| | |
|---|---|
| nr | The town was laid out in 1806, Peter Nicholson (1765-1844) of Glasgow, architect to the 12th Earl of Eglinton. Remains of the original town include rows of two storey dwelling houses and the Eglinton Arms and stables. South Beach has villas of the 'select watering place' created by Eglinton. |
| nr | The first Thomas Cook tour to Scotland, in 1846, arrived in Scotland at Ardrossan by steamer from Fleetwood. |

## GENERAL

| | |
|---|---|
| Johnston | 1375, Ardrossan. Gaelic, *ard rosan*, 'height of the little cape'. |
| Pigot, 1837, 239 | 'A bathing place advancing into celebrity … pleasantly situate on the western shore of Ayrshire. … This place, though but yet in a state of infancy, bids fair to rival some of the longer established watering places, and has already become a favourite resort, in the bathing season, for the genteel families of Ayrshire and other places – who can be accommodated with neat and commodious houses or lodgings.' |
| ASH, 23.10.1858 | First Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald, 1 June 1853. |
| AA, Th 20.11.1845, 1ef | Petition to form Burgh of Barony. Boundaries and proposed powers. PHOTOCOPY herewith. |
| EG 5483, F 14.11.1845, 589b591a | Bill. Proposed Burgh of Barony. Boundaries, powers, &c. |
| EG 5558, F 24.7.1846, 305c | Royal Assent given 16.7.1846 to Act making Burgh of Barony, for paving, lighting and cleansing, establishing a police, &c. |
| Paterson | The town was laid off in the most spacious manner and a number of handsome villas erected. Splendid baths were built and Ardrossan soon became a fashionable watering place. |
| Hume | The town laid out in 1806; Peter Nicholson, architect, for the Earl of Eglinton. Much remains of the original town, built in connection with the dock development, including rows of 2-storey dwelling-houses and the Eglinton Arms Hotel, with stables at the rear. Along the South Bay are villas built to create a 'select watering place'. also by Eglinton. |
| RCAHMS, AYD/107/1 | Plan of the Town of Ardrossan, proposed to be built on the property of the Right Hon The Earl of Eglinton. Drawn by Peter Nicholson. PHOTOCOPY herewith. |
| McWilliam | ... The last creation of a burgh of barony was in 1846 when the Earl of Eglinton, faced with the collapse of his hopes for Ardrossan - founded in 1805 as a canal-head sea-port - prudently handed over the superiority to the ratepayers. To them alas neither its draughty open plan, nor more recently its over-powering smell of oil, have commended it. |
| AA, Th 28.8.1806, 1a | Feus in Ardrossan New Town for sale. |
| AA, Th 4.9.1806, 1c | Feus for sale. William Auld, Inspector at the New Harbour of Ardrossan' will show. |
| AA, Th 11.9.1806, 4d | 'The works at Ardrossan are going on with vigour, and we flatter ourselves [that] the liberal encouragement given to feuars [and] the certainty of the Canal going on to Paisley ... will make a large and well-peopled town rise at Ardrossan, that in a very few years will be conspicuous in Ayrshire.' |
| AA, Th 16.4.1807, 1a | Plan of the New Town to be seen, and feus granted. |

ASH, Sa 19.3.1864, 4bc [1813] In describing Ardrossan fifty years ago, we cannot, like our correspondent in Kilwinning last week, tell of any worthies, mendicants of an obsolete type, unsuccessful contractors, shoals of salmon, and cheap whisky. The description is only interesting as a contrast - the houses then so few in number as barely to indicate the lines of streets, with the compact rows of elegant villas, shops and dwellings which are now our boast; the then ghost of a trade with the crowded harbour, and the many thousand tons of coal and iron now yearly exported to every part of the world. Ardrossan, in no stinted measure, has shared in the benefits arising from the beneficial legislative, social and commercial changes of the last half century.

Approaching Ardrossan from Saltcoats, in the year 1813, the first house in the South Crescent is Mr Hamilton's of Holmhead, now occupied by Mr Hanishaw, and is succeeded by Mr Brown's villa, now the property of Mr Robert Young, the Pavilion, which was the first built in the Crescent, and the three half-houses in Arran Place - Misses Crawford's, Miss Warner's and Mrs Long's. The other villas have all been erected within the period mentioned. From the Cannon Hill, a ridge of rocks in the direction of the church runs down towards the sea. The Baths are built, and those little houses adjoining that [are] now occupied by Misses Houston. Indeed, those little houses were the first built in Ardrossan, and at the time of which we write, is occupied by Mr Penny, foreman of the masons employed on the Harbour Works. In Princes Street, where the Station now stands, is a house called the Stables, and in a line with those properties now occupied by the Railway Hotel, Mr David Barclay, baker, Mr Paton, Mr Wallace, and Mr Currie. Mr Hendry, the then resident engineer, occupied the house second last mentioned. On the other side, nearer the sea, is the Hotel only. Montgomery Street can only boast of three properties - the houses now occupied by Mr J O Mack, Mr Robert Drape and Mrs Wilson. There are more properties in Glasgow Street. On the east side there are only the houses presently occupied by Mr John Howie, grocer, and Mr Clark, flesher; but on the opposite side there are two properties facing Mr Howie's shop, then belonging to Mr Barbour and Mr Neil Shaw. The site next to these is unbuilt, then Mr Russell's house and two houses belonging to a Mr Wilson. From these the street is

