

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 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.

Vale-Angus Lockhart of the Lee



The Scottish Banner is saddened to learn of the recent passing of Angus Lockhart of the Lee, Chief of Clan Lockhart. We wish his family and Clan our condolences at this time.

Stornoway's Saddest Day

Happy New Year to all our readers and staff at the Scottish Banner, down throughout the ages New Year has been a very special time for Scots with great celebration and renewed hope for the future, and none more than way back in 1918 with a lot of Scottish servicemen finally making it home after the end of the First World War. With the continuing commemorations of WW1, I would like to salute the memory of the brave fighting men of Stornoway returning from war on New Year's eve 1918 and the ultimate price they ended up paying.

Stornoway's Saddest Day

The Faith, the Eagle, the Perished and the Despair

Praise the Lord for the boys coming home, oh what a Hogmanay. And the war they fought tae end all wars had finally passed away. Through blood and gore the boys had fought, for the guts of four long years. With hope and dread and comrades dead, in a sea's of endless tears. But joy and jubilation, as they climbed the gang plank on the quay. And drank thair dram, as thair

ship set sail, for home in Stornoway.

From the Kyle of Lochalch *The Lolair* sailed, up the stormy. Minch Packed with dear Scotland's retuning sons, as they covered every inch. This night they thought would never come, had finally came tae pass. And in a couple of hours through blackened sea, they would see thair folks at last aye the home fires had been burning, for mony's a lonely year. And on Stornoway thair loved ones awaited, amid the festive cheer.

But the sea like a ruthless predator, had stalked them like a foe. And in the dead of night the sea turned black, amid the sleet and snow. On and on the ship sailed forth, and was lured right past the port. Toward the menacing" beast of Holm" and her jagged rocky warts mercilessly the beast struck out, and ripped right through her bow. And all hope varnished instantly, amid the cries and row.

After four long years of battle fought, they'd reached thair final hour. As the men slipped into this treacherous foam, and the sea began tae devour.

Brave John Macleod battled ice cold waves, tae get a line ashore. And valiantly many souls were saved, amid the oceans roar. But the bulk of men just perished, amongst the froth and foam. So near, and yet so far and so cruelly close tae home.

Thair loved ones came upon the shore, in that desperate. January morn Tae see thair kith strewn across the beach, like driftwood from the storm. Limp bodies floating aimlessly, where thair souls had flown away. With hearts ripped out in Stornoway, on thair saddest New Year's Day. Why tortured souls, why did sadness reign, and so many hearts did brake? God works in mysterious ways, for the Lord giveth and The Lord takes!

Dedicated to Scotland's returning sons that perished on New Year's Day 1919.

By Andrew Heaney
(Formerly Glasgow)
Brisbane, Queensland
Australia

The Saltire

Mrs Bruce of Jennings in NSW, Australia, is not the only one to see the 'Saltire Sky' (*Scottish Banner*, November, 2015). In April of 2014 the late afternoon at the Australian Celtic Festival, Glen Innes, NSW just as the Closing Ceremony was taking place, a few hundred people looked towards the bright blue sky and witnessed the Saltire. This was particularly moving as the weekend had been celebrating the "Year of the Scots". The Glen Innes area is called "Celtic Country" and is known for its Scottish connections. Jennings is just 110 km north of Glen Innes.
Eileen Lyon
Maroubra, NSW
Australia

Thomas Muir at 250

In regards to the article *Thomas Muir at 250* (*Scottish Banner*, November, 2015). Before coming to Canada in September 1968, our schools in the north end of Glasgow, were involved in an 'Environmental Studies

