



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

'That little sugarloaf Island'

Citation for published version:

McDowell, ML 2014, 'That little sugarloaf Island': Ailsa Craig, romance, reality and the branding of Scottish sport and leisure, 1707-2013', *Sport in History*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 249-275.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2014.923733>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1080/17460263.2014.923733](https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2014.923733)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Early version, also known as pre-print

Published In:

Sport in History

Publisher Rights Statement:

© McDowell, M. L. (2014). 'That little sugarloaf Island': Ailsa Craig, romance, reality and the branding of Scottish sport and leisure, 1707-2013. *Sport in History*, 34(2), 249-275. 10.1080/17460263.2014.923733

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Pre-publication print of: Matthew L. McDowell, “‘That little sugarloaf island’: Ailsa Craig, romance, reality, and the branding of Scottish sport and leisure, 1707-2013’, *Sport in History* 34 (2) (2014): 249-275. There may be small textual differences between this version and the published version. Any reference made to this paper should refer to the published version.

‘That little sugarloaf island’: Ailsa Craig, romance, reality, and the branding of Scottish sport and leisure, 1707-2013

Matthew L. McDowell¹

University of Edinburgh

Abstract

This article examines the post-1707 history of Ailsa Craig, a small island off of the Ayrshire coast in the west of Scotland. The island was a site of tourism for Scots, and for English and other foreign travellers, who offered romantic depictions of what they saw as a uniquely Scottish natural landscape, inclusive of rare species of nesting seabirds. Of more relevance to the world of sport was that granite from Ailsa Craig comprised the majority of the world’s curling stones. In terms of its imagery, the island was also used as both a selling point and narrative device by journalists covering British Open golf tournaments at nearby Turnberry. These uses both represented globally-transmitted ideas of what was represented as an ‘authentic’ Scottish sporting material culture. This article goes beyond these depictions, however, to examine the island as a food store, and as a playground for its aristocratic owners, and to examine the quarrying ‘industry’ – both as a small-scale family affair, and later as a larger, even riskier venture. The place of Ailsa Craig in discourses on ‘Scottishness’ will be balanced against the difficulty of life on the island, and concerns over the environmental damage done by man’s presence there.

‘Ailsa Craig’ means different things to different sportspeople and aficionados. American tourists, coming over for golf holidays on Scotland’s links, will no doubt recognise the island from its appearance on the television during previous British Opens. Canadian, Swiss and Scandinavian curlers, meanwhile, will associate Ailsa Craig with the material of which their stones are made. There is little doubt this tiny island in the Irish Sea has made a considerable contribution to the material culture of Scottish and international competitive sport over the past two hundred years. Beyond this, however, Ailsa Craig has a far more complicated place within both the history of British leisure and tourism, and Scotland’s collective national consciousness. Very few travellers from England and elsewhere – possibly none – came from abroad solely to visit this island off of Scotland’s west coast, but the sight

of it nevertheless left a significant imprint upon those who did see it, either from afar or up close. Many travellers might not have known about curling stones, but remembered both the island's unique landscape, and its status as one of the North Atlantic's major seabird colonies. And, to the golfers and journalists who came from abroad, Ailsa Craig was written into the fabric of some of the sport's greatest moments. There is, however, comparatively little written on the island's history. This article discusses the island both in the context of literary and public discourse, and the history of the island since the Union of 1707. It will take a critical eye towards the construction of a romantic identity for Ailsa Craig, and its subsequent maintenance throughout several centuries. Much of this discourse does not discuss the island as a place of residence or work; the realities of quarrying for curling stones, and of living with invasive species, received short shrift. This article will also look at the issue of land ownership on the island in the wider context of Scottish land issues. Aside from collating material from a variety of secondary sources, it also seeks to return to primary sources: newspaper accounts, census records, government records, and even film will be used to elucidate the island's history, its place within the overall dialogue of authentic Scottishness, and its intersection with wider trends in Scottish and British leisure.

Romance and nature

If one travels along the Ayrshire coast, Ailsa Craig – sitting in the distance – is no doubt a ubiquitous feature of the journey. It is a small island off of Scotland's west coast. The name is believed to derive from Gaelic, meaning 'Rock of Elizabeth'. The island sits in the Irish Sea, at the mouth of the Firth of Clyde. It is over nine miles west of the nearest town – Girvan, in South Ayrshire – twelve miles off the isle of Arran, and 36 miles from the Irish coast. The island rises over 1,100 feet above the sea at its highest point: it is an 'igneous intrusion', the result of molten rock cooling from underground roughly 60 million years ago, and similar to St. Kilda, Rockall, and Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth.² It is nicknamed 'Paddy's Milestone', as it sits roughly equidistant between Glasgow and Belfast, and is roughly the middle point for sea voyages between the two cities. It was one of the first Scottish landmarks that Irish immigrants would have seen upon arrival in Scotland during the nineteenth century; and, during and afterwards, one of the landmarks that Scottish émigrés would have seen on the way out of the country. If one was to identify the literal contribution of Ailsa Craig to the

world of sport and leisure, it would be in reference to curling. The island is the world's only location of ailsite, a special kind of granite which, by the mid-nineteenth century, became the most sought-after material in the crafting of curling stones. Three different kinds of microgranite are used for the making of curling stones: Common Ailsa, Blue Hone, and Red Hone, with Blue Hone overwhelmingly used for competitive curling at the time of writing.³ Ailsite, however, is not Ailsa Craig's only unique natural feature. The island's cliffs are also the nesting place for a variety of rare sea birds, including puffins, gannets, cormorants, kittiwakes and guillemots. The birds during the mid-nineteenth century became an attraction for passing steamer ships; and, in 2004, well into the island's 'post-industrial' phase, Ailsa Craig was turned into a sanctuary run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), leased from the island's owners, the Marquises of Ailsa. The RSPB had long been tasked with protecting the island's bird population.⁴

The sole reference to Ailsa Craig in the scholarly historiography of sport and leisure comes from Fiona Reid; her doctoral thesis examines the geography of Scottish sport, with curling comprising a significant sample of her work.⁵ Reid's theoretical approach is underpinned by Bale's works on the geography of sites of sporting; and yet, despite being indelibly linked with sport, Ailsa Craig is not strictly a geographic *site* of competitive sport.⁶ A bit further away from Scotland, Gilchrist has recently examined the intersection of history and romantic literature with regard to Beachy Head on England's south coast, specifically its place within the universe of Alpine climbing.⁷ And yet, Ailsa Craig's remoteness, even at the mouth of a busy shipping corridor, places the island in a slightly different, more ephemeral leisure context than Beachy Head. If anything, Ailsa Craig represents an 'idea' as much as it does a location. While it shares similarities with Rockall, it lacks the North Atlantic islet's explicit application as a site of geopolitical significance.⁸ More people, after all, have seen Ailsa Craig with their own eyes than they have Rockall, even if they have never landed there. The place itself, and the rare raw material it produced, came to represent an authentic 'Scottishness' which reflected an evolving discourse on romantic ideas of Scotland and its material culture. In part, this was because curling had great appeal to the Scottish diaspora, particularly in Canada, where Scots played a key role in instigating the game's development and institutions.⁹ As Pittock states, however, Scotland's perception of its own material

culture, as well as outsiders' understandings of it, have been subject to multivalent interpretations, and cannot be oversimplified as one-way traffic from the outside in.¹⁰ Within Hardy, Loy and Booth's typology of sport's material culture, curling stones intersect between 'equipment' and the interlinked residual of 'craft', containing as they do 'stories beyond specialisation' as to their origins in volcanic rock, as well as a unique relationship with land and commerce. But even Hardy, Loy and Booth's typology cannot quite address Ailsa Craig as a specific 'venue' in sport, even though the island is and has been indelibly linked to the 'framing' of British Open golf tournaments held at Turnberry Resort, the home of the Ailsa Course, which sits on the Ayrshire side of the Firth.¹¹ The island itself might be *terra firma*, but a strict definition of what it represents in the world of Scottish, British and global sport is slippery at best.

