



Posted on October 16, 2012 by South Ayrshire Libraries

This is the third (and final) post to be themed around the Kilmarnock & Troon Railway, completed in 1812. Not the least of its claims to fame is that it carried the first railway locomotive to be seen in Scotland, ordered from George Stephenson by the 4th Duke of Portland and brought to Kilmarnock by George's brother Robert. Unfortunately, its weight and the downward impact of its vertically-acting drive rods soon proved to be too much for the flat cast iron rails.

Until fairly recently, much of the locomotive's story was shrouded in mystery. There seem to be no contemporary references in the press to its trial – perhaps to avoid embarrassment to the duke in case of failure. Although the 1839 Kilmarnock section of the New Statistical Account and local artist John Kelso Hunter's 1864 recollection of witnessing the first trial run are consistent in dating it to 1816, various publications gave other dates. However, Professor Roland Paxton of Heriot Watt University (who was the driving force behind the restoration of the railway's Laigh Milton Viaduct in 1995-96) examined the company accounts and found a big jump in payments for replacing broken rails in 1816, for which the locomotive was presumably responsible.

There had been also been uncertainty as to what became of it. Samuel Smiles, in his biography of George Stephenson published in 1862, claimed to have information that, after being fitted with wooden wheels, it continued in use until 1848, and this has often been repeated. It is clear from reports of the 1820s and 30s, though, that only horse haulage was then in use on the Kilmarnock & Troon Railway. Professor Paxton has now established that the locomotive was sold to the Earl of Elgin in 1824 and taken to Fife, where a horse-haulage railway connected the earl's coal mines to his harbour at Charlestown.

However, the locomotive would not be forgotten in Troon. Its memory would be invoked as the symbol of the town's enterprise, and of the part played by the dukes of Portland in its development.



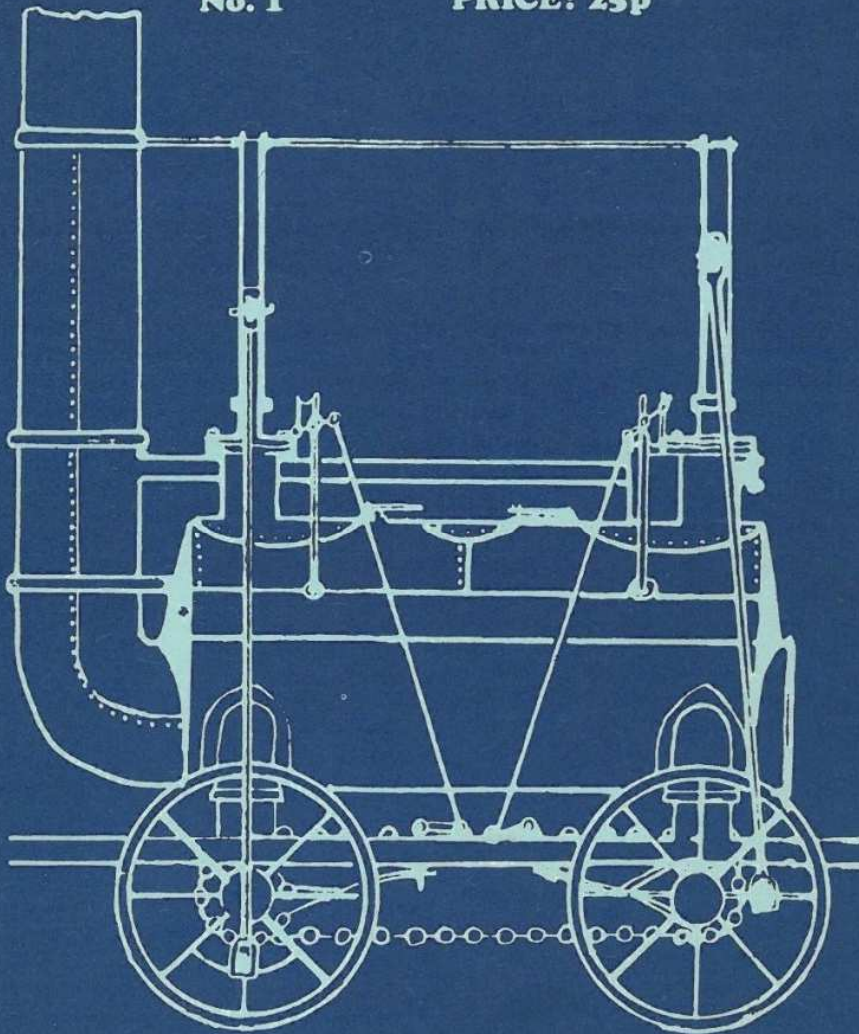
Troon's burgh seal on the plaque at the war memorial

