

Saltcoats Literary Society Magazine

Overview

The records for the Saltcoats Literary and Debating Society are housed in Ayrshire Archives Headquarters, Ayr. They include the minutes from 1897 until 1982, along with lists of members, syllabi, cash books, correspondence and newspaper articles for various years. A full study of this society remains to be conducted. The one extant issue of the magazine that this group produced is housed in Irvine Townhouse.

The table of contents lists 22 contributions to this magazine, including the 'Introduction' and 'Answers to Correspondents', and is a total of 80 pages. The authors' names — presumably all male — are given, which is not very common for either manuscript or published literary society magazines.

According to the 'Introduction', the group met on a weekly basis, and its 'primary object' was 'the acquiring of knowledge by mutual effort'. The purpose of the published magazine was prompted by the wish of 'putting into more permanent form some of the work overtaken by the Society during the winter session' ('Introduction', *Saltcoats Literary Society Magazine*, Session 1904-05 (Saltcoats: Archibald Wallace, 1905), p. 3). While the articles are admittedly of a more serious tone — 'It undoubtedly lacks much of the humorous element common to popular magazines' — it reflects the tone and seriousness of the members' collective endeavours.

The introduction asks readers to remember that the magazine is a production of amateurs, and makes no claim for absolute originality. Almost all of the articles were first read aloud at the society meetings, and they appear in the magazine in condensed form so as to limit costs as well as the readers' patience. The magazine's intended audience was to include not only society members but also the public.

In addition to advertisements for local businesses that appear at the front and back, the issue contains a mixture of non-fiction articles, original fiction and poetry. Outwith those that accompany the advertisements, there are no illustrations for any of the contributions.

The 'Answers to Correspondents' is the final contribution in which the Editor replies to letters singly and collectively, as in the case of 'J. M. and Others': 'We were very much surprised at the amount of poetry received for this Magazine. We had room for a very

few of the more suitable ones' (Editor, 'Answers to Correspondents', *Saltcoats Literary Magazine*, p. 79). In addition to providing feedback on the contributions, there are also answers to factual questions posed, often with a humorous twist. For example, the answer to 'K"'s question was as follows: 'Saltcoats is 30 miles from Glasgow and 390 from London. We are unable to compute its distance from Ardrossan. Judging from the remarks of some people we know it must be a long way off indeed' (*Ibid*). (Ardrossan is just under 2 miles from Saltcoats: there appears to have been a rivalry between the two towns during this period.)

To date, it is unknown if any further issues of this magazine were produced.

Name of Club, Society or Group That Produced the Magazine

Saltcoats Literary and Debating Society

Date of Existence

1891-1982?

Date of Magazine

1905 (Session 1904-05)

Number of Issues

1

Manuscript/Published Magazine

Published (Saltcoats: Archibald Wallace, 1905)

Contents and Contributions

Advertisements; Articles (non-fiction); Correspondence column; Essays; Fiction/Narrative; Poems (original); Table of Contents; Title page

Repository

Irvine Townhouse, North Ayrshire

Reference

Local & Family History Collection, GJ8