



the Scottish Banner



North American Edition



Years Strong - 1976-2018

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A' Bhratach Albannach

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Creating snow and boosting the Highland economy

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The Banner Says...

January-Celebrating two great Scots



by Sean Cairney

A New Year has again come around and with the hopes of health, happiness and hopefully some fortune to be had! For some January is a month of setting goals and catching up after the busy festive period and for the Scottish community there are a few big events to celebrate.

Robert Burns

This month thousands of Scots will of course honour Scotland's national poet Robert Burns, whose work has permeated everyday life and is still recognised as some of the most important written works in history. Burns was born on 25 January 1759 in Alloway and his works about the ordinary man, love and social inequalities have given him an international following.

As a child I somewhat felt I grew up knowing Robert Burns. Now you may be asking how I could have known a poet from Scotland who died in 1796, clearly I am not (quite) that old nor was it my childhood imagination running rife.

In fact I knew of Robert Burns because of my Uncle, John Cairney, who was considered as one of the world's leading interpreters of the works of Robert Burns. As a small child of course you do not know any different than what I did, and that was seeing people pack theatres to watch him perform the works of Robert Burns. When I did get to see him perform I was usually dragged up on stage for a moment of the show by him, much to my horror. I am sure my red face of



John Cairney as Robert Burns.

embarrassment was one of the very few moments the audience took their eyes off my Uncle and his engaging performances as he portrayed the brilliant works of Robert Burns, which have been enjoyed by many for hundreds of years.

So as you can imagine Robert Burns was a part of the family's growing up. When Uncle John came to town we all chipped in and helped where we could with the shows. It was only a little later in childhood I realised that not all my friends were dragged up on stages by a famous Uncle and probably none knew who Robert Burns was.

As many people around the world, and most certainly many *Scottish Banner* readers, will celebrate the great Robert Burns I will too raise by glass to both the national poet of Scotland and also the man who was for me the living Burns of my youth.

Greyfriars Bobby

Around the time of my theatrical debut (as mentioned above!) I also started a small dog walking service. Each day after school I would pick up local dogs and walk them for neighbours so I could get some pocket money. We already had dogs in our family and my lifelong love for our four legged friends started at a very young age. So I am always interested to see the special place the city of Edinburgh has for one faithful dog called Bobby, and each year the Scottish capital honours a Skye Terrier known today as Greyfriars Bobby on January 14th.

The story of Greyfriars Bobby is one that has captured generations of people across the world. In 1850 a gardener named John Gray arrived in Edinburgh with his family looking for a better life. Unable to find work as a gardener he ended up joining the Edinburgh Police Force as a night watchman. To keep him company through the long winter nights John took on a partner, the Skye Terrier called Bobby. Together John, or Auld Jock as he was sometimes known, and Bobby became a familiar sight walking along the ancient cobbled streets of Edinburgh. They became each other's friend and family 'pack' member and patrolled the streets year round as companions and work partners.

Sadly John Gray passed away from tuberculosis on 15 February 1858 and was buried in an unmarked grave in Greyfriars Kirkyard, leaving Bobby behind. Once Auld Jock was buried Bobby began a new career which involved protecting his master's grave. Bobby carried on to protect his master's grave for the next 14 years in all weather and out of true love and devotion. Bobby's fame spread throughout Edinburgh and many people took on roles to help Bobby by feeding him and looking out for him. The then Lord Provost, Sir William Chambers,

ensured the Bobby's freedom by buying a licence and dog collar, allowing him to roam the graveyard. Bobby continued to protect Auld Jock's grave up until his own death in 1872 and his poignant memorial reads: 'Let his loyalty and devotion be a lesson to us all.'

Today the statue of Greyfriars Bobby is one of the most popular visited sites in Edinburgh (please don't rub his nose however) and the story has crossed over into books and a film and surely must be considered one of the great stories about 'man's best friend'.

In this issue

2018 is now upon us and Scotland is again ready to welcome visitors to a nation that keeps offering something to come back to. We look at some of the highlights of both the Scottish tourism and piping calendar in 2018. With new attractions opening, anniversaries and pipe band competitions being held throughout the year, it makes you want to pack your bags today!

Winter has now set in across Scotland and we learn about how technology is helping the Highland ski resorts create the perfect ski run for visitors who will be taking to the slopes right into the spring season amongst some of the most stunning scenery in Scotland.

The Scottish Snowdrop Festival will begin later this month and this heralds in the first floral sign of growth for Scotland. And whilst not quite spring it provides locals and visitors a sure sign that spring will come with each new bloom across the country.

This month is also the anniversary of the death of one of the most prolific and celebrated Scottish historical authors ever, Nigel Tranter. Tranter wrote over a hundred books and let Scotland's story set the stage for a read which was hard to put down. It was wonderful to see he also inspired one of our very own writers David C. Weinczok, who though separated by several generations, cherishes his works and uses it still today to help him to tell the story of Scotland in a modern way. Many readers will also remember Nigel was a contributor and supporter of *the Scottish Banner* and we know few international publications can say that.

January is a great month to reset yourself and take stock of where you are. It is also a month that we remember some great Scots and I hope that some of their lasting legacy helps us in the year ahead, Happy New Year! 🍷



Gracing our front cover: Nevis Range - Boarder on the edge of the back carries with braveheart tow in the distance. Photo Steven McKenna.



By: Don Cumber,
Skater-in-Chief

On the rink in Toronto.

For the fourth straight year, skaters across Canada will be taking to outdoor rinks in a unique celebration of Scottish heritage: the annual Sir John A's Great Canadian Kilt Skate. What began years ago as a private house party to celebrate a birthday has grown into a friendly, cross-country rivalry for the title of Kilt Skate Capital of Canada.

Canada's 150th birthday in 2017 saw kilt skates held in seven cities across the country, with Montreal taking the Kilt Skate Capital honours. On a cold winter day, the city's St. Andrew's Society was able to draw out the local Highland dance societies and curling clubs to join in the birthday party for Sir John A. Macdonald, the architect of Canada's confederation and its first Prime Minister.

Tartaned

Anyone showing up at the Natrel Skating Rink in the city's Old Port had their admission fees paid for by the St. Andrew's Society. Everyone – tartaned, kilted or not – was invited to enjoy birthday cake.

Montreal wrested the Kilt Skate Capital title from Saskatoon which, the previous year, had coordinated its kilt skate with the city's initiative to set the Guinness world record for the World's Largest Snowball Fight.

Calgary was also a strong contender for Kilt Skate Capital. Skaters gathered at the Olympic Plaza where they were entertained by pipers, Highland dancers, and a choir which sang *O Canada* in both English and Gaelic.

Toronto held its first kilt skate in 2017 at the popular Nathan Phillips Square in the heart of downtown.



Raising the flag in Montreal.

Its opening ceremonies included Science Minister Kirsty Duncan, who brought special greetings from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The home of the original kilt skate, Ottawa once again attracted enthusiastic crowds. The original plans were to hold the event on the Rideau Canal Skateway – the world's largest skating rink. However, unseasonably warm temperatures forced the organizers to move the event to the Lansdowne Skating Park. That didn't prevent more than a hundred kilted skaters from enjoying a perfect day for winter fun, with the snowflakes gently falling.

The kilt skates are indelibly Scottish and undeniably Canadian – a great way to celebrate Scotland's contribution to Canada's multicultural heritage.

Warm weather forced the cancellation of the kilt skate in Winnipeg, where it had been scheduled on a large duck pond. Back in 2015, however, Winnipeg's inaugural kilt skate brought together perhaps the hardest skaters in the country. They gathered at The Forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers at The Forks in temperatures that dropped to minus 35 degrees Celsius, with a wind chill on top of that. That year, many of the Winnipeg skaters displayed bare knees. Were they skating "regimental?" No one is saying.

Kilt skate phenomenon

Each of these kilt skates had been coordinated and organized as a part of a national event by the Scottish Society of Ottawa (SSO). The SSO provided communications support, channelled sponsorship funding, and created and forwarded design templates for promotional material. In the meantime, the news about

the kilt skate phenomenon spread to other communities, including Lloydminster, which hosted its own event, bringing the total in 2017 to seven cities.

Most are planning kilt skates for January and February 2018, and the national organizers are enlisting other cities interested in joining this growing phenomenon. The Scottish Government has provided sponsorship funds for organizations to purchase cake and hot chocolate, hire entertainment and photographers, and buy insurance and ice time (if required).

This year, the kilt skates will highlight Scotland's "Year of Young People" – an opportunity for the host organizations to reach out to clubs and societies that bring a youth element to the events. Expect to see hockey and ringette teams out in force, wearing tartan.

The kilt skates are indelibly Scottish and undeniably Canadian – a great way to celebrate Scotland's contribution to Canada's multicultural heritage. Some five million Canadians trace their ancestry back to Scotland – which is close to the population of Scotland itself.

But Sir John A's Great Canadian Kilt Skate is not just for those who can boast Scottish heritage. It's a time for everyone to nurture their inner Scot. They don't have to be Scottish. They don't have to wear a kilt. They just come join the party with a Scottish spirit of fun and fortitude, and wear Canada's favourite colour – tartan!

For more information on Sir John A's Great Canadian Kilt skate, or to contact the national organizers, go to www.kiltskate.com. Or follow #kiltskate2018.



Ottawa smiles.

Aberfoyle-Did you know?



- Before 1800 Aberfoyle was just a small hamlet centred around the old church. The railway in 1884 changed that by carrying slate to Glasgow. The slate quarries worked for more than 300 years and in 1858-9 produced 1.4 million slates. The car park is where the old station used to be and the old line can be walked as far as Buchlyvie.
- There are some significant graves in the old church; 1692- Rev. Robert Kirk. Kirk is famous for having revealed the secrets of the fairies in Aberfoyle and having suffered the punishment. His soul is still said to dwell within the fairy hill.
- Patrick Graham, a friend of Sir Walter Scott as well as a historian is buried here. (1756 - 1835) He wrote the first guide for the district.
- There are remains of Nissen huts in Loch Ard which are old store buildings made of corrugated iron. Some are still used for agricultural purposes. During World War 2 Loch Ard was a munitions base and these huts contained live ammunition, shells and mortar bombs.
- Sir Walter Scott visited the area and wrote his famous poem, *The Lady of the Loch*, based on his experiences at Loch Katrine.
- In 1949 Scottish nationalists led by Dr John McCormick met at the Inchrie Castle hotel for two days and launched a petition, *The Second Covenant* to secure a devolved Scottish parliament. This was eventually signed by two million people. The second covenant was named after the national covenant of 1638, which was a manifesto which opposed Charles I's attempts to lesson Presbyterian worship. The hotel was later named the Covenanter's Inn.
- The Stone of Scone was also hidden in the Covenanter's Inn in 1950 when stolen by nationalists from Westminster Abbey, although some argue it was a fake.
- The old graveyard in Aberfoyle contains one of the few remaining mortsafes in Scotland.

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Band on the Run-Playing pipes with Sir Paul McCartney



Sir Paul McCartney playing in Perth with the WA Police Pipe Band.

Sir Paul McCartney last month finished up his One on One World Tour which wowed audiences across the globe and included a wee bit of Scotland with the hit song Mull of Kintyre featuring local guest pipe bands. Australia and New Zealand was the final leg of the tour in 2017 which started in Fresno, California on 13th April 2016 and ended in Auckland, New Zealand on 16th December 2017. The tour covered 18 different countries, played in 59 different cities, performed 77 individual shows and played live to well over 1 million people. For a select group of pipers and drummers this marked a certain career highlight, as our Australian pipe band perspective explains.

Governor Macquarie Memorial Pipe Band(GMMPB) had the rare honour of playing alongside one of the greatest musicians of our time in Sydney in December. Thanks to an invitation from Pipers of Distinction GMMPB accompanied Sir Paul McCartney playing *Mull of Kintyre* as part of his One on One World Tour in two Sydney shows on the 11th and 12th December, 2017. The band was greeted enthusiastically by the 18,000 strong

crowd as they joined McCartney on stage as a special surprise for the Sydney audience as one of the final numbers for the evening.

How does such a well-loved artist as Paul McCartney, manage to rouse images of Scotland literally in the midst of so many people? *Mull of Kintyre* has a hauntingly simple musical theme with the sound of the pipes and drums evoking all things Scottish. For the pipers of GMMPB to not only hear the music but to physically feel it

through the chanter, to touch it through the finger sequences was a once in a lifetime experience, particularly with the playing of the beautiful sustained low A early in the song. Both McCartney and the audience gave GMMPB a huge welcome on to the stage and the applause was thunderous and sustained throughout the song.

Thrilled

GMMPB performers were a mixture of players young and young at heart, each being absolutely thrilled to be involved in this event. The youngest player and snare drummer, 10 year old Jaxson Gray, was singled out by McCartney for special praise with McCartney commending him for continuing the pipe band tradition. The band also included a number of other young members, 14 year old pipers, Luke Blowes, Oscar Petro and Hayley Whitehill and 14 year old snare drummer, Ezra Wolfinger, a huge McCartney fan, who described these two nights as “the best of my life.” Other young players included 15 year old bass drummer, Clare Adamson and 17 year old piper, Lachlan Wiggins. These players summed up the experience well when describing the fun and excitement of learning the music with great friends prepared together in the lead up to the event, the nerves of rehearsal in Qudos Arena, meeting Sir Paul McCartney and the thrill of playing to such a large audience.

They each felt honoured to have been involved. The number of young players in this band is a promising sign for the future of pipe bands in Australia. Many of the

more experienced members of GMMPB have followed McCartney over the decades and were perhaps even more thrilled to be involved in the performance. The experience was particularly special for piper, Ian Henry, who first heard the Beatles play in Liverpool in 1961 before they were well known and has followed the music of Paul McCartney since. Ian developed a particular love for the song *Mull of Kintyre* having worked in the north of Ireland in a vet practice within sight of the Mull of Kintyre.

Other bands

In addition to the Sydney performances a selection of bands also got to experience a musical highlight playing alongside the legend of Sir Paul McCartney. In Perth the tour gained the services of the current Grade 1 Australian Champions the Western Australia Police Pipe Band at NIB Stadium in front of 28,000 people under the direction of Gold Medalist Pipe Major James Murray.

In Melbourne the current Grade 3 Australian Champions, Scotch College performed for two nights with Sir Paul McCartney, led by tutor Mark Saul. At this show a very rare opportunity came along to have the bands bass drum skin signed on stage which will have a pride of place for the band and school. The show at AAMI Stadium attracted 30,000 each evening.

In Brisbane a combined band was established lead by Pipe Major Barry Gray for the show with players from the Governor Macquarie Memorial Pipe Band, Ipswich Thistle, MacLean, St Andrews, Warwick Scots School, City of Whitehorse and Queensland Irish participating at Suncorp Stadium with a crowd of 52,000. Auckland was the last stop of the tour with the Grade 1 Auckland & Districts Pipe Band taking the stage with Sir Paul under Pipe Major Ben MacLaughlin.



10 year old drummer Jaxson Gray being interviewed in-front of the 18,000 strong crowd in Sydney by Sir Paul.



Coorie in, an bide a while

Còsagach identified as a Scottish trend which could rival the Danes. Picture credit: Jack Boothby, The Lazy Duck, Nefhy Bridge.

Còsagach– an old Scottish word which describes the feeling of being snug, sheltered or cosy – has been identified by VisitScotland as a new trend for 2018, which could rival the Danish concept of Hygge. Scotland is world renowned for its hospitality, most recently being voted Most Welcoming Country by *Rough Guides* readers, and now the national tourism organisation is encouraging businesses to create environments which “induce a feeling of warmth or cosiness” where visitors can relax and unwind. Almost a quarter of visitors come to Scotland to get away from it all, whilst more than 4 million UK visitors mentioned relaxing as something they did when here.

Feeling of contentment

Còsagach is just one of the trends identified by VisitScotland and comes off the back of a boom in the trend for Hygge, a Danish word described as a type of cosiness and comfort that engages a feeling of contentment or well-being. Referring to Còsagach, the VisitScotland reads: “With tranquil seascapes, vast open spaces and many warm and welcoming pubs, Scotland is a perfect place for your well-being.” That feeling of well-being also forms the basis for another trend, “Wellness”, where visitors seek escapism from technology and their fast-paced lives in tourism-related activities, to recharge their mind and body.



Governor Macquarie Memorial Pipe Band on stage with Sir Paul McCartney.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By: Ron Dempsey



Have a name that has you stumped? Scottish Banner readers can send in their name queries direct to Ron via the Scottish Banner via our website at www.scottishbanner.com/contact-us, by post or email: info@scottishbanner.com. Ron will do his best to help you with your name query and may just add that extra piece to your genealogy puzzle.



Now that Christmas is over let's talk about the really important holiday in Scotland and that is New Year or known locally as Ne'er's Day. New Year's always brings back many fond memories. In our house, everyone had to be home before the clock struck twelve to see in the New Year together. Then it was a steak pie dinner after the bells announced midnight. The table was then cleared for the arrival of the first footer. The first footer or the first person across the door had to be a dark haired gentleman bearing a lump of coal for warmth through the year and wee dram for friendship and conviviality. It was time remembered fondly as everyone looked upon the coming year with a sense of buoyed optimism.

New beginnings

New Year is a time for new beginnings and with that we make our New Year's

resolutions. These are to do with some goals that we wish to attain. In years past I have been suggesting to our readers that a good resolution was to start in compiling a family history and collecting those ancestors in a comprehensive form for future generations.

I can now voice a resolution that I made for myself. For forty odd years *the Scottish Banner* has been receiving letters from readers, for all kinds of subjects, but what most pleases me is those letters inquiring about their surnames. While this is my greatest interest to which I am only too happy to respond there are features in these letters that I may not always mention. These are the kind words of appreciation for the column and for *the Scottish Banner* in general. It is very gratifying to have readers to take the time to send a note of appreciation. It is also so very nice to know that we are reaching you, even those that let us know where we may have erred on a subject matter. Thank you all.

Eells

From the internet we received an email from Ms. Jane Eells and Mr. Jim Adair as well a kind note about the column they asked about their own surnames. Eells is an unusual name and it is the first time I have come across it. It has various forms of spelling including Eele, Eales, Eals etc. There are two possible derivations of the

name, which can happen with many family names. The first is the evolution in sounds and dialects from Old English personal names as Ægel, Æel, or Ealh. The other is that it is another form of the more common form of Ellis which supposedly Crusaders brought back from the Holy Land. It derives from the Greek names of Elis or Elias which in turn is from the Hebrew name Elijah.

Adair

Now Mr. Adair's surname, a very Scottish surname, it too is from a personal name from Middle English. That name being Edgar via the older form Eadzer. My guess is that the letter "z" was a replacement for the Middle English and Middle Scots letter known as yogh. It was written like a numeral three and could be confused with elongated written letter "z". This letter was sounded like a softer version of the letter "g". Thus modern readers would read as with a z when in fact it should be as it is pronounced in Edgar as vocalized today. Similarly, the yogh also comes into play, with the surname Menzies with a mix of modern and ancient pronunciations such as Menzies, Mingis, and Minnis, almost like Spanish letter ñ pronounced as onion. One of the earliest records of the surname in Scotland was a Thomas Adair held lands in the reign of Robert I, the Bruce. Since Robert I died in 1329 it would be awarded

the decade or two before this. Land holdings for various branches of the family were in Galloway and Dumfries areas. Family Badge: a man's head, cut and bloodied. Family Motto: Loyal Au Mort (Loyal unto death)

Is it no time ye wur awa' hame?

I was going to say, this seems like a good year for a trip to Scotland then I realised that any year is a good time to see Scotland. If you haven't been, there are so many things to do and see in Scotland. Wouldn't it be lovely to attend a Burns Supper in Scotland, or attend the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo and Edinburgh Fringe Festival? One can see the clan and family homelands, a variety of castles and exciting landscapes in any part of the country. While there one can look up some old friends and family. If amazing historical or geographical sites aren't enough reasons to visit Scotland, then world class entertainment and shopping can be had at the major cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. While I say this to first time visitors but also to expats: "Is it no time ye wur awa' hame?"

Lastly for the New Year let's hope that the political climate of the world improves and sanity becomes the mindset for humanity, with kindness and tolerance coming to the forefront. A very healthy and wealthy new year to all our readers and their families for the year 2018.

Restalrig – Edinburgh's 50th conservation area

Photos courtesy of The City of Edinburgh Council.



St Margaret's Church.

These buildings reflect the historical and architectural significance of the area and its development as a centre of religious activities.