The first manifestation was in 1897 when the 6th Duke of Portland presented a gold provost's chain to the town, which had become a burgh the year before. He had himself designed the burgh seal on the chain's pendant, which included the locomotive. On the wall at the rear of Troon's seafront war memorial is a bronze plaque bearing the burgh seal as it appeared on the chain. It depicts a four-wheeled locomotive with vertical cylinders, obviously based on drawings of the four-wheeled engines built by George Stephenson for Killingworth Colliery on Tyneside.

"The Duke"

No. 1

PRICE: 25p

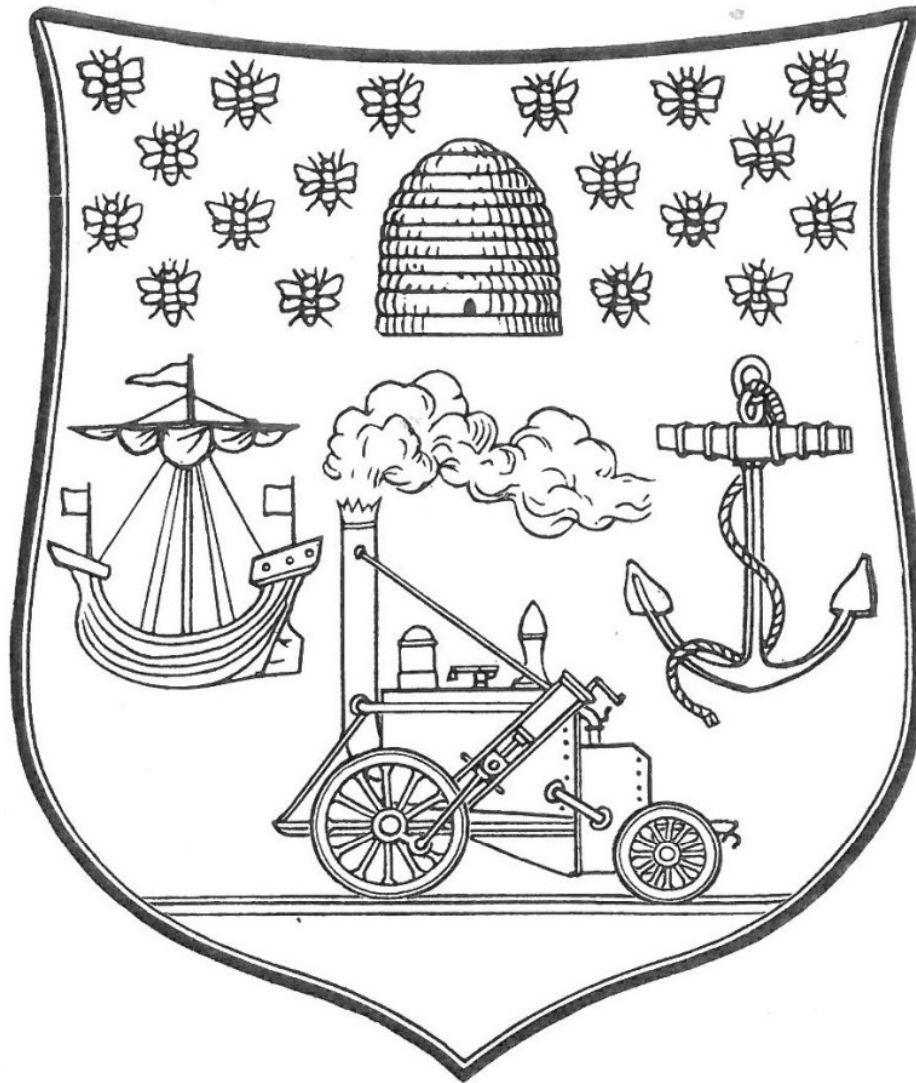


**Magazine of the Ayrshire
Railway Preservation Group**

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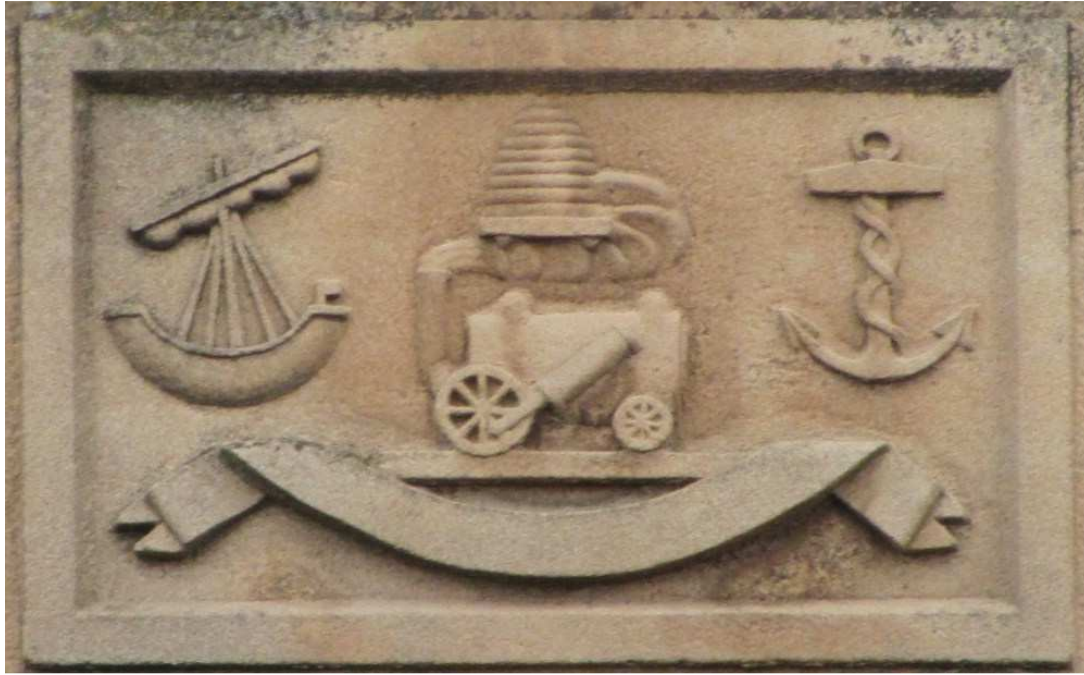
The cover of the first issue of the Ayrshire Railway Preservation group's magazine depicted a four-wheeled Killingworth-type engine.