Two books have been written about Ailsa Craig: one by Maybole United Presbyterian minister Roderick Lawson in 1888, and another by Rev. David Landsborough in 1852. These works, while entertaining, did not purport to be social, economic or cultural histories, and the isle's past was used as a preamble towards exploring the Craig's natural features.¹² Only two other pieces of written material try make any attempt at discussing the history of Ailsa Craig: a pamphlet for Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, written by A. Gunning in 1985, and a brief essay by geologists Potts and Holbrook, which also summarises the considerable scientific literature written about the island up to 1987.¹³ Ailsa Craig has long been of geological interest, with Scottish geologist John Macculloch dedicating a chapter of his 1819 book *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* to the island.¹⁴ Within the humanities, however, travel literature and poetry have been far more plentiful in their references to the Craig than historical texts. Robert Burns, from nearby Alloway, used the island metaphorically in 'Duncan Grey cam' here to woo'.¹⁵ The less-celebrated William Shaw of nearby Lendalfoot, meanwhile, wrote his faux-epic 1805 *Poetical Description of Ailsa* primarily for the eyes of Sir Archibald Kennedy, the twelfth Earl of Cassillis, the Ayrshire landowner who possessed the island.¹⁶

But locals were not the only ones to make reference to Ailsa Craig; and, indeed, English travellers had long been fascinated by what they saw as a singular landmark of ancient

provenance. The primary motifs of these works were indelibly linked to the island's ancient, primitive nature, with the dominant trope of English romantic literature's construction of Scotland being, in John Glendening's words, as an 'Other to English modernity'.¹⁷ The island, despite its ties with lowland Ayrshire, can be included as part of a wider post-Culloden trend in the Highlands and Islands. The *Gaidhealtachd* was fashionable for English tourists, and accordingly they made their own cultural interpretations of a landscape that they viewed, however wrongly, as being untouched by man.¹⁸ Ailsa Craig, along with Bass Rock, were part of what Rackwitz states were well-established, internationally-known routes of travel for English, German, and other foreign tourists, which included the country's major towns and 'natural curiosities'.¹⁹ In 1635, traveller and future English parliamentary army officer Sir William Brereton remarked that 'Ellsey' was 'a much-to-be-admired piece of the Lord's workmanship'.²⁰ Thomas Pennant mentioned the island in his account of his 1772 voyage around Scotland and the Hebrides.²¹ John Keats and William Wordsworth, meanwhile, also wrote entire poems about the Craig. Written on an 1818 tour of Scotland, Keats's 'To Ailsa Rock' refers to the 'craggy ocean-pyramid' as being 'dead asleep', with its 'life... but two dead eternities'. He wrote in a letter that seeing Ailsa Craig from the mainland hilltops had awed him: 'The effect... with the peculiar perspective of the Sea... and the misty rain... gave me a complete Idea of deluge – Ailsa struck me very suddenly... I was a little alarmed'.²² Wordsworth in his 'In the Frith of Clyde, Ailsa Crag (July 17, 1833)', wrote in slightly more measured tones, and was more concerned with how the island watched over passing ships.²³ Richard Ayton's summer 1813 voyage around Britain included a trip along the Ayrshire coast; and painter William Daniell, who accompanied him, accordingly produced two paintings of the Craig: one picturing it in the foreground, another the view from Culzean Castle, a property of the Earls of Cassillis.²⁴

From the nineteenth century, the Firth of Clyde and its communities had become some of the most fashionable tourist destinations for urban Scots, given its close proximity to Glasgow. Steamships on the Clyde proliferated from the 1820s onwards. This was parallel to the development of railway networks on land by the 1840s.²⁵ Ailsa Craig, in the broadest sense of the word, was a site of leisure and commerce with regard to the paths of sailboats and steamers. The island was used as a waypoint for regattas and other local sailing

competitions. Many steamer expeditions also noted Ailsa Craig as a waypoint, while some noted it as a 'destination' in its own right. The *Ayr Advertiser* described one of these typical excursions 'to' the island aboard the steamer *Scotia*, on Saturday, 14 July 1849:

The SCOTIA, on reaching the Craig, will proceed slowly round [Ailsa Craig], allowing Passengers a view of the wondrous formation of this gigantic Ocean Rock. Going and returning, the Steamer will sail close against the Carrick Shore, presenting a succession of beautiful and interesting views, rich in every variety of the grand and picturesque.²⁶

Commentators of the nineteenth century believed that the birds, far more than curling stones, were the main attraction of the island, and they were a part of the sightseeing experience, albeit from afar. The 1888 edition of *Pollock's Dictionary of the Clyde from Tinto to Ailsa Craig* noted that:

Pleasure parties, as a rule, content themselves with sailing round the Craig, and noting the wondrously plentiful concourse of sea birds. A favourite practice with excursionists by steamers is to approach the cliffs and fire off the ship's gun, at which there is a sudden and universal alarm amidst the myriads of birds, and a scene such as no words can adequately describe. The whole of the solid mountain seems as if it were dissolving itself into great dense clouds of feathered creatures, with an accompaniment of discordant cawing and screaming that is almost terrific.²⁷

Those who wanted to get even closer to the birds did so at their own risk. One such adventure tourist, *Leisure Hour's* 'TCW', tried to get at eye level with the nesting birds in 1868. This was not easy; since, to get a close look, one needed to climb over a thousand feet to Ailsa Craig's summit. TCW, who was there to catch some birds in order to stuff them, stated that: 'It requires cautious walking, as the stones are loose, and the path is a mere wild goat's track, leading close above the edge of the precipice'.²⁸

The Ailsa Craig brand

Nature, then, was a dominant motif in any discussion of the island. This discourse was encapsulated brilliantly by the half-hour documentary *Paddy's Milestone* (1947), funded by curling stone manufacturers Kays of Mauchline, and directed by J. Blake Dalrymple.²⁹

Ostensibly, the film's main purpose was to promote Kays as a business: a good portion of the film's running time demonstrated how ailsite was extracted, its transport back to land, the craftsmanship by which material was melded into curling stones, and a demonstration of the game via an elaborately-filmed match between Ayr and Girvan Curling Clubs.³⁰ Nevertheless, the volcanic eruption which created the island (shown in an animation which opened the film), and the violent process by which granite blocks (known as 'cheeses') were dynamited on Ailsa Craig, were juxtaposed with something far more bucolic. The first character introduced to viewers was a birdwatcher, who had arrived from the mainland to get a better view of the seabirds and their eggs.³¹ The island's tenants, the Girvan family, were then introduced, specifically Jimmy Girvan's wife and their three children. After the weekly supply and post boat had arrived, the camera focused on the activity of milking goats. This was, the narrator mused, 'plenty to do in a life of enviable simplicity'.³² The film effectively employed a variation on the 'authentic' Scottish experience, and utilised it to promote an authentically 'glocal' Scottish product. It advertised that Kays produced 2,000 pairs of stones a year, 750 of which had been for the Canadian market, and another 228 for other destinations abroad: 'all part', stated the narrator, 'of that little sugarloaf island off the Ayrshire coast'.³³

Within the past twenty years, Ailsa Craig has continued to be seen as an icon of authentic 'Scottishness'. The island's continuing popular cultural relevance has much to do with its status as both a global exporter of a quality Scottish product in curling stones, and a site of incredible natural beauty. Visually, a 2006 episode of BBC's *Coast* provided a host of picturesque aerial images of Ailsa Craig, and its narrative included an interview with Hew Girvan, son of a former quarryman, about life on the island.³⁴ In 2012, an exhibition at the British Library, 'Writing Britain: Wastelands to Wonderlands', Daniell's painting of the island appeared side by side with Keats's 'To Ailsa Craig'.³⁵ The island has managed to stay on the periphery of the news in sport, especially during Olympic years. Curling was elevated to a medal sport for Nagano 1998; previously, it had been a demonstration sport in 1924, 1932, 1988 and 1992.³⁶ Kays of Scotland's website, at the time of writing, advertises itself as the official provider of Olympic curling stones, as it has been since the game's introduction at Chamonix 1924.³⁷ Kays' stones were in demand both before and after the victory of the

Team GB women's curling team during the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, in a gold medal triumph noted as being a 'Scottish' victory in the Scottish press.³⁸ Before the Olympics, Kays employees went to the Craigs to collect 1,500 tons of fallen granite in order to prepare for possible demand after the Olympics.³⁹ Foreign clientele continued to comprise a significant portion of Kays' business. For example, in 2003, Kays (with a workforce of eight) signed a £30,000 contract to provide the Capital Curling Club of Bismarck, North Dakota with new stones.⁴⁰ In the aftermath of Team GB's victory, the *Scotsman*, while acknowledging the 650 curling clubs and approximately 25,000 curlers in Scotland, focused instead on the game's international appeal. The rest of the world as a whole might have been better at curling, stated the paper, but: 'We make the best stones (polished Ailsa Craig granite, no substitutes accepted).'⁴¹ Ailsa Craig, then, represented the authentic Scotland, the highest order of the nation's craftsmanship.