Cllr Neil Gardiner, Planning Convener, said: "Conservation areas have special architectural or historic interest and we protect them by putting in place extra rules to control building work. The use of natural materials in several of the listed buildings in the area, such as rubble stone, creates a sense of place and are integral to its character."

Lestlaric

The village of Restalrig developed around the ancient parish church of St Margaret (formerly Restalrig Parish Church). The name Restalrig is a 15th century variant on the name Lestlaric, recorded from the late 12th century. The area was part of a medieval estate owned by the De Lestlarics. St Margaret's Church has its origins in the 12th century and formed the nucleus of the village. The original parish incorporated South Leith.



Restalrig streetscape.

Edinburgh's 50th conservation area, Restalrig, was announced in December by the City of Edinburgh Council. Approval was given after a report was considered by the Planning Committee, following a public consultation in the local area. Restalrig lies to the north east of the city and the boundary of the conservation area includes St Margaret's Parish Church, graveyard and surrounding buildings at the entrance to Restalrig Road South from Restalrig Avenue.

Historically significant

Restalrig conservation area is historically significant as a result of its development around St Margaret's Parish Church. Within the area there are other listed buildings at 62 Restalrig Road South and The Deanery Wall. There is also a scheduled monument, St Triduana's Aisle, Chapel and Well house.

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2018-A Year in Piping

Happy New Year from The National Piping Centre! Across the world each year there are lots of opportunities to hear Scotland's national instrument, but these are some of the key events here in Scotland and abroad. Celtic Connections, now in its 25th year, kicks off the year in style as Glasgow's annual folk, roots and world music festival, celebrates Celtic music and its connections to cultures across the globe. From 18 January – 4 February 2018, over 2,100 musicians from around the world will descend on Glasgow and bring the city to life for 18 days of concerts, ceilidhs, talks, art exhibitions, workshops, and free events, including a very special event at the SSE Hydro, where the GRIT orchestra will be joined by stunt cyclist Danny MacAskill who will perform tricks for Bothy Culture and Beyond, a celebration on the work of pioneering piper Martyn Bennett.

In February, our National Piping Centre Junior Piping Championship returns, one of a host of fantastic contests for young pipers aged Under 18 across the country every year. It aims to encourage all young players to compete, with chanter competitions through to Piobaireachd events.

In March and April The National Piping Centre's Seasonal Schools return with our spring editions. These great 4 day workshops are tailored for different age groups and are a great way to meet other pipers and get immersed in learning.



Piping Live!

There are 5 Major pipe band championships in the UK, and this year they are:

- British Championships – May 19th - Paisley
- United Kingdom Championships – June 16th - Belfast
- European Championships – June 30th - Forres
- Scottish Championships – July 28th - Dumbarton
- World Championships – August 17th & 18th at Glasgow Green, Glasgow

The piping world gathers

The last of these championships is the biggest and the best. It is part of the world's biggest week of piping here in Glasgow, with Piping Live!, taking place from 13th–19th August. This festival brings together musicians from across the globe, who come to the city with pipe bands and music groups from many different countries to take part. With Pipe Idol, The Piping Live! Big Band, The Masters, Evening Concerts, the festival club, Street Café and more, Piping Live! has something for everyone.

This all leads up to the World Pipe Band Championships on Friday 17th and Saturday

18th August. For 2 days the piping world gathers on Glasgow Green (even via the live streaming of the event!) to celebrate a new world champion. Will Inveraray and District repeat their phenomenal success of 2017? We will wait with bated breath and see... This marks the end of the UK pipe band season.

International competitions

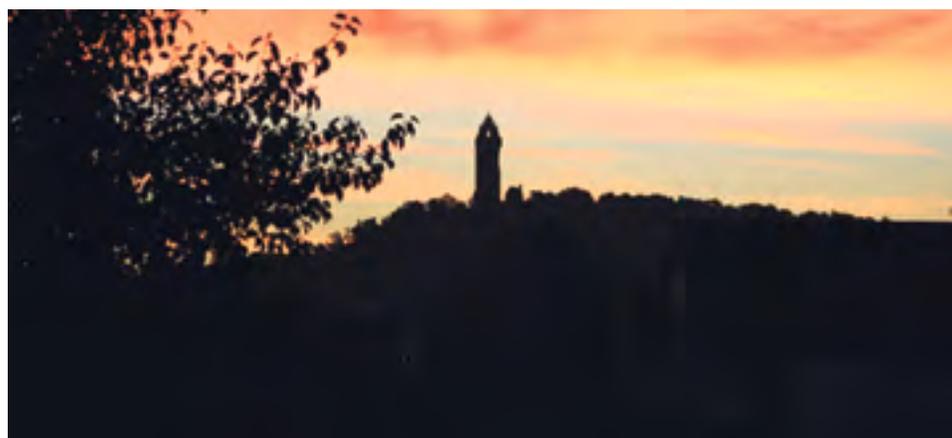
Other significant worldwide contests include the New Zealand Pipe Band Championships, this year in Rotorua on 8th – 9th March, The Australian Pipe Band Championships on April 7th in Queensland and the North American Pipe Band Championships at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville, Ontario which is 3rd – 4th August 2018.

Once the Pipe Band season is over, thoughts turn to major solo competitions. The end of August and start of September see The Argyllshire Gathering and Northern Meetings, the two most prestigious solo piping competitions in Scotland. Each event takes place over 2 days with competitors taking part in Piobaireachd and light music events. Once the winners have been announced for these, then the 10 competitors for the Glenfiddich Piping Championship are announced. This solo championship, taking place at the end of October each year has been called the de facto world solo championship, where the 10 best pipers of the year compete for the overall trophy.

The Glenfiddich is the end of the 2018 season, only for the 2019 season to start the very next weekend in London with the Scottish Piping Society of London's annual competition, which has its 80th year in 2019.

So if you are travelling this year, come and hear piping in Scotland – or look out for it around the world!

The National Wallace Monument welcomed 135,000 visitors in 2017



Stirling's National Wallace Monument has felt the effects of a strong year for Scotland's tourism sector as it welcomed over 135,000 visitors in 2017. With the highest number of visitors for over ten years, the attraction has generated an estimated gross direct contribution to the local economy of over £4.5m during what has been an unforgettable year.

Scottish landmark

Throughout 2017, Stirling District Tourism, the charity responsible for the running of the Monument, has continued to make significant investments in the 148-year-old Scottish landmark, including improvements to the Abbey Craig and new displays inside The Hall of Heroes.

Commenting on this year's successful performance, Zillah Jamieson, Chair of Stirling District Tourism, said: "Our goal has always been to keep The National Wallace Monument at the heart of culture, education and heritage in Stirling. The visitor numbers which have been recorded this year, and the Monument's contribution to the local economy reflect how this is being achieved."

The stand-out year began with an initiative that captured the hearts and minds of the public across the globe - who cast their votes for 'Scotland's Heroines', selecting Mary Slessor and Maggie Keswick Jencks as the first females who will be commemorated in The Hall of Heroes.

2017 also saw extensive renovations completed on the Abbey Craig, the hill on which the famous landmark stands, with the main pathway leading to the Monument upgraded, and the 'Wallace Way' opened with its collection of 11 specially created woodcarvings. The Abbey Craig was also the setting for an expanded programme of visitor events, which included a celebration of Wallace's victory at the Battle of Stirling Bridge and 'Knock on History's Door' - a special event where the doors were opened after hours for an exclusive evening tour.

Scotland's National Hero

2018 is set to be another important year for the charity, as it continues to make improvements to the attraction and looks ahead to the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Monument, in 2019. Zillah Jamieson explained: "As a key part of Stirling's heritage tourism infrastructure, we pride ourselves on the quality of the visitor experience and we are always looking for ways to make improvements to the Monument. The performance of the Monument this year means that we are able to take forward our investment plans for the attraction. We look forward to revealing the next phase of the Scotland's Heroines project in the new year, as well as finalising our plans for 2019, when we will mark 150 years of the Monument telling the story of Scotland's National Hero."



SCOTSPEAK

Scotspeak is a selection of quotes which made headlines in Scotland last month on a variety of current Scottish affairs.

"This is the most we have had this century. In recent years the most sightings in a year we have had is 17 - and that was in 1996. Before that the 1960s and 1930s were the times that had most sightings - sometimes more than 20 in a year."

Gary Campbell, Registrar of Sightings at the Official Loch Ness Monster Sightings Register, said that 2017 had more official Nessie sightings on Loch Ness than any other year this century. 9 reported sightings happened in 2017 from visitors to the area from as far as Canada, England and the USA. The legend of Nessie has captivated the world for decades and continues to be a lure for local tourism.



An artist's impression of the new Citizens Theatre opening in 2020.

"The Citizens Theatre building is about to embark on the biggest changes to its physical structure in its 139-year history. This latest stage in our £19.4m redevelopment project presents an exciting opportunity for a number of key landmark cultural organisations to work together in Glasgow."

Glasgow's Citizens Theatre company artistic director Dominic Hill said as Glasgow's Citizens Theatre company is to relocating out of the 139 year old building it occupies in the Gorbals for the first time in its 72-year history. The theatre will close next summer for a £19.4m redevelopment which will take two years to complete and is expected to reopen in the autumn of 2020. The building first opened as His Majesty's Theatre in 1878, during its closure, the company plans to take its work further afield across Scotland.

"The discovery of a second Bronze Age cist on the site provides increasing evidence for the special selection of this site in the prehistoric landscape as a location for ceremonial funerary activity. This cist, along with the medical centre cist and a second burial pit, is generating much more information about the prehistory of Glen Urquhart. Historically, there was a large cairn shown on maps of the area but you can imagine that centuries of ploughing in these fields have removed any upstanding reminders of prehistoric occupation. During the work, we actually found a displaced capstone from another grave that either has not survived or has not yet been discovered. So it's quite likely that these graves were covered by stone cairns or mounds, long-since ploughed out."

Mary Peteranna, operations Manager for AOC Archaeology's Inverness office, said as archaeologists have found an important burial site from the bronze age in the Loch Ness area of the Highlands. The grave believed to be over 4,000 years old included items such as beaker pots and human remains. Over the years the sites have been interrupted by local farmers and weather deterioration.



"We continue to break our own records, bringing in more visitors to Glasgow each year, and showcasing some truly amazing talent. Piping Live! is intrinsic to Scotland's cultural calendar and we're delighted to say that this report reflects a worldwide thirst for traditional music that is going from strength to strength."

Piping Live! Festival organiser Roddy MacLeod said as the international piping festival attracted record crowds in 2017. The event which takes place at venues across Glasgow and presented the National Piping Centre generated £2.5m for the local economy and attracted record numbers of visitors from outside Scotland.

"It's a very emotional issue and it's not just in Scotland now, it's worldwide. The author of Outlander, Diana Gabaldon has brought this attention to people all over the world."

Protester and Outlander extra Andy MacAlindon said as protesters gathered to stop a housing development to be placed on sacred ground at Culloden in the Scottish Highlands. Culloden Battlefield is one of the nation's most sombre places where

thousands of Scots were killed by the English, Property developers Kirkwood Homes wants to build nearly 20 homes less than 400 metres from the historic battleground site. The Battle of Culloden of 1746 is where British troops defeated the Scottish Jacobite army for the final time near Inverness.

"In this past year Barra has shown the importance that a flag can have for its community - not only as a celebration but also as a symbol to rally around. I am sure it will serve as a powerful example to the many other communities thinking of developing their own flag to promote their own identity and the patchwork of national heritage."

Philip Tibbetts, of the Flag Institute, said as the flag representing the Isle of Barra has secured official recognition. The green and white Nordic cross has been used by residents of the Hebridean island for decades. Following a campaign, the flag has been granted the seal of approval by heraldic authority, the Court of the Lyon Court. The Nordic cross on the flag represents Barra's Scandinavian heritage, while the green represents its landscape.

"We have found evidence of the impact at two sites on the Isle of Skye, at the moment. One of the things that is really interesting here is that the volcanological evolution of the Isle of Skye has always been considered to have been started with what's called a volcanic plume, an enormously large bulk of magma which has come up under what then was the crust that Skye was on. We are now suggesting that this may well have been assisted by a meteorite impact."

Dr Simon Drake from the University of London said as geologists have discovered evidence of a 60 million year old meteorite that hit the Isle of Skye. The surprise find was made just outside of Broadford.



"Many are familiar with Edinburgh's rich history and folklore, renowned architecture and classical beauty. Although every nook and cranny has a story to tell, some stories are told more than others. Using imagery sourced from Edinburgh's archives, this projection mapping show presents Edinburgh's giant advent calendar, telling stories of Edinburgh's past, using the facade of this iconic Edinburgh landmark as its canvas."

Steven McConnachie, director of Double Take Projections, said as Edinburgh's iconic General Register House, featured 24 glimpses of Edinburgh Winters from years gone-by, one revealed each day throughout December, as part of the city's Christmas celebrations.

SCOTWORD

Here is a fun crossword for you to try with a few of the answers to be found in Scotland! If you are in doubt, you may need a wee peek at a Scots dictionary or a map. Or, if you are really stuck, the answers can be found on page 23!

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
									8			
9						10						
11								12				
13		14						15				16
						17						
18				19					20	21		
22									23		24	
								25				
				26						27		
28												
				29								

CLUES ACROSS

- 1) Borders woollen town (10).
- 8) Top male voice (5).
- 9) Kirk office bearer (5).
- 10) Additional part! (5).
- 11) Heraldic plumes (6).
- 12) Scattered the bed frame! (8).
- 13) A salad plant (6).
- 15) Highland gardens (8).
- 18) Vied with (8).
- 20) Stopped work in Scotland (6).
- 22) Found in Skye & Lothian Region (8).
- 23) He prepares issues (6).
- 26) A running knot (5).
- 27) Drive out (5).
- 28) A wee dram! (5).
- 29) A low wall in Fife! (10).

CLUES DOWN

- 1) Village east of Perth (9).
- 2) A serving scoop (5).
- 3) Scottish valleys (1).
- 4) On the rocks! (4).
- 5) Capital regions (8).
- 6) Highland capital (9).
- 7) Doublet edging (5).
- 8) Scof's potato (6).
- 14) Bandleader up front (4,5).
- 16) Carpet town near Johnstone (9).
- 17) Congratulatory steak! (4,4).
- 19) Fervent {6}.
- 21) Up to Hogmanay (3,4).
- 22) A knight's wage increase! (5).
- 24) Feeling after 28 Across (5).
- 25) Auld Nick! (4).

SCOT POURRI



Send us your inquiries on life's little question marks. Ever wanted to know what happened to your old pal from home, how to make your favourite Scottish meal, or wondered about a certain bit of Scottish history? Pose your questions on Scottish related topics to our knowledgeable readership who just may be able to help. Our letters page is a very popular and active one and many readers have been assisted across the world by fellow passionate Scots. Please keep letters under 200 words and we reserve the right to edit content and length. Letters, photos and any other items posted to *the Scottish Banner* cannot be returned. We prefer letters to be emailed to your nearest office or please visit our online Scotpourri form at www.scottishbanner.com, alternatively you may post your letters to us. Please ensure you include your full contact details, when emailing it is best to include your post address for those without internet access. This page belongs to our readers so please feel free to take part! Thanks to all our readers from around the world who have made this such a special page.

Robert Burns Club of Camperdown hosts Burns Clubs of the Pacific Rim



The fledgling Robert Burns Club of Camperdown hosted the Burns Clubs of the Pacific Rim for their annual conference from September 29th to October 1st. The conference was attended by President Royden Sommerville and his wife Lee from New Zealand and delegates from Australia. The Friday night dinner was held at Lake Edge cafe overlooking the shore line of Lake Purrumbete. Saturday morning was business and after lunch there was a tour of the property "Renny Hill" owned currently by Clark & Judy Roycroft.

That had been the property of the Taylor family who donated the Burns statue by John Greenshields to the town of Camperdown. A ceilidh was put on the Saturday night with The Likely Celts, Andy Richardson, Peter Daffy and local band Tuniversal. Sunday morning there was a tour of Stewart & Bev McArthur's property "Menningort" and finally to send our guests on the way a barbecue at John & Carolyn Menzies property Wuurong.

Cheers,
Chris Maguire
Camperdown, Victoria
Australia

Scottish Weather: Winter

We'll come again, perhaps at a different season. I'd like to taste a Scottish winter—just a little—just once. I'd like to be here among some villagers during a lighter snow, visit a pub with them

and share a glass or two of The Famous Grouse, then walk out to an easy wind and the ground still bare in spots. I'd want to feel a few gritty flakes strike my skin, then watch them skid across an icy spot

with a soft, whispery, sleety sound, and hear in local tones that ancient word

"skift" which my dad used when I was a child, and which hasn't come to mind in sixty years.

Twice a reunion, that moment—his soft Virginia voice in my ear and this harsh word from another forebear who brought with him a few clothes, an axe, and a crazy-quilt language patched together from a dozen lands. "A skift of snow," I think to myself, and look ahead to home and winter, to a cold day and a few grains of icy snow rasping across the frozen ground, when I can whisper in my father's voice, Now that's a skift of snow.

David Black

Louisa, VA
USA

Facebook page www.facebook.com/davidblackwriter

Chief John MacArthur leads Clan on Edinburgh Tattoo opening night



Photo: Chief John MacArthur of that Ilk meeting HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, the Earl & Countess of Wessex with daughter Lady Louise Windsor. Photo courtesy of The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

Clan Arthur, along with Clan Murray, were invited to appear on the 4th August opening night of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Clan members from across the globe met at a pre-tattoo supper held at the New Club on Princes Street hosted by Clan Murray. Afterwards we walked from Princes Street to the castle where we assembled and were ushered into the Great Hall for a welcome prior to the event. We were then mustered into lines and given our marching instructions. The clans formed columns behind Chief John MacArthur of that Ilk, and Michael of Tullibardine, Chieftain of Clan Murray and we were led onto the castle esplanade by the Atholl Highlanders and their pipe band. The columns halted at a prearranged point awaiting the arrival of the guests of honour. Two limousines drove onto the esplanade and our clan heads were introduced to HRH Prince Edward of Wessex, his wife Sophie and their two children, and His Serene Highness, Prince Albert II of Monaco. The clan heads then shared a Gaelic toast with the two Princes. When the opening ceremony finished, the clan members found their seats in the stands while Chief John and his wife, Lorraine enjoyed the show in the luxury and prestigious company of the Royal Box. We were very lucky to see the Orchestre des Carabiniers du Prince au Monaco as they only performed at the Tattoo on this one night.

The following day Saturday, 5th of August, the International Clan Arthur Gathering was held at the very historically significant Masonic Lodge in Canongate off the Royal Mile. We toured the Temple, and heard the most impressive organ masterfully played by Malcolm McCrae, the Lodge organist. The building dates back to

the 1700s and on the top floor it houses the historical painting of Robert Burns, exalted to a companion in the Holy Royal Arch Degree in May 1787. A special guest at this function was Dr Joseph Morrow, King of Arms who sported a MacGregor tartan kilt, a clan that is close to his heart. Both the Lord Lyon and Chief John are Freemasons.

If you would like to know more about Clan Arthur, please contact carolmcarthur18@gmail.com
Carol McArthur Budlong
High Commissioner, MacArthur Society in Australia

Scottish Banner trip to Scotland winner



We are back from our whirlwind tour of Scotland! None of which would have been possible if not for *the Scottish Banner* and Qatar Airways. Who would have thought that simply entering a competition would be so rewarding? It was a truly amazing experience. "A dream come true" for my wife Helena and I.

We stayed in Glasgow for 4 nights to check out my home town and catch up with some of my relatives that I haven't seen in almost 36 years. It was great to explore such a vibrant city and sample all the culinary and liquid treats on offer. We hired a car at Glasgow Airport and headed to Gourrock. We caught the car ferry over to Dunoon and drove from there to Inveraray, then on to Oban where we stayed for the night.

The next day we drove to Glencoe, then on to Fort William. We stayed in Caol for 2 nights which allowed us the time to have a better look around the area. We went on the Jacobite Steam Train to Mallaig, via the Glenfinnan Viaduct and back again to Fort William. On our way out, we drove to Invergarry and to see Eilean Donan Castle on our way to stay on the Isle of Skye for the next 3 nights. We based ourselves in Portree which allowed us to explore the island from one end to the other. Some of the highlights were the Armadale Castle, Clan Donald Centre & the Museum of the Isles in the south. The Old Man of Storr, The Museum of Island Life & Flora MacDonald's Grave in the north.