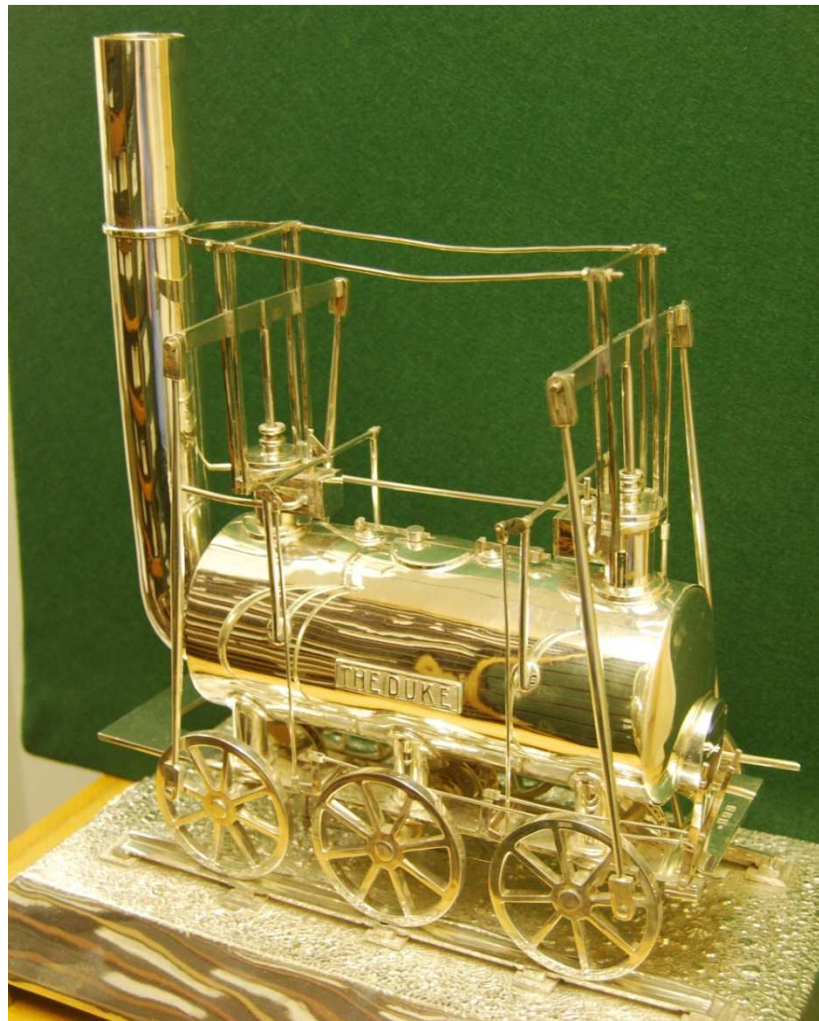
TROON.

Azure, semée in chief of bees volant or, the railway locomotive "Rocket" emitting smoke, all proper, passant to dexter upon rails argent; in chief a beehive or; in the dexter flanch a lymphad or, sails furled argent and flags flying gules; in the sinister flanch an anchor paleways argent, wreathed about with a cable or.

The portrayal of Troon's burgh seal in the 1903 'Arms of the Baronial and Police Burghs of Scotland' was based on details provided by the town clerk. He described the locomotive as 'the first steam-engine, called the Rocket', and it ended up being depicted as the famous Rocket built by George Stephenson's son Robert in 1829 for the Liverpool & Manchester Railway.