The location has also remained in the news for very different reasons, largely within the world of high-class leisure and global finance. Certainly this has been the case for Turnberry, acquired in 2008 by Leisurecorp, an arm of the Dubai World investment company. After its purchase, Leisurecorp noted Turnberry to be an 'under-utilised asset' when viewed in comparison with St. Andrews, Gleneagles and Carnoustie, and the *Scotsman* mused that: '[The view of Ailsa Craig] is a view that the new Arab owners of Turnberry wish to see better broadcast around the world'.⁴² Ailsa Craig had been an integral part of Turnberry's marketing appeal, especially within the foreign media. The beauty of the Ayrshire coastal landscape was certainly not lost on those who covered the travels of the golf-loving US President Dwight Eisenhower, who was gifted a sixteen-room apartment at Culzean Castle for his services in the Allied cause during the Second World War. Dolph C. Simons Jr. of Kansas's *Lawrence Journal-World* noted during Ike's visit to Culzean in September 1959 that:

President Eisenhower has vacationed at some of the most beautiful spots in the world, and he has tackled many of the more difficult and picturesque golf courses around the world. But it is difficult to imagine how any of these vacation locations could surpass Culzean Castle and the Ailsa golf course in Scotland...⁴³

The Craig was a known image in global sporting telecasts due to Turnberry hosting the British Open several times during the tournament's post-war run. Ailsa Craig was used to frame golf journalists' narrative of Opens past and present: Dave Anderson of the *New York Times*, whilst covering the 2009 Open at Turnberry, recalled the 1977 tournament at the same course, and one of golf's classic duels between Americans Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson: 'On the 16th tee, as the sun slid toward the rocky Ailsa Craig in the Firth of Clyde, each knew the grand moment had arrived'.⁴⁴ Covering the 2009 tournament for the *Times* was also Christopher Clarey, who could not take his eyes off of the island, it being what he considered to be an integral part of the Ailsa course:

A crescent of beach appears on the left along with a piece of driftwood shaped like a massive, prehistoric antler. At the top of the rise, there is, surprisingly, no abyss. Instead, there is only the round's best view yet of the [Turnberry] lighthouse and of Ailsa Craig, the helmet-shaped island that is the rough Scottish equivalent of Uluru in its monolithic presence on the horizon. As with Australia's massive red rock, the longer you stare at Ailsa Craig, the more meaning it seems to acquire.⁴⁵

Back in the UK, the *Guardian's* Lawrence Donegan hinted at a more pragmatic use of Ailsa Craig, at a time when professional golf was considered to be going through a weak patch:

The sun was out on Scotland's south-west coast, casting a sparkling light across players, spectators and the landmarks that have become synonymous with this place: Ailsa Craig, the lump of granite that sits 10 miles into the sea, and the famous old [Turnberry] lighthouse. Picture postcards are made of such scenes, but are great major championships? More than ever before, golf needs the answer to be a resounding yes.⁴⁶

One year after Leisurecorp's takeover of Turnberry, then, Ailsa Craig had been further weaved into the narrative of global golf. It was an integral component of one of golf's greatest venues.

The island itself has also featured in the world of real estate. The eighth Marquess of Ailsa, Archibald Angus Charles Kennedy, put Ailsa Craig up for sale in May 2011. It was marketed by Vladi Private Islands in Hamburg, initially to the tune of £2.75 million.⁴⁷ The RSPB was

mooted as a potential buyer, but it nevertheless stated that they could not afford to purchase it; and, in any event, any potential buyer would be legally bound to protect the wildlife on the Craig.⁴⁸ The offer was not taken, however, and in March 2012 the island was taken off the market by the marquess due to lack of interest.⁴⁹ It was again placed back on the market at £1.5 million; and, close to the time of writing, Vladi Private Islands was expecting a formal bid by 'a British-based charitable environmental trust with a special interest in birds'.⁵⁰ It then emerged that, in the early 2000s, businessman Bobby Sandhu had purchased the lighthouse, cabins and adjoining land for £85,000 in a failed attempt to create a five-star hotel, afterwards offering to sell his land at the inflated rate of £250,000, and that this had complicated attempts to purchase the island in its entirety before the offer was finally made.⁵¹ Ailsa Craig entered the popular discourse in a whole new light: Ian Bell, left-wing and Scottish National Party (SNP)-supporting columnist for the *Sunday Herald*, in May 2011 made the case that private islands such as Ailsa Craig were becoming a new benchmark for the super-rich. He proposed making a new currency, the Ailsa, to refer to units of wealth comparable to the price of the island.⁵²

Sustenance, aristocratic privilege, and public safety

The overall public discourse on Ailsa Craig does not touch upon the island as either a place of either work or residence. The eighth Marquess's recent sale of the island, and its convoluted facilitation, however, revives a long-latent debate about the island's unusual place within Scotland's 'Land Question'.⁵³ Late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century clearances affected surrounding lands, at least on Gaelic-speaking Arran.⁵⁴ More research must be performed on Ayrshire, but Devine has argued for the existence of 'Lowland Clearances' that occurred at this time, albeit without the social trauma of their Highland counterparts.⁵⁵ Scottish sport's history has been indelibly intertwined the Land Question: the creation of new Highland hunting estates took place in earnest from 1790 onwards, in large part to service the demands of new British and other industrial elites for sporting grounds.⁵⁶ Hunting, along with golf, became one of the major sporting tourist attractions that Scotland could offer visitors.⁵⁷ Ailsa Craig was never used for commercial hunting, but its landowners nevertheless jealously guarded the island's seclusion for a variety of purposes.

According to Lawson, Ailsa Craig first appeared in official records in 1404, when King Robert III, grandson of Robert the Bruce and the second of the Stewart monarchs, granted the monks at nearby Crossraguel Abbey on mainland Ayrshire the 'Insula de Ailysay'. The island is still home to a small castle; Lawson speculated that it was built by monks from the Abbey, but no serious historical or archaeological studies have ascertained if this is true. In 1548, the abbey chartered Ailsa Craig to Gilbert, the third Earl of Cassillis.⁵⁸ Keats, Wordsworth and Pennant, in their travels around Ailsa Craig, might not have immediately considered curling stones to be the sole product of the island: it had, however, long been considered a food store for its landowners. Food was in the form not only of the island's birds, but also in the introduction of other species onto the island. The food stuffs housed on the island not only included the native birds and rabbits, and the fish surrounding the island, but also hogs and goats placed upon it. Daniel Defoe, in his tour of Britain in 1722, noted that the Earls used the island to store their stock, which included 'hogs, fowl, down and fish'.⁵⁹ In 1806, the twelfth earl of Cassillis was given the title Baron Ailsa, and was further promoted to the Marquess of Ailsa in 1831.⁶⁰ During the 1870s, Archibald Kennedy, the third Marquess of Ailsa, introduced raccoons and badgers onto the island, and there was even talk of introducing chamois. This did not happen, however, and the badgers died off quickly.⁶¹

The hunting of sea birds, or 'fowling', had long been a tradition in coastal regions of the British Isles. Ailsa Craig was amongst a group of Irish Sea islands whose birds were hunted regularly. In the nineteenth century, birds were killed through a variety of methods, including through the use of ground nets, and rod and noose.⁶² These methods astounded outsiders: Pennant was positively fascinated by the rod-and-net combination used to capture his avian dinner from Ailsa Craig's cliffs.⁶³ This was, as Baldwin states, fowling largely driven by the estate, and not the community, as on some other Scottish and Irish islands.⁶⁴ Ailsa Craig's role as a 'storage' facility posed problems in terms of policing. Aside from merely firing rifles in the air, some passengers aboard steamer pointed their guns directly at the island. The aforementioned 1849 voyage of the *Scotia* warned passengers that there were 'No Guns allowed to be taken on Board'.⁶⁵ Landsborough, in 1853, noted that a member of his party on board the steamer opened fire at several birds flying above

them. He stated: 'I wish the noble proprietor, the Marquess of Ailsa, would use some means of preventing such culpable conduct.'⁶⁶ It was considered a pressing enough problem by the Ailsa estate that an advert was posted in the 7 August 1851 *Ayr Advertiser*, stating that Sir Archibald Kennedy, the second Marquess of Ailsa, was to place a gamekeeper on the island, noting that shooting from on the island itself, and from the vessels, was threatening both the stock and human lives.⁶⁷ Indeed, the one human resident of Ailsa Craig in the 1851 Scottish census is listed as being Mungo Guthrie, whose profession was 'gamekeeper'. Guthrie had his two sons and housekeeper with him in 1861, and together they were Ailsa Craig's only human residents at the time; Guthrie was listed as the 'Keeper of Ailsa Craig' in 1861's census.⁶⁸

Guthrie's letting arrangements with the Marquises are indicative of both aristocratic privilege *and* of a taste for leisure. In 1888, Lawson noted the rent of Ailsa Craig to be £30 a year, with the difference in rent made up through the sale of curling stones.⁶⁹ The 30 September 1865 letter signed between Guthrie and the second Marquess, outlining the conditions of the let, however, is somewhat more complicated. Guthrie's main purpose was to prevent outsiders from either destroying the stock, or from landing on the island, unless ships in distress came ashore. The let was renewed yearly, and Guthrie accepted the built cottage on the Craig, and resided there throughout the year. The tenant was allowed to sell curling stones, but – at that time – could only employ one person to assist with this. Furthermore, Guthrie was also required to deliver free of charge any geese, birds, or eggs to Culzean Castle. The gamekeeper had the power to kill animals on the island for his own purposes, though he himself was not allowed to use guns. The Marquess himself reserved 'full power to himself and his friends... to shoot fowls, goats and rabbits': Guthrie would be compensated ten shillings for each goat shot, but fowl and rabbits were left unaccounted.⁷⁰ Illegal hunting, then, did surely occur on Ailsa Craig during this time, and the presence of Guthrie probably did not prevent others from trying to open fire at the island's birds: Lawson blamed passing yachtsmen for firing at the island's goats, and noted that some hunting accidents had occurred on Ailsa Craig.⁷¹ Human inhabitants of Ailsa Craig, for the most part, tended not to be permanent residents. Defoe stated in 1722 that the island was inhabited at only one point of the year, where it was used as a stopping-off point for

fishermen and game-hunters in the summer.⁷² Lawson and Landsborough both stated that during the 1830s, there was talk of fishermen being based at Ailsa Craig to serve the increasing steamer travel between Glasgow and Liverpool. Cabins were built, but the scheme was abandoned, and the buildings remained empty.⁷³