From Skye we headed towards Drumnadrochit to see Urquhart Castle and the Loch Ness Centre & Exhibition on the way to Inverness, where we stayed for 2 nights. We went to Culloden and their Visitors Centre, then on to Elgin, Harlaw and Aberdeen for 2 nights. We went to Kincardineshire to see where my ancestors came from, before heading to Dunnottar Castle, Montrose, Arbroath, Dundee, Perth, then to Doune for the night. While there, we went to Doune Castle, Stirling Castle and the Wallace Monument and then stayed in Falkirk for the next 2 nights. We went on the Falkirk Wheel and to see the Kelpies (day & night) Linlithgow Palace, Blackness Castle, Midhope Castle and

around to Culross via the new Queensferry Crossing, which satisfied Helena's interest in seeing sites from *Outlander*.

The next day we dropped off the car at Edinburgh Airport (I had managed to clock over 1000 miles in the 2 weeks we had the car), and from there we caught the tram into Edinburgh City Centre. Accommodation for our final 3 nights in Scotland was provided by The Spires Serviced Apartments Edinburgh, located on Hanover St. It's an ideal location for sightseeing around the city as it's so central to everything. On the 1st day in Edinburgh we took our complementary Rabbie's Tour around the old & new city. It was ideal for seeing the sights and provided us with a great way to decide which areas were most suitable for us to visit the following day. We went to Edinburgh Castle the following morning, then down to see Greyfriars Bobby and explore the city. That night we went on the Mercat Tours "Ghost & Ghouls Tour" (also a part of our prize). It was a great way to hear about the history around and under the streets of Edinburgh from our knowledgeable and entertaining guide Steve.

As you can see, we packed a heap of great experiences into our short trip around Scotland and when we left in the wee small hours of our final day, hauling our extra luggage to the tram to the airport, we realised just how lucky we were to have had such a fun adventure together. So I'd just like to say another huge thank you to everyone who made it possible.

Scott Rodger
Victoria, Australia

Ed note: Congratulations once again Scott and you sure packed in so much of Scotland. We are thrilled you had such a great experience.

FROM OUR SOCIAL MEDIA



Send your photos or letters via social media

Autumnal Glencoe at Loch Achtriochtan.



Carolynn Wilson
Scotland

Wallace Monument



Thanks *Scottish Banner*—what a great paper. Thought you may like this photo I took last time I was in Scotland.
Marcus MacLeod
Ashtonfield, New South Wales
Australia

Immortal Memory - *The Scottish Banner speaks to Len Murray*

This month many Scots around the world will celebrate one of Scotland's great sons-Robert Burns. Glasgow born Len Murray is considered one of Scotland's top legal and academic minds. However his love for Robert Burns has seen Len become one of the Scotland's foremost speakers on Burns and is today Dean of the Guild of Robert Burns Speakers. Len took the time to speak to the Scottish Banner's Sean Cairney on just what makes a good Burns Supper, The Robert Burns Guild of Speakers and how Burns' legacy still lives today.



Len Murray.

SC: Len thank you for taking the time to speak to *the Scottish Banner*. Can we begin with giving us a brief background on how one of the Scotland's top lawyers became so connected to a poet who died over 200 years ago?

LM: I think it all began many years ago, indeed more than I am ready to admit to. I was in my first year at Glasgow University when an Indian student with whom I was friendly asked me why the Scots make such a fuss of Robert Burns. I answered by saying probably because he was a good poet. But Ajit, my friend, wasn't convinced by my answer and he went on to tell me that Scotland had other good poets and he mentioned Walter Scott and James Hogg. Why didn't we make a fuss about them? He went on to tell me that there was a big Burns Supper every year in his native Calcutta. What did Robert Burns have to do with Calcutta? I'm sorry to say that I didn't know the answer to that. I resolved that one day I would find out. I think that it

was that encounter, and more importantly that question, that started it all off.

SC: For those who don't know can you tell us how the concept of a Burns Supper began and just what happens at one today?

LM: It all began in 1801, five years after his death, when some friends of his gathered at his birthplace to commemorate his death; the following year a group of Ayrshire men decided to hold a supper on the anniversary of his birth, although they got the date wrong! They held it on 29th January instead of 25th but they got it right the following year! The idea of a Burns Supper is to remember that beautiful legacy of poetry and song that Burns left, a legacy unequalled by any other.

SC: There is a great deal of ritual at a Burns Supper, can you tell us your favourite part of the evening, or perhaps least?

LM: There is often too much ritual at Burns Suppers. The essence of any Burns Supper is enjoyment while recalling the life and works of this literary genius. There has to be music, there has to be poetry, there has to be an appreciation of Burns, usually a toast to his *Immortal Memory*, but above all there has to be enjoyment. My own favourite part, of course, is the *Immortal Memory* which I have had the honour of proposing right across the world from North West Canada to South East Australia.

SC: Len as you say, you have travelled all over the world attending hundreds of Burns suppers and functions. What have you learned about Scots the world over when attending these events?

LM: The Scottish diaspora is surely the greatest in the world. The story is told of four men washed ashore on a desert island, two Englishmen and two Scots. After a week the Scots were the best of pals: they had had a great ceilidh, a fantastic Burns Supper and a wonderful St. Andrew's Night. The two Englishmen hadn't spoken - they hadn't been introduced. There is a warmth and a sincerity about the ex-pat Scot which must be the envy of all others.

SC: The legacy of Robert Burns is still very much relevant today. There can surely be few songs that are more frequently sung throughout the world than *Auld Lang Syne*. How do you think a song penned in the 1700's is still so much a part so many peoples holiday traditions today?

LM: *Auld Lang Syne* is generally regarded as the universal song of parting. It has been sung all round the world countless times and probably *Happy Birthday to You* or *He's a Jolly Good Fellow* are the only songs which have been more frequently sung. Remember that Burns did not write the song. Its origins go back many years before him but it is yet another example of how he took an old traditional song of Scotland, resurrected it and breathed new life into it. Why is it so popular? Well, I ask, is there anything more nostalgic than those verses:

We twa hae run about the braes,
and pou'd the gowans fine;
But we've wander'd mony a weary fit,
sin' auld lang syne.
We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,
frae morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
sin' auld lang syne.

SC: Robert Burns wrote from the heart and with a great deal of humanity. Do you have a favourite work of Burns and if so what and why?

LM: By far my favourite Burns' work is *John Anderson my Jo*. It is a work that illustrates the genius of Burns as much as anything else. It was originally a bawdy ballad in which an old lady was complaining of her husband's declining virility, shall we say. Burns took it, sanitised it, polished it and converted it to surely the greatest hymn to the love between a man and a woman as they grow old together. It was the favourite piece of my late wife so it has a very special and emotional meaning for me.

SC: You are Dean of Guild at The Robert Burns Guild of Speakers, a select group of 37 Burns enthusiasts. Can you tell us more about this organisation?

LM: The Guild was the idea of former Presidents of the Burns Federation who were concerned about the standard of speaking at Burns Suppers, so they

decided to raise that standard. We are only 37 in number, the age Burns was when he died. Membership of the Guild is by invitation only and membership is a guarantee of the speaker's ability and knowledge of the subject.

SC: Say Robert Burns and people think Scotland, however his works have a far reaching international appeal and still translate into today's fast paced society. What is it about Robert Burns and his works do you feel has stood the test of time and crossed so many borders?

LM: Robert Burns occupies a unique place in world literature and rightly so. When he wrote: "Whatever mitigates the woes or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness but whatever injures society at large or any individual in it, then this is my measure of iniquity" he was writing with a compassion for his fellow man which no other writer had ever shown. Elsewhere he wrote: "God knows I'm no saint. I have a whole host of sins to answer for; but if I could, and I believe that I do it as far as I can, I would wipe all tears from all eyes." What a beautiful sentiment! No other writer in any language delivered such a message of love and compassion for his fellow man. Burns Suppers are held in over 200 countries throughout the world. No other figure in world literature is honoured the way he is. He has been admired throughout the world and down through the ages: Abraham Lincoln was a great admirer of Robert Burns as was Kofi Annan. William Wordsworth, one of England's greatest poets, wrote a poem mourning the death of Robert Burns.

SC: And finally Len can you tell where you will be this coming Burns Night?

LM: Yes, I shall be in the Great Hall of Stirling Castle as the guest of Historic Scotland proposing the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns and I can think of fewer places I would rather be and even fewer things I'd rather be doing.

For more information or to connect with Len Murray see: www.lenmurray.co.uk



A Burns Supper in the Highlands of Scotland. Photo: Paul Tomkins/VisitScotland.



Addressing the haggis. Photo: Kenny Lam/VisitScotland.

KINGS CASTLES AND "DURTY" WEE RASCALS

Australian Jim Stoddart was born in a Glasgow Tenement and raised in a Glasgow Housing Scheme 1943-1965. Jim will be taking readers on a trip down memory lane, of a time and place that will never be the same again, and hopes even if only a few people in the Scot's Diaspora have a dormant folk memory awakened, then he shall be more than delighted.



Strictly Dashing White Sergeant

*Deary me, when ah wis wee,
Ah used tae peel the tatties,
But noo ah'm big and ah can jig - ,
Aah can even kiss the laddies.
Ma faither built a wee, wee hoose,
Tae keep me from the laddies,
But the hoose fell in and ah fell oot,
An ah fell in wi' a' the laddies.*

The big sliding doors that usually partitioned off and separated the boys' gymnasium from that of the girls were unexpectedly left wide open. Sometimes these were opened up to provide us with the extra space needed to play our favourite game, British Bulldog. That was when Mr Macdonald, 'Wee Mac', let us put out every piece of apparatus the school owned so that we could keep off the floor by scrambling over mats and vaulting horses, by climbing around the parallel bars and swinging from rope to rope, like Tarzan, to try and avoid being caught by the bulldog. We all loved the rough and tumble of this game and would have played it all day and every day if we had been allowed to. Today was different, for Wee Mac, an ex-paratrooper and built like a classical men's gymnast and whose body always seemed to highlight our puny little frames, was reminding us yet again about the protocols required for the lesson ahead.

Cattle market

For today and for the next few weeks before Christmas the partition doors of the gymnasium were to be opened up for dancing; and the excitement of British Bulldog was to be replaced by the more subdued and tantalising expectation caused by a different set of hormones racing around our pubescent little bodies. As we entered the gym, there lined up before us, stood the pride of Crookston Castle Secondary School's evolving womanhood, our thirteen year old girl students dressed in sky-blue T-shirts and wrap-around navy blue skirts. "Take your partners, gentlemen, for the *Saint Bernard's Waltz*", rang out wee Mac's voice, as we eyed up the talent. This was going to be better than the practice sessions pairing off with another boy, a most embarrassing situation and best to be avoided. "And no running", added Mrs Beveridge, the girls' Physical Education teacher "It's not a horse race".

But it was a cattle market. Those of us who had an eye on prospective partners made bee-lines for the girls we had in our sights; often the girls who we looked longingly at in the corridors or who we tormented through the fence to the girls' playground. We gave up from holding up the walls of the gym to actually touch and hold these same creatures even if only at a respectable and designated distance. Those of us who hesitated were destined to end up with the sad-faced girls with the vacant eyes, the too fat girls, the too skinny girls or the ones who smelled. We, 'the likely lads', gave little thought, at the time, to the sad fact that none of these poor lassies had any choice in the matter of who they had to accept amongst we handsome and mannerly, would-

be dancing partners. For the girls had their own protocols for accepting their partners, laid down by Mrs Beveridge, and to be complied with, without question.

"May I have the pleasure of this dance?" I asked with confidence, holding out my hand to be taken by a pretty girl with a nice smile. She was the younger sister of an equally good-looking friend of my sister. "Certainly, with pleasure", came her immediate response in the words drummed into all the girls by Mrs Beveridge in the secrecy and privacy of the girls' change rooms. As an aside It was there that Isabel Johnston, the sister of my brother-in-law, Robert, reports that the ritual showing of a pair of worn underwear in one hand to be replaced by a clean pair in the other at the end of a perspiring PE lesson underwent a regular inspection by Mrs Beveridge. She didn't say what the girls wore whilst this ritual was happening and both hands held up a pair of knickers. And I was too polite to ask.

Quickstep

I then shyly walked with my partner her hand on my arm, to the dance floor like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. But that's where the illusion ended. *The Gay Gordons* and the *Vienna Waltz*; they were not so difficult; for I could always watch some of the others and try to keep in step with what they were doing. I could even begin to relax, that was until Mrs Beveridge's strident voice rang out. "Come here, boy". I glanced quickly from side to side and behind me. "Yes you, the boy that was being over boisterous during the *Dashing White Sergeant*, a few minutes ago and who appears to have two left feet. It's the Quickstep, slow-slow, quick-quick-slow-, not a foxtrot, - a quickstep." The smiles on the faces of my classmates all around me, as they involuntarily stepped back a little, confirmed my worst fears. "Who me, Miss?"

"Yes you, and don't act so glaikit, boy. Come here at once." Red-faced and

mortified in front of, Ginger Rogers, my dancing partner, I slunk across to the centre of the gym to Mrs Beveridge. She took my right hand and placed it abruptly behind her and onto her lower back. She made me take her right hand in my left

I then shyly walked with my partner her hand on my arm, to the dance floor like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. But that's where the illusion ended.

and gently kicked my feet into position. "Right then, thank you, Mr Macdonald, please start the music again." Where to put my eyes was my first dilemma. When I looked straight ahead my nose seemed only an inch or so from Mrs Beveridge's ample breasts, with a hint of her perfume tantalising my senses for good measure.

Slow, slow - quick, quick slow

I felt utterly trapped and could sense the rest of the class's heightened enjoyment at my fast growing discomfort. Like all thirteen year olds I thought any teacher older than twenty-five was ancient; and Mrs Beveridge was certainly a lot older than twenty-five. Nevertheless, the fact that she was an attractive woman was not lost on us adolescent boys as we sniggered in the change rooms. If other teachers like the grandmotherly 'Maw Whyte' or the prim 'Ma Logan' had held me in the same way I would have gained nothing but sympathy; but the actions of the more sexy Mrs Beveridge brought out the opposite in my trusted pals.

"Slow, slow-quick-quick, slow", rang out from her as she manoeuvred me around the glossy wooden floor of the gym; all the while kicking my feet, puppet-like, to keep in step with the music. I had seen her do the same to other boys with two left feet and I knew that there was nothing personal in her actions. I had giggled on these occasions with the best of them as we watched such ungainly and undignified perambulations around the gym. It was my turn today and I thought I saw an occasional flicker of a smile on 'wee Mac's' face as he watched yet another victim take the floor. "That's a bit better", she said as the music stopped and the other boys politely thanked their partners, "Just think more about what you're doing." I shamefacedly walked back to my own partner having lost all confidence in myself. I was no longer a man of the world, with savoir faire and sophistication. I was a failed dancer.

I wished at that moment that I had inherited the 'rerr pair o' feet' that my father claimed and boasted of. He loved old time and ballroom dancing and with his black patent leather shoes tucked under his arm saw himself as the next Gene Kelly. The romantic in me has in the years since believed that if Mrs Beveridge had taken a different approach to her dance teaching, all might have been well with my skill development and I might have become a good dancer after all. If only she had said, "Now relax boys and girls and listen to the rhythm of the music and with your hearts to the mood of the dance. Let yourself flow and glide to what you feel within. But most of all enjoy the moment; for the purpose of all this is to let you enjoy dancing this Christmas at the school social and more importantly in the years to come."

On the other hand I might have taken not a blind bit of notice of what she said: for the order of the day in the coming years was to be Rock and Roll, The Shake and The Moonie at the Flamingo Dance Hall on Paisley Road West. Slow, slow - quick, quick slow was becoming a bit dated.



Annie Lennox OBE becomes Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University



to serve this outstanding institution in the very best way I can. Following in the footsteps of such an exemplary individual as Muhammad Yunus is somewhat daunting, but I'm very much looking forward to working with everyone in a collaborative way, so I can be of good value to the students and the establishment of the University."

Professor Pamela Gillies CBE, Vice-Chancellor of GCU said: "The vision and inspirational leadership of Chancellor Lennox will continue to set the moral compass, strategic direction and social actions of our University for the Common Good. The students, staff, and lay governors of the University feel privileged indeed that she has accepted the role of Chancellor and are excited by the prospect of what we might now achieve together over the coming years." Professor Yunus remains a lifelong friend to the University as Emeritus Chancellor.

The role of Chancellor involves formal and ceremonial duties, conferring degrees on students, and supporting and promoting the University's ambitions and vision for the common good. The University's values and work to transform lives through education align with Dr Lennox's deep commitment to social justice.

Humanitarian work

Throughout her hugely creative and successful musical career spanning more

than 30 years, Aberdeen born Annie Lennox has so far received an Oscar, four Grammy Awards, eight Brit Awards and four Ivor Novello Awards.

Dr Lennox was inspired to launch the SING Campaign to raise funds to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS after taking part in the inaugural concert of Nelson Mandela's 46664 HIV Foundation in 2003, and visiting Uganda with Comic Relief and Malawi with Oxfam. An Ambassador for UNAIDS, Oxfam, Amnesty International and the British Red Cross, Dr Lennox received the Nobel Woman of Peace Award at the 10th Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in 2011 for her work on HIV/AIDS prevention and control, especially for women and children. In 2011 she received an OBE in the Queen's New Year Honours for her humanitarian work. She founded The Circle, a charitable non-governmental organisation, in 2008. The Circle has a vision of equality for women and girls in a fairer world and supports some of the most disempowered women and girls in the world to change and challenge the injustices they face.

In 2017, Dr Lennox's most recent social philanthropic work was honoured when she received the George Harrison Global Citizen Award. Chancellor Lennox will be formally installed during a ceremony at Glasgow Caledonian University in July 2018.

Royal Academician, singer songwriter, highly-respected social activist and philanthropist, Dr Annie Lennox OBE is the new Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University. Dr Lennox succeeds Nobel Peace Prize Winner Professor Muhammad Yunus, anti-poverty campaigner and founder of the Grameen Bank and Social Business Movement. She is the first ever female Chancellor of the University.

Commitment to social justice

Dr Lennox said: "It is truly a remarkable honour to be invited to become Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University. I am humbled by it, and intend

Tartan of the Month Rabbie Burns



The Scottish Banner is pleased to be offering the Tartan of the Month series highlighting a variety of different, unique and colourful tartans from around the world which are registered with the Scottish Register of Tartans in Edinburgh. The Scottish Register of Tartans was established by an act of the Scottish Parliament in November 2008 and promotes and preserves information about historic and contemporary tartans from Scotland and throughout the world. Text and image use is courtesy of the Scottish Register of Tartans.

Designed by Claire Donaldson of House of Edgar for Robert Nicol of South Methven Street, Perth to commemorate the poet Robert Burns and for use in his dress hire business. This tartan (Ref:6318) was recorded prior to the launch of The Scottish Register of Tartans. **Happy Burns Night!**

From Russia with love of Robert Burns



Russian school pupils Polina Berezanslia, Daniil Romanyuk, Natalia Rozhkova, Ilia Zorin and Lana Shikhar visiting the University of Glasgow.

He is dubbed the people's poet in Russia and his work has been taught in schools along with their own national writers. The Russian's love affair with Robert Burns even saw the country becoming the first in the world to honour his memory with a postage stamp in the mid- 20th century. And modern day Russians are still learning about his works as part of their school curriculum. Recently a group of Russian school pupils toured Scotland to follow in the bard's footsteps. During the trip, organised by the Robert Burns World Federation, the group visited locations around Scotland that had an association with our national bard such as Dumfries,

Edinburgh and Alloway. On 1 November 2017, students took part in a series of short lectures with academics at the University of Glasgow's Centre for Robert Burns Studies.

People's poet

Professor Gerard Carruthers, Co-director of the Centre for Robert Burns Studies and Francis Hutcheson Chair of Scottish Literature, said: "We were delighted to welcome this group from St Petersburg to the University. Robert Burns first became popular in Russia in the 19th century. His works were translated into Russia and he was seen as a great source of inspiration for ordinary Russians. Post the Russian Revolution, he became known as the

people's poet and today he is still taught in schools alongside their own national poets."

Daniil Romanyuk, 16, who plays Robert Burns in the school's Burns production, said: "Robert Burns poetry is full of wonderful language and it is very beautiful. We really appreciate coming to Scotland and the University to learn more about his country." The group of 22 students and leaders from the school travelled to Scotland to learn more about Scotland's national bard after featuring in winning awards in Burns competitions written in Russian. One of the party is the winner of the St Petersburg Robert Burns World Federation Essay.

