



the Scottish Banner



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A' Bhratach Albannach

Volume 49 Number 4

NEWS FOR GLOBAL SCOTS

October 2025

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The heart of the Scottish Highlands

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the Scottish Banner

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The Banner Says...

Glasgow City Chambers

A proud symbol of Glasgow



by Sean Cairney

On a recent visit to Glasgow, I again had the opportunity to visit Glasgow City Chambers, one of the most iconic buildings to be found in the city. Whilst there I was given a private tour of just some of the incredible spaces found in this historic and amazing building. Glasgow City Chambers stands proudly on the eastern edge of George Square and is one of Scotland's most magnificent civic buildings and a powerful symbol of Glasgow's historical wealth, ambition, and civic pride.

Completed in 1888 and opened by Queen Victoria herself, the building reflects the city's meteoric rise during the Victorian era, when Glasgow was known as the "Second City of the Empire" due to its booming trade, shipbuilding, and industrial prowess.

The need for a grand municipal headquarters had been growing since the 18th century, as Glasgow's population and political responsibilities expanded. Earlier council meetings were held in modest locations like the Tolbooth at Glasgow Cross and later in various buildings near the Saltmarket and Ingram Street.

Glasgow's growing status

But by the 1880s, the city's leaders sought a purpose-built structure that would reflect Glasgow's growing status and accommodate its administrative needs. A design competition attracted over 100 entries, and the winning design

by Paisley born architect William Young was chosen for its opulent Victorian style and practical layout. Construction began in 1882, and the foundation stone was laid in 1883 by the then Lord Provost John Ure during a public holiday attended by an astonishing 600,000 people.

The building was completed five years later, and its grandeur was immediately apparent. The building cost £552,028 which as you may be able to imagine was considerable for that time.

Glasgow City Chambers is one of Scotland's most magnificent civic buildings.

Whilst the outside of the building is spectacular you really need to go inside to fully understand not just how incredible this building is, but to understand Glasgow's political strength and historical wealth.

The interior boasts a sweeping Carrara marble staircase—reputedly the largest of its kind in the world—vaulted mosaic ceilings, and pillars made from Aberdeen granite and polished red Scottish granite topped with green marble. The building incredibly features more marble than what is found at the Vatican. These lavish materials showcase an Italian influence and were deliberately chosen to highlight Glasgow's prosperity and craftsmanship.

In this issue

A trip to the Scottish Highlands is not complete without visiting Inverness and Loch Ness. Go for the scenery, history, Highland culture and friendly locals. There is an unquestionable timeless drama about the region which makes it a must on your next Scottish adventure.

Some love them, and some not so much, but stroll around a graveyard and there are many stories to be told. Scottish graveyards are rich

in history and fascinating, I have visited many and am drawn to the stories the stones tell and the often-lovely natural setting that those who came before us rest in.

East Linton is a small country village, located on the banks of the River Tyne between Haddington and Dunbar in East Lothian, with a lot of history. The village and surrounding area not only offer beauty but also centuries of history which is quite easily accessible when looking for something different when next in Scotland.

Glasgow's civic spirit

Glasgow City Chambers today remains a working municipal building. Council meets regularly and meetings are open to the public. As you would imagine the staff working here are immensely proud of this building. The building has hosted royalty, heads of state, sporting greats, and countless everyday great people.

You can, and really should, take the free tour of this building, these run Monday to Friday twice a day. Public tours allow visitors to explore its ornate rooms and learn about Glasgow's civic legacy, making it not just a seat of power but a living museum of the city's identity. Outside George Square is currently undergoing a lengthy redevelopment, but the City Chambers are still in full operation.

Glasgow City Chambers is more than a municipal building—it's a monument to the city's industrial might, artistic heritage, and celebrates Glasgow's civic spirit. Its history mirrors Glasgow's transformation from medieval burgh to what is today's Scotland's largest city which this year is celebrating 850 years, and its continued use underscores the city's commitment to honouring its past while shaping its future. 🇪🇸

Have you visited Glasgow City Chambers? Do you have any comments from the content in this month's edition? Share your story with us by email, post, social media or: #ScottishBanner, #TheBanner.

