THE NAME

Johnston	1548, *Saltcoates*, "salt workers' huts".

There is a series of undated, and badly photocopied, articles on Saltcoats Street Names in Vennel, Gj72.

Burgh	1885

PROVOSTS

1885 – 1886	John G HALKETT
1886-1895	James McISAAC
1895-1899	John SMITH junior
1899-1904	Alex GUTHRIE
1904-1906	Robert BLAKELY
1906-1909	David DONALDSON
1909-1912	Alex S MILLAR
1912	Hezekiah M ARNOT
1912-1915	James MILLER
1915-1921	John CHRISTIE
1921-1927	Alex S MILLAR
1927-1930	William D KERR
1930-1933	John CHRISTIE
1933-1936	Andrew KENNEDY
1936 - 1939	Harry GAUL, BA, teacher. Died 25.3.1947. [AP, F 28.3.1947, 10d]
1939-1943	John ANDERSON
1943-1945	Adam ADAIR
1945-1949	James REID
1949-1950	Charles SHORE [Has died, ACC Education Cttee 14.11.1950]
1950-1954	Thomas M GOURLAY
1954-1957	James REID [Died 30th March 1968]
1957-1960	Robina LAMBIE [Died 27th December 1963]
1960-1963	Robert LAMBIE
1963-1966	Charles MARTIN
1966-1968	John MULGREW [Died in post 26th March 1968]
1968-1969	T D LINDSAY
1969-1972	Mrs N LAMBIE
1972-1975	Harry BARNETT

BURGH SURVEYORS

GEORGE HARLEY [1928 - 1962]

ASH F4.5.1962, 5gh	Retiring after 34 years as Burgh Surveyor, Saltcoats. Born in Maxwelltown. Lost right eye in WW1 (Royal Artillery). He was Burgh Surveyor, Girvan, 1922-1928, coming to Saltcoats in 1928.

W TULLOCH
Fl 1972-1973

TOWN CLERKS

James CAMPBELL [- 1908]	Born 31st May 1835, died 8th August 1908, during a meeting.
William F McALLUM	In post, October 1961 (EG)

GENERAL

GENERAL COMMENT

Reg Mag Sig, IV, no.2560 — BURGH CHARTER. Charter granted by James VI to Hugh, Earl of Eglinton, the town of Sltcoittis and creates it a free burgh of barony. Dated 6 May 1576.

AA 24.7.1884 [1778] — A Tour through most of the trading towns and villages in Scotland, 1778

"A seaport, where a great deal of coal and salt are shipped, and of which Lord Eglintoun is superior; having a harbour that has 12 feet of water at spring tides. There are 200 looms employed in the silk manufacture in and about this place, and about 40 looms in the linen branch. There are several young people here who earn from 4s to 5s per day on the silk loom, on which account people of all professions are turning to silk manufacture, the wages being so tempting to a carefull industrious person. There are about 1200 examinable people in the parish. Robert Reid Cunninghame, Esq., junior of Seabank, carries on the coal and salt works, and also ropery, in company with Captain Hugh Brown and others. These, and most of the gentlemen, indeed, in the neighbourhood, are truly public-spirited, who take part of ships, &c; and Mr Wodrow, the minister here, is a public-spirited man. There are 2 dockyards, much supported by Captain Hugh Brown. 13 busses are on the herring fishery; 3 ships are at present on the stocks, full 200 tons; and 30 sail of good vessels are constantly employed. The average of the tonnage of the vessels which sail from this place is about 70 tons each".

Robert Weir, My Mother Was Unaware of the Awful Event, EAFHS Journal, 28, April 2011, 12-18 — Saltcoats seafaring families: Browns, Barclays, McQueens. PHOTOCOPY in Parishes files at Saltcoats.

2SA, [July 1837], 199 — Population nearly 4,000. Principal occupations are sailing, fishing and weaving.

454 — Third of town in Stevenston parish. In 1661 only 4 houses. By 1703 first slated house built by William Miller, feuar of Adam Campbell of Gargunnock. This first house was in Quay St: now occupied by Hugh Robertson. Adjoining house occupied by descendants of Wm Miller. He describes Saltcoats; few houses, mere low thatched cots.

461 — Ropeworks. 2 saltpans. Shipping has recently declined. Brewery established 56 years ago. Stevenston Grain Mill 'of great antiquity'.

Imp Gazette, 1855, 691 — 'plain one storey houses'. Has a village character, c.1660 only 4 houses; c.1685 Sir Robert Cunninghame erected the saltpans, and also built the harbour and opened coal pits. Still produces some salt. Main occupation is hand-loom weaving. Pop (town) 1841: 4238; 1851 4338 in 537 houses.

Imp Gaz, II, 691 [1855/85] — "The near neighbourhood of the gay town of Ardrossan also is not a little pleasant; and the accommodation of Saltcoats itself, together with the character of its sea-beach, are such as to draw to it many families of the middle class for summer sea-bathing."

RQR, June 1855 — "... the unhealthy state of Saltcoats, caused by imperfect sewerage, particularly a stagnant open ditch in the heart of the town".

GENERAL

ASH, Sa 29.11.1862, 2g — [Trade nationally depressed, due to American Civil War]. Of c.300 looms in Saltcoats, 166 are presently idle.

ASH, Sa 17.6.1871, 4d — Saltcoats. Improvements.
[Full transcript in ASH file - individual quotes in various Saltcoats files]

Groome, 1884, vi, 319 — Industries are ropemaking, shipbuilding. Exports coal. Pop (town) 1871: 4624. 1881 - 5096, in 1169 inhabited houses.