Ensure the heritage and future of Burns

This visit was organised by the World Federation and St Petersburg Forum and will see the Russian group visiting Burns associations around Scotland. Marc Sherland of the Glasgow District Burns Association who hosted the group during their visit to the city and the University, said: "Our continuing mission for all Burns associations is to ensure the heritage and future of Burns and the Scottish language are celebrated both at home and on the international stage. It is wonderful to see how these Russian children have embraced and enjoy the writings of Scotland's national bard."

The Centre for Robert Burns Studies was established in July 2007. Its mission is the development of research, scholarship and teaching in the area of Robert Burns, his cultural period and related literature.

The Big Tree – Scotland's Tree of the year



The Scottish winner of Tree of the Year with 655 votes was a 200 year-old sycamore tree named The Big Tree, in Orkney. It has been a meeting spot for generations of Orcadians. The Big Tree was originally part of a trio however in 1870s a new owner of the land cut down two of the trees as he was planning to cut the third an outcry and protest from the public saved the final tree, which still stands strong today. It could only be regarded as "big" somewhere like Orkney where there are so few trees, and as Kirkwall grew the Big Tree eventually found itself in a street rather than a garden. In more recent years a public outcry once again saved the Big Tree when the council decided to remove it. In poor health due to its challenging location, and its hollowed out trunk supported by a metal rod, the Big Tree nevertheless continues to find a special place in the hearts of Orcadians. Woodland Trust Scotland Director Carol Evans said: "The competition celebrates grand trees, old trees, historic trees and trees with a story. The Big Tree may be a comparatively modest specimen but it has a big place in Kirkwall's heart. A worthy winner!"

By: Judy Vickers

Scottish snowdrops

A sign of the season

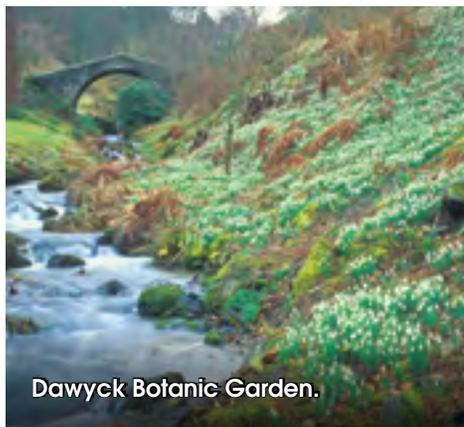
This month throughout Scotland a floral carpet of change will be laid across woodlands, gardens and loch side roads. As the small snowdrop flower (or flower of hope) blooms, on a beautiful display across the country, many of Scotland's top gardens and historic properties are getting ready to celebrate one small flower which provides a great deal of light and hope to the winter weary. The snow drop is one of the first flowers to bloom in Scotland, a sure sign that spring will return and adds another unique aspect to a winter visit to Scotland as Judy Vickers explains.

It's only a tiny flower, yet the diminutive snowdrop is probably one of the most welcome of all blooms in Scotland as it heralds the end of the cold, dark winter months and the beginnings of spring. So well-loved is *Galanthus nivalis* - to give the flowers their Latin name - that they have their own celebration, the Scottish Snowdrop Festival, which runs from the end of January until the beginning of March, covering the period when these dainty perennials are at their best.

Scotland's gardens are rich in snowdrops

With more than 50 venues taking part across Scotland, including private and public gardens, nurseries and garden-related businesses keen to show off their collections, visitors are sure to experience brilliant moments full of winter wonder and beauty.

The event is run by VisitScotland and garden tourism organisation Discover Scottish Gardens with the aim of encouraging locals and tourists alike to enjoy the wonders of Scotland's gardens during the snowdrop flowering period and to highlight the diversity of our snowdrop collections.



Dawyck Botanic Garden.

For a small ticket price, a donation or for free, participating gardens provide fabulous spectacles of white flower carpets, and collections of unusual, rare and specialist snowdrop species, alongside a variety of events and activities celebrating this popular flower.

It's only a tiny flower, yet the diminutive snowdrop is probably one of the most welcome of all blooms in Scotland as it heralds the end of the cold, dark winter months and the beginnings of spring.

Amongst partaking gardens in the Scottish Borders are Dawyck Botanic Garden and Cringletie House. Set amidst a picturesque glen in the Scottish Borders, world-famous Dawyck Botanic Garden provides a magnificent backdrop for a stunning display of snowdrops, popping up their heads in their thousands. Every Sunday during the Festival in February and March, experienced garden guides take Dawyck's visitors for a walk to see the swathes of snowdrops carpeting the banks of Scrape Burn.

Paula Bushell, marketing manager at Dawyck Botanic Garden, said: "Scotland's gardens are rich in snowdrops, with many spectacular species thriving here and creating stunning displays. The flowers flourish brilliantly at Dawyck and in the surrounding area and the Garden looks particularly stunning at this time of year.

Spectacular displays can be seen the length and breadth of the country." At Cringletie House twinkling lights guide visitors along a waterfall path and through a snowdrop carpeted woodland.

Fantastic climate for snowdrops

The Cambo Estate in Fife is a global centre for the snowdrop. In a beautiful wooded glen are some of the best examples of the species, cultivated lovingly by the Erskine family who have lived and owned the estate since 1688. Catherine Erskine, from Cambo Estate, Chair of Discover Scottish Gardens and founder of the Snowdrop Festival in Scotland, said: "We are very lucky in Scotland to have a fantastic climate for snowdrops, with many species thriving here and creating stunning displays. And this year, due to a mild winter, snowdrops are certainly popping their heads out earlier than they have for many years."

As snowdrops need thinning out and redistributing every few years, Lady Erskine and her eight children spent many hours each year digging, dividing and replanting the flowers across the 70 acres of woodland on the estate. The estate is home to 350 different snowdrops and even has a children's snowdrop garden with different varieties labelled.

Another good spot in Fife is the Hill of Tarvit, an Edwardian mansion which was once the home of the Wemyss family. A monument on top of the hill of the same name was built in 1897 to commemorate the Treaty of Garlie Bank. Signed in 1559, that treaty saw Mary, Queen of Scots promise not to attack Cupar. The woodlands below are carpeted with snowdrops at this time of year and a good network of paths set up by the National Trust for Scotland allows great access.

More remote locations are covered by the festival including Abriachan Garden Nursery, where winding paths lead through native woodlands above Loch Ness, and the grounds of Fyvie Castle, at Turriff in Aberdeenshire.

Great seasonal sight

Many of the best snowdrop sites across Scotland are members of Discover Scottish Gardens, a national garden network, which launched in 2015 with funding from VisitScotland. The organisation aims to put Scottish gardens, nurseries and related businesses on the tourist map and to showcase the nation's outstanding horticulture and plant diversity. Discover Scottish Gardens now boasts a wide-reaching membership of more than 130 gardens and garden-related businesses in Scotland.

Malcolm Roughead, Chief Executive of VisitScotland, said: "Over the past decade the Scottish Snowdrop Festival has grown to become an annual calendar highlight with the first snowdrops of the year a sign that spring is just around the corner.

"The festival provides a welcome boost for attractions during a traditionally quieter period of the year and we hope many people will be able to get out and about to enjoy this great seasonal sight around Scotland's most stunning gardens and estates.

"Many of the Scottish Snowdrop Festival locations are within the grounds of some of Scotland's most historic buildings."

The Snowdrop Festival runs from Sunday 28 January to Sunday 11 March. Details of locations and events can be found on the VisitScotland website – www.visitscotland.com. Further displays across Scotland can be found on the Discover Scottish Gardens website – www.discoverscottishgardens.org

Did you know?



- The scientific name for the snowdrop is *Galanthus nivalis*. The name comes from the Greek words "gala", which means milk, and "anthos" which means flower. The second part of the name, "nivalis", originates from Latin language and it means snow.
- A galanthophile is an enthusiastic collector of snowdrops.
- The flower, given its status as one of the first signs of new spring life, has come to symbolise hope and consolation as well as purity.
- Snowdrops are known as natural thermometers. In the mid-part of the 20th century, they would generally appear in February. Since the 1990s, they have been arriving increasingly quickly, an indication of the changing climate.

Lady MacGregor's Scotland



Lady MacGregor of MacGregor – otherwise known as British broadcaster Fiona Armstrong. Fiona is currently news reading for the BBC. But she also leaves the studio from time to time to report on matters Scottish. She lives in Scotland with her husband, the MacGregor clan chief. Sir Malcolm is Convenor of the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs, and Fiona is an active member of Clan Armstrong, so their lives are interwoven with all things tartan. The couple have moved from the borderlands to the lowlands, home is now a white tower house between Perth and Dundee, although filming and writing takes Fiona all over Scotland.



Sir Malcolm MacGregor, The Revd. Dr. Glenn Chestnuff, Lady MacGregor and Jason MacCallum at The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal. Photo courtesy of Ian Aitken.

Greetings from Scotland where a low-key Hogmanay was originally in the wind. The chief and I planned to be home alone. Just be the two of us. And the MacNaughties, of course. The two naughty dogs always close at heel...

As we prepared to bid farewell to 2017, we hoped it would be quiet – and cosy. The chief pouring himself a dram or two. Yours truly drinking wine and perhaps cooking a venison casserole.

For once this would be a calm end to the year. No energetic dancing of reels. No excitement as a handsome, dark-haired male brought the obligatory piece of coal into the house. We would wait in vain for a first-footer to come through the door. Then we are a little off the beaten track.

We would need a blazing fire, of course. Because the weather has been freezing. December brings snow and ice, driving our feathered friends into a feeding frenzy around the bird table. One morning I am tardy with the refills and a cheeky red robin taps impatiently on the glass to let us know the peanut feeder is empty.

A red streaked woodpecker is busy guzzling bits of fat. Meanwhile, a posse of gaudy pheasants hoovers up the seeds that fell to the ground: much to the disgust of the MacNaughties who bark indignantly from their sentry post at an upstairs window.

It has been really cold here in Scotland. But not as cold as I imagined Canada would be. Because since we last talked, the MacGregor and I have once again crossed the Atlantic.

Montreal

The chief has been to Canada several times before, not least with the army.

One of his visits was for a military exercise with Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, a regiment raised to help in the First World War. 'First in the Field' is its boast - and the great outdoors its hardy soldiers train in must surely sort out the men from the boys.

From sugar and steel, to construction and flour production: if there was a success story to tell here, the chances were there was a Scotsman behind it.

Mercifully, our trip involves fewer basic survival skills. This time we are in Montreal - a charming place and a perfect mix of old and new. This is where historic stone churches sit alongside towering glass edifices and Victorian piles. The massive Sun Life building was finished in 1931. One of the first modern skyscrapers, it was said to be the largest in square footage in the British Empire.

We do some sightseeing. But that is not the main reason to be in this part of the world. For we are guests of the St Andrew's Society of Montreal, founded in 1835 and dedicated to the preservation of Scottish culture. Which abounds in this chic city. Montreal may be French in appearance and style, but it was developed mainly by Scots.

Over the years, tens of thousands of economic migrants from the Land of the Thistle made the arduous sea journey to Canada. Many came with nothing but the clothes on their back – and they arrived hungry to prosper.

When they did succeed, they might want to put something back. Grateful for his own education at a Scottish university, businessman and philanthropist, James McGill, founded a university in Montreal. Other Scots transformed the place into a thriving business hub. From sugar and steel, to construction and flour production: if there was a success story to tell here, the chances were there was a Scotsman behind it.

Tartan abounds

Walk round any corner in Montreal and you might see some Celtic influence. A statue to Sir John Macdonald remembers a man who was born in Glasgow and went on to become Canada's first prime minister. Drummond Street recalls an entrepreneur known for banking and railways. McTavish Street is named after a celebrated fur trader.

Scottish sports, too, have left their mark here. The Royal Montreal Curling Club was founded in 1807. It was the first curling club in North America. Ditto, the Royal Montreal Golf Club founded in 1873.

Here in Montreal, the Royal Highland Regiment of Canada is known as The Black Watch. Its soldiers sport kilts and the traditional Red Hackle - and its pipe band excels itself at the St Andrew's Society of Montreal banquet.

This is a glittering affair and our hosts could not be more welcoming. Tartan abounds. So does haggis and whisky. We dance reels and we admire the different plaids. Among them is the new Montreal 1642 Tartan. It is designed to mark the 375th anniversary of the founding of the city. We feel at home - and do not want to leave.

But leave we must – to plan for Christmas and New Year. And guess what? Plans for a peaceful Hogmanay are in ruins. An invitation comes in – and we cannot resist. We are dancing into the wee small hours...

Follow the MacGregor clan chief, Sir Malcolm MacGregor of MacGregor, Convenor of the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs, on twitter.com/theclanchiefs



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By: Nick Drainey



Let it snow

Creating snow and boosting the Highland economy

Nevis Range, looking into the back carries with braveheart chair. Photo Steven McKenna.

Scottish ski resorts are looking to technology to future proof their slopes, income and keep visitors coming to enjoy snowsports across the Highland ski region. Revolutionary technology will be used for the first time at a ski resort in Scotland to guarantee snow for the thousands of skiers and snow boarders who visit the Highlands each year and play an important role in Scotland's winter tourism economy as Nick Drainey explains.

Scotland is gearing up for a “game changing” winter of snowsports with technology being brought in to guarantee a covering of the white stuff necessary for good pistes. With the Winter Olympics taking place in South Korea next month (February) resort owners are hoping for a surge in interest and an increase in skiers and snowboarders on Scottish slopes.

A winter of mild temperatures and high winds took its toll on the snowsports industry last year but this year, technology is being imported from the Alps in the form of snow making machines which can create piste in temperatures as high as Scotland sees on the warmest summer days.

The same machines are being used in South Korea to make sure the showpiece Winter Olympics go without a hitch, whatever the weather.

The Snowfactory

Glencoe Mountain Resort – Scotland's oldest ski and snowboard area - has been running a crowdfunding drive to pay for the TechnoAlpin Snowfactory equipment. Owner and managing director Andy Meldrum said: “These units make 100 cubic meters of snow per day in temperatures of up to 25 degrees. We expect this to be a game

changer for Scottish skiing as it will allow us to guarantee at least some skiing for the whole winter.”

The snowmaking – which is also being introduced at CairnGorm Mountain and The Lecht - takes place in a mobile cooling plant which connects to an electricity and water supply. The snow is made from small dry ice flakes after cooling water to freezing point. It is then pumped out through a snow outlet pipe. The Snowfactory is capable of producing 45 tonnes of snow a day which can be pumped and sprayed a distance of 200m.

Meanwhile, a spokeswoman from Nevis Range said everything possible was being done to make the most of interest generated by the Winter Olympics. She added: ““The engineering team has been working hard over the summer months preparing for a great winter.”

One of the first things the resort had to do to get ready for the season was more basic than high engineering, rubbish had to be collected into 25 large bags and taken off the ski slopes by helicopter. Fencing is a key part for any ski resort because they capture the snow and keep it in place on the slopes, stopping it being blown away, either completely or to a very thin level. At the Nevis Range, in the shadow of “The Ben”,

around 2,500m of fencing have been replaced around the beginners' area.

Scottish winter

As well as the actual ski slopes, huts and lifts also needed upgrades to make them strong enough to survive a Scottish winter's 100mph winds and sub-zero temperatures. At Glenshee, work is due to begin on a new four-person chairlift similar to ones seen in the Alps,

replacing the elderly Cairnwell T-bar tow and transporting three times as many snowsports lovers and much more user-friendly for snowboarders.

Ski-Scotland Chair Heather Negus said: “The snowsports areas are all set to welcome the new season's snow, both natural and factory-produced, as well as our skiing and snowboarding customers. We would encourage them to make sure they are ready for some serious snow



Cairngorm - Looking Across Northern Corries.



Nevis Range, frozen Saltire.
Photo: Steven McKenna.

sliding fun by having their equipment serviced early, working on their muscle toning and buying their season tickets.”

The Scottish snowsports industry is worth around £30 million each year to the Scottish economy, with local businesses including ski and board hire shops, bars, restaurants and hotels benefiting from a winter influx of visitors to the Highlands. Although there have been bumper years in the last decade when huge snowfalls have meant the season can be extended until May, last winter’s mild weather led resort owners to come up with new ideas to create the right conditions. The slopes in the Cairngorms have seen the introduction of the snow making machine for a trial period this winter. Adam Gough from CairnGorm Mountain Ltd said: “This is really significant for CairnGorm Mountain. It is no secret that last season was poor in terms of snowfall and we

simply weren’t able to open for snowsports as often as we would have liked. Being able to trial the Snowfactory for two months is crucial to understand whether this is a viable option for the resort in the long term. If successful, then we believe it will noticeably enhance the snowsports experience at CairnGorm Mountain.”

A guarantee of snow

Susan Smith, Head of Business Development with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), added: “This is a very exciting development for Cairngorm Mountain, which plays such an important role in underpinning the wider tourism sector in the Aviemore area. The technology looks set to offer skiers and snowboarders a guarantee of snow being available whenever they want to visit. For an outdoor business in Scotland, that could be a real game changer.” The Lecht

says its snow factory will create “green snow” because it is powered by the resort’s own wind turbine.

Scotland’s snowsports industry has been keen to promote its environmental credentials and Nevis Range installed its own hydroelectric power scheme in the autumn. Built at the Allt choille Rais - known to skiers and boarders as the Braveheart Burn in the ‘Back Corrie’ of Aonach Mor – it has an electrical output range of 40kW to 1.1MWh from two 550kW Pelton turbines. The scheme is projected to generate 3,700MWh per annum, equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of over 1000 households. The power generated from the turbines is transferred via an 11kV private HV cable to the Nevis Range Gondola Station. The power is then used onsite with any excess being exported to the National Grid.

Peter MacFarlane, managing director of Nevis Range, said: “The idea of building a hydro scheme was an attractive one to Nevis Range. Not only did we want to produce green power with the option to export any excess to the National Grid,



Nevis Range - Boarder on the edge of the back corries. Photo Steven McKenna.

reduce carbon emissions and help mitigate climate change, we were also looking for a way to benefit from the periods of wet and windy weather when our visitor attraction and ski area struggles to generate income from its normal business.”

Did you know?



Cairngorm funicular railway.

- Scotland has 5 major ski centres which are home to the UK’s top ski and snowboard runs:
 - CairnGorm Mountain, near Aviemore
 - Glencoe Mountain Resort between Tyndrum and Ballachulish
 - Glenshee Ski Centre between Blairgowrie and Braemar
 - Nevis Range, near Fort William
 - The Lecht Ski Centre, between Strathdon and Tomintoul
- The snowsports sector is important for Scotland’s rural economy and is worth an estimated £30 million per year, supporting over 600 jobs.



Cairngorm - Coire Cas.

Scotland: *What's new for 2018*

Scotland is the place to be in 2018 with a host of new openings, festivals, events and anniversaries. From the first V&A museum to be opened outside London, to a brand new 90 mile scenic route through the Highlands, and a luxury floating hotel in Edinburgh with royal connections. It is going to be a big year for Scotland. Read on to find out about what is happening in 2018, including VisitScotland's Year of Young People 2018, distillery updates, and amazing new attractions to check out during the year ahead.



The V&A Dundee opening in 2018.