Despite Ailsa Craig's status as a waypoint for ships by day, by night the island was a hazard, given the notoriously brutal weather of the west of Scotland, and the currents where the Firth of Clyde met the Irish Sea. Boats grounded and shipwrecked onto the Craig often; in 1888, Lawson estimated that in the previous twenty years, eight vessels had been 'totally lost' on the island.⁷⁴ In 1884, work began on constructing a lighthouse and an accompanying foghorn and gasworks system. The lighthouse would be built at the eastern end of the island, facing Girvan, and accompanying lighthouse-keepers' cabins would be also be constructed, for the estimated cost of £25,000.⁷⁵ The installation of a lighthouse and foghorn system was completed in March 1886 – with the total cost ending up at £30,000 – and the lighthouse became governed by the Northern Lighthouse Commission.⁷⁶ The lighthouse's designers were the renowned Stevenson family; and, as census records show, men from Islay, Orkney, Caithness, the Isle of Man and other locations within the Northern Lighthouse Commission's network took residence on Ailsa Craig, along with their housekeepers.⁷⁷ In previous decades, lighthouses themselves had become symbols of the state's increasing use of private property to suit public needs; though, unlike in previous decades, the third Marquess of Ailsa did not seem to put up any fight against the scheme.⁷⁸ Lawson, additionally, stated that the idea of the island being fortified for the Clyde's defence was occasionally mooted. 'Ailsa occupies a commanding position', he stated, 'which, as in the case of Gibraltar, makes it important of itself'.⁷⁹ This fortification, however, never moved beyond a suggestion. The lighthouse was automated in 1990, and at that point the island was abandoned by humans.⁸⁰

Quarrying for curling stones

Excepting Fiona Reid's work, curling is under-represented in academic historiography; though, outwith academia, the Curling History Blog of David B. Smith and Bob Cowan is helping to redress some of the gaps in our knowledge of the sport's history, geography and

material culture.⁸¹ In many respects, historians are still piecing together curling's considerable legacy. Curling highlighted a unique Scottish sporting identity within Britain, one that did not necessarily represent party-political nationalism, at least in the same sense that shinty did. It might even be argued that curling's popularity in Canada hinted at Scottish sport's historic and paradoxical imperial and aristocratic bonds.⁸² Certainly, one of curling's major patrons during the mid-nineteenth century was another Ayrshire landowner, Archibald William Montgomerie, the thirteenth of earl of Eglinton, whose staunch Scottish patriotism was heavily intertwined with his being a Conservative.⁸³

Curling's national organisation in Scotland was greatly assisted, as in other sports, through the proliferation of railways.⁸⁴ The Grand Caledonian Curling Club was formed in 1838, with 36 founder clubs. The Grand Caledonian became the Royal Caledonian Curling Club (RCCC) in 1843, after Prince Albert's visit to Scotland in 1842, where he and Queen Victoria were presented with a pair of Ailsa Craig curling stones –with silver handles – at the Palace of Scone.⁸⁵ Linked to transport, and the organisation of the game's governing institutions, were changes in technology. The first president of the RCCC, Largs native John Cairney, was the inventor of the artificial curling rink, and in 1832 he wrote his *Essay on curling, and Artificial Pond Making* with detailed instructions on how to replicate the process.⁸⁶ Previous to these developments, Ailsa Craig granite was not the only kind of material used to make curling stones, and the names of other makes reads as a list of Lowland Scottish villages, indicative of what Reid believes is curling's historic and cultural connections to the Lowlands.⁸⁷ Before the organisation of the RCCC, regional environmental conditions moulded local curling culture: for example, Cairnie initially believed that Ailsa granite was too light on Kilmarnock ice, and thought Burnock Water and Sanquhar stones worked better for meets held in or around the town.⁸⁸ But codification, the advent of regional and national competition, and the invention of the artificial rink all led to the standardisation of playing conditions, including the materials used to play the game. By 1844, the *Glasgow Herald* noted that the RCCC then had a total of 116 provincial clubs, and a membership roll above 5,000. The paper stated that: 'Curling, instead of being a series of local detachments or clubs, is now a centralised corporation'.⁸⁹

The RCCC mandated that stones weigh 44 pounds.⁹⁰ From around the organisation's inception, then, it was Ailsa Craig's stones that became the gold standard in curling, so much so that some were displayed at the 1851 Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace.⁹¹ The proliferation of codified curling in the 1830s and 1840s, however, did not alter Ailsa Craig's relative solitude. Even before these formative decades of curling's institutions, curling stones had come from the island: Shaw's poem addressed to the twelfth Earl of Cassillis in 1805, mostly concerns the island's bird population, but still made reference to the Craig's principle material product:

But what this shore is fam'd for let me tell,
For curling stones, and that I know right well;
For here I've seen them, when I took a view,
As smooth as bottles when they are made new.⁹²

As early as 1829, Ailsa Craig granite was used to make two hundred pairs of curling stones for travel to Canada.⁹³ But the most famous business to become involved in the manufacture of curling stones was that of Thomas and Andrew Kay: their new venture, Kays of Mauchline, was founded in the Ayrshire village in 1851, and eventually found itself under the stewardship of Thomas's wife's brother-in-law, James Wyllie.⁹⁴

A quarrying family

At most, quarrying for curling stones involved only a handful of people, on either the supply or the craft side. Table 1 displays population information on the island found in the Scottish censuses. One local family would become indelibly associated with the process by which curling stones were extracted: the Girvans (not to be confused with the name of the nearby town on the Ayrshire coast), whose tenancy succeeded Guthrie. The *Ayr Advertiser* stated in 1899 that the family had quarried on the island since 1870; they first featured in the censuses in 1881, where 'fisherman' Andrew Girvan and his daughter Barbara were listed as residents of Ailsa Craig, along with five 'visitors', apparently unrelated fishermen.⁹⁵ Andrew's address was listed as Ailsa Craig Cottage, and in 1901 he resided with his son Matthew, and nephew Archibald Girvan, whose professions were listed as 'curling-stone dressers'.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, William Girvan, upon his death in 1942 at the age of 96, was referred to by the *Ayr Advertiser* as the Marquises of Ailsa's main tenant on Ailsa Craig for

over seventy years. William began life in the local fishing industry, and started his association with the island while he was working to convey materials for the building of Ailsa Craig's lighthouse during the early 1880s. William fulfilled a number of jobs; not only was he the 'official' boatman to the island, and the 'pioneer for pleasure sailings', but he was also a quarrymaster.⁹⁷ After William's retirement, his son, also named Andrew, continued the tradition until 1952: the Girvans' daily output was around ten cheeses a day, with a yearly amount as high as 1,000 or 1,400.⁹⁸ Detonating the rock to create was a violent process, even within the somewhat sanitised account of quarrying presented in *Paddy's Milestone*. Working under such conditions negotiated a fine line between safety and effectiveness. One of the Girvans, 23-year-old William, Andrew's son, died in 1899 when gunpowder prematurely exploded in the quarry, sending William falling to the bottom along with the rocks.⁹⁹ Seven years previously, Andrew himself was involved in a similar accident, but only hurt his hand.¹⁰⁰ Quarrying for the material ceased in 1971, largely because it stopped being economically viable to do so. But, aside from a brief period in the 1980s when rock from Trefor, Gwynedd made most of the world's curling stones, decades of fallen granite remain on the island at the time of writing, and they continue to provide Kays with raw material.¹⁰¹

The precarious balance of nature

Under the Girvans' watch, quarrying for curling stones was a small-scale operation. No quarrying on an industrial scale took place until 1907, when William Wilson, a quarrymaster from Kilsyth, successfully completed negotiations with the third Marquess of Ailsa for the rights to open a new quarry on Ailsa Craig. Wilson and his Ailsa Craig Granite Company were uninterested in curling stones: granite from Ailsa Craig could also be used in road building. Wilson obtained contracts with several unspecified municipalities in Scotland, Ireland, Yorkshire, and Lancashire.¹⁰² Over time, his business was proven to be overwhelmingly unsuccessful due to the logistics involved, particularly with regard to haulage costs. The business did not make money, and the Ailsa Craig Granite Company, and its successor company Ailsa Craig Granites, both plunged into liquidation in 1912 and 1926 respectively.¹⁰³

