

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?

The Piper's Requiem



The Piper stood at Heaven's gates, his bagpipes by his side,
But hesitant to enter, although they were open wide.
An angel chancing to pass by, paused, and made this demand,
"Are those a weapon of some kind that you hold in your hand?"
The Piper groaned, "A Sassenach!" As it became quite clear
That they were present everywhere, they even had them here!

"They were regarded as such, long ago", he then replied,
"But always made such harmonies that ever will abide
With images of heather clad hillsides with rippling burns,
Which every native Scotsman in his heart secretly yearns".
And gently coaxing out a melody his fingers wove
A highland air so exquisite, a song of peace and love.

And as he played, it seemed there was an echo distantly,
Until he was aware of other pipes in harmony,
And into view came Highland pipers playing, by the score;
He recognised his old comrades, and then, so many more
That he had played a farewell for so many years long gone,
Who came, prepared to welcome him, his race now finally run.

For though their mortal span is over, pipers will transcend
This life, their spirit wings to where we cannot comprehend,
A place reserved for them somewhere in heaven's paradise,
Where chanters play quite easily, and drones are so precise.
Where reeds are perfect at all times and neither flat nor sharp,
And in this part of heaven, you will NEVER hear a harp.

So never fear, good Piper, you may now lay down and rest,
In knowledge that your friends considered you the very best
Example of what any man in this life can attain,
And truthfully will say that they won't see your like again,
You leave a space in people's lives but will forever be
One of God's heavenly pipers in celestial harmony.

*Tony Church
Southampton, England*

Ed note: Thank you Tony for these great words of the power of the pipes.

matters of today; to planning and welfare; how it treats its citizens, diaspora and visitors; and, above all, its uniqueness in the broadest possible way.

Some of the above might appear negative, but to counter this readers are encouraged to peruse the several documents relating to the Strategy. These are available through the Government's website at www.gov.scot. Feedback is a must.

*Ron Layton
Crafers, South Australia*

Summertime in Scotland

This Scots poem is by an unknown author, hopefully it might bring back memories to readers of times past.

Summertime in Scotland

It's summer-time in Scotland,
An' though I'm far awa',
In thocht I wander o'er her hills
An' by her lochs sae brow;

Aince mair, I'm jist a bairnie
Wi' ither bairns at play,
Aye lauchin' an' chaffin,
Through the bonnie summer day.

This land is a fine land,
That I'll no' deny,
But aye I think on Scotland
Wil mony a lang-drawn sigh.
Oh, wae's me, I'm trauchled
Wi' langin's for my hame,
I'm comin back, auld Scotland,
Sae welcome hame yer ain.

*Chris Ferguson
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada*

A culture strategy for Scotland

Many years in the making the Scottish Government released its much anticipated "A Culture Strategy for Scotland" in 2020. This followed a raft of extensive consultations, research, a comprehensive reported analysis and, interestingly, a detailed report on comparisons between Scotland and Ireland as to the place of the diaspora in the scheme of things. Following its release, the Government also set up a National Partnership for Culture body to monitor introduction progress and provide advice as to how the Strategy could be further improved. All of this was designed to reflect that the subject of Culture and the Strategy is of considerable importance to the country and its people: that there is much still to be learned and that the latter would be subject to change.

The document proposes a vision of: "Scotland is a place where culture is valued, protected and nurtured. Culture is woven through everyday life, shapes and is shaped by society, and its transformative potential is experienced by everyone. Scotland's rich cultural heritage and creativity of today is inspired by people and place, enlivens every community and is celebrated around the world."

Ten Aims are also set out including "Strengthening Culture", "Transforming Through Culture", and, "Empowering Through Culture." Guiding Principles are similarly outlined.

It goes without saying that Scotland has elements of having a very distinctive culture, acknowledged as such throughout the world. The Government and many of the country's citizens also note its importance in maintaining its well-being particularly through its tourism and economics.

Important and valuable as is the Strategy, it is disappointing to some, particularly from outside of the country. The notion of Culture

adopted seems to be narrow, focusing mainly on high end aspects such as the creative arts, theatre and modern literature, and bringing these to the citizens as well as the outside world. The latter appears to be around 'what you can do for us on our terms'. In some quarters it is thought that a more complete understanding of the country's culture can be better seen from outside, or at least, a combination of both.

From inside, difficult as it is to capture, culture is often so much a matter of everyday life that it is taken as for granted. Yet, from outside it might also be distorted, simplified, often a matter of externalised and manufactured mystique. Both sides together, however, can be seen to be better able to come to grips with more of that which could be regarded as the country's culture. Even then there is profit in better understanding what is a country's culture, particularly for a nation like Scotland that seems to be wanting put its own on a much higher symbolic platform.

All of this propels one to consider just what is culture and what it is that should be taken into account in putting forward such a Strategy. As it stands, it is only just a strategy, but there is enough in it to suggest that something more is sought. The question is, what? In its more extensive definitional form the culture of a country is regarded as all that which socially outlines how a country operates and how it defines itself, both as a social whole and in its individual aspects. It is the same for every country and indeed every group within a country.

The concept is quite slippery, but to do justice, one must pick out all of those aspects which sets out the particular social nature of the subject country and its people. In this case it should be about what sets Scotland aside, as considered by its people, both in actuality and aspiration, and because of its national history, also leaning heavily on what now call its diaspora.

So, the Strategy must extend to a whole raft of matters beyond the 'high end' and include, for example, how the country regards the many aspects of its landscape and geography; its portrayal of history and

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Glencoe



"Black Mount" an icy start to the day in Glencoe.
*Ronald Stokes
Scotland*

Edinburgh Castle



Is there a more beautiful sight than Edinburgh Castle.
*Aye Spy Photography
Scotland
<http://ayespyp photography.co.uk>*

Highland Coo



Don't mind me...
*The Kilted Photographer
Scotland*

Highland locals



Meeting the locals at Glen Etive.
*Tommy Hamilton Photography
Scotland*