The best of 2018

V&A Dundee - Scheduled to open in the second half of 2018, the V&A Museum of Design Dundee will be the only V&A museum anywhere in the world outside London. It will be the first ever dedicated design museum in Scotland: an international centre for design, a place of inspiration, discovery and learning. Visitors to V&A Dundee will experience the remarkable story of design past, present and future in a Scottish and global context, as well as the processes which underpin great design and the beautiful and inventive objects which tell that story. This is all part of over 1 billion pounds of investment in to the new Dundee waterfront. www.vandadundee.org

Snow Roads Scenic Route,

Cairngorms National Park - The Snow Roads Scenic Route is a 90 mile journey from Blairgowrie to Grantown-on-Spey, crossing the highest public road in Britain and travelling through the outstanding landscapes of the eastern Cairngorms. The road links the communities of Braemar, Ballater and Tomintoul with a range of natural and cultural attractions. Three stunning Scenic Route Installations provide new opportunities to stop and explore this wild and beautiful highland countryside. www.cairngorms.co.uk

Fingal - The Royal Yacht Britannia's New Floating Hotel - Launching in spring 2018, this major investment by the Royal Yacht Britannia will provide the ultimate luxury experience: a floating hotel berthed at The Shore, Edinburgh. The 23 beautifully styled cabins, all named after Stevenson lighthouses, are inspired by Fingal's rich maritime heritage. With a cabin for every occasion - guests will be able to choose their own private balcony, a duplex cabin or, for that special occasion the stunning presidential suite. All of this a short stroll from two Michelin starred restaurants in the vibrant Leith neighbourhood. www.royalyachtbritannia.co.uk

Year of Young People - In 2018, Scotland puts its young people in the spotlight, celebrating their talents, contributions and creating new opportunities for them to shine. The Year of Young People 2018 will offer even more opportunities for both locals and visitors to enjoy a trip to, and around, Scotland. From adventure breaks to road trips, camping holidays to family-friendly days out, there is a range of fantastic things to see and do for young people and their families to enjoy. A year-long programme of events and activities will also give young people in Scotland the opportunity to show the world what they are made of. www.visitscotland.com

New attractions



Kirkcudbright Galleries - The new Kirkcudbright Galleries are opening 24 March 2018. The B listed, 19th century building is located on St Mary Street, in the heart of Kirkcudbright's town centre and within the inspirational landscape of Dumfries and Galloway. The new gallery will celebrate the town's unique artistic heritage, through a dedicated permanent exhibition gallery. This exhibition will explore the history of the artist's colony, including why Kirkcudbright was and still is a desirable location for so many artists and creative people. www.kirkcudbrightgalleries.org.uk

Moat Brae - In 2018, you will be able to discover the place where a legend was born, where *Peter Pan* began. Moat Brae – the enchanted land in Dumfries was the childhood playground of J.M. Barrie, creator of *Peter Pan*, and the place where he first found Neverland. The national centre for children's literature and storytelling will be a place which promotes and encourages imagination and creativity. The attraction will include visiting exhibitions, interactive rooms and a discovery garden. www.peterpanmoatbrae.org

Set the date – Anniversaries



Celtic Connections' 25th

Anniversary - Returning for its 25th anniversary in 2018, Celtic Connections –Scotland's largest winter music festival– will be filling the city of Glasgow with music and entertainment for two weeks. The opening gala celebrates the history of the festival with a variety of artists who have featured prominently over the years, reflecting such Celtic Connections hallmarks as its multi-generational breadth, its internationalism and its collaborative, cross-genre spirit. With pianist David Milligan – one of 1994's original performers – as musical director, expect plenty of mixing and matching among the cast, creating a wealth of fresh connections as well as aptly session-style festivity. www.celticconnections.com

Mackintosh 150th Anniversary

- A major exhibition celebrating the work of one of Glasgow's great artists will happen in 2018, to coincide with the anniversary of his birth. Little-seen Charles Rennie Mackintosh objects from the city's collection will go on display at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum - part of a city-wide celebration of the architect and designer. His work can be seen across the city; at Scotland Street School, The Willow Tearooms and House for an Art Lover. There will also be a fully conserved tearoom, the Oak Room, put on display at V&A Dundee. www.glasgowlife.org.uk

Muriel Spark 100th Anniversary - Led by the National Library of Scotland and Creative Scotland, with the collaboration of many more partner organisations, the Muriel Spark 100 programme celebrates the life and literary achievements of one of Scotland's finest internationally respected writers. The programme boasts a series of events throughout 2018, including talks, exhibitions, readings, publications and screenings. www.murielspark100.com

Frankenstein - 200 years of the Gothic Classic - 2018 will mark 200 years since the publication of Mary Shelley's classic *Frankenstein*. A classic work of gothic literature, which has been adapted into many films, Shelley stayed in Dundee for nearly two years, incorporating the 19th century Tayside town's industrial society into the text. The young writer arrived in 1812 from London looking for rest and recovery from illness. She was housed by family friend William Thomas Baxter at "The Cottage" - a decently-sized home in Dundee's Ferry Road that had originally been constructed as the Countess of Strathmore's dower house. Literary fans can explore the links to the story with the help of Dark Dundee, a company that runs regular tours exploring the darker side of the city. www.darkdundee.co.uk

Time for a wee dram



Fife Whisky Festival - The first ever Fife Whisky Festival will take place in March 2018, at the Corn Exchange in Cupar. The inaugural Fife Whisky Festival will showcase the renaissance of whisky-making in Fife, bringing together whisky connoisseurs and

beginners with the best whisky producers from Fife and beyond. With over 25 different exhibitors, including the Kingsbarns Distillery, Morrison and Mackay, Glen Moray, Isle of Arran and the Glasgow Distillery, there will be a huge range of whiskies to try. www.fifewhiskyfestival.com

Borders Distillery, Hawick - This will be the first distillery to open in the Borders for 180 years. The Borders Distillery will be opening in 2018 with a small visitor centre. The distillery is expected to produce a light, fragrant and floral style of malt whisky - a very typical Lowlands character. www.scotchwhisky.com

Falkirk Distillery - Rosebank Single Malt was last produced in Falkirk in 1993 and reviving the style of this famous whisky is the vision of the Falkirk Distillery Company. The new distillery and visitor centre will have a traditional appearance in a modern facility. Producing its own distinctive triple distilled whisky, the new building will house a world class leading retail, restaurant and business complex. www.falkirkdistillery.com

Ardnahoe Distillery, Isle of Islay - Ardnahoe will become Islay's ninth operational distillery. With a production capacity of just 500,000 litres of alcohol per annum, Ardnahoe will distill a classic peated style of Islay malt, using the finest barley and water from the depths of Loch Ardnahoe itself. Employing wooden washback, Scottish-made stills, traditional worm-tub condensers and the knowledge of one of the whisky industry's most experienced Master Distillers, Ardnahoe will strive to create one of the most enchanting spirits to come out of the renowned Whisky Isle. www.ardnaoedistillery.com

Holyrood Park Distillery, Edinburgh - Situated next to Holyrood Park, this city-centre distillery is located right in the heart of Edinburgh's distilling history - on St. Leonard's Lane. The 180 year old Engine Shed building - steeped in railway history - will be thoughtfully renovated to suit the distilling needs, while making room for the visitors. The visitor centre will be unique: a hands-on, sensory, educational experience that will enlighten and delight people as they explore the world of flavour while touring a working distillery. www.holyroodparkdistillery.com

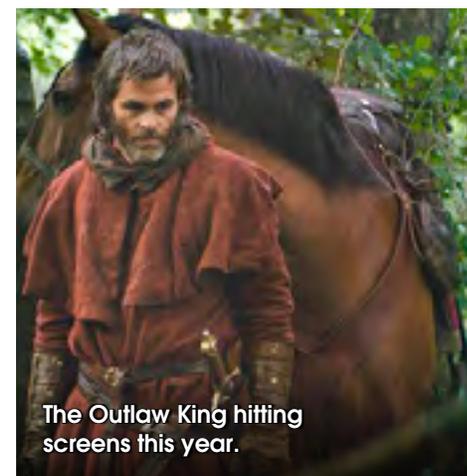
And relax...



The beautiful Japanese Gardens at Cowden Castle.

Japanese Gardens, Cowden Castle - Located north east of Dollar, this Japanese-style garden is set within the park and woodland grounds of the former Cowden Castle estate. The garden itself occupies a relatively low-lying area close to the Cowden estate boundary wall. It is centred on an artificial lake created from what was once a tract of waterlogged ground and is secluded around much of its perimeter by higher ground, shelter-belt plantations and the mature specimen trees and shrubs of the garden itself with the notable exception of an open and panoramic outlook to the west towards the Ochill Hills. www.cowdengarden.com

Films to look out for in 2018...



The Outlaw King hitting screens this year.

Don't miss the following new releases that include scenic filming locations in Scotland:

Outlaw King (2018) - Starring Chris Pine and Aaron Taylor-Johnson, it tells the story how the great 14th century Scottish 'Outlaw King' Robert The Bruce used cunning and bravery to defeat and repel the much larger and better equipped occupying English army.

Mary Queen of Scots (2018) - Saoirse Ronan plays the titular Mary Stuart, and Margot Robbie portrays her cousin Elizabeth I. Mary's attempt to overthrow her cousin the Queen of England, finds her condemned to years of imprisonment before facing execution.

Avengers: Infinity War (2018) - The next film in the superhero franchise stars Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson and Chris Pratt.

For more information on holidays in Scotland, please go to www.visitscotland.com

Hurricane Low Q - Scotland's greatest natural disaster

By: David McVey

This month is the 50th anniversary of Glasgow's January gales which saw Scotland's largest city battered by nature's raw power. A wave of destruction was caused across industrial Glasgow and David McVey recounts his memories from a storm in which 20 people died, 250,000 homes were damaged and more than 2000 people were left homeless.



Remember the 15th of January 1968 quite clearly. I woke up about my normal time to be told I'd slept through the worst of a powerful storm and, sure enough, the wind was still howling menacingly around the house. It wasn't all bad, though, as I was also told there'd be no school today. We lived in Kirkintilloch, near Glasgow, in a sturdy 1950s council house. A few slates and coping tiles had gone flying off our roof. Debris was scattered about the streets, greenhouses had been shattered and garden sheds crushed. But we'd got off lightly, all the same. For Hurricane Low Q has been described as Scotland's greatest natural disaster.

No warning

Hurricane Low Q battered Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man and Northern England, but it caused particular distress and havoc in and around Glasgow. The storm system had actually been born very far from a wintry Scotland, near the Bahamas, but by Sunday, January 14, 1968,

it was whirling towards the Faroe Islands. Late on the 14th, however, it began to change direction and during the night it rampaged through Northern Ireland, crossed the Irish Sea and hurtled across Scotland's Central Belt. The winds were at their most powerful between 3am and 5am, in the middle of a long dark winter's night. And, of course, in a pre-digital age, there had been absolutely no warning.

Online you can find plenty of photographs, and YouTube footage taken in Central Scotland on the 15th January, 1968. The destruction looks appalling but even so it's difficult to comprehend just how widespread and serious the damage was and to imagine the level of disruption caused. Heavy roof slates, brickwork and chimney heads had tumbled onto cars and lorries and, tragically, sometimes people. Much of Glasgow's housing stock at the time was already in poor condition and the storm ruthlessly exposed these flaws. Thousands of homes in the city were damaged and many completely destroyed leaving hundreds of people homeless. Factory chimneys (much more numerous in 1968 than 2018) had toppled as had church towers and spires and, on the Clyde, several great shipbuilding cranes. Twenty people were killed on the day, nine of them in Glasgow. Three men were drowned when a dredger capsized in the gales off Greenock. Astonishingly, another 30 people are

thought to have died subsequently during clearing, demolition and repair work.

Highest recorded wind speed in the UK

Winds in Central Scotland had peaked at over 100mph and a speed of 134mph was recorded on the summit of Great Dun Fell in the Pennines in Northern England. This was the highest recorded wind speed in the UK until a 173mph gust smashed all records on the summit of Cairn Gorm in 1986. That must have been a day to avoid the Cairngorms. On the Tuesday, January 16th, we walked back to school through a devastated streetscape. The following day, two days after the storm, was my 7th birthday. I remember nothing about it. I think things like birthdays must have seemed trivial.

Our local council quickly and efficiently repaired its housing stock, including our roof. However, the damage was so great in the worst-affected areas that clearing, repair and rebuilding took months and sometimes years. In the early 1970s I lived briefly in Dennistoun in Glasgow's East End. Most of the tenement roofs in our block were still draped in giant olive-green waterproof tarpaulins, their roofs still not fully restored after the January Gales years earlier.

Immediate after the gales, 150 soldiers from Edinburgh barracks were sent to help in Glasgow's clearing-up work. Voluntary collections were made subsequently

to help raise funds for those affected, with particularly large sums raised from collections at football matches. Frankie Vaughan staged a benefit gig at the Alhambra Theatre. The government, disappointingly, only provided a £500,000 interest-free loan to the affected areas. Damage in the gales was estimated at around £30m so this this not a great deal of help and had to be repaid anyway.

Lost to memory

The January Gales of 50 years ago are largely unknown except by those of us who experienced them. There was no Internet then, no Twitter, and there were no mobile phones or rolling news TV programmes. In fact, there was scarcely any TV at all until late in the afternoon. If the unaffected parts of the UK heard about the gales at all - and they heard little - it was a long time after Hurricane Low Q had hammered across the North Sea to cause similar disruption in Denmark (it had finally fizzled out by the 18th).

There's no January Gales Memorial in Glasgow or anywhere else, and indeed the hurricane of January 1968 is now largely lost to memory. But on the 50th anniversary it's worth pausing to reflect on what it was and what it caused. Arguably, it at least contributed to the improvement of Glasgow's housing stock. A similar storm now would not destroy anywhere nearly as many domestic buildings. That, at least, is some comfort.

IN SCOTLAND TODAY



Orkney Islands a great place to live

The Orkney Islands enjoy the best quality of life of any rural area in Great Britain, according to the 2017 Halifax Rural Areas Quality of Life Survey. The annual study examines key factors in determining quality of living across the nation, with employment, education, social and environmental factors helping measure the rural communities with the best quality of life on offer. The Orkney Islands scores strongly in employment rate, average earnings and average spend per pupil on education, as well as low anxiety levels, crime rates, and high scores in factors related to well-being and leisure. Although there is an abundance of space, Orkneys has some of the smallest houses in Britain with an average of 4.5 habitable rooms per home.

Also in the wider top 50 places to live in UK, which included towns and cities, the Orkney Islands in took second place after Hart in Hampshire, followed by Rutland in the East Midlands, Wychavon in Worcestershire - and last year's winner Winchester in fifth place.

Paisley's reaction as UK City of Culture 2021 title decided



The team behind Paisley's bid to be UK City of Culture 2021 have thanked the people of the town for their 'incredible effort', while promising Paisley's journey will continue – after Coventry was named the next UK City of Culture. Paisley was the only Scottish place to make the shortlist for the 2021 title, awarded every four years by the UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Paisley's bid was part of a wider plan to transform the town's future using its internationally-significant heritage and cultural story as the one-time home of the world's thread industry and the place which gave its name to the globally-recognised design icon, the Paisley Pattern.

And bid bosses spoke of 'heartbreak mixed with pride' after a two-year campaign which energised the town – while promising the momentum created by the bid will continue. Paisley 2021 bid director Jean Cameron said: "We are

of course heartbroken not to win the title as we know how much the people of the town poured into this – but at the same time those hearts are bursting with pride at what Paisley achieved in the past two years. More than 34,000 people – equivalent to almost half of Paisley's population – added their voices and ideas to the town's bid....and our thanks go to every single one of you for an incredible effort and those ideas will still be taken forward. We are proud to be the only town to ever make the shortlist and by some distance the smallest place to ever get this far in the competition – few places of Paisley's size can claim to have given the world so much over the years, and the town punched above its weight once again. Our bid was based on a belief that culture changes people's lives, and that by harnessing that power while promoting what sets us apart, Paisley can change its future for the better – and the people of the town made that vision their own over the past two years. The next chapter in our story is only just beginning."

Meanwhile Dundee also received a blow as the Dundee 2023 bid team have been advised they will not be able to compete in the European Capital of Culture 2023 competition due to Brexit, the European Commission has confirmed.

The reds are back in Aberdeen



Recent feeder box monitoring and camera trapping carried out in Countesswells and Foggieton Woods, near Aberdeen, indicates a rosy future for red squirrels. The work by Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) and Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels (SSRS) builds on many years of conservation work and monitoring and indicates that red squirrel numbers in the area are increasing - and that the woods are free from non-native grey squirrels.

Philippa Murphy, Environment Manager for the FES team in the area, said "We put some sticky tape on the feeder boxes to collect hairs and these, once analysed, showed that the number of red squirrels recorded in these woodlands are increasing year on year, suggesting more and more red squirrels are taking

advantage of the free treats on offer. But the best news is that we've got no trace of grey squirrels, which tend to drive reds away from local habitats. It's like getting a thumbs up from the red squirrels for our sensitive management of the forests around Aberdeen."

As well as following best practice to manage the woodlands for red squirrels, other measures taken include minimising the amount of large clearfell sites and maximising the tree species favoured by red squirrels. There has been no evidence of grey squirrels in the area for the last two years.

All aboard at Barry Links

New UK wide figures have been released and shows that a station in Angus is the least used in Britain. Barry Links station was used by just 24 passengers during 2016-17, according to data produced by the Office of Rail and Road. This is in quite a contrast to London's Waterloo Station which was the country's busiest station with some 99.4 million passengers - up by more than 250,000 on the previous year. Whilst in Scotland Glasgow Central and Edinburgh Waverley are the nation's busiest railway stations, with 32,060,134 and 22,582,342 entries and exits respectively. Barry Links is on the line between Carnoustie, which hosts golf's Open Championship next year, and Dundee, and is served by just one ScotRail train a day in each direction, Monday to Saturday. There is no ticket office, ticket machines, toilet or CCTV, and the station is not staffed. The two passengers who enter or exit the station on average each month can use bicycle parking facilities.

Freedom of the City of Aberdeen: Denis Law honoured in conferral ceremony



Denis Law CBE has been awarded the Freedom of the City of Aberdeen at a ceremony underpinned by centuries of tradition. The sporting hero and charity ambassador had the honour bestowed upon him at a special event at the Beach Ballroom in his home city. While the Freedom of the City dates back to the 12th century, current features of the modern ceremony first become apparent in the 18th century. Key features of the Freedom of the City conferral included the reading of the Burgess Ticket, which is an extract from the Freedom Roll, the signing of the Freedom Roll, the presentation of a casket to hold the Burgess Ticket and the pinning of the ticket to the honorary freeman's hat. Denis wore a Scotland cap, provided by the SFA for the occasion. Denis Law said: "To get the Freedom of the City of Aberdeen is a real highlight in my life and something I will never forget – and to get another Scotland cap is fantastic! It was very emotional, looking around the

audience and seeing all of our family and people from Aberdeen. It was a proud day for our children and grandchildren - they have never been to something like this and it was a very special event."

The Lord Provost of Aberdeen Barney Crockett said: "Today's ceremony was a fantastic occasion to honour an incredible individual, a man who put Aberdeen on the world map and who has never forgotten his roots. He will always be recognised a hero for his sporting achievements, but Denis is also a charity figurehead and has been a driving force for the efforts of the Denis Law Legacy Trust in Aberdeen. Through the Trust he is making a lasting difference to the lives of young people in the city and he deserves enormous credit for that. Denis Law has received the Freedom of the City today and with it comes the best wishes and goodwill of everyone in Aberdeen."

The ceremony marked the first conferral to take place in Aberdeen since Scotland the What? received the honour in 2008 and 18 years since fellow football legend Sir Alex Ferguson was honoured. Previous recipients include international figures such as Mikhail Gorbachev and Nelson and Winnie Mandela as well as eminent UK politicians, including Sir Winston Churchill.

Record number of Scots going to Scottish universities



The number of Scottish residents going to university in Scotland has reached its highest ever level, latest figures show. In 2017, 34,830 applicants living in Scotland were accepted for a place at a Scottish university – an increase of more than 1,000, or 3%. Scottish students represented 70% of all acceptances to universities in Scotland. The number of English students accepted at Scottish universities also increased by 2.8 per cent to the highest figure on record. The figures also show that students from European Union (EU) countries accepted to Scottish universities fell by 10 per cent, while the number from outside the EU increased by 4.3 per cent.

Further and Higher Education Minister, Shirley-Anne Somerville, said: "These figures show that more people of all ages from Scotland are being accepted to study at Scottish universities. This is testament to the excellent reputation of our universities, but also shows that more people are benefiting from access to tuition-free higher education. Not only is this encouraging our brightest and best to stay in Scotland to study, it is also giving more people the opportunity to go on to university by removing one of the most significant financial barriers. While this is encouraging, there is still much more work to do to widen access to university to students from Scotland's most deprived areas – and this remains a key focus of the Scottish Government and the sector."