Unlike the previous curling-stone quarrying, this industry was seen as directly contradicting the aims of both environmental protection and tourism in the region; and, at their initiation in 1907, Wilson's quarries provoked a significant public backlash. Author and adventurer Neil Munro stated in 1912 that: 'recently the West of Scotland roused with indignation to the possibility of the "second eternity" of the Craig being checked incontinent by soulless quarrymasters'.¹⁰⁴ The rhetoric of the public reaction to Wilson reflected similar campaigns occurring at the time to protest the placement of advertising on the White Cliffs of Dover and other English landscapes; and, much as these campaigns were driven by a modern desire to utilise preservation to market a unique 'Englishness', the protests against Wilson reflected a particular brand of 'Scottishness'.¹⁰⁵ The campaign against Wilson utilised romantic motifs of Ailsa Craig. Many letters were sent to the *Scotsman* in February and March 1907 protesting the Marquess's leasing of the island to Wilson. 'Ailsa Rock', wrote J. Hamilton Mitchell:

standing in silent majesty and in all the beauty of its solitude, is not only one of the most remarkable features of the Firth of Clyde, but an object of interest to all who know it... even the partial destruction of its dizzy precipices and weather-beaten-cliffs... would render it forever an eyesore to all lovers of the wild grandeur and beauty of nature.¹⁰⁶

One letter from 'Tammie Norrie' (the Scots term for puffin), meanwhile, stated that 'every endeavour must be made to prevent the scheme being carried into execution... before irreparable damage is done to our treasured possession.'¹⁰⁷ One letter from 'Interested' noted the irony of the Marquess of Ailsa's son's participation in the St. Andrew's Society, and its recent campaign to restore Holyrood Chapel in Edinburgh. 'Is it not rather inconsistent', asked the letter:

that his Lordship should associate himself so prominently with the restoration of this historical building, while at the same time his father is about to hand over the world-famed island in the Clyde to the tender mercies of the quarrymen.¹⁰⁸

By comparison, the *Ayr Advertiser* had very little criticism for the project. 'The announcement', stated the *Advertiser*:

that Lord Ailsa has leased the right to quarry granite on Ailsa Craig... has drawn forth indignant protests in the city papers. The writers of the letters are moved by high sentiment at the prospect of the removal of a most interesting landmark.

The paper, however, stated that Girvan's trade was depressed, local men needed work, and did not seriously believe the possibility of the landmark being scarred.¹⁰⁹ The *Advertiser* even praised Wilson for the rather obligatory act of erecting cabins for the workmen, stating that: 'It is to be hoped that the people of Girvan will appreciate this act of consideration on the part of Messrs Wilson'.¹¹⁰ The *national* conversation, in this case, was different to the *local* one: did Ailsa Craig 'belong' to the local community, or to Scotland as a whole?

In reality, life on Ailsa Craig was far from the idyll that *Paddy's Milestone* purported it to be; at times, conditions were primitive. In a House of Commons debate on 15 February 1895, Eugene Wason, Liberal MP for Ayrshire South, requested that the Board of Trade assist Ailsa Craig by connecting it with telegraph and telephone. The use of carrier pigeons for communication was still the norm at this point.¹¹¹ Storm-related accidents where workers were injured, and whole structures were destroyed, took place in November 1911 and November 1912.¹¹² And, when storms prevented the usual weekly supply boats from reaching the Craig over Christmas and Hogmanay 1913-14, it resulted in the island being cut off for ten days. The *Scotsman* seemed to believe that the lack of carrier pigeons emanating from there implied the survival and good health of the workers.¹¹³ Telegraphs were not installed in the lighthouse until 1935.¹¹⁴

This lack of communication, coupled with the dangers of sailing to Ailsa Craig on choppy seas, had life and death consequences. The Ailsa Craig Granite Company, unlike the Girvans' operation, worked year around; Wilson's more advanced quarrying raised the risk factor of injury considerably. Carrier pigeons were no good when urgent attention was required after a storm in January 1909. After the storm, a fire (the usual distress signal) was seen on the Craig from onshore at Girvan. Doctors responded, only to find no one was injured, but that the quarrymen had been out of food for three days.¹¹⁵ By February 1913, Girvan doctors were complaining that the recent extension of the Insurance Act made it difficult for them

to properly serve the Craig, especially with the risk and distance involved. By May, doctors were actively refusing to serve it unless they received a 'special mileage grant' to work the route.¹¹⁶ Temporary arrangements would not be devised until the next year, with a three-month contract signed between a Girvan doctor and William Girvan (as boatman) to serve the island.¹¹⁷

Not only were conditions primitive, but humanity's presence on Ailsa Craig, while initially designed to protect the island's precarious natural balance (in the form of the gamekeeper), had begun to tip it in the wrong direction. Some of this was due to the expanded quarries: the RSPB had considerable trouble with Wilson's quarrymen: a complaint to the third Marquess of Ailsa in April 1913 stated that birds' eggs were being destroyed by workmen on the island.¹¹⁸ But even more insidious invaders, also related to man's presence, made their way onto the island in the 1890s: brown rats. The issue of rats on Ailsa Craig was raised by Joseph Montague Kenworthy, MP for Central Hull in a question to the Scottish Office on 20 May 1924.¹¹⁹ Unlike Wason's earlier question on communication, this particular query necessitated an entire Scottish Office folder to solve the problem.¹²⁰ Interviews with Matthew Girvan, two then-current lighthouse keepers, and two former ones, indicated that a coal boat which landed on the island prior to 1899 was probably responsible for the presence of these rats. All five agreed that their existence on the island was drastically harming the puffin population, whose eggs sat at the lowest elevation.¹²¹ By the 1930s, puffins had disappeared from Ailsa Craig.¹²²

The increased attention focused on the island's bird population took place in the context of – simultaneously – an expanding market of literature on bird watching, and an increasingly statistics- and science-based approach to the leisure pastime.¹²³ This may have given an added impetus to solving the problem of rats on Ailsa Craig. The Scottish Office dossier contained press accounts which discussed the rat menace. The 17 November 1924 edition of the *Times* linked the presence of brown rats to a broader disharmony between man and his surroundings, stating the brown rat was 'a signal example of the disturbance of the balance of Nature'.¹²⁴ One cutting in the Scottish Office files, from the 21 March 1925 *Edinburgh Evening News* – headlined 'DEATH TO THE RODENTS: HOW AILSA CRAIG WAS

CLEARED’ – was particularly keen to spell out the process by which these rats were assumed to be eradicated. For good measure, some horrifying stories of the rats playing around in quarrymen’s quarters were included as well. The handwritten notes on the clip from a Scottish Office mandarin, however, state ‘Clearly taken from Report of Roy. Soc. Protection of Birds’.¹²⁵ The RSPB, too, was fighting a propaganda battle, and not always winning it: the ‘war’ against rats on Ailsa Craig was not definitively won until the late 1990s, when puffins began to return to the island for breeding after a campaign which involved Royal Navy Search and Rescue Helicopters airlifting rat poison onto the island in 1991.¹²⁶

Conclusion

Ailsa Craig continues to draw reduced amounts of tourists to areas just beyond its shores. As the island is now abandoned, direct landfalls are rare unless caused by scientists or Kays’ employees. This is despite one of the recent property listings of the island discussing it being suitable for boat and helicopter landings, perhaps more reflective of the clientele who can purchase a private island, rather than the practicalities of it.¹²⁷ However, at the time of writing, the Glasgow-based paddle steamer *Waverley*, itself a remnant from the days of the Clyde steamers, continues to offer as part of its repertoire a cruise ‘to’ Ailsa Craig. The mythology of Ailsa Craig, and its place within the world’s leisure geography, serves as part of the ship’s advertising for its excursions.¹²⁸ In previous decades, there were many small-boat operators based in the surrounding area who offered more personal cruises. When Mark McCrindle initiated his cruises from Girvan in 1982, he was one of eight operators based within the town. At the time of writing, there were only two left: McCrindle, and an Arran-based captain, with a significant amount of McCrindle’s customers bird watchers.¹²⁹ Meanwhile, the island is still used as a marker in sailing competitions. In June 2013, for instance, Clyde Cruising Club and Royal Ulster Yacht Club races used Ailsa Craig as the starting point and midpoint respectively; in the case of the RUYC’s race, it was its fiftieth anniversary.¹³⁰

Despite the decline of domestic tourism in the Firth of Clyde region, activities that still occur around Ailsa Craig indicate that it continues to sit at the confluence of leisure, sport and material culture. As a place, it shares very few precedents in the wider worlds of all three. It

is not a site of sport, and yet one can argue that it is one of the most storied 'locations' in curling and golf, and stands as a globally recognised barometer for quality. While it was not the primary focus of this article, one would be intrigued to see where the island stands in the minds of yachters, as the island sits at the nautical and cultural meeting point of Scotland and Ireland, Lowland and Highland/Hebridean. But the island's cultural significance – throughout history, literature, and material culture – goes far beyond the world of sport, and links directly into the idea of an 'authentic Scotland' based on the country's nature, landscape and craftsmanship. For poets, writers and travellers, the island told of Scotland's ancient origins; while for the bird watchers and others whose primary concern was the island's environmental health, the island represented similar romantic notions of Scotland's uniqueness. One no longer thinks of Ailsa Craig as a hunting ground or store for food; but, as has been seen by the recent debate on its sale, the island nevertheless reflects several strands of discussion within the broader context of the Scottish land rights and international finance, some of them part of long-dormant discourses on who really 'owns' the island. Ailsa Craig, while not being a 'venue' of sport and leisure, and while not at present being a place where anyone lives, is still commercially and emotionally harnessed as a 'real' piece of the nation.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my partner, Kayleigh Hirst, for her assistance in proofreading and editing my article; to Dion Georgiou and Mark Sampson, both of Queen Mary, University of London, and to Stephen Etheridge, University of Huddersfield, for their helpful comments and suggestions. I am also grateful to Mark McCrindle for his assistance. I also wish to thank the staff at the following archives and libraries: the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; the National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh; the Mitchell Library, Glasgow; the Scottish Screen Archive, Glasgow; and the University of Glasgow Library. I also wish to express my gratitude to the two anonymous peer reviewers.