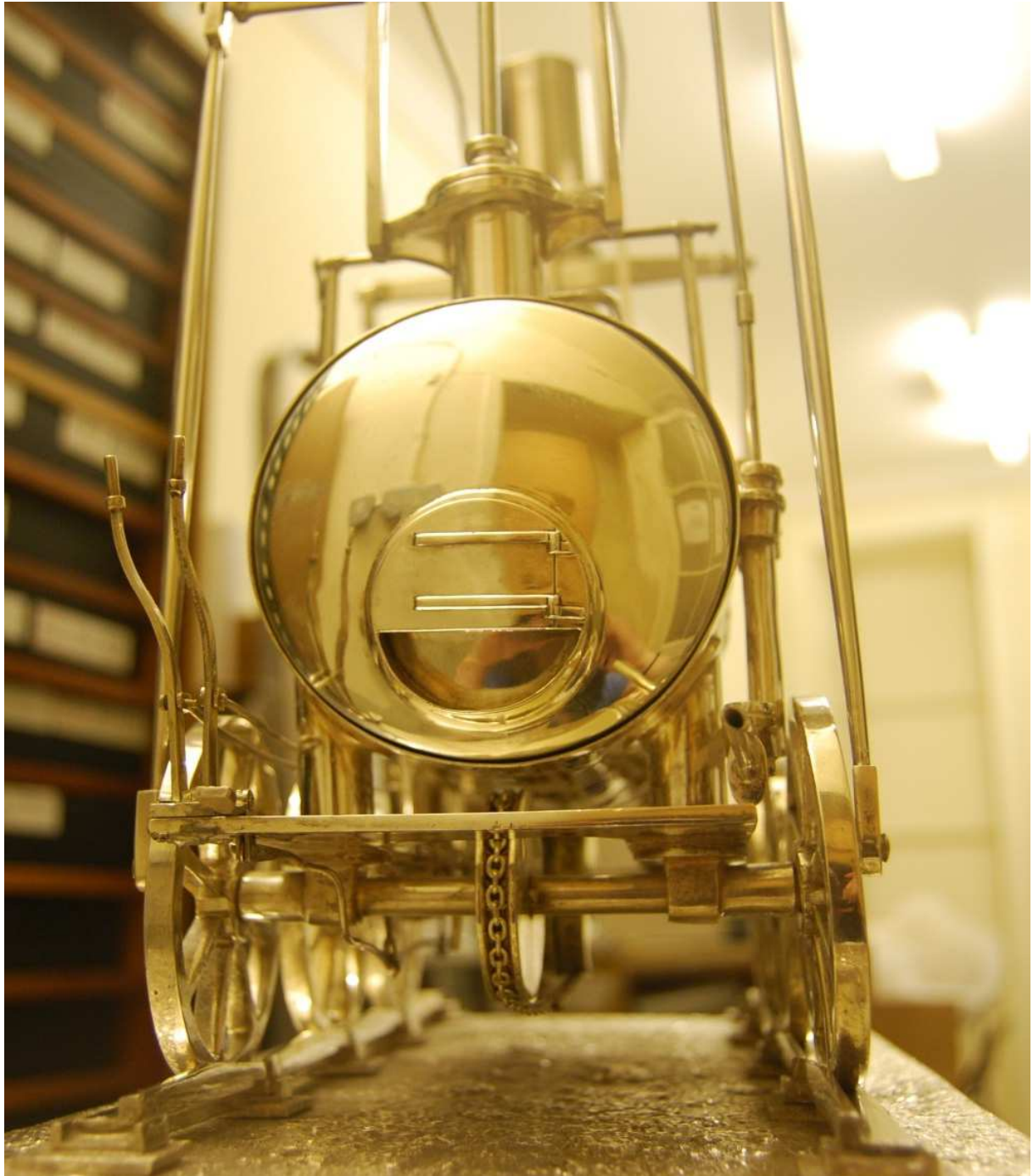


Troon Town Hall was completed in 1932, and above its front door is a stone panel bearing yet another representation of the locomotive. It has become a bizarre hybrid – grafted onto the tubby body of the Killingworth-type locomotive, with its vertical cylinders, are the asymmetric wheels and side-mounted cylinder of Robert Stephenson's Rocket.