THIS MONTH IN SCOTTISH HISTORY

Names & Places In The News From Today And The Past

1 - King James V married Magdalene of France. **1537**

1 - Charles II crowned at Scone, the last coronation on Scottish soil. **1651**

1 - James Stewart the "Old Pretender" died. **1766**

1 - First celebration of New Year in Scotland on this date (was March 25th till then). **1600**

1 - The Beatles opened a 5-day tour of Scotland to promote their first single *Love Me Do*. **1963**

2 - Ibrox Park disaster, 66 supporters killed on stairway 13. The disaster led to the rebuilding of Ibrox Park as an all seater stadium. **1971**

3 - O H Mavor (James Bridie) physician and prolific playwright, born in Glasgow. **1888**

3 - Poet and critic Edwin Muir died. **1959**

4 - The death of George Cathcart. Cathcart was a doctor from Edinburgh who instigated the annual series of concerts now known as the Proms, short for promenade concert. **1951**

5 - 89,000-tonne Liberian-registered Braer oil tanker, carrying 84,500 tonnes of crude oil, hit rocks on Shetland Isles in heavy seas. **1993**

6 - A.J. Cronin, author of *Keys of the Kingdom* and creator of the British television series *Dr Finlay's Casebook* died. **1981**



7 - Glasgow University founded at the request of James II and Bishop Turnbull. **1451**

8 - The first newspaper in Scotland was published. *Mercurius Caledonius* offered coverage of "the Affairs now in Agitation in Scotland, with a Survey of Foreign Intelligence." It ceased publication on 28 March after only nine issues. **1661**

8 - King Alexander I crowned. **1107**

8 - Earl of Stair, held responsible for the massacre of Glencoe, died. **1707**

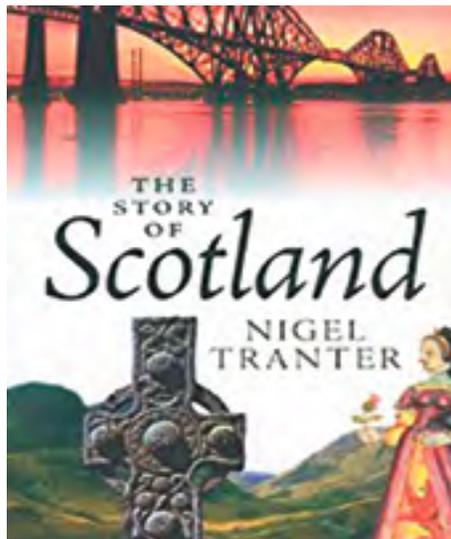
8 - Rationing of sugar, bacon and butter introduced. **1940**

9 - The Diocese of Glasgow was elevated to an Archdiocese by Pope Innocent VII. **1492**

9 - Income tax introduced for the first time. **1799**

9 - The first women's golf tournament took place in Scotland, at Musselburgh. **1811**

9 - Liner *Queen Elizabeth I*, launched at John Brown's shipyard, Clydebank, in 1938, caught fire and sank in Hong Kong where it was to serve as a floating marine university. **1972**



9 - Author and *Scottish Banner* columnist Nigel Tranter died. Tranter published more than 130 novels and biographies during his 60-year-long career, most covering famous Scots and their place in the country's history. **2000**

10 - Pop star Rod Stewart born. **1945**

11 - John A MacDonald, first Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, born at 20 Brunswick Street in Glasgow. **1815**

11 - The Scottish National Blood Transfusion Association was created. This independently funded service was responsible for Scotland's blood and blood products. The National Blood Transfusion Service in England and Wales was not set up until the 26 September 1946. **1940**

12 - John Buchan, author (39 Steps etc) and diplomat (Governor General of Canada, 1935/1940) died. **1940**

13 - Death of St Mungo, patron saint of Glasgow (and also known as St Kentigern). **603**

13 - Mary Slessor, missionary in West Africa and known to many as "Ma", died in Calabar. **1915**



14 - Skye Terrier Greyfriars Bobby died after staying by his master's grave for 14 years. The terrier belonged to Edinburgh policeman John Gray who died of tuberculosis in 1858. His grave stone reads: Let his loyalty and devotion be a lesson to us all. A statue of Bobby is now one of the most popular in Edinburgh. **1872**

14 - Alexander Graham Bell demonstrated his telephone to Queen Victoria. She made the first call in the British Isles from her residence on the Isle of Wight. **1878**

15 - Neil M Gunn, author of *The Silver Darlings* and many other books and short stories, died. **1973**

16 - Retreating Jacobite army defeated Hanoverian forces at Battle of Falkirk. **1746**

16 - Treaty of Union of Scottish and Westminster Parliaments ratified. **1707**



17 - Duddingston Curling Society became formally organised, one of the earliest in the history of curling - though Kilsyth lays claim to a date of 1716. Curling dates back to the sixteenth century in Scotland, with Scots taking the sport across the world where it still flourishes. **1795**

17 - Author Compton Mackenzie (*Whisky Galore* etc) born. *Whisky Galore* is based on a real life true story. In the middle of war time rationing, the *SS Politician* ran aground with a cargo of 264,000 bottles of malt whisky. **1883**

18 - Death of Sir John Pringle, President of the Royal Society from 1772-1778 and physician to King George III. Sometimes called the "father of modern military medicine", the Scottish-born physician focused on the need to adopt a clean medical environment for the treatment of wounded soldiers. He also coined the term "influenza". **1782**

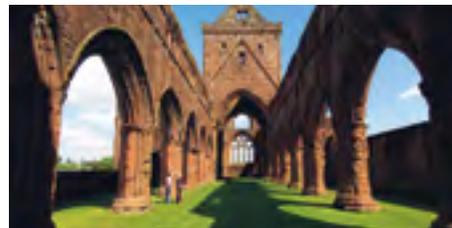
18 - The launch of the Scottish Labour Party. The inaugural meeting of the breakaway party was held in Glasgow. It was formed as a result of the dissatisfaction several Labour MPs felt with their party over its stance on devolution for Scotland. **1976**

19 - A Scottish army under the Earl of Leven crossed the river Tweed into England. It remained in England for three years playing an important part in the Civil War. **1644**

19 - Birth of James Watt, mathematical instrument maker, developed the steam engine, invented the condenser and copying machine. **1736**

20 - Benny Lynch crowned world flyweight champion. Recognised as probably the greatest boxer Scotland has produced, Lynch enjoyed a meteoric rise to the top of the sport. **1937**

20 - The chemist Thomas Graham, was born. Graham is famous for discovering the diffusion rate of gasses, which is known as "Graham's Law". He is also called the "father of colloid chemistry", and was the author of, *Elements of Chemistry*. **1805**



21 - Sweetheart Abbey, near Dumfries, founded by Devorguilla, mother of John Balliol. **1290**

22 - Poet George Gordon Byron (later Lord Byron) born. He moved to Aberdeen at the age of four and attended Aberdeen Grammar School. The title was inherited from an uncle. **1788**

23 - James Stewart, the Regent Moray on the abdication of Mary Queen of Scots, murdered in Linlithgow, triggering civil war. **1570**

23 - William Hamilton, the Scottish Labour politician, died. He was MP for Fife West, 1950-74, and Fife Central, 1974-87. He became a controversial public figure due to his outspoken advocacy of Scottish independence and his dislike of the Royal Family. **2000**

24 - Birth of Publius Aelius Hadrianus, who built Hadrian's Wall to cut off Scotland from the rest of Britain. **76**

24 - First train over Forth Rail Bridge. **1890**

25 - Robert Burns born Alloway. Burns Night is celebrated around the world on this night. **1759**



26 - One o'clock gun fired for the first time from Edinburgh Castle. The gun was created to complement a time ball on Nelson's Monument which was not reliable during Edinburgh foggy days. **1861**

26 - The 1st Glasgow Scout troop was registered, the first to be formed. **1908**

26 - Kirkpatrick MacMillan, inventor of the bicycle, died. The thought of patenting his invention or trying to make any money out of it never crossed MacMillan's mind, but others saw its potential, and soon copies began to appear. However, Macmillan was quite unconcerned with the fuss his invention had prompted, preferring to enjoy the quiet country life he was used to. **1878**

27 - *Glasgow Herald* newspaper first published. It is the longest continuously published daily newspaper in Britain. Today the paper is simply called *The Herald*. **1783**

27 - First public demonstration of TV by John Logie Baird. **1926**

28 - William Burke, murderer and body snatcher of "Burke and Hare" fame, executed. The duo were accused of killing 16 people over the course of 12 months, in order to sell their cadavers as "subjects" for dissection. **1829**

29 - Earl Haig, Commander in Chief of British forces 1915-18, founder of the British Legion, died. **1928**



29 - The first adoption of GMT by Scotland. The subject has been the source of controversy ever since. **1848**

30 - King Charles I executed. His execution caused a change of sides by most of the Scots who had previously supported the Parliamentarians in the English Civil War as, for all his faults, Charles was still a Scottish Stuart king. **1649**

31 - Lachlan MacQuarie, "Father of Australia" born Ulva. Lachlan Macquarie was the governor of the colony of New South Wales from 1810 to 1821. **1761**

31 - Charles Edward Stewart, "Bonnie Prince Charlie" died in Rome. **1788**

31 - *Princess Victoria*, Stranraer-Larne ferry, sank in a storm with the loss of 133 lives; 44 were rescued. **1953**

31 - 270 Royal Navy servicemen were killed whilst on practice missions with other Royal Navy vessels in the Firth of Forth. **1918**



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For Membership Information contact:
Secretary: Noel Wright (03) 9306 7495
Email: noelwright@netspace.net.au



Clan Morrison Society of North America

Arthur G. Morrison
220 South Orchard Drive
Burbank, CA 91506

June Alvarez-Fetzer
Membership-Treasurer
8516 Lookout Cliff Pass
Austin, TX 78737-8539
www.clanmorrison.net

Membership cordially invited from those who are connected with this great Clan, i.e., Morrison, Morison, Gilmour, Gilmer, Gilmore, Murrison or descendants of eligible name.

CLAN SCOTT AUSTRALIA GROUP

Clan Chief: The Duke of Buccleuch K.B.E
Commissioner: Heather de Sylva

Membership welcome from Scotts and Septs: Balwearie, Harden, Laidlaw, Geddes & Langlands.
Info: Secretary, PO Box 320, Maclean, NSW, 2463

E: heatherdesylva@bigpond.com
W: clanscottaustaliagroup.moonfruit.com




Clan WARDLAW Association
Founded 2004

Worldwide organization for all Wardlawes or related families.
We invite you to join us. Email: clanwardlaw@yahoo.com

'Wardlaw Ivermair!'
www.clanwardlaw.com
Wardlaw Tartan and Ancestry Books

Scottish Heritage USA, Inc.

P.O. Box 457
Pinehurst, NC 28370

Welcomes membership of anyone interested in the exchange of people and ideas between Scotland and the United States.

Write or phone for our free brochure.
www.scottishheritageusa.org
email: shusa@embarqmail.com
(910) 295-4448

Clan Munro Association, U.S.A

We are the only national organization of Munro in the U.S.A. affiliated with the Clan Munro (Association) of Scotland.

COME JOIN US!
Web site: **www.Clanmunrousa.org**
Write: Heather Munro Daniel
4600 Lloydrown Road
Mebane, NC 27302



Clan Scott Society

Membership is invited from all descendants of the surname Scott; associated families Balwearie, Bucklew, Geddes, Harden, Laidlaw, and Langlands (however spelled); as well as those who have an interest in the heritage of the Middle March of the Borders of Scotland.

Clan Scott Society
PO Box 13021
Austin, TX 78711-3021
USA
Info@ClanScottSociety.org • www.ClanScottSociety.org



Scottish Associations and Societies

The Scottish Australian Heritage Council



Founded at a meeting held in Sydney 18 June 1981
Welcomes membership from all Australians of Scottish descent.
Applications for membership can be obtained from:
The Hon Secretary, SAHC
Susan Cooke tel: 02 6355 4158
Email: alfredhcooke@gmail.com
www.scottishaustralianheritagecouncil.com.au



Murray Clan Society of North America

Applications for membership are invited from Murray's and the following allied families: Balneaves, Dinsmore, Dunsmore, Fleming, Moray, Murrie, Neaves, Piper, Pypier, Smail, Smeal, Small, Smeale, and Spalding.

In Canada contact:
William J.M. Murray
1001 Cordero Crescent
Campbell River, BC V9H 0C3

In the U.S. contact:
Robert W. Murray
2000 Cambridge Ave #329
Wyomissing, PA 19610-2738



Clan Shaw Society

Invites membership or inquires from all: Shaw, Ayson, Adamson, Esson, MacAy, MacHay, Shiach, Sheach, Sheath, Seith, Seth, Skaith, Scath and Shay.

Mike Shaw
Secretary
2403 West Cranford
Denison, TX 75020



Australian Scottish Community (Qld) Inc.

Promoter of International Tartan Day, Brisbane, Queensland
PO Box 3188, South Brisbane 4101
Bi-Monthly Newsletter. All things Scottish
All persons of Scottish Descent welcome. www.aussie-scots.org.au, Email: secretary@aussie-scots.org.au, Ph 07 3359 8195

Scottish Gaelic Society of Victoria

www.scottishgaelicsocietyvic.org
Founded in 1905

Scottish Gaelic Choir:
Wednesdays 10:30 am to 12:30 pm during school terms at The Kildara Centre, rear of 39 Stanhope Street, Malvern.

Language Class: Wednesdays 7:00 to 8:30 pm during school terms at the Celtic Club, Cnr Queen and Latrobe Streets, Melbourne.

Contact Maurice Fowler 0408 223 277
Email: scottishgaelicsocietyvic@gmail.com




Clan Pollock

Among the most ancient families of Scotland. If you are a descendant of Pollock, Pollok, Pook, Polk, Polke, Paulk, Poalke, Poulk, Poolke, Pogue - you are cordially invited to contact:

A. D. Pollock, Jr.
PO Box 404
Greenville, KY 42345
e-mail: apollockis@comcast.net



Clan Sinclair Australia

Membership and enquiries from all Sinclairs, Sinclair Septs and Sinclair descendants

For further info contact

President Wayne Sinclair 0417 146 174
Secretary Liane Sinclair (03) 9348 2663

E: clansinclairaustralia@hotmail.com



Comunn Gàidhlig Astràilia (The Scottish Gaelic Association of Australia) is a non-profit organisation which supports the language and culture of Scottish Gaels.

Ruaraidh MacAonghais, Neach Cathrach (Convener)
Phone: 04 0482 2314 E-mail: fos@orggaelic.org
Web: www.orggaelic.org
Mail: PO Box A2259, SYDNEY SOUTH 1235



The Society of St. Andrew of Scotland (Queensland) Limited
ABN 30 093 578 860

Invites membership of all people of Scottish descent or association.

The Secretary, P.O. Box 3233, South Brisbane, BC, QLD, 4101, Australia. www.standrewsociety.com



Clan Pringle Association (North America)

Membership cordially invited from Pringle/Prindle descendants and other interested parties.
www.clanpringle.org.au

William L. Pringle, III
e-mail: williampringle3@gmail.com
Clan Pringle Assoc. (North America)
6538 140th Ave., Holland, MI 49423



Clan Skene Association, Inc.

Invites membership from Skene and septs Cariston, Carney/Carnie, Currehill, Dyas, Dyce, Dyer, Hall, Halyard/Hallyard, MacGalliard, Rennie, and Skains.

Al McGalliard
President
273 Amy Clegg Drive
Gray, GA, 31032
Email: alrx95@gmail.com

CALEDONIAN CLUB OF FLORIDA WEST (SARASOTA, FL)

2017 Spring Schedule:
Feb. 4: Scottish Games
Mar. 25: Thistle Ball
Apr. 2: Kirkin' O' Tartans
May 6: Annual General Luncheon
Summer Socials: TBA



Contact: Robert Howard, President 941-376-5514
Email: roberthoward200@gmail.com
Web site: www.caledonianclub.org



St. Andrew's Society of Vermont

P.O. Box 484
Essex Junction, VT 05453

Invites membership inquiries.
David Campbell - President (802) 878-8663



Ross Clan in Australia

The clan is active again in Australia for information contact Commander Des Ross (By appointment David Ross Bt Chief of Clan Ross and Bahagowan)

We would be pleased to hear from anyone with Ross Clan heritage and interest

contact Commander Des Ross at lonepiper.ross@gmail.com



The Stewart Society

Welcomes Stewarts, however spelled, by name, birth, or descent, from all over the world. Annual Gathering in historic, Stewart-related properties in Scotland. Newsletter. Annual magazine.

Please inquire:
The Secretary
53 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2HT,
Tel/Fax 0131 220 4512 www.stewartssociety.org

Daughters of Scotia

A 100 plus year old fraternal order for women of Scottish birth or descent or married to men of Scottish birth or descent whose purpose is to keep alive our Scottish heritage and customs.

For membership information contact:

Ms. Cynthia Ridings
Grand Recording Secretary
2566 Galloway Road
Blue Ridge, GA 30513
706-632-8510
cynthiar5@yahoo.com <http://www.daughtersofscotia.org>

Victorian Scottish Union
Established 1905

Umbrella group representing the interest of Scottish Clans and Societies in Victoria.

Affiliated Clans & Societies for 2013-2014:

Balarat Highland Dancing	Geelong Highland Gathering Association
Balmoral Highland Dancing Society	Geelong Scottish Dance
Begonia City Highland Dancing Society	Glenbrae Celtic Dancers
Brunswick Scottish Society	Horsham & District Highland Dancing Club
Clan Cameron	Kilmore Celtic Festival
Clan Donald Victoria	Maryborough Highland Society
Clan Grant	Mornington Peninsula Caledonian Society
Clan Lamont Australia	Scottish Country Dance Victoria Society
Clan Macdonald Yarraville Inc	St Andrews First Aid
Clan Mackenzie of Australia	The Robert Burns Club of Melbourne
Clan Maclean Australia	The Royal Caledonian Society
Clan Sinclair Association	Warrnambool & District Caledonian Society
Glenmaggie Scottish Folk Festival	Warrnambool Caledonian Highland Dancing Society

Jan Macdonald: Secretary
Victorian Scottish Union
T: 03 9360 9829 M: 0438 584 930
E: secretary@victorianscottishunion.com
www.victorianscottishunion.com



CLAN ROSS AMERICA
ASSOCIATION AND FOUNDATION MERGED

Many Names - One Clan

Liz Ross, President
Robert Aumiller, Membership Secretary
czamembership@abcglobal.net
PO Box 6341
River Forest, IL 60305
www.clanross.org



Clan Sutherland Society of Australia

The Society welcomes membership of all bearers of the Sutherland name and any of their septs - (Cheyne, Duffus, Frederith, Mowat (or any variation of the spelling)).

Marie Hodgkinson
212 MacKenzie Street
Toowoomba, 4350
Queensland, Australia
e-mail: william.hodgkinson@bigpond.com.au
<http://goldenvale.wix.com/clansutherlandaus>



Clan Sutherland Society of North America, Inc.

The Society cordially invites membership of all Sutherlands (however the name is spelled) and of the associated families: Cheyne, Duffus, Gray, Frederith, Mowat and Oliphant.

Richard Langford
1106 Horseshoe Lane
Blacksburg, VA 24060
e-mail: richard@langfordmail.net



Illinois Saint Andrew Society

Illinois' oldest, largest Scottish organization and owner of The Scottish Home. A unique "assisted living" facility located in a beautiful wooded setting.

For more information on Society membership and programs or The Scottish Home, contact
Gus Noble, President
708-447-5092 or www.chicago-scots.org

SCOTTISH BANNER EVENTS

Having a Clan event? Know of a highland games? Know where the pipes will be playing? Let Scottish Banner readers know of Scottish events both near and far with the Scottish Banner events page. Send us your community event, concert, meeting or anything with a Scottish twist! Please submit events either online at www.scottishbanner.com/events or email info@scottishbanner.com. Please ensure you submit your event in the exact format we use below, events not submitted in this way cannot be guaranteed to be printed. Events will run both in print and online and is a free service.

CANADA

JANUARY 2018

13 Montréal, QC - Sir John A's Great Canadian Kilt Skate

Get your kilts and skates on at Natrek Skating Rink, Vieux Port, 333 Rue de la Commune O. Info: 514-570-0491 or www.kiltskate.com

19 Calgary, AB - 3rd Annual Burns Night

Dinner with outstanding bill of fare, auction and ceilidh dancing at Confederation Park 55+ Activity Centre, 2212-13th Street NW. Info: Janyne Bertram: 403 585 3842.

19 Toronto, ON - St. Andrew's Society

of Toronto Burns Night
Banish the mid-winter blahs with some "richt guid" cheer at the University Club of Toronto. Info: www.standrews-society.ca

19 Calgary, AB - The Calgary Burns

Club Annual Burns Supper
Celebrate the Bard at Telus Convention Centre. Info: www.calgaryburnsclub.com

20 Burnaby, BC - Burns Night Supper

With the Grand Master of the Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon at Slovenian Hall 5762 Sprout St. Info: 604 298 6922.

