

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.

You're a Wizard

Twenty years ago J. K. Rowling put pen to paper and Hagrid said to a young Harry Potter, "You're a wizard Harry" it was a wonderful adventure to delight so many young readers. But in 1670 folk accused Major Thomas Weir of being a wizard, it did not end well. Between 1497-1722 the Church said that was a mortal sin and the Crown said it was a crime – witches, warlocks and wizards were burned at the stake in Scotland.

Enter the angelic child Thomas Weir, son of Thomas Weir, Laird of Kirkstone and Lady Jean Sommerville; born into a family with ancient roots, power and wealth would set young Thomas on a privileged path and step out on that path he did. He marched to the drum beat of the Covenanter Army. As a civilian he and his spinster sister lived in West Bow, Edinburgh. A fine figure of a man, a devoted member of the Kirk who often robustly gave "preaching's" to all and any who would listen. He lived to a good age (70) and on that fateful spring day in 1670 he was seen out marching along with his unique walking stick as he often did.

But on this day those preaching's took on a very different tone; a raving rant of unspeakable evil and the once angelic Thomas became the Wizard of West Bow. Friends said that poor Thomas had taken a turn and was not well. Others were not so kind and spoke in hushed tones of seeing that walking stick had a life of its own; marching before the dark and totally evil wizard. Edinburgh's Lord Provost was called in to sort it out. Jean was called before the court to give an account of her brother and what a tale she told! She also put on a dramatic show worthy of any actress on stage. Both of them were locked up in the Tolbooth to wait their fate as between the Kirk and Crown there could be only one outcome – guilty.

In April 1670 Thomas Weir was burned at the stake at the Gallowlee along with that offending walking stick. As an act of mercy he was to have been strangled before the burning but that did not go as planned. He was only unconscious and

was burned alive. Jean was to hang at the Grassmarket. As she was led toward the gallows, she started to rave, tear her clothes and even managed to get her head stuck in the steps leading up to the gallows. She had managed to put on a fine show for the crowd before her death. Their bodies were buried at Shrub Hill and the grand house where they had once lived soon became a legend. No one wanted to stay there. It had an aura a bone chilling sense of doom and darkness and unexplained things happened in that house. For 200 years folk tried to off load that house because it was prime real estate, Finally they gave up and tore it down.

So why did Major Weir and his sister take leave of their senses and their fine orderly life vanished as their rantings and reports of that devilish walking stick became the talk of the town. Was it dementia? Or was Major Thomas Weir a wizard?

Happy Halloween.

*Donna G. Portree
Canada*

Ed note: Thank you Donna for sharing this interesting, and rather spooky, piece of amazing history with us!

Clan Leslie at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo



We were asked to go to Edinburgh Castle with other members of the clan to have a walk down the castle esplanade. This was called a "Splash of Tartan", this was a prelude to the real Tattoo to allow the Clan Chiefs to show off the different tartans from each clan. They paraded three different clans every night of the tattoo. Our night was Leslie's

Moffatt's and Urquhart's. When we arrived at the castle we were shown to the great hall to wait instructions. We had a talk from the Great Ones about what we were to do. A bit of music from the Royal Marine Band to make sure we were awake. Back outside and the RSM (Regimental Sergeant Major) told us what we were there for.

Most of them had not a clue as to what he was saying as we had a lot of people from the USA, Canada and others.

We were to march down the esplanade and line each side of the Red Carpet. That done the three Clan Chiefs and the other ones from up there had a quick nip from a Quaich. After the handshaking we all went to our seats to watch the Tattoo. We had a

rousing call for "FREEDOM" as we passed a crowd of Jacobite's who were taking part in the Tattoo.

*Brian & Petra Lesslie
Perth, Scotland*

Ed note: Thanks for sharing with us Brian and Petra, if any other Clan's took part in this years "Splash of Tartan" do let us know and send your photos.