Late C19 childhood — Charles Duguid, *Doctor Goes Walkabout*, Adelaide, Rigby, 1977 ppk (hardback 1972 as *Doctor and the Aborigines*). Duguid grew up in Saltcoats. Copy of ppk at Vennel, Irvine.

3SA, 1951, 315 [1946-50] 331 — Burgh population is 8600.
Harbour and pier repaired 1914. Winton Circus and parts of Brae were reclaimed and protected by concrete walls.
Town centre is little altered since 1790. Early in C20 whinstone was replaced by asphalt and footpaths laid in mass concrete.
3204 houses in burgh: 2170 built before 1914. Since 1919 950 houses have been built by local authority.

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

ACC Planning, A1186 — June 1947. Housing development, Dykesmains, for Dykesmains Farm Ltd. No decision.

C20 childhood — Sarah Munro, *First Up Best Dressed*, Milngavie, Heatherbank Press, 1978. Parents ran a lodging house in Saltcoats: author worked at Ardeer and involved in amateur dramatics. [Copy at Irvine, Vennel]

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

TOURISM

1SA [1791] — Principal watering place in Ayrshire. 300-500 visitors a year from Paisley, Glasgow and Hamilton. Coalmining. Divided between parishes of Stevenston and Ardrossan. Proprietor in late part of C17 was Robert Cunningham of Auchenharvie, coal improver.

1822 — Vennel has part photocopy from W M Wade, Delineations Historical Topographical and descriptive of the Watering and Sea Bathing Places of Scotland, Paisley, J Lawrence, 1822. [Book appears to be 1326 in Wood Collection]

[c1820s/1830s?] — Andrew James Symington, “Seaside in Old Days - Saltcoats II”, in ASH Sa 28.7.1877, 4cde. [In ASH file]

Imp Gaz, II, 691 [1855/85] — “The near neighbourhood of the gay town of Ardrossan also is not a little pleasant; and the accommodation of Saltcoats itself, together with the character of its sea-beach, are such as to draw to it many families of the middle class for summer sea-bathing.”

ASH 22.8.1857 "There is no lovelier bay anywhere than that stretching from the Crescent, Ardrossan, to the old Magnesia Works at Saltcoats".

ASH, F10.6.1887, 4d "I had a fine breath of breezy fresh air at Saltcoats the other afternoon (writes *Lorgnette* in a late issue of the *Evening News*). It is many a year since my last visit to the sluggish little village which lies by the shore on this side of Ardrossan, and there did not seem to be a single change. Perhaps, after so long a time I was surprised to find that the old pier still stood in the same old place and formed a convenient haven for the fishermen of the village; perhaps, also, I was somewhat astonished to find the sea still blowing gloriously fresh breezes inland, and breaking itself helplessly upon the sandy beach. Perhaps - well, well, perhaps I expected to find that even Saltcoats had moved with the times, and was a little disappointed that it hadn't. To the quiet man in search of health there is plenty of amusement in Saltcoats. There is, for example, a sleek, fat-sided pony down by the shore called 'Charlie', which everybody feeds with biscuits, and there is a donkey with a weak back. If he get tired of these exciting occupations, he might temper his disposition by calculating the exact number of shops in the village that dispense "digestive biscuits". To me, it seemed that every other establishment was in the business. The funniest thing of all about Saltcoats is the gas. The street lamps are not lit in the summer, nor in the winter when the moon is up. Neither is there any gas to be had either summer or winter on the Sundays, from all of which, and the number of churches and quiet taverns in the place, it may be easily guessed that Saltcoats is one of the "unco guid" places on the face of the earth. Touching the gas question there is a funny old tradition which has almost become classic. Once upon a time a tourist who was walking along Hamilton Street on a very dark night, with not a glimpse of a moon or a twinkling star to be had overhead, accosted the lamplighter and asked him why the street lamps weren't lit. Thereupon the lamplighter whipped out an almanac and proved conclusively that no gas was required for there was a moon, and if there was no moon there ought to be, for the almanac plainly stated that the moon was due. In circumstances such as these one would imagine that the local magnates ought to have better control of the moon".

LITERATURE

Saltcoats features in William Black, "The Daughter of Heth", 1878 (or 1871?). [Mitchell copy LL H39106]

Set in the village of Airlie, inland from Saltcoats.

p.15 The pale grey glimmer of the houses of Ayr.

p.51 A few minutes afterwards Coquette and he stood upon the shore. The long bay of Saltcoats sweeping round from the far promontory of Troon, fronted a heaving tumbling mass of white-crested waves that came rolling onward from under a great leaden breadth of sky; and, as they gazed out on this wintry-looking sea, they had on their right hand the grey stone wall of the town, which projected into the water, with here and there a crumbling old house peeping over it. The church spire rose above the tallest of the houses and aided the perspective - so much so that it was almost possible to imagine that the site of the building had been chosen by one who had studied the picturesque opportunities of the place.

"It is St Nazaire in winter!" cried Coquette, her voice half lost in the roar of the waves.

[TLS, 8.11.1941, "William Black 1841-1898":

A Daughter of Heth was his first successful book, published, anonymously, in 1871. He was a novelist of place, his equivalent to Hardy's Wessex, et al, being the Western Isles of Scotland. After his death, funds were raised to erect a Memorial Beacon at Duart Point, Mull, 1898. George Meredith dismissed his books as all 'fishing and sunsets'.

The introduction in A Daughter of Heth of the ingenuous French Coquette into the austerity of a bleak Scottish manse suggests dramatci possibilities, but she falls in love with a Bulweresque peer, who proves to be already married, and after his melodramatic departure, marries somebody else before dying of a broken heart.]

© Rob Close 2026