20 Regina, SK - Robbie Burns Tartan Ceilidh

Join the Sons of Scotland, Camp Balmoral #177 for the 119th Annual Robert Burns Dinner and evening of Scottish entertainment (aka Ceilidh) at St. Martin's Parish Hall, 4720 Castle Rd. Info: SOS_BurnsNight@yahoo.com

20 Summerside, PE - Robbie Burns Fundraising Gala

Presented by the College of Piping and Celtic Performing Arts of Canada at Credit Union Place, featuring a Scottish Ceilidh, food and music. Info: 902-436-5377 or www.collegeofpiping.com

20 Montreal, QC - St Andrew's Society

of Montreal Burns Supper
An evening to celebrate Robert Burns at the University Club. Info: 514-842-2030 or www.standrews.qc.ca

20 Ottawa, ON - Sir John A's Great Canadian Kilt Skate

Get your kilts and skates on at Lansdowne Park Skating Court. Info: www.kiltskate.com

21 Airdrie, AB - The Airdrie Scots Burns Supper

4th annual Robbie Burns dinner and show. Info: www.airdriescots.ca

25 Toronto, ON - 2018 Burns' Statue Celebration

Join the St. Andrew's Society of Toronto and gather at the Burns Statue in Allan Gardens to honour Burns on the day and then repair to a cosy pub to continue with the festivities. Info: www.standrews-society.ca

25 Nationwide - Happy Burns Night

A night to celebrate the life and works of Robert Burns. The tradition of the Burns Night Supper was first held in 1801 by the poet's friends, five years after his death. Today events take place around the world with Scottish music, poetry, food, drink and dance.

26 Hawkesbury, ON - Whisky Jazz

A celebration of the life and poetry of the poet Robert Burns, under the musical direction and the demistification of whisky by Gaëtan Pilon, this evening invites you to rediscover the different tastes of Scotch whisky at Centre Culturel Le Chenail. Info: www.lechenail1975.ca

27 Cobourg, ON - Robert Burns Dinner & Ceilidh

Robert Burns dinner with live entertainment by Madman's Window, The Lindsay Rose Highland Dance Company and the Cobourg Legion Pipes and Drums at LiUNA Local 183 Hall, 560 Dodge St. Info: 905-372-7158 or www.cobourghighlandgames.ca/burns

27 Pointe-Claire, QC - West Island Robbie Burns Night

Celebrate one of Scotland's most famous individuals, Robert Burns with Scottish music, food and fun at the Holiday Inn, 6700 Trans-Canada Hwy. Info: Devin Shanks 514 217 4781 or www.shanksevenets.ca

27 Calgary, AB - 4th Annual Rocky Mountain

Pipe Band Robbie Burns Dinner
Burns Dinner fundraiser in celebration of Scotland's most beloved poet with live entertainment, highland dancing, great "craic", and of course, bagpipes and drums at Royal Canadian Legion Chapelhow Branch 284, 606 38 Ave Northeast. Info: www.rmpb.ca

27 Toronto, ON - Sir John A's Great Canadian Kilt Skate

Get your kilts and skates on at Nathan Phillips Square 100 Queen St W. Info: 416-482-1250 or www.kiltskate.com

27 Saskatoon, SK - Sir John A's Great Canadian Kilt Skate

Get your kilts and skates on at Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink at PotashCorp Plaza, 945 Spadina Crescent. Info: www.kiltskate.com

FEBRUARY 2018

9 - 10 Regina, SK - Mid-Winter Celtic Festival

Celtic music, workshops and a concert featuring the amazing Fred Morrison, on his second visit to the Canadian prairies. Info: www.crbp.org/mwcf

11 Calgary, AB - Sir John A's Great Canadian Kilt Skate

Get your kilts and skates on at Calgary Olympic Plaza, 228 8 Ave S. Info: 403-975-8902 or www.kiltskate.com

22 Montréal, QC - WhiskyFête 2018

Montreal's most unique Scotch Tasting event at the Mont Royal Club. Info: www.whiskyfete.org

USA

JANUARY 2018

6 - 7 Marathon, FL - Florida Keys Celtic Festival

Show your Clan pride at Marathon Community Park, MM49 US Hwy 1 Ocean Side. Info: www.floridakeysceleticfestival.com

12 - 14 Kansas City, MO - Winter Storm

The pipes and drums event; consisting of master classes, concerts, and competitions. Info: www.mhaf.org

13 - 14 Winter Springs, FL - Central

Florida Scottish Highland Games
Experience traditional highland athletics, dance, art, music, culture, food and a Gaelic spirit at Central Winds Park, 1000 Central Winds Dr. Info: www.flascot.com

13 Sacramento, CA - Burns

Celebration & Whisky Tasting
Hosted by Kilwinning Lodge 203, a celebration of the Baird himself at Oak Point Event Center, 4366 Auburn Blvd. Info: www.facebook.com/Kilwinning203

19 New York, NY - The American-Scottish

Foundation 23rd Burns Night Gala Celebration
Honor and celebrate Scotland's national bard, Robert Burns, in words and music at The University Club, One West 54th St. Info: 212 605 0338 or www.americanscottishfoundation.com

20 Las Vegas, NV - St. Andrews Society of

Southern Nevada Burns Supper
Celebrate the Bard with the the St. Andrew's Society of Southern Nevada at Sunset Gardens, 3931 E Sunset Rd. Info: www.sassn.com

20 Denver, CO - 2018 SASC Burns Supper

Presented by St. Andrew Society of Colorado at Denver Marriott Tech Center, 4900 S. Syracuse St. Info: www.coloradoscots.com

20 Cedar Rapids, IA - Hawkeye Area Grand

Gaelic Isles Society Burns Dinner 2018
Annual Robert Burns dinner at St. Wenceslaus Church. Info: www.haggis-iowa.com

25 Nationwide - Happy Burns Night

A night to celebrate the life and works of Robert Burns. The tradition of the Burns Night Supper was first held in 1801 by the poet's friends, five years after his death. Today events take place around the world with Scottish music, poetry, food, drink and dance.

26 - 27 Fort Myers, FL - The 15th Annual

Caloosahatchee Celtic Festival
Celtic music and more at Centennial Park. Info: 941-625-8544 or www.celticheritageproductions.com/calooosahatchee.htm

26 New Franklin, OH - The Scottish American

Society 3rd Annual Burns Dinner
Haggis, neeps & tatties, pipers, Highland dancers and more at the Syb Party Center, 4157 Hudson Dr. Info: Margaret Frost 330 903-4573 or www.scottishamericansociety.org

27 Scotts Valley, CA - Loch Lomond

Celtic Society Burns Supper
A night of music, food, drinks, friends and poetry at Bruno's Banquet room, Upstairs at Brunos BBQ, Kings Village Shopping Center. Info: www.lochlomondceltic.org

27 Charleston, SC - Burns Supper

The Scottish Society of Charleston presents its annual Burns Supper, a celebration of the life and works of Scotland's Poet Laureate, Robert Burns. Info: www.charlestonscots.org

27 Studio City, CA - Robert Burns Supper

Presented by the Saint Andrew's Society Los Angeles at Sportsmen's Lodge Event Centre, 12833 Ventura Blvd. Info: (818) 755-5000 or www.saintandrewsla.org

27 Modesto, CA - Robert Burns Supper

Celebrate with the Saint Andrew's Society of Modesto at The Fruit Yard Restaurant, 7948 Yosemite Blvd. Info: www.standrewsmoesto.org

27 Mount Vernon, WA - Celtic Arts

Foundation Burns Supper
Scots around the globe gather each year to celebrate the birthday of Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet. The Celtic Arts Foundation marks this festive evening with a dinner honoring the great bard at Littlefield Celtic Center. Info: 360-416-4934 or www.celticarts.org

27 Beacon, NY - Hudson Highlands Pipe

Band Burns Night Supper 2018
12th annual traditional Burns Night Supper honoring the Scottish poet Robert Burns at Roundhouse, 2 East Main St. Info: www.hhpb.org

27 Hollywood, FL - Scottish American

Society Of South Florida Burns Supper
Celebrate the bard at Orangebrook Country Club, 400 Entrada Dr. Info: www.SASSF.org

27 Sarasota, FL - Sarasota Highland

Games and Celtic Festival
The sound of the pipes, the beating of drums, Irish dancing (Sarasota Highland Feis) and athletic events at Sarasota Fairgrounds 3000 Ringling Blvd. Info: www.sarasotahighlandgames.com

FEBRUARY 2018

3 Chandler, AZ - The Caledonian

Society of Arizona Burns Supper
Celebrate the bard with music and food, co-sponsored with the Daughters of Scotia at American Legion Post 35. Info: www.arizonascots.com

5 - 9 Seabeck, WA - Celtic Arts Winter

School: Highland Pipes & Drums
Each year the Celtic Arts Foundation brings some of the world's most accomplished Celtic musicians from Scotland, Ireland, Canada, and the US to teach aspiring musicians at Seabeck Conference Center. Info: www.celticarts.org

9 - 10 Brooksville, FL - Celtic Family Jamboree

Celtic music, goods and more at t The Rustic Sertoma Youth Ranch 85 Myers Rd. Info: www.celticheritageproductions.com/fj.htm

10 - 14 Seabeck, WA - Celtic Arts Winter

School: Smallpipes & Fiddles
Each year the Celtic Arts Foundation brings some of the world's most accomplished Celtic musicians from Scotland, Ireland, Canada, and the US to teach aspiring musicians at Seabeck Conference Center. Info: www.celticarts.org

10 Dallas, TX - 2018 Robert Burns Supper

Celebrating the birthday of the Bard of Scotland, Robert Burns. Hosted by the Dallas Knights of St. Andrew, this fundraising event at the Dallas Scottish Rite Cathedral, 500 South Harwood St. Info: 214-264-7879 or www.knightsostandrew-dallas.org

17 - 18 Long Beach, CA - The Queen Mary

Scots Festival & International Highland Games
Experience the rich culture and history of Scotland first hand through an array of authentic activities, athletics, dancing, entertainment and cuisine in ode to the Queen Mary's Scottish legacy. Info: 877 342-0738 or www.queenmary.com/events/scotsfestival

24 Green Cove Springs, FL - Northeast

Florida Scottish Games and Festival
A "Wee Bit o' Scotland" to the Northeast Florida area at Clay County Fairgrounds, 2497 State Road 16 West. Info: (904) 725-5744 or www.neflgames.com

SCOTLAND

JANUARY 2018

1 South Queensferry West Lothian - Loony Dook

Dive into 2018 with a dip off South Queensferry. Gather for the parade and watch as the swimmers freeze their proverbials off under the iconic Forth Rail Bridge. Info: www.edinburghshogmanay.com

13 - 18 Edinburgh - The Edinburgh

Outlander Experience
Visit locations from Diana Gabaldon's Outlander novels as visited by characters Claire and Jamie. Hear stories of the Jacobites, the Stuarts, witchcraft, clans and how the fictional story intermingles with history. Info: www.mercattours.com

19 - 5 Glasgow - Celtic Connections

Celtic Connections is a winter music festival in Glasgow, featuring artists from around the globe alongside the best Scottish talent at venues across the city. Info: www.celticconnections.com

19 - 28 Dumfries - Big Burns Supper

The world's biggest Burns Night celebration. Stars from across the country congregate as Dumfries celebrates the birth of the Baird with a vast selection of dance, theatre, visual arts, live art and comedy, turning Burns' Night into a festival of contemporary arts. Info: www.bigburnssupper.com

19 - 20 Ayr - Aileen Robertson School of

Highland Dancing - Hop Scotch Polka
Dance Director of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo Aileen Robertson choreographs Hop Scotch Polka. Showcasing dancers aged 3+ who aspire to perform in the Tattoo Dance Company at Edinburgh Castle's Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo at Gaiety Theatre. Info: www.thegaiey.co.uk

21 - 23 Glasgow - Scotland's Trade Fair, Spring

The only Scottish trade gift show at the SECC. Info: 01877 385772 or www.scotlandstradefairs.co.uk

24 Edinburgh - Burns Night Special

Celebrate Burns Night in style with an evening of top comedy at The Stand. Info: www.thestand.co.uk

25 - 27 Edinburgh - Annasach's Burns Night Ceilidh

Annasach Ceilidh Band invites you to our informal celebration of The Bard's birthday at the Counting House. Info: www.annasach.co.uk

25 Nationwide - Happy Burns Night

A night to celebrate the life and works of Robert Burns. The tradition of the Burns Night Supper was first held in 1801 by the poet's friends, five years after his death. Today events take place around the world with Scottish music, poetry, food, drink and dance.

26 Alloway, Ayr - Haggis Hooley

Celebrate the Bard's birthday in style at an informal nod to a Burns Supper. The Borland Ceilidh Band and a variety of talented local musicians will perform while you enjoy traditional Burns Supper fare at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum. Info: www.burnsmuseum.org.uk

27 - 28 Stirling - Revel with Robbie

Celebrate Scotland's national bard and learn about the Stirling Lines with a dram of whiskey and a bite of haggis at Stirling Castle. Info: +44 (0)131 668 8885 or events@hes.scot

FEBRUARY 2018

8 - 11 Aberdeen - Spectra 2018: Play The Night

Aberdeen's four-day festival of light will light up the winter skies with a varied programme of light installations from fire drawings to light projections and sculptures, as well as music and performance. Info: www.spectraaberdeem.com

9 - 10 Glasgow - The Glasgow Tattoo

Pipe bands and military displays at the SSE Hydro. Info: www.theglasgowtattoo.com

17 Edinburgh - Inspire by The National

Youth Pipe Band of Scotland
The National Piping Centre is proud to present The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland live in concert. This year's concert will see the band perform a fantastic mixture of traditional and contemporary music infused with the ever so popular NYPBoS twist at Edinburgh Corn Exchange, 11 New Market Rd. Info: +44 (0) 141 353 0220 or www.thepipingcentre.co.uk

23 - 24 Badaguish - Groove Cairn Gorm

A thrilling weekend of live music, world-class DJs and snow sports all within the setting of Cairngorm Mountain & Badaguish Outdoor Centre. Info: www.groovecairngorm.co.uk

24 - 28 Inverness - Inverness Music Festival

This music festival is a competitive event that allows people of all ages and abilities to show off their skills. The main discipline groups are vocal, instrumental, speech, Gaelic and Scottish. Competitions are open to the public. Info: www.invernessmusicfestival.org

🍷 DID YOU KNOW?

The Scottish Banner has one of North America's most comprehensive Scottish events listings available! With hundreds of Scottish events listed from around the world and updated weekly.

See our most up to date listings and add your event anytime at: www.scottishbanner.com/events

Answers to Scotword on Page 7

ACROSS: 1) Galashiels; 8) Tenor; 9) Elder; 10) Extra; 11) Crests; 12) Littered; 13) Radish; 15) Inverewe; 18) Emulated; 20) Lowsed; 22) Armadale; 23) Editor; 26) Moose; 27) Expel; 28) Short; 29) Cellardyke

DOWN: 1) Glencarse; 2) Ladle; 3) Straths; 4) Iced; 5) Lothians; 6) Inverness; 7) Braid; 8) Tattie; 14) Dummajor; 16) Elderslie; 17) Welldone; 19) Ardent; 21) Oldyear; 22) Arise; 24) Topsy; 25) Deil

Scottish Genealogical Research



Let us build your Scottish Family Tree!

Ron Dempsey
General Delivery
Udora, Ontario
LOC 1L0, Canada

Email: dempseyrand@gmail.com for details.

IN THE SCOTTISH KITCHEN



Cullen skink

Ingredients:

For the stock:

75g/2½oz. butter
1 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 leeks, roughly chopped
2 onions, peeled, roughly chopped
2 fennel bulbs, roughly chopped
250ml/9fl oz. white wine
500g/17½oz smoked haddock
750ml/1 pint 7fl oz. water

For the soup:

75g/2½oz. butter
1 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 leeks, finely chopped
2 shallots, peeled, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled, crushed
300g/10½oz. potatoes, peeled, chopped
500ml/17½fl oz. double cream
1 tbsp. finely chopped fresh parsley
pinch freshly grated nutmeg

Method:

For the stock, heat the butter and vegetable oil in a large pan and gently fry the leeks, onions and fennel for 3-4 minutes, or until softened.

Add the white wine to the pan and bring to the boil. Add the smoked haddock, pour in the water and bring back to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 30 minutes, skimming off any scum that rises to the surface, until the haddock is cooked through.

Strain the haddock, reserving the cooking stock. Chop the haddock into bite-sized pieces.

For the soup, heat the butter with the vegetable oil and fry the leeks, shallots and garlic for 3-4 minutes, or until softened. Add the potatoes and the chopped smoked haddock to the pan.

Add the reserved cooking stock and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 10-15 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Stir in the cream and briefly blend the soup with a stick blender.

Serve the soup with crusty bread and sprinkle with the chopped fresh parsley and a sprinkling of freshly grated nutmeg.

Vegetarian haggis stuffed mushrooms

Ingredients:

4 large flat open/Portobello mushrooms
1 tbsp. olive oil
75g/2½ oz. breadcrumbs
2 tbsp. pine nuts, toasted
2 tbsp. pecorino, grated
2 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
350g/12 oz. vegetarian haggis, sliced

Method:

Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6.

Place the mushrooms onto a baking sheet and drizzle with a little oil. Cook in the oven for 5-6 minutes or until beginning to soften.

Mix together the breadcrumbs, pine nuts, pecorino and parsley.

Remove the mushrooms from under the grill and top each mushroom with a slice of vegetarian haggis.

Spoon the breadcrumb mixture over the haggis and drizzle with a little more oil.

Return to the oven for about 15 minutes or until the cheese is slightly melted and the filling is hot and bubbling.

Serve one mushroom as a starter or 2-3 with tatties and neeps as a main course.

Haggis



Ingredients:

1 sheep's stomach or ox secum, cleaned and thoroughly, scalded, turned inside out and soaked overnight in cold salted water
heart and lungs of one lamb

450g/1lb. beef or lamb trimmings, fat and lean
2 onions, finely chopped
225g/8oz. oatmeal
1 tbsp. salt
1 tsp. ground black pepper
1 tsp. ground dried coriander
1 tsp. mace
1 tsp. nutmeg
water, enough to cook the haggis stock from lungs and trimmings

Method:

Wash the lungs, heart and liver (if using). Place in large pan of cold water with the meat trimmings and bring to the boil. Cook for about 2 hours.

When cooked, strain off the stock and set the stock aside.

Mince the lungs, heart and trimmings.

Put the minced mixture in a bowl and add the finely chopped onions, oatmeal and seasoning. Mix well and add enough stock to moisten the mixture. It should have a soft crumbly consistency.

Spoon the mixture into the sheep's stomach, so it's just over half full. Sew up the stomach with strong thread and prick a couple of times so it doesn't explode while cooking.

Put the haggis in a pan of boiling water (enough to cover it) and cook for 3 hours without a lid. Keep adding more water to keep it covered.

To serve, cut open the haggis and spoon out the filling. Serve with neeps (mashed swede or turnip) and tatties (mashed potatoes).

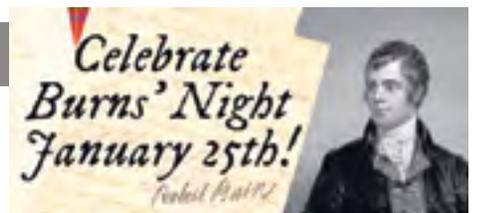
Bobby Burns Cocktail

Ingredients:

60ml/1.5 oz. Scotch whisky
30ml/3/4oz. red vermouth
2 dashes Benedictine

Method:

In a mixing glass with ice, add the whisky, vermouth and Benedictine and stir until condensation forms along the outside of the glass. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a twist of lemon peel.



BURNS NIGHT RECIPES

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face, Great chieftain o' the pudding-race!

The Burns Supper on January 25th is an institution of Scottish life: a night to celebrate the life and works of the national Bard. Suppers can range from an informal gathering of friends to a huge, formal dinner full of pomp and circumstance, enjoy!

Cranachan



Ingredients:

570ml/1 pint double cream
85g/3oz. porridge oats
7 tbsp. whisky
3 tbsp. honey
450g/1lb. raspberries
fresh mint, to garnish

Method:

Toast the oats in a frying pan, being careful not to burn them.

Lightly whip the cream until it reaches the soft peak stage, then fold in the whisky, honey, oatmeal and raspberries.

Serve in dessert glasses garnished with a few raspberries and mint.

Shortbread

Ingredients:

125g/4oz. butter
55g/2oz. caster sugar, plus extra to finish
180g/6oz. plain flour

Method:

Heat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5.

Beat the butter and the sugar together until smooth.

Stir in the flour to get a smooth paste. Turn on to a work surface and gently roll out until the paste is 1cm/½in thick.

Cut into rounds or fingers and place onto a baking tray. Sprinkle with caster sugar and chill in the fridge for 20 minutes.

Bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes, or until pale golden-brown. Set aside to cool on a wire rack.

Nigel Tranter: Scotland's Storyteller

By: David
C Weinczok



This month marks the anniversary of the death one of Scotland's most beloved historical writers Nigel Tranter OBE. The bestselling author penned over 100 books and was also a long time contributor to the Scottish Banner. His works were rigorously researched and brought Scotland's history to life for many including our very own David C Weinczok.



