



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 on line Scotpourri form at www.scottishbanner.com, alternatively you may post or fax 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.

Maclean vs. MacLean

The late author Norman Maclean referred to himself as Scot-Irish. In his novella "A River Runs Through It" he refers to his father simply as a Scot. In that book there is a scene where the father is upset because Norman's younger brother has started spelling his name MacLean. The father complains that "now everyone will think we are Lowland Scot".

So, is MacLean Lowland and Maclean is Highland, or is Maclean Scot-Irish, or is there some other reason why one family might use the capital L and another use lower case l?

Thank you so much.

George Franklin

USA

Email: georgefr@aol.com

Glasgow Coat of Arms

Could anyone please tell me who designed the Coat of arms for Glasgow? There's a story that's been passed down through our family, that one of our ancestors designed the Coat of Arms for Glasgow. But I never got a name and unfortunately the people who would know have now all passed away.

Could you possibly tell me the artists name and any other interesting facts?

Thank you for the Banner I read it every month and enjoy it very much.

George Fleming

Australia

Email:

Georgeflemingard@dodo.com.au

Independent Scotland

Keith Rayeski-Munroe, writing from New Hampshire (November 2011 Scottish Banner), observes that he is puzzled by the history of Scotland and that the Scots nation is not an independent state today.

Yes, there is a history of slow consolidation, which eventually fused Scots, Picts, Gaels, Vikings and Saxons into a single, independent kingdom distinct from England. In that narrative James IV, who ended the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles, and Bruce and Wallace who battle the English king, Longshanks, are supreme.

This is the history of a thousand years from about 550 - 1550, but history doesn't stop. That tells us there must be other story arcs; I can think of four, but here are two.

First, Scots kings had long understood that war with England was expensive and destabilising, but England was a strong, regional power with a population roughly ten times Scotland's. What to do? Easy - form an alliance with England's biggest enemy, France. This was the "Auld Alliance", which lasted over 250 years. Problem - the alliance with France usually worked more to the benefit of France than Scotland.

So Scotland decided to marry the carrot with the stick - literally. Five kings of Scotland married English princesses and more marriages were arranged, which fell through.

Eventually this tactic worked. James IV married Margaret Tudor, sister of the English king Henry VIII, with the result that Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I were cousins. On Elizabeth's death, Mary's son James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne, becoming James I of England. Scotland achieved by diplomacy, what it could not by war. Scotland conquered England; it was going to.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Philip Moore
Research, Victoria
Australia

A Tee'd Off Trump

Just a comment on the Donald Trump quote in September *Scottish Banner Scotspeak*. There has been plenty of controversy and ill feeling in the region since he started his project at the Menie estate. I believe the wind farm has been in the planning since before he started building his resort and this is not the first time that I have heard of him speaking against it.

I'm sure that his golf resort will never be on the normal tourist itineraries as it has no good access roads in the foreseeable future and will definitely be rather pricey. I'm sure the visitors to his place will not be of the normal tourist type and the number of these will be very insignificant compared to the thousands of people from the wind farm development.

Better the wind do good for the many than to listen to his wind blowing complaints to satisfy only him.

Norman Mitchell
Formerly Aberdeen
Now Westland Michigan U.S.A.



Donald Trump

Celtic Thunder

I being an expat Glaswegian, was pleased to read your article on Celtic Thunder, especially the story on George Donaldson.

My wife (77) and I (68) emigrated to Australia with our son in 1980, but we still keep very much in touch with the folks back home and may I say through the *Scottish Banner* we are kept up to date with what is going on in our homeland.

Our introduction to Celtic Thunder came through watching a Foxtel Channel named STVDIO, we were immediately smitten and have watched all their shows to date on TV and we also have the collection of their DVD's.

Our love of Celtic music goes back to our childhood days, when our parents, relatives and neighbours being of Irish and Scottish descent, used to have the old sing-alongs on a Friday and Saturday evening.

Having grown up with this, it sticks in your mind and watching Celtic Thunder rekindles our love for the music and our homeland.

John & Helen Fitzpatrick

Geelong, Victoria

Australia

Ed note: John congratulations you are one of our lucky winners who will receive tickets to the Celtic Thunder Australian tour, and hope you enjoy seeing Celtic Thunder next month!

The Scottish Close

My first assignment at school was to stand up in front of the class and read a uniquely English poem, *Vitae Lampadae*. Some readers may well remember it as "Paly up, play up and play the game!". I was halfway through before realising it was about a little known game called cricket. Where I came from, we only played fitba'. The opening line referred to an English close as an outdoor, grassy area for gentlemanly games. They bore no similarity to the tenement building entries in Scotland/. There weren't too many breathless hushes in our closes. They usually gave access to four floors of room and kitchen residences, each occupied by as many as eight people. The closes were alive with boys rolling 'girds' or playing 'heidlers' against the walls and the wee lassies stotting Sorbo bouncers, to the rhyme of "one two three a leerie". The postie, the milkman and the coalie, all came in via the close.

At night courting couples felt the close was their own secluded shelter from the elements, but were often startled by the intrusion of an uncertain voice, singing that hit song of those days, *I Belong Tae Glasca*. The close was symbol of social standing. A tiled close was deemed to be a step up from the ones with painted walls. In the city of Glasgow, closes led to legendary havens of neighbourliness. Climb up any stair, knock on any door and you will find a spawife, a teacup reader, a spiritualist or a self-trained midwife-all willing to help.

Our small seaside town (population 800)lacked the magnificent freestone tenements of Glasgow, but we did have closes. Abden Palace was originally the summer residence for the bishops of St Andrews. A foresighted developer inserted a close, and it became a tenement housing many families. Lots of the children were my school mates and we had no idea of the impressive history of our area. Our seven family building had possibly replaced the Palace servants quarters and we had marvellous views that took in Inchkeith, Edinburgh Castle and on clear days the Forth Bridge.

The time came when we reluctantly left our *Vitae Lampadae* and off, full of hope, and another one here in faraway Australia.

Charles Murray

Gladesville, NSW

Australia

Ed note: Thank you Charles for a fantastic letter and insight into such an important part of Scottish social fabric.

Scottish Hogmanay

I simply loved the fun and festive cover of the December edition of the *Scottish Banner* showing the Edinburgh Castle at Hogmanay. It reminded me that there are spots on the globe that celebrate New Year's Eve, or Hogmanay to us Scots, as Edinburgh.

Though I am a native of Aberdeen I have been many times to see the New Year in at Edinburgh, the energy on the streets and in the pubs is second to none.

Though it is a global event I have always found it to be a uniquely Scottish celebration. I may be like other '*Scottish Banner*' readers and still raise my glass to Scotland at their stroke of midnight which is 7pm still for me, it usually is when I have my first drink and when I take that sip I know my family, friends and country are all doing the same. Just a wee way to stay connected to Scotland.

I wish Scotland and all the Scottish Banner readers a happy 2012!

'Lang May Yer Lum Reek and A guid New Year and mony may ye see'.

Jane Nixon

Ajax, Ontario

Canada

Ed.note: We will be doing the same Jane

Lost Relatives-Found

In the September 2011 edition of the *Scottish Banner*, you published my request under "Descendants of the name Hall".

I received an email from a Donald McDonald, an American reader of the *Banner*, that enabled me to locate two living members of that family as well as their sons and daughters.

To the *Banner* and Donald, I am very grateful.

Thank you all.

Regards,

Jim Hall

Australia

Ed. note: It is good to hear these comments and to know we helped bring people together.

Keep your letters coming on life's little question marks. This page is also available each month on our website www.scottishbanner.com where you can also send in your comments or queries direct.