¹ This article is based on an invited lecture given by the author: 'Ailsa Craig and the Leisure Industry on the Firth of Clyde, c. 1800-2012', Sport and Leisure History Seminar Series, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 14 May 2012.

-
- ² A. Gunning, *Ailsa Craig: A Milestone in the Clyde* (Glasgow: Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, 1985); Rev. Roderick Lawson, *Ailsa Craig: Its History and Natural History* (Paisley: J. And R. Parlane, 1888), 13; Edwin Lawrence, 'For Sale – Ailsa Craig. Just Call Hamburg', *Ayrshire Post*, 6 May 2011.
- ³ Gunning, *Ailsa Craig*.
- ⁴ Kirsty Scott, 'Ailsa Craig becomes nature reserve', *The Guardian*, 20 March 2004.
- ⁵ Fiona Reid, 'A Geographical Study of Scottish Sport', (PhD thesis, University of Stirling, September 2010).
- ⁶ John Bale, 'Human Geography and the Study of Sport', in *Handbook of Sports Studies*, ed. Jay Coakley and Eric Dunning (London: SAGE, 2000), 171-86.
- ⁷ Paul Gilchrist, 'Beyond the Brink: Beachy Head as a Climbing Landscape', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 10 (July 2012): 1383-1404.
- ⁸ Fraser MacDonald, 'The last outpost of Empire: Rockall and the Cold War', *Journal of Historical Geography* 32 (2006): 627-47.
- ⁹ Gerald Redmond, *The Sporting Scots of Nineteenth-Century Canada* (London: Associated University Presses, 1982); Stephen G. Wieting and Danny Lamoureux, 'Curling in Canada', *Culture, Sport, Society* 4, no. 2 (2001): 141.
- ¹⁰ Murray Pittock, 'Material Culture in Modern Scotland', in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature – Volume Three: Modern Transformations: New Identities (from 1918)*, ed. Ian Brown et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 64-8.
- ¹¹ Stephen Hardy, John Loy and Douglas Booth, 'The Material Culture of Sport: Toward a Typology', *Journal of Sport History* 36, no. 1 (2009): 129-52.
- ¹² Lawson, *Ailsa Craig*; Rev. David Landsborough, *Excursions to Arran, Ailsa Craig, and the Two Cumbraes, with reference to the natural history of these islands* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1853).
- ¹³ A. Gunning, *Ailsa Craig*; P.J. Potts and J.R. Holbrook, 'Ailsa Craig – The History of a Reference Material', *Geostandards Newsletter* 11, no. 2 (1987): 257-60
- ¹⁴ John Macculloch, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, including The Isle of Man* (London: Hurst, Robinson, and Co., 1819), 490-6,
- ¹⁵ Alexander Smith, ed., *The Poetical Works of Robert Burns* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1879), 82-3.
- ¹⁶ William Shaw, *Poetical Description of Ailsa, a large rock in the Firth of Clyde, also, an account of its inhabitants, describing the manner in which they live and bring forth their young* (Glasgow: Niven, Napier and Khull, 1805); 'Sir Archibald Kennedy, 1st Marquess of Ailsa', *The Peerage*, <http://www.thepeerage.com/p2429.htm#i24286> (accessed 20 February 2013).
- ¹⁷ John Glendening, *The High Road: Romantic Tourism, Scotland, and Literature, 1720-1820* (London: Macmillan, 1997), quote on 220.
- ¹⁸ Katherine Haldane Grenier, *Tourism and Identity in Scotland, 1770-1914: Creating Caledonia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 93-134. For more on the historical/cartographic debate on the location of the 'Highland Line', see Charles W.J. Withers, 'The Scottish highlands outlined: Cartographic evidence for the position of the highland-lowland boundary', *Scottish Geographic Magazine* 98, no. 3 (1982): 143-57.
- ¹⁹ Martin Rackwitz, *Travels to Terra Incognita: The Scottish Highlands and Hebrides in early modern travellers' accounts, c. 1600 to 1800* (Munich: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 62, 65-66, 92-114 (quote from 111).
- ²⁰ Lawson, *Ailsa Craig*, 17; John Morrill, 'Brereton, Sir William, first baronet (1604-1661)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3333> (accessed 6 January 2013).
- ²¹ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour of Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides, 1772*, ed. Andrew Simmons (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1998), 179-82.
- ²² Miriam Alcott, ed., *The Poems of John Keats* (London: Longman, 1970), 364-5.

-
- ²³ William Wordsworth, *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* (London: Longman et al, 1835).
- ²⁴ Richard Ayton and William Daniell, *A voyage round Great Britain undertaken in the summer of the year 1813*, vol. iiii (London: Longman, 1818), 7-8.
- ²⁵ Alastair Durie, *Scotland for the Holidays: a history of tourism in Scotland, 1780-1939* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2003), 150-70.
- ²⁶ *Ayr Advertiser*, 12 July 1849.
- ²⁷ *Pollock's Dictionary of the Clyde from Tinto to Ailsa Craig: a descriptive, historical and statistical guide* (Glasgow: John Menzies & Co., 1888), 31-2.
- ²⁸ TCW, 'A Trip to Ailsa Craig', *Leisure Hour* 883 (29 November 1868), 758-62.
- ²⁹ *Paddy's Milestone*. Directed by J. Blake Dalrymple. Glasgow: Elder Dalrymple Productions, 1947.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ The phrase 'sugarloaf' was taken from a quote by Sir William Brereton on the shape of the island: Lawson, *Ailsa Craig*, 13.
- ³⁴ *Coast*, 'Arran to Gretna'. British Broadcasting Corporation, 2006.
- ³⁵ Amy E. Cutler, "'A local habitation and a name': Writing Britain", *Journal of Historical Geography* 39 (2013): 125-34.
- ³⁶ Wieting and Lamoureux, 'Curling in Canada', 143-5.
- ³⁷ Kays of Scotland, 'History', Kays of Scotland, <http://www.kaysofscotland.co.uk/about-history.php> (accessed 4 January 2012); 'News Page', Kays of Scotland, <http://www.kaysofscotland.co.uk/news.php> (accessed 4 January 2012).
- ³⁸ Irene A. Reid, "'The stone of destiny". Team GB curling as a site for contested national discourse', *Sport in Society* 13, no. 3 (2010): 399-417.
- ³⁹ Jim McBeth, 'Ailsa's granite rocks the curling world to its roots', *Scotsman*, 14 June 2003.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Susan Mansfield, 'Can curling be cool... again?', *Scotsman*, 22 February 2002.
- ⁴² Stephen McGinty, 'Gulf gold takes a slice of Scotland's golf', *Scotsman*, 7 October 2008.
- ⁴³ Dolph C. Simons Jr., 'Ike Has Great Spot for Golf, Relaxing', *Lawrence Journal-World*, 4 September 1959.
- ⁴⁴ Dave Anderson, 'Two Great Players, One Great Moment at the British Open', *New York Times*, 11 July 2009.
- ⁴⁵ Christopher Clarey, 'Ocean's 18: Solace for Sea Dogs at Turnberry', *New York Times*, 15 July 2009.
- ⁴⁶ Lawrence Donegan, 'Tiger Woods returns to fray just when the Open needs a hero', *Guardian*, 16 July 2009.
- ⁴⁷ Edwin Lawrence, 'For Sale – Ailsa Craig. Call Hamburg For Further Details', *Ayrshire Post*, 6 May 2011.
- ⁴⁸ Edwin Lawrence, 'Ailsa Craig Is Strictly for the Birds', *Ayrshire Post*, 13 May 2011.
- ⁴⁹ Anon., 'Ailsa Craig taken off the market', *The Herald*, 27 March 2012.
- ⁵⁰ 'Ailsa Craig: Asking price reduced in Irish Sea island sale', BBC News, 21 March 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-21878099> (accessed 12 September 2013); Kevin McKenna, 'Ailsa Craig, granite jewel of the Firth of Clyde, finally finds a buyer', *The Observer*, 8 December 2013.
- ⁵¹ McKenna, 'Ailsa Craig'.
- ⁵² Ian Bell, 'The gannets are circling Scotland', *Sunday Herald*, 8 May 2011.