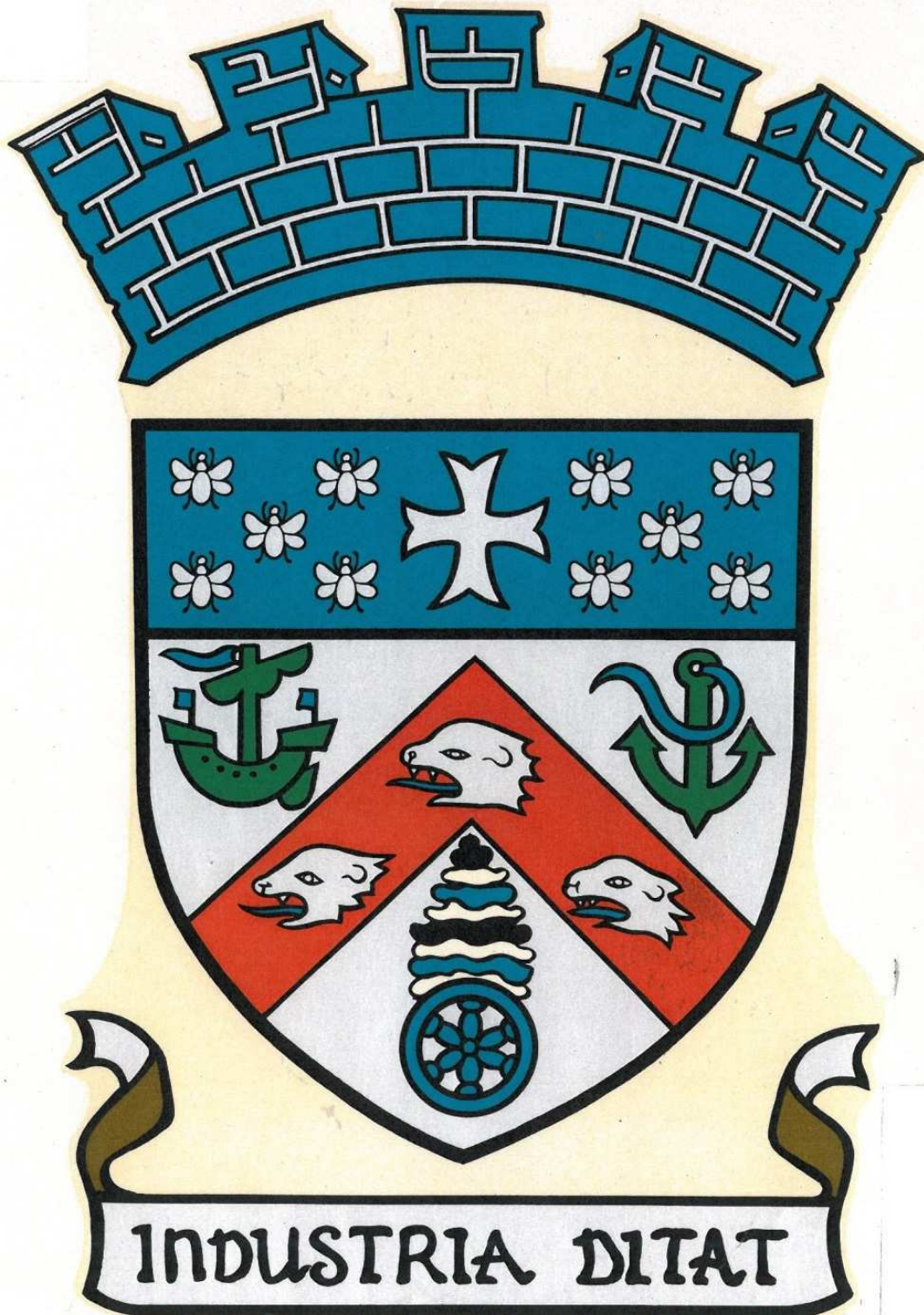
The 1914 silver presentation model of The Duke. (Image courtesy of South Ayrshire Museums & Galleries)

In 1914 the 6th Duke of Portland and his lady celebrated their silver wedding, and the people of Troon presented them with a splendid silver model of the pioneer locomotive, which had according to tradition been called *The Duke*. This is the most accurate representation of the engine. It was designed by William Steele Watson, engineering manager at the town's Ailsa Shipyard. He was clearly aware that John Kelso Hunter's eyewitness recollection of a six-wheeled locomotive, with chains connecting the axles, tallies exactly with drawings in the 1816 patent of George Stephenson and William Losh. The model has been based on these, with details added from drawings of other Killingworth-type locomotives.



According to John Kelso Hunter, the teeth on the axle sprocket wheels (connected by chains which kept all the axles and drive rods moving in unison) were frequently damaged when they struck the heaped-up gravel which formed the horse-path between the tracks. (Image courtesy of South Ayrshire Museums & Galleries)

The model was gifted back to Troon in 1964 by the 7th Duke of Portland. It was put on show in the town hall, but since the 1997 theft of the provost's chain from the hall it has been in storage at Rozelle House, Ayr, in the care of South Ayrshire Museums & Galleries Service.



Arms of the Burgh of Troon 1960-1975

The

The 1897 seal had never been approved by the Court of the Lord Lyon King of Arms, and therefore had no official status in Scottish civic heraldry. In 1960, the Lord Lyon finally granted a coat of arms to the Burgh of Troon. It bore the cross of the Benticks, earls of Portland, the chevron of the Cochranes, earls of Dundonald, and the otter heads of the Fullartons, who for centuries had been in possession of the area. The motto translates as 'industry enriches'. In heraldry, abstract symbolism is preferred to realistic depiction, and the locomotive was reduced to the abstraction of a single wheel and a pile of clouds representing the chimney smoke. (The coat of arms went out of use when the 1975 local government reforms ended the town's self-governing status.)