c unbuilt as far as Bute Lane, where there is a property now occupied by Mr Archibald Russell, and those properties beyond as far as the new house recently erected by Provost Barr. In Princes Lane there are fivre houses, and in Montgomery Lane two houses and a half. Where Barr's Square now is there stood a smithy and wright's shop, and it may be interesting to notice that when more convenient workshops were erected on the Harbour, the vacated building was used as a school-room, and this was the first educational institution in the place. Paisley Street is in part built, and the houses occupied by workmen engaged on the Harbour.

At this period, on the Harbour there are but few buildings. Where Mr Barclay's Engineering Work now stands there is a sawpit, and adjoining a store, a dwelling house, the residence of Edward Hamilton, smith, a wright's shop, and a smithy. As yet there is neither Custom House nor Agents' Offices, Shipyards nor Sawmill, Foundry nor Shops and Dwelling Houses; the little business connected with the Custom is done in the open air, or in the officer's private house in Saltcoats, and till a trade has been developed, the erection of offices for Shipping Agents would be a useless expenditure of capital.

A few houses, separate from each other by wide intervals, the ground rocky and covered here and there with marine plants and pools of water, not long freed from the presence of sea fowls which formerly had found in the solitude of the place a safe and agreeable habitation; a trade yet to be formed - the prospect is anything but a cheerful one; but the noble Earl, with a faith in the future, which nothing can daunt, year by year at an enormous expense carries on the works, assured that his successors and posterity will reap the fruits of what he is sowing.

AA, Th 11.7.1822, 4c

"The town is crowded with strangers who resort hither during the summer months for the benefit of sea-bathing; and we are informed that at present not a single house remains untenanted."

Cockburn [1842]

Ardrossan, Friday 9th September 1842. 7 a.m. At half past one we all left Glasgow by the Ayr railway and were here by three, where Maitland's family has been living for some months.
Lord Mackenzie has gone to Inveraray, and we don't begin at Glasgow till Thursday next, the 15th, and my object in coming here is to get over to Arran, where I have never been, and to pass some days in its solitudes. But the window I am writing at looks across the water, and Arran is invisible, the waves surly, and the air showery. My contemptible stomach almost turns at the look of it, and is not made steadier by the pitching of a sloop a mile or two out. So my long desire to be in Glen Sannox, or on the top of Goatfell, may probably not be gratified today.
11 p.m. It was not. We went to the end of the pier here, and saw the steamer set out, and she grunted and heaved so, that I was thankful I was not in her. But then, as usual, she probably landed by half past eleven at Brodick, so it would have been all over in an hour and a half, by which time it turned out an excellent day. Still it was only excellent for this side, for Arran was only seen like a ghost, through mist, occasionally. But tomorrow!
[Fairlie and Southannan were visited that day instead, q.v. The following day they crossed to Arran, returning on Tuesday 13th]
Glasgow, Wednesday night, 14th September 1842. But I have forgot Ardrossan. It is above, or about, thirty years since I last saw it. It was then a sort of poor fishing village, with no harbour, and no fashion as a bathing place. The late Earl of Eglinton was just beginning the attempt to realise his vision of glorifying and enriching his family by carrying a canal from Glasgow, by Paisley, to this part of his property, and thus making Ardrossan Tyre and Saltcoats Sidon. The canal, after being bankrupt, reached Johnstone, and now, with its railway rival, it will certainly never advance an inch further. But his lordship succeeded in compelling the sea to submit to be a small port, and in alluring genteel invalids, by a large bad inn, and small bad baths, to resort there in summer. So Ardrossan is a town, and has a harbour. There is no beauty in its own immediate neighbourhood. But no place on the Firth of Clyde can ever be without charms and interest, and until Arran shall be covered again by the waters, it will always be delightful to look from Ardrossan. It consists at present chiefly of a single line of small houses, curbing with the line of the beach; in front of the houses is the public road or street, and next the street the sea, which ebbs very little. The summer population consists mostly of strangers, few of whom have what, in Scotch Irish, are called self-contained houses, most of them cramming into the small, but clean, upper flats, which are let for

bathers by the poorer people below. The whole place is respectably clean.

