

PORTLAND - Marquis of Titchfield - 4th Duke of Portland MP

The Portland Crest is designed on the Portland ancestral seat in North Nottinghamshire with no relevance to Troon.

The Duke of Portland married Henrietta Scott, a coal heiress from Kilmarnock. The Duke now in possession of vast seams of coal was investigating ways to get it out of the pits and over to Ireland, where the greatest demand was. Consideration of a waterway, or canal, was dashed when he found the town was sitting on large swathes of dolomite rock. If transport coal by horse drawn wagon, he would need to go over Fullarton land, which would be problematic and time consuming. Discovering the Fullarton estate was for sale, he swiftly negotiated a bill of sale for the land with landowners of Eglington estate at Irvine, custodians of Fullarton's bankruptcy. The ink was scarcely dried on the sale when the Marquis of Titchfield MP [as he was then] tabled a Bill in parliament that would allow Troon harbour to be used as a commercial port.

As the parliamentarians were away celebrating the Battle of Trafalgar, Fullarton's Bill raced through the various readings in the house unimpeded. It was and still is the fastest Bill ever to go through Parliament

Work on the harbour started in 1807. Both harbours were constructed using large blocks of seasoned sandstone, ferried over from Arran on sailing ships. In preparation he laid a road for his horse drawn wagons from Kilmarnock to the harbour. This operation was unworkable and costly as demand was outstripping supply and after appraising Stephenson's steam locomotive in 1812, he ordered one to be brought to Kilmarnock. This would be the first train ever to run in Scotland. Meanwhile Portland presented another Act to authorize a railway from Kilmarnock to Troon. The Act of Parliament was passed and at the same time he had an Act passed to authorise the export of coal from the harbour. In a short space of time coal exports were rocketing, Troon was recorded as one of the top ten busiest export ports on the west coast. Being an experienced yachtsman, in 1810 he established a sawmill and shipbuilding companies at the harbour, firstly to build his own boats, but eventually as orders came pouring in, Troon Shipbuilding Company gained a worldwide reputation for producing fast powerful yachts. The Shipyard built 1000's of crafts over 200 years and until it closed in 2000. Troon Sawmill is still in business today and is the busiest in Scotland.

Added passenger coaches to his locomotive in 1814, called Caledonia's, he created the first tourists in Scotland by day trippers travelling from Kilmarnock to Troon on Sundays. As there was no way for charging fares, each passenger was weight the same as the coal and depending on affordability, they either sat inside in comfort for 2/6, or on the roof for a 1/-.

The Duke of Portland controlled the shape of the town by drawing up street plans in a grid system to fit in with his many rail lines snaking through the town. All planning applications had to meet his high standards of design and quality, before getting approval, which left a

legacy of grand mansions in the town. As the business at the harbour expanded, Troon was noticed worldwide as a beautiful, healthy seaside location, a place for business and pleasure. The many mansions springing up in the town were workplaces and offices for the many export and import agents and holiday resorts for their families in the summer.

The Duke also provided running water for every house in the town. The water installation coming from a reservoir at Collenan was proving difficult as drain tiles were scarce. To overcome this problem the Duke built a factory in Kilmarnock to produce his tiles. Troon was the first town in Ayrshire to have clean running water on tap in every home. As a conservationist he insisted every planning application had trees planted on the roadside of each property. Car usage and increase of traffic saw the demise of trees lining Bentinck Drive , but the result of this condition can still be seen in many streets in Troon, Peirsland Lodge Hotel, Hunter Crescent, Wilson Avenue, the lower end of Barassie to name a few.

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The town's reputation as a thriving economy, home to rich families, was all down to the 4th Duke of Portland. The 5th Duke had serious mental health issues and confined himself to his estate in Nottinghamshire. The 4th Duke resided at Fullarton House, but the 6th Duke chose to stay in North Nottinghamshire. However he did donate the finance to build the Town Hall and concert hall in 1933 and only coming north to officiate at notable occasions. Unlike any other town in Scotland, the Portland family's Welbeck estate still own the solemn of all the lands of Troon , legally claiming all mineral rights and is managed by an agent in Ayrshire. Strike oil or finding gold in your back garden is not yours to keep, it belongs to the Dukes of Portland.