

**Alex C McKinlay  
1809-1873  
& 'Emerald Bank'**

Alex C McKinlay was Harbour Master in the 1860s. The name of his house is a reminder of the area in the early 19th century, in that it links a large pond and the coal trade. The large pond named the Sluices existed in the area between the main road (now Harbour Street) and the Guthries (now Gottries Road), as shown on Wood's Town Plan of 1819. The coal trade attracted ships from Ireland arriving with ballast, discharging it, and taking on cargoes of the coal produced by the many pits in the surrounding area.

We will let John Paterson (Provost 1873-78) explain the connection. "The old wooden Vessels of the period seldom shifted without Ballast, so that the Land in the neighbourhood of the Harbour was greatly raised during the three Centuries it has been there from this cause - as can easily be seen when a Drain or other excavation is made. At the beginning of this Century the Tide flowed across the Street where the present large Drain empties itself into the the river and there was a Loch of considerable size called the Sluices on the E side of the street where Alexr McKinlay built his House Emerald Bank. Mr McKinlay was long the Harbour Master & gave his House that name knowing that the stuff the Sluices was filled up with was Ballast discharged at the Dock on the other side of the street & brought from Ireland, the Green Isle."

Strawhorn records (p.141) that the Sluices were drained (in 1839-42) by the council, in association with Lord Justice Boyle (the area is marked on Wood's Town Plan as belonging to Boyle).

Alexander Campbell McKinlay was born in Irvine on 22/5/1809, and appears in the 1861 census, aged 51, with his wife Jessie, aged 40 (a few doors away from a John Bicker, fisherman), on the Quay. McKinlay died on 25 July 1873, aged 64, at Royal Terrace, Gourock, of "tabes mesenterica . . phthisis pulmonalis" (tuberculosis). He does not seem to appear in the 1851 census. In the 1841 census he is recorded, age 30, as a blockmaker (with a William aged 8 months), living on the Halfway.