The ruins of Threave Castle brought to life so well by Nigel Tranter.

Scotland's castles capture the imagination like perhaps no other aspect of our history. Their stones stand as testaments to an extraordinary drama through which we may freely wander, pages in a book with countless chapters imprinted all across the land. You do not need to be a historian to stand in awe of history at such places – you need only to be curious. It was with relentless curiosity that they were brought to life by a man who harnessed the power of storytelling to inspire millions. When it comes to Scottish castles, no storyteller inspired more people to discover their wonders for themselves as Nigel Tranter.

Prolific Scottish author

Tranter passed away on 9 January 2000 at the age of 90, and goes down in history as the most prolific Scottish author after Sir Walter Scott. He published over 100 historical novels as well as dozens of books in genres spanning from Westerns to children's literature under the pseudonym Nye Tredgold. His best-known work is probably *The Bruce Trilogy*, which sold over 1 million copies and has pride of place in the literary pantheon that fostered the enduring legend of Scotland's hero king. *The Scottish Banner* was also privileged to call Tranter a friend and contributor for many years, and retains many of the personal letters he would include alongside his articles. His impact on modern Scotland is profound – I am certain that Tranter's writings provided the first spark for many of the brightest minds now working to illuminate Scotland's story.

Tranter's fascination with castles in particular may have begun as a schoolchild at George Heriot's School in Edinburgh. A palace by any other name, it is now captivating a whole new generation as one of the architectural inspirations for Hogwarts in *Harry Potter*. To this day one of the most dramatic perspectives of mighty Edinburgh Castle is from the grounds of George Heriot's and adjacent Greyfriar's Kirkyard. Surely the great castle on the crag was the source of many a daydream in his schoolboy years.

Castles

From the age of thirteen Tranter started concertedly exploring the castles in

the south of Scotland, sketchbook always in hand as he walked or cycled to his destination. By age twenty-two he published his first serious study of castellated architecture, *The Fortalices and Early Mansions of Southern Scotland, 1400-1650*. This was the first instalment in an exhaustive five-part series of descriptions and detailed sketches of castles across the country called *The Fortified House in Scotland*. Many times I have turned to this series when embarking on a castle quest of my own, and every castle enthusiast I know treats it as something of a bible.

While most of Tranter's works are classified as historical fiction, I recommend using them as guidebooks. There is no better way to connect with a historical site than to learn a story or two about it before visiting, and for that Tranter's tales are indispensable. Take Threave Castle, setting of much of the intrigue in his book *Black Douglas*. Set in the 1440s in the wake of the infamous Black Dinner, the story follows the doomed William Douglas and his kin as they negotiate the minefield of medieval Scottish politics under James II.

Now a brooding ruin, Tranter restored it to its full glory with vivid and intimate descriptions of lordly life within its walls. Though of course speculative, the conversations and internal thought processes of real historical figures such as Margaret, the 'Fair Maid of Galloway', are so well-informed that you can envision her as clearly as though she were receiving you into the castle's Great Hall. By taking this approach Tranter achieves what standard history lessons so often fail to do: he makes you care about the people behind the titles, to empathise their fears, desires, ambitions, and doubts. You recoil with them when their pride is bruised and revel in their victories as though you had taken up arms alongside them.

Scotland's extraordinary history

Tranter was sometimes criticised for romanticising aspects of Scottish history, and while that may be true in some cases no one can say that he ever sacrificed accuracy for the sake of the story. To the contrary his commitment to history led to several of his

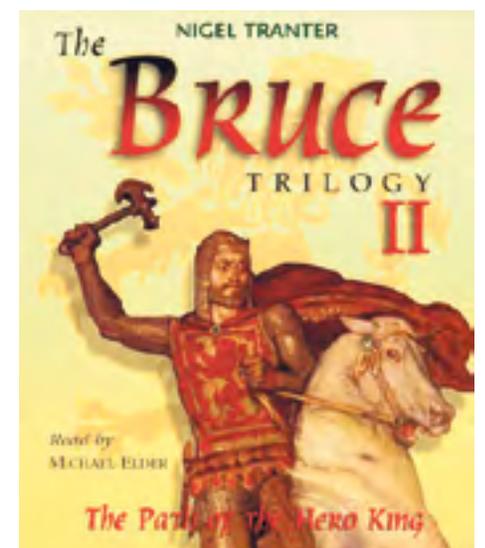
major works subverting standard dramatic narratives. After all, the very last page of *Black Douglas* kills off the main protagonist in an impulsive, spiteful act that hits all the harder for being historically inevitable. Who needs *Game of Thrones* when you have Scottish history as told by Tranter?

While his many endeavours brought him international fame and a living, these were incidental products of a simple pleasure: setting out on a long walk to write. Tranter famously worked on the go, hiking or cycling for many miles to places where the tales he wanted to tell actually unfolded. He held a particular affinity for Aberlady in East Lothian where he lived for much of his life, calling the small wooden bridge at Aberlady Bay 'The Footbridge to Enchantment'. Every day he would take his walk, fuelled by a childlike fascination that enriched everything story he told, for he told them out of love.

I, for one, owe him a great debt for he carved out the path that I now follow. Since arriving in Scotland seven years ago I have created a niche as a 'castle hunter', sharing and celebrating Scotland's castles and history in pages such as these. I am under no illusion, however, as to who the original and greatest castle hunter was! Tranter visited thousands of castles in his lifetime and played an essential role in establishing them as internationally recognized icons

of Scotland. So when I set out towards a castle, often along the same routes that Tranter took, I am acutely aware that I do so in the footsteps of a giant. I often travel with one of his books in my bag, referring to them as I approach the places described in their pages. Nigel Tranter lived his life enchanted by Scotland's extraordinary history. Perhaps the most fitting tribute of all, then, is that his work is now considered an indispensable chapter within that story.

David C Weinczok is a heritage professional, presenter and adoptive Scot based in Edinburgh. Twitter: @TheCastleHunter



Jacobite History Brought to Life in LEGO



Jacobite story brought to life in new Brick to the Past exhibition at Stirling Castle until 2 February 2018.

Visitors to Stirling Castle will be able to step back in time to explore Scotland's Jacobite history through the magic of LEGO with a brand new exhibition which is now on display at the iconic castle. The Jacobite Risings: The Fight for Britain's Throne depicts key locations involved in the Jacobite story, recreated in approximately 1 million LEGO bricks, and featuring over 2000 soldiers from both sides of the conflict. The model includes detailed miniature recreations of two sites in the care of Historic Environment Scotland (HES): the medieval tower house Corgarff Castle and Ruthven Barracks, the bulwark against the Jacobites built by George II's government in the early 1700s. The exhibition – on display for the first time ever in Scotland – will run until Friday 2nd February 2018.

So much history

The spectacular 6 metre by 3 metre model has been painstakingly crafted by Brick to the Past, a team of volunteer LEGO and history enthusiasts who

specialise in creating massive, detailed and meticulously researched historically themed LEGO models.

Speaking at the exhibition, Dan Harris of Brick to the Past said: "As 2017 is Scotland's year of History, Heritage and Archaeology, we wanted to join in with the celebrations and struck upon the Jacobite Risings as great topic that represented a pivotal moment in not only Scottish history, but in British history too. We had a great time designing and building its different parts, from the Jacobites themselves to the major buildings, which are based on HES properties such as Corgarff Castle and Ruthven Barracks. It also gave us an opportunity to take on Scotland's dramatic landscape, so we have built mountains, rivers, forests and animals that are designed to represent those of the highlands. It's really exciting to be going on display at Stirling Castle. It's an incredible venue with so much history!"

Brick to the Past's The Jacobite Risings: The Fight for Britain's Throne will be on display in the Queens Outer Hall at Stirling Castle until Friday 2nd February. Entry to the exhibition is included in the normal Stirling Castle admission price.



Robert Burns: Scotland's Bard

As William Shakespeare is England's national bard so Robert Burns is Scotland's. And over 250 years after he was born into a poor Ayrshire farming family the universal appeal of many of his poems and songs endures.



Burns statues can be found across the world.

Text courtesy of Scotland.org

Burns had a genius for putting himself into the shoes of others and sympathising with their plight. His greatest works gave a unique and vivid insight into the aspirations and anguishes of the brotherhood of man and his words maintain their powerful meaning today.

Robert Burns died in Dumfries on 26th July, 1796, on the same day that his wife gave birth to their ninth child, a son, Maxwell. He succumbed to a form of rheumatic fever, which would have been easily treatable today. In those days, however, the cause and remedy of his ailment were unknown and his demise was likely hastened by a course of sea-bathing in icy salt waters.

To make matters worse, Burns died in debt, borrowing from a cousin and an old patron, George Thomson, to bail himself and his pregnant wife out of trouble. The fact is that Burns had lived in near poverty most of his life. He had been engaged in heavy physical farm work since he was a young boy, in a harsh climate and on a very limited diet had taken its toll. He was only thirty-seven years old. He was buried with full military honours as a member of the local volunteer militia, the Fencibles. Burns had joined up the year before as Britain was at war with France and there was a fear of invasion. Sadly, as is so often the case, Burns' genius was only widely recognised after his death.

Who was Burns?

In his short life he had written a host of poems and songs that would become cherished throughout the world. His words would reach far beyond his native Scotland and continue to resonate over two centuries later words about the human spirit and condition, about nature, love, life and death that are as meaningful now as they were in Burns' time.

Auld Lang Syne, Tam o' Shanter, Ae Fond Kiss, Red, Red Rose, Scots Wha Hae, A Man's a Man for A' That the list goes on and on.

But who was this man who died young and in poverty in a small provincial town, who was almost instantly mourned by an entire nation and who is still revered over 250 years after his birth?

Burns was born on a wild and windy night in Alloway on the Ayrshire coast of Scotland, in the family house his father, William, had built with his own hands. Robert was the eldest of seven children. Burns' Cottage, now a museum, still stands today, although no longer set in rolling fields, but in the new affluent suburbs of the town of Ayr.

Robert's parents were small tenant farmers. William and his wife, Agnes, struggled to make a living on poor soil. But despite their hardships they were keen to educate their offspring, so in 1765 Robert and his brother, Gilbert, were sent to a school two miles away at Alloway Mill. William then clubbed together with three local families to share a private tutor, a young man called John Murdoch, who taught Robert English grammar. He also made the children sing Psalms but, ironically, for someone who went on to pen some of the most well-known songs ever written, Robert's voice was, according to Murdoch, "untuneable". When Murdoch took up a post at Ayr Academy in 1772, Burns' father tutored the boys at home, although they continued taking lessons at various other schools nearby.

Burgeoning imagination

The following year the family moved to another farm at Mount Oliphant, high on a hillside two miles from Alloway. The rent was steep and the sour upland ground was difficult to cultivate. Life was tough on the new farm. Since the family couldn't afford hired help, Robert did a full day's work in the field and farmyard on a diet of oatmeal and skimmed milk even though they lived on a farm, meat was much too expensive.

On the long, dark, bitterly cold Scottish winter nights Robert was often to be found huddled under a single candle, with his nose buried in a book. By the time he was 21 he had read Shakespeare, David Hume, his favourite philosopher Adam Smith and everything in-between. These books helped to fuel his already burgeoning imagination.

He had already written his first love poems when he was fifteen, to a farmer's daughter from Dalrymple. It was the beginning of his life-long love of women and his celebration of them in poem and songs. Burns had many affairs throughout his life and enjoyed drinking with friends, but he was far from the over-sexed, booze-sodden farmhand of yore a slightly misleading myth that has tended to overshadow his literary legacy. He sowed his wild oats in a fairly roguish fashion, fathering over a dozen children to various women, and his sexual behaviour was radical, especially in 18th century society. The handsome, charismatic poet undoubtedly enjoyed the company of women, from society ladies to servant girls. Burns' first child was by a servant, Elizabeth Paton, who worked at Lochlea farm in Tarbolton (the family had moved to the village when Robert was nineteen), and one of his most famous love affairs, though never consummated, was with the upper class Agnes McLehose, for whom he wrote the beautiful parting song *Ae Fond Kiss*.

Nowadays, the Bard is said to generate in the region of £200m every year to the Scottish economy. Not bad for a man who left debts of £14 when he died.

But Burns also liked women, acknowledging them as individuals who had valuable insights and opinions and were stimulating. He started a life-long correspondence with sometime patron, Mrs Frances Anna Dunlop, a well-to-do Ayrshire widow who admired his poems. In his work he managed to combine descriptions of his prurient exploits with the tenderest of emotions, memorably and simply expressed. Love (and lust!) and poetry were always to run together for Burns.

Scots language

By the time his first collection of poetry, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* was published in July 1786 he had founded the debating society, the Tarbolton Bachelors' Club, gained a reputation locally as an outspoken critic of the church and become a freemason.

He had started writing seriously after his father's death in 1784 and this first collection, known as the *Kilmarnock Edition* because that was where it was printed, emerged from the poems that had been passed around locally in manuscript form during 1784-85, gaining him regional notoriety. It included some of his best writing, including *The Twa Dogs, Address to the Deil, Hallowe'en, The Cotter's Saturday Night, To a Mouse, and To a Mountain Daisy*, many of which had been written at Mossiel farm, where the family had moved in 1785. Having already written a handful of poems in English, Burns found his true voice in the Scots language, writing in words that did not come from the classical dictionary but from everyday speech.

His poems touched on themes of injustice, hypocrisy, the hard life of the countryman, radicalism, anticlericalism, sexuality, gender roles, Scottish cultural identity and man's inhumanity to his fellow man. He wrote scathing satires and tender love songs delivered in a direct, playful, yet sympathetic voice that spoke to all walks of life.

Throughout his life Burns was on the side of the poor and the downtrodden and was always anxious to speak up for them. Inequality made him angry. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the French revolution in 1789 before it turned into a blood-bath, and supported the American struggle for democracy led by George Washington.

Poetry was in Burns' blood but the book was also born of financial necessity. The farm at Lochlea, which he worked with his younger brother, Gilbert, provided little money and an increasingly desperate Burns had considered leaving for the West Indies to find a job as an employee on the slave plantations. He had even booked a berth on a boat to Jamaica but had postponed the trip on several occasions.

Heaven-taught ploughman

The Kilmarnock Edition got 612 advance subscriptions, mostly concentrated on around a dozen individuals who sold them on to other admirers. By this time Burns had met and married Jean Armour, who bore him twins in September 1786, despite the strenuous attempts by Jean's father to prevent his daughter having anything to do with the poet owing to his opprobrious reputation. After an enforced separation Robert and Jean were reunited and she remained his long-suffering wife until his death. She had nine of his children and took in and nursed one of his several illegitimate offspring.

Burns arrived in Edinburgh, Scotland's cultural capital, in November 1786 as the sensation of the season. In a review of his poems in the literary periodical *The Lounger*, Henry Mackenzie coined for Burns the famous epithet of the "heaven-taught ploughman". It was a sentimental moniker that stuck, the image of the rustic bard with plough in one hand and quill in the other composing poems in

the Ayrshire fields. But it was far removed from the reality of Burns' life, which had been one of toil and hardship.

Burns knew he was different and special and held centre stage in Edinburgh with his powerful charisma and passionate way with words. However, he was also aware of his low social standing in polite Edinburgh society. Poets were certainly not meant to be peasants and he found the drawing rooms of literary Edinburgh reeking with pretension, which he derided memorably in his famous poem *Address to a Haggis*.

A life-time of unrewarded toil

In April 1787 an Edinburgh edition of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* was published, containing 22 additional poems to the *Kilmarnock Edition*, and was subscribed to by over 1300 individuals. But Burns sold the copyright of the book to William Creech for 100 guineas and despite further editions appearing in London, Dublin, New York and Philadelphia, he made no money from these.

That same year the first volume of James Johnston's *Scots Musical Museum*, a collection of Scottish folk songs, appeared, including three songs by Burns. Burns would go on to contribute nearly 200 songs to future volumes of the publication, many published posthumously. He toured the Highlands and the Scottish Borders collecting old Scottish tunes to which he set his verses, thus helping to preserve the songs and keep a cultural tradition alive. Some of his more bawdy lyrics were collected in a notorious volume entitled *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*.

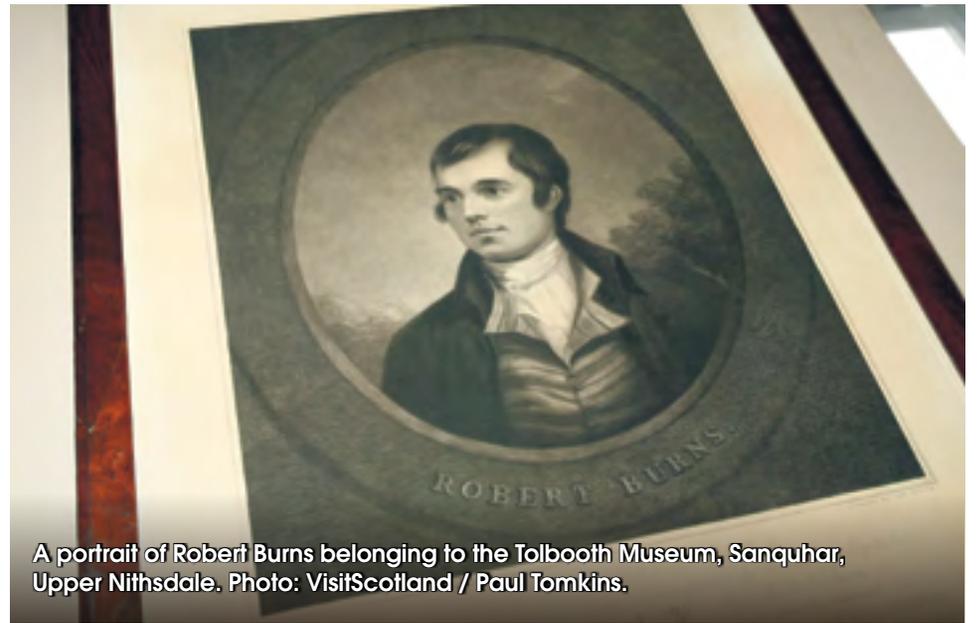
Despite his new-found fame in Edinburgh and beyond, Burns was struggling to support his family from either his poetry or the small farm he had leased in Ellisland, Dumfriesshire and he was forced to take a public service job in 1788. After a life-time of unrewarded toil he abandoned farming altogether in 1791 to become a full-time employee in the Dumfries excise, moving to a house in the town.

Undeterred by ailing health during the winter of 1790, and depression about the fading prospects of the farm, his muse remained undimmed and he continued his prolific output of songs and poems, completing his most famous poem and arguably his masterpiece, *Tam o' Shanter*, in November that year.

Celebrated all over the world

Nowadays, the Bard is said to generate in the region of £200m every year to the Scottish economy. Not bad for a man who left debts of £14 when he died. Every year on the night of Burns' birthday, 25 January, or an evening close to it, his life and work are celebrated as Burns clubs all over the world from Alloway to Adelaide, Moscow to Milwaukee host traditional Burns Suppers.

These informal suppers vary from club to club but the general format has remained the same since Burns' friends hosted the first recorded night in his honour around the anniversary of his death in 1801. Guests gather as at any informal function and the host says a few words of introduction before



A portrait of Robert Burns belonging to the Tolbooth Museum, Sanquhar, Upper Nithsdale. Photo: VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins.

everyone is seated and the Selkirk Grace is said. A starter of soup, usually a Scots broth or Cock-a-Leekie, is eaten, before the centrepiece of the meal, a haggis, is brought in while a piper plays the bagpipes. The host then recites *Address to a Haggis* and at the lines 'His knife see rustic Labour dicht, An' cut you up wi' ready slicht', draws and cleans a knife and plunges it into the haggis, slicing it open from end to end in dramatic fashion. A toast is then proposed to the haggis. Mashed potatoes (champit tatties) and turnips (bashed neeps) traditionally accompany the haggis.

When the meal is over, one of the guests makes a speech commemorating Burns and proposes a toast to the great man, known as the *Immortal Memory*. A toast is then made to the lassies' in

recognition of Burns' fondness for the fairer sex and sometimes a female guest will reply with a humorous toast to the laddies'. Following the speeches there may be singing of songs by Burns and occasionally guests take to the floor in a whirl of Burns Scottish country dancing known as a ceilidh, although this is not a normal part of a Burns supper.

Finally, to conclude the evening everyone stands, joins hands and sings the song most associated with Burns worldwide, *Auld Lang Syne* a song which has become an international anthem of brotherhood and has been translated into more than thirty languages.

The most important thing about a Burns Supper is to have fun. After all, the man you're paying tribute to was certainly not averse to a wee party himself!



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