representatives of member societies to discuss in an informal setting matters of mutual interest. There will be tea and biscuits, and an opportunity to see something of the grounds and setting of Hansel Village.

Hansel Village is off the A77 Ayr Kilmarnock road, midway between Symington and Monkton. Formal notice of the meeting will be mailed in due course, but we ask you to keep this date free, and hope to see many of you - old and new friends - at Hansel Village on that day.

The Burgesses and Guild Brethren of Ayr 1647-1846

This book, edited by Jean Kennedy and Alistair Lindsay on behalf of the Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies, has now been published by the Federation as the second volume in our Ayrshire Records Series. We are grateful to the National Lottery (Awards for All), South Ayrshire Council, the Marc Fitch Fund, the Scottish Local History Forum, and to the AANHS, for the generous financial support which has enabled us to publish such a finely produced book. The 8,500 names listed and indexed are all burgesses of Ayr, but they come from a far wider area, from Russia, America, Spain, the West Indies, from Glasgow, Edinburgh and every part of Ayrshire. Everyone with an interest in Ayrshire will find something of merit in this book. Copies are available from Rob Close, 1 Craighrae Cottages, Drongan, AYR KA6 7EN, for £22.50, inclusive of UK postage. Cheques, &c., to be made payable to A.F.H.S.

News

At the end of 2002, the Federation ran a successful conference in Troon, and also hosted, with East Ayrshire Council, and support from the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, a Buchan Lecture at Rugby Park, Kilmarnock. The Committee has decided that, in future, these events should be held in alternate years, so that the next Troon Conference will be in 2004. It is hoped to organise another lecture, possibly in Largs or West Kilbride, in the autumn/early winter of 2003. We would welcome any suggestions for a speaker, especially someone of national importance who could attract a good turnout to a lecture. Any thoughts to Rob Close, at the usual contact points.

Diary

EAFHS	East Ayrshire Family History Society. Meetings in Gateway Centre, Foregate Square, Kilmarnock, 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.
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.

April 2003

Thu 3rd	PHG	Jim Allan	North Ayrshire
Mon 7th	L(MS)	Ian McLagan	Submarines in Rothesay in WW2
Mon 7th	SHS	Allan Richardson	Beith Furniture
Tues 8th	LNAFHS	Chris McLeod	Hand Weavers in Scotland
Thurs 10th	EAFHS	Dane Love	Old Inns?
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

Most of our member societies run excursions during the summer months. As the numbers that these can accommodate are often limited, they are not included in our diary. If you are interested in summer visits organised by any of the groups, please get in touch with them directly.

A diary of winter meetings, for 2003–2004, will be published in the next edition of *Ayrshire Notes*. Society secretaries are reminded and encouraged to send details of their winter programmes to Rob Close as soon as they are known.

*PUBLICATIONS of the AYRSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL &
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY*

available from Ronald W. Brash MA, Publications Distribution Manager
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