Small Scottish world

I'm writing to you because of an uncanny situation that occurred on my recent trip back to Scotland so here it is. On a recent trip back to Scotland, only my second in 61 years, my cousin took me to the Riverside Museum in Glasgow. Whilst there I got talking to a lady who works in the museum shop. In conversation I mentioned that I came from Adelaide in South Australia and she said she had been there and thought it is a lovely city. In fact she said her brother is a warder at Yatala Labour Prison in Adelaide and her sister-in-law is in the police force.

As a retired South Australia police officer myself I rang my wife, who was back in Adelaide, that night and asked her, out of curiosity, if she would ask her eldest son, who is also a police officer in the SA Force, if he might know of Sue's sister in law. Imagine my surprise when my wife rang me back the next day to say that her son had only taught the sister in law his job in the CIB as he was moving on. Out of all the thousands in the force how is that for coincidence?

Whilst on this trip I was also able to visit a number of Scottish singers and companies who have been kind enough to send me CDs for my Scottish radio program I present here in Goolwa, South Australia, singers such as Fiona Kennedy, Moira Kerr, Eddie Rose, Colin Campbell as well as Scotdisc and Greentrax.

All in all it was a great six weeks holiday.
*Bruce Scotland
Goolwa, South Australia*

King of Scots

After research by the Canadian, American, Scottish and Australian families from Scotland. I was so proud to see that my ancestor was the only King of Scots to be anointed by the Pope and elected King by the seven ancient Earls of Alba.

Although some information is unusual and cannot be confirmed as all references were destroyed even some of the Church records. Our name can be traced back to Finley Earl of Moray who married Princess Donada whos son Macbeth become king after the Vikings killed his cousin in or near Forres, when Macbeth was in his castle near Braemar. When Duncan's son took over the family made a quick getaway to Ireland until the end of the 11th century before returning to Scotland. One of the descendants was the standard bearer for Mary Queen of Scots at the battle of Pinkie, that's were my line started to be recognised once again.

May I take this opportunity to thank all those who did a wonderful job in the genealogy for the world wide family of Finley, irrespective of the spelling.

*Robert Findley
Australia*

Silver Chanter Competition Skye



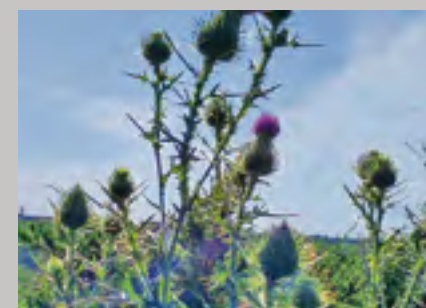
The Silver Chanter took place in August at Dunvegan Castle. Participants included: (Standing left to right) Finlay Johnstone, Derek Midgely, Cameron Drummond, Iain K. MacDonald and Callum Beaumont. Seated Roddy Macleod MBE. The Silver Chanter piping event is sponsored by the William Grant Foundation.

*Derek Maxwell Photography
Scotland*

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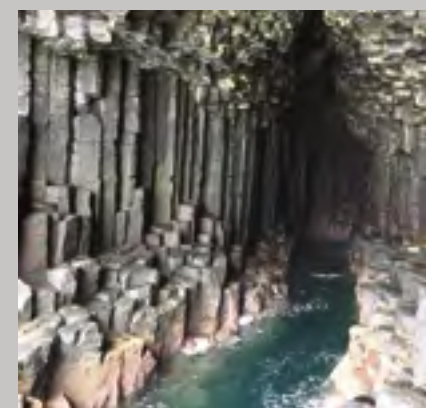
Flower of Scotland



O Flower of Scotland. When will we see your like again!!! I just saw some in Connecticut next to the baseball field that we play at.

*Margo Mattice
Trumbull, Connecticut
USA*

Staffa, Inner Hebrides



Beautiful rock formations and loved the puffins on Staffa too.

*Tina Miller
Wrexham, Wales*

Cawdor Castle



Fabulous visit to Cawdor Castle today, a beautiful castle and stunning gardens.

*Borders Journeys
Edinburgh, Scotland*