The ladies' bathing is conducted on the genuine Scotch principle, of not being at all ashamed of it, as why should they? Is it not pure? and healthy? and ordered by the doctor? and anything wrong in it? So the ladies emerge, in full day, from their flats, in their bathing-dresses, attended by a maid, and a sister or aunt, the maid carrying a small bundle containing a towel and some dry clothes, the friend tittering. The bather crosses the road, and goes to the sea, which is never more than a few yards, or inches, beyond the road's edge. She then enters the water, and shivers, or splashes, according to her taste, conversing or screaming all the while with her attendants ashore. But it is on coming out that the delicate part of the operation begins; for, as they don't walk home wet and then dress in their own rooms, they must change their whole raiment before the public. For this purpose the maid holds a portion of the dry vestment over the dripping ladiy's head, and as the soaked gown descends to the heels, the dry is supposed to descend over the head as fast, so that the principle is that, between the tow, the lady is never seen. Ignorance is sometimes bliss, and it is very wise in the assistants never to tell the patient anything about it. But I wonder how, when they happen to be looking at a fellow exhibitor, and observe the interest taken from every window, and by all the street, in the proceeding, they can avoid discovering that such feats are seldom performed with revelations, and that a single fold of wet linen adheres too accurately to the inner surface to require any other revelation.

But I never saw bathing performed by ladies in Scotland even with common decency. Why the devil can't they use bathing machines, or go into retired places, or wall or pale off enclosures? There was one bathing-machine on the beach at Ardrossan, which was rarely used, and two in the inn court, which the landlord told me were never used at all. Portobello, however, (the most immodest spot in Scotland), shows that machines may be used so as to be no protection, but the reverse, for there they are used, nearly touching, by men and women indiscriminately.

Imp Gaz, I, 73 [1855/65] "Ardrossan possesses great attraction as a bathing-place, and is now one of the much-frequented summer resorts on the Firth of Clyde." In the crescent, "there are many handsome villas, varied in style, but all more or less tasteful."

Had its own police force until 1st April 1878.

TT, F 16.6.1899, 3f BATHING FACILITIES. Sir - Few will be disposed to withhold commendation from Provost Young's administration in the Ardrossan Commission, especially in the practical sympathy they have shewn with progressive movements and measures, the kind of movements and measures which must popularise the town with visitors and the administration with electors. I noticed the other day that the unsightly and dangerous hole at the north shore, in which refuse was deposited and water and vermin were allowed to collect is in process of being filled up. Much, however, remains to be done in the way of improving the shores and providing facilities for such delights as are associated with the sea-side. The bathing facilities are beggarly. To say that the bathing resources of a seaside town are left to be developed (!) by one or two residents is to make a confession as humiliating as any that could be imagined. Repeatedly I have heard of intending holiday-makers

giving Ardrossan the go-by because there was no bathing facilities. Let the Commissioners consult expert opinion as to the best way of bringing the town abreast of others in a matter only less important to the public health than the drainage. Yours, CITIZEN.

ACC, PLC 2.7.1945 — A single burgh for Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston is being mooted.

ACC, PC 12.2.1952, 79 — Proposed boundary extension noted.

Albert Mackie, Mackie on the Move, in Scotland's Magazine, Sept 1971, p.45

"A Clydebank man I spoke to on the front at Ardrossan South Beach - a family man enjoying a holiday away from the problems of Upper Clyde Shipyards - told me - 'I like Ardrossan. It has a beach second to none, and in good weather that's all the children want.'"

ASSET (Ardrossan Saltcoats Stevenston Enterprise Trust)

Established in May 1981.

SRC, E&ID 21.4.1981, 666 — Proposed. Chair to be Douglas Muirhead, ex chairman of PA Management Consultants, UK

SRC, E&ID 2.6.1981, 920 — ASSET launched 21st May 1981.

IRVINE BAY REGENERATION PROJECT

C21 — Part of Irvine Bay Regeneration Partnership project. Master plan for the Three Towns: **The Halcrow Group**.

COUNCILLORS AND OFFICIALS

PROVOSTS

Harry HAPPERTON — ? - ?. Died. [ASH, F 4.1.1957, 5, It happened in 1956, ASH27.7.1956]

TOWN CLERK

James Ogilvie MACK — `Died 27th August 1887.

T K COOK — fl. 1919

W N M McDERMENT — - 30th November 1965, retires.

W M CUMMING — Nov 1965 -

BURGH AND ROADS ENGINEER

James C DUNCAN — fl 1916 – 1919

John B CURRIE — fl.1969

**UNSORTED**

MASONIC TEMPLE [LODGE ST JOHN]

AA, Th 30.1.1919 — Consecrated last Saturday.

COTTAGES

TT, 28.10.1898 — On Monday, the Dean of Guild Court continued for 14 days an application by James Morton for a double cottage between South Beach Station and South Crescent.

LAIGHPARK

DSA, Small JW — 1882. **John W Small**. Internal work, house, Laigh Park, Ardrossan - dining room mantelpiece.

NATAL HOUSE

ACC Planning, A6640 — November 1953. Additions and alterations, Natal House; Alex Dunlop, for SWSEB.

© Rob Close 2026