-
- ⁵³ The scholarly historiography of the Highland Clearances is considerable. Recent scholarship includes Andrew G. Newby, 'Land and the "Crofter Question" in Nineteenth-Century Scotland', *International Review of Scottish Studies* 35 (2010): 7-36. McKenna, 'Ailsa Craig', explicitly links the recent sale of the island to the modern 'Land Question'.
- ⁵⁴ J.I. Little, 'Agricultural Improvement and Highland Clearances: The Isle of Arran, 1766-1829', *Scottish Economic and Social History* 19, no. 2 (November 1999): 132-54.
- ⁵⁵ T.M. Devine, 'Social Responses to Agrarian "Improvement": The Highland and Lowland Clearances in Scotland', ed. R.A. Houston and I.D. Whyte, *Scottish Society, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 148-68.
- ⁵⁶ Grant Jarvie and Lorna Jackson, 'Deer Forests, Sporting Estates and the Aristocracy', *Sports Historian* 18, no. 1 (1998): 24-54.
- ⁵⁷ Alastair Durie, '"Unconscious Benefactors": Grouse-shooting in Scotland, 1780-1914', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 15, no. 3 (1998): 57-73.
- ⁵⁸ Lawson, *Ailsa Craig*, 24.
- ⁵⁹ Daniel Defoe, *A tour thro' the whole island of Great Britain, divided into circuits or journies*, vol. iv (London: D. Browne et al, 1761), 287.
- ⁶⁰ 'Sir Archibald Kennedy, 1st Marquess of Ailsa', The Peerage, <http://www.thepeerage.com/p2429.htm#i24286> (accessed 20 February 2013).
- ⁶¹ Lawson, *Ailsa Craig*, 61.
- ⁶² John R. Baldwin, 'Harvesting Seabirds and their Eggs on the Irish Sea Islands (Part 4: Environmental and Cultural Influences)', *Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies* 50, no. 1 (May 2012): 66-67.
- ⁶³ Pennant, *A Tour of Scotland*, 179-82; Rackwitz, *Travels to Terra Incognita*, 101-02, 342-55.
- ⁶⁴ Baldwin, 'Harvesting Seabirds', 66-67.
- ⁶⁵ *Ayr Advertiser*, 12 July 1849.
- ⁶⁶ Landsborough, *Excursion*, 108-90.
- ⁶⁷ *Ayr Advertiser*, 7 August 1851.
- ⁶⁸ Mitchell Library (ML), *Census of Scotland – 1851*, Vol. 585, County of Ayr, Parish of Dailly, Enumeration District 2; ML, *Census of Scotland – 1861*, Vol. 585, County of Ayr, Parish of Dailly, Enumeration District 2.
- ⁶⁹ Lawson, *Ailsa Craig*, 24-25.
- ⁷⁰ National Records of Scotland (NRS), Box GB25/9/77, Copy, Letter from 30 September 1865, 'Condition on which "Ailsa Craig", the property of the Most Noble Archibald Kennedy, Marquis of Ailsa, Earl of Cassillis K.T. is to be let.'
- ⁷¹ Lawson, *Ailsa Craig*, 60, 69-70.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 18-19.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 36-7; Landsborough, *Excursions*, 112.
- ⁷⁴ Lawson, *Ailsa Craig*, 61.
- ⁷⁵ *Scotsman*, 2 July 1884.
- ⁷⁶ *Scotsman*, 13 March 1886.
- ⁷⁷ A.D. Morrison-Low, *Northern Lights: The Age of Scottish Lighthouses* (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 2010), 187-215; ML, *Census of Scotland – 1891*; Vol. 585, County of Ayr, Parish of Dailly, Enumeration District 5; ML, *Census of Scotland – 1901*, Vol. 585, County of Ayr, Parish of Dailly, Enumeration District 5.
- ⁷⁸ James Taylor, 'Private property, public interest, and the role of the state in nineteenth-century Britain: the case of the lighthouses', *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 3 (2001): 749-71.

-
- ⁷⁹ Lawson, *Ailsa Craig*, 28.
- ⁸⁰ 'Ailsa Craig, History', Northern Lighthouse Board, <http://www.nlb.org.uk/Lighthouse.aspx?id=183> (accessed 21 February 2012).
- ⁸¹ David B. Smith and Bob Cowan, The Curling History Blog, <http://curlinghistory.blogspot.co.uk/> (accessed 20 February 2013).
- ⁸² I.A. Reid, "'Stone of Destiny'"; G. Jarvie and I.A. Reid, 'Sport, nationalism and culture in Scotland', *Sports Historian* 19, no. 1 (1999): 97-124.
- ⁸³ John Tolson, 'The Thirteenth Earl of Eglinton (1812-1861): A Notable Scottish Sportsman', *Sport in History* 28, no. 3 (2008): 472-90.
- ⁸⁴ Wray Vamplew, *Pay Up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain, 1875-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 47-50.
- ⁸⁵ W.H. Murray, *The Curling Companion* (London: Richard Drew, 1981); David B. Smith, 'Curling', in *Sport, Scotland and the Scots*, ed. Grant Jarvie and John Burnett (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2000), 74-77; E.H. Lawson Williams, 'Curling', *Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* 2, no. 6 (January 1896), 39.
- ⁸⁶ F. Reid, 'A Geographical Study of Scottish Sport', 131; John Cairney, *Essay on Curling, and Artificial Pond Making* (Glasgow: W.R. McPhun, 1833).
- ⁸⁷ F. Reid, 'A Geographical Study of Scottish Sport', 130-7. Reid mentions Burnock Water (or Ochiltree) and Sanquhar, while Gunning adds Crawfordjohn, Carsphairn, and (in the southern Highlands) Crieff; one account from the *Glasgow Herald*, 11 March 1844 stated that New Cumnock, Ettrick Forest, Peebles, Douglas, Lesmahagow, and Portsoy all provided their own brand of curling stones. See also Gunning, *Ailsa Craig*.
- ⁸⁸ Cairnie, *Curling and Artificial Pond Making*, 36-43, 68-9.
- ⁸⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, 11 March 1844.
- ⁹⁰ Smith, 'Curling', 82.
- ⁹¹ *Scotsman*, 7 June 1851.
- ⁹² Shaw, *Poetical Description of Ailsa*, 7-8.
- ⁹³ Gunning, *Ailsa Craig*, *Glasgow Herald*, 11 March 1844.
- ⁹⁴ Andrew Boyle, *Ayrshire Heritage* (Darvel: Alloway, 1990), 67-9; 'History', Kays of Scotland, <http://www.kaysofscotland.co.uk/about-history.php>, (accessed 20 February 2013).
- ⁹⁵ *Ayr Advertiser*, 3 August 1899; ML, *Census of Scotland – 1881*, Vol. 585, County of Ayr, Parish of Dailly, Enumeration District 4.
- ⁹⁶ ML, *Census of Scotland – 1901*, Vol. 585, County of Ayr, Parish of Dailly, Enumeration District 4.
- ⁹⁷ *Ayr Advertiser*, 31 December 1942.
- ⁹⁸ Gunning, *Ailsa Craig*.
- ⁹⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, 2 August 1899.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Glasgow Herald*, 7 November 1892.
- ¹⁰¹ Gunning, *Ailsa Craig*; McBeth, 'Ailsa's granite', *Scotsman*, 14 June 2003.
- ¹⁰² Gunning, *Ailsa Craig*; *Ayr Advertiser*, 14 February 1907; *Ayr Advertiser*, 28 February 1907; NRS, BT2/7435, Batch 32304H-HRS, Ailsa Craig Granite Quarries Ltd., Ledger Book, 1910-1914; NRS, CS257/390, Batch 32302H-TTH 1 B 446, William Life v. Ailsa Craig Granite Quarries Ltd., and Liquidator: Reduction.
- ¹⁰³ Ailsa Craig Granite Quarries Ltd., Ledger Book, 1910-1914; William Life v. Ailsa Craig Granite Quarries Ltd., and Liquidator: Reduction; NRS, BT2/8942, Batch 32304H-HSR, Ailsa Craig Granites Limited, Ledger Book, 1914-1926; NRS, CS252/258, Batch 32302H-HSR, Ailsa Craig Granite Quarries, Ltd., in liquidation, and Harry Bentley, the Liquidator thereof, Petition for Supervision Order; NRS, CS254/1854, Batch 32302H-HSR, William J. Johnstone & others: Petition for an order to wind up Ailsa Craig Granites Ltd.