Project'. This meant we had to research our local area in history, geography, arts, and culture, etc. Our school, St. Aloysius, was located in Springburn. This had been a thriving community with large locomotive, and engineering works, co-operative stores, railway junctions, cinemas, swimming baths, public halls and parks. Our class paid particular attention to Balgrayhill Road, and discovered that Bonnie Prince Charlie had used that road when his soldiers marched south to claim his crown. James Reid, the rain magnet, had his estate and home built there. A mansion, designed by Rennie McIntosh, always displayed beautiful vases of flowers in its octagonal windows both upstairs and down. On a clear day, Ben Lomond and its neighbouring peaks could be seen from this, the highest point in Glasgow. Following the hills descent towards Bishopbriggs, it joined up with Crownhill Road where the home and estate of Thomas Muir was located. Our class visited the house and grounds. We were particularly interested in the life story of this man, his political ideas, his expulsion to Australia, and the ensuing episodes with France and America. We took photographs and later sent them to Springburn Public Library. The Project for the schools had been a success and was later featured in the Times Educational Supplement.

Ann E. Rooney
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

Clan Sinclair International Gathering 2015 Caithness



Pictured in the photo from left to right: Liane Sinclair, Lloyd Bradshaw, Noelene Deane, Jim Deane, Dianne Sides, Bill Sides, Pam Sinclair, Roger Sinclair, Margaret, Wayne Sinclair, Chief Malcolm Sinclair The Earl of Caithness and his wife Penny.

On 23 July 2015, 9 Clan Sinclair Australia members travelled to Caithness where we joined by approximately 130 Sinclair's from Scotland, England, Canada, USA, Norway, Italy and Romania for our latest Gathering. We were greeted by our Chief Malcolm and his wife Penny, who had organized a wonderful itinerary for our time together. Over the next 6 days we enjoyed outings to Castle of Mey, Halkirk Games where we were guest clan, a trip to the Orkneys, Thurso Castle and a joint dinner with Clan Gunn who were also having their gathering. We also visited Sinclair Girmogoe Castle where a moving memorial service was held for our departed loved ones. Our most enjoyable stay finished with a farewell dinner at McKay's Hotel in Wick.

Wayne Sinclair
President, Clan Sinclair Australia
Melbourne, Victoria
Australia

Reads the Banner from front to back

I never miss reading *the Scottish Banner* from front to back. Of special interest to me are the columns written by Lady MacGregor and Ron Dempsey. My branch of the numerous Armstrong clan traces its early member back to Dumfries. As an Armstrong, before she married the MacGregor, Fiona wrote about events and history of the Dumfries area, so I have felt a distant kinship with her and sincerely appreciate her wit and style of reporting. Thank you for continuing to bring all things Scottish to us in Canada and around the world.

Mary Armstrong-Munz
Kemptonville, Ontario
Canada

Scottish Gaelic Choir in Victoria



Many people, even some Victorian Scots, are surprised to learn that there is an active Scottish Gaelic choir in Melbourne. The choir grew out of the Scottish Gaelic classes that have been held for many years. It has had a number of phases over the years but currently the choir practices weekly at the Kildara Centre in Malvern under the direction of Barbara McLaughlin. Next year, the weekly practice time will be 10:30am on Wednesdays. Not all the choir members are Gaelic speakers but a number are learning the language at the weekly classes being run at the Celtic Club in Queen Street, Melbourne. Lewis-born, Joan Mitchell is the regular Scottish Gaelic coach for the choir and informs it on the significance of the lyrics, the emphases that should be placed on particular words and other features of the Scottish Gaelic culture that surround the songs. The choir regularly performs at retirement villages, Scottish ceilidhs, Celtic and multicultural festivals and has often been the face of the Scottish Gaelic Society of Victoria. Its most recent outing was at *The Global Village*; the multicultural festival at Prince's Park in October 2015. The director, Barbara McLaughlin, is retiring from that position at the end of this year and the Scottish Gaelic Society of Victoria is looking for a replacement for her. If anyone is open to an interesting musical challenge of directing a small, largely a *capella* choir (the Scottish Gaelic tradition) singing songs from a very old culture in a language that has its own special attractions, anyone wishing to join the choir for a new musical experience might also contact the Secretary. The Scottish Gaelic Society of Victoria Catriona Devlin, Secretary Kildara Centre Malvern, Victoria Australia Phone 03 9509 7906 Email: kildara@netspace.net.au