-
- ¹⁰⁴ Neil Munro, *The Clyde: River and Firth* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912), 200-1.
- ¹⁰⁵ Paul Readman, 'Preserving the English Landscape, c. 1870-1914', *Cultural and Social History* 5, no. 2 (2008): 197-218; Idem., 'Landscape Preservation, "advertising disfigurement", and English National Identity c. 1890-1914', *Rural History* 12, no. 1 (2001): 61-83.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Scotsman*, 12 February 1907.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Scotsman*, 8 March 1907.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ayr Advertiser*, 14 February 1907.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ayr Advertiser*, 28 February 1907.
- ¹¹¹ Hansard, House of Commons, 15 February 1895, 30 (c835).
- ¹¹² *Scotsman*, 8 November 1911; *Scotsman*, 30 November 1912.
- ¹¹³ *Scotsman*, 31 December 1912.
- ¹¹⁴ Potts and Holbrook, 'Ailsa Craig', 258.
- ¹¹⁵ *Scotsman*, 18 January 1909.
- ¹¹⁶ *Scotsman*, 6 February 1913; *Scotsman*, 19 May 1913.
- ¹¹⁷ *Scotsman*, 14 January 1914; *Scotsman*, 9 February 1914.
- ¹¹⁸ *Scotsman*, 4 April 1913.
- ¹¹⁹ Eric J. Grove, 'Kenworthy, Joseph Montague, tenth Baron Strabolgi (1886-1953)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, 2005), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/59302> (accessed 20 February 2013)
- ¹²⁰ NRS, HH1/1004, Batch 32304H-HSR, Wild Birds Protection, Secretary of State for Scotland, No. 3182/415, stamped 14 May 1924.
- ¹²¹ NRS, HH1/1004, Batch 32304H-HSR, Wild Birds Protection, Secretary of State for Scotland, No. 3182/418, Letter from the Board of Agriculture for Scotland to Ernest R. Graham, Superintendent, Northern Lighthouse Board, Edinburgh, 10 June 1924.
- ¹²² Pat Monaghan, 'Puffins back to breed on Ailsa Craig after rats are eradicated', *Scotsman*, 25 June 2009.
- ¹²³ Stephen Moss, *A Bird in the Bush: A Social History of Birdwatching* (London: Aurum Press, 2004), 120-49.
- ¹²⁴ NRS, HH1/1004, Batch 32304H -HSR, Wild Birds Protection, Secretary of State for Scotland, No. 3182/415, *Times*, 17 November 1924.
- ¹²⁵ NRS, HH1/1004, Batch 32304H-HSR, Wild Birds Protection, Secretary of State for Scotland, No. 3182/415, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 21 March 1925 (with handwritten notes).
- ¹²⁶ Pat Monaghan, 'Puffins back to breed on Ailsa Craig after rats are eradicated', *Scotsman*, 25 June 2009.
- ¹²⁷ 'Property for sale: a unique Scottish landmark', Knight Frank, <http://search.knightfrank.com/edn100158> (accessed 13 September 2013)
- ¹²⁸ 'Scotland', Paddle Steamer Waverley, <http://www.waverleyexcursions.co.uk/plan-your-trip/scotland/destination-guide/> (accessed 13 September 2013). One quote from the website states: '**CRUISE AILSA CRAIG** Ailsa Craig is a well-known landmark in Scotland – often referred to be locals as 'Paddy's milestone' due to its locality being roughly half way between mainland Scotland & Ireland. Ailsa Craig is now an RSPB nature reserve and boasts cliffs hundreds of feet high providing nesting for an impressive variety of seabird colonies including 40,000 pairs of gannets. Historically the island was famed for its high quality granite – used for curling stones including those used by the Scottish Women's Curling Team Olympic Gold medal winners! The lighthouse, which stands on the Island, has been automated since 1990. This wonderful cruise sails right round the Island giving close up views.';

¹²⁹ Personal communication with Mark McCrindle, 29-31 August 2013.

¹³⁰ '50th Anniversary Ailsa Craig Race', Royal Ulster Yacht Club, http://www.ruyc.co.uk/ruyc/Ailsa_Craig_50th.html, (accessed 13 September 2013); 'Ailsa Craig Race', Clyde Cruising Club, http://www.clyde.org/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=464&Itemid=99999999 (accessed 13 September 2013).

Figure 1

Ailsa Craig and the surrounding region

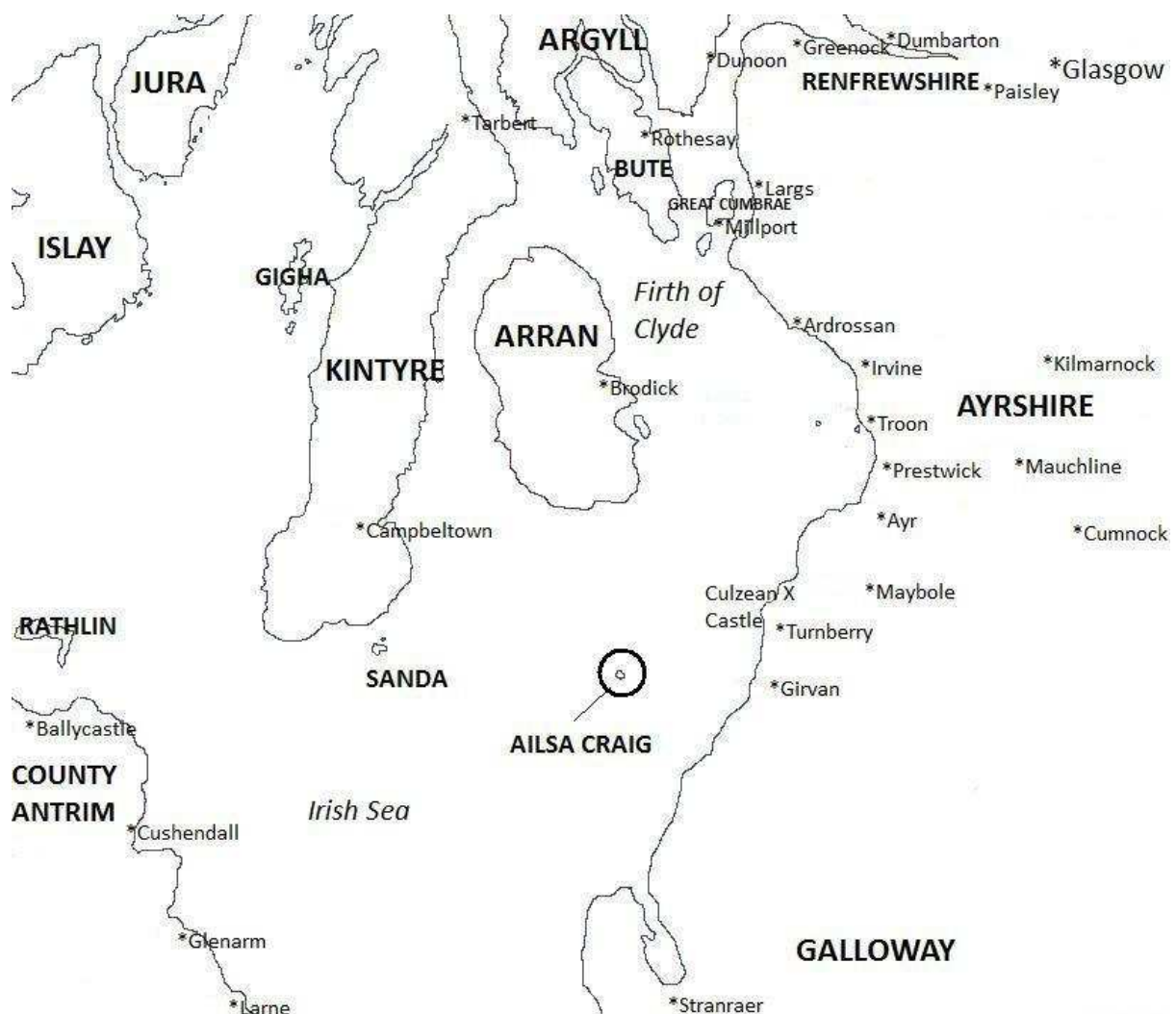


Figure 2

Photo of Ailsa Craig from the east (by author, 21 April 2012)



Table 1

Census Reports for Ailsa Craig

THE POPULATION OF AILSA CRAIG**Ailsa Craig in the Parish of Dailly (later District of Girvan), County of Ayr**

Permanent residents listed from 1891 include lighthouse-keepers

(includes temporarily absent)

	PERMANENT					SHIPPING					DATE CENSUS TAKEN
	Total	Males	Females	Families	Gaelic speakers	Total	Males	Females	Families	Gaelic speakers	
1851	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0		n/a
1861	4	3	1	1		0	0	0	0		8 April
1871	1	1	0	1		12	11	1	2		3 April
1881	7	6	1	1	0	22	22	0	5	4	3 April
1891	6	5	1	4	1	21	21	0	2	0	5 April
1901	9	7	2		0	0	0	0		0	31 March
1911	49	36	13			0	0	0			29 May
1921	15	6	9								19 June
1931	11	5	6	0	0						26 April
1951	14	10	4								8 April
1961	10	9	1								23 April
1971	not listed										

Source: *Census of Scotland Reports*