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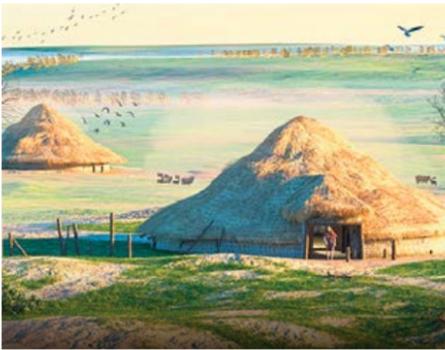


Glasgow City Chambers: Photo: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam.



Gracing our front cover: Urquhart Castle sitting on the edge of Loch Ness. Photo: VisitScotland/Stuart Brunton.

Prehistoric Eden revealed in Fife



Many people who live in houses today may not be aware that they inhabit the same space that prehistoric peoples once inhabited. Two new publications reveal that archaeology that spanned over 10,000 years, from traces of Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunter gatherers, to Neolithic farmers, Bronze Age metalworkers, Iron Age Fort dwellers and medieval kiln burners, once lay where new houses now stand. The discovery was made by GUARD Archaeology during archaeological excavations between 2017 and 2021 commissioned by Persimmon Homes North Scotland prior to construction of new houses at Guardbridge, located just outside St Andrews. Before the excavation began, the ditches of a fort in the north-east corner of the site had already been identified on aerial photographs.

Bronze Age

While most of this fort was left intact, the excavation revealed that it likely

originated during the Late Bronze Age and continued through much of the Iron Age until the early centuries AD. Spindle whorls and loom weights attest to the weaving of woollen cloth by the fort's inhabitants while fragments of shale bracelets demonstrate personal adornment. But what was really surprising about this site was all the other archaeology found outwith the fort, not just Iron Age but much earlier too.

From earlier in the Bronze Age, the remains of substantial roundhouses were discovered, from which an assemblage of pottery sherds and animal bones were recovered. Metalworking was also carried out here during the late Bronze Age as rare casting moulds for a sword blade and a socketed gouge – a tool used in carpentry – were found. From the porch of one of the roundhouses was found evidence that one of its occupants had once sat there knapping flint for tools.

The earliest occupation of Scotland

The site was also used before this, during the Neolithic by some of the first farmers of Fife who left many pits across this site, containing burnt cereal grains, saddle querns and pottery sherds but no trace of their houses.

And before even this, were traces of a temporary Mesolithic campsite. A fire-pit, radiocarbon dated to around 4320-4051 BC, was associated with a cluster of burnt lithics arranged in a

distinctive star-shaped pattern, indicative of a tent or shelter, where a small group of hunter gatherers once camped to hunt and fish in the nearby estuary. And below this was a scatter of flints from around 10,000 BC during the Late Upper Palaeolithic period where some of the very earliest inhabitants of Fife once sat knapping flint tools.

While settlement at this site seems to have drawn to a close around the end of the Iron Age, several medieval corn-drying kilns were also found, dating to between AD 900 and 1300. These kilns were presumably worked by labourers of 'Segy' farm. The different construction techniques apparent shows how these kilns changed over time, improving in design and size to meet the growing demand from the growing medieval population of Fife. These were the last traces of archaeology with origins stretching back in some form or another to some of the earliest occupation of Scotland.



Artist's impressions of the area.

High interest in Armadale Castle sale



The Board of Trustees of the Clan Donald Lands Trust (CDLT) have announced they have received a large number of offers regarding the sale of Armadale Castle. Offers have now closed for the property on the historic lands of Clan MacDonald on the Isle of Skye. The sale has drawn concern from island residents as well as clan members around the world, with many caught off guard when the sale was announced in March this year. The property is described on the agent's Strutt & Parker website as "A unique opportunity to acquire the centrepiece of a historic estate, located in a spectacular position on the Isle of Skye with potential to be restored as a private home or further developed into a world class tourism and hospitality destination."

The Board of Sleat Community Trust had considered a community buyout but decided not to bid for Armadale Castle due to high costs. Donaidh MacDonald, Chair of Sleat Community Trust, said: "We want to see Armadale run again as a successful enterprise, bringing jobs and associated business to our communities. We want it to be recognised as a place of significant historical value, as well-managed land where people respect, value and celebrate the natural beauty and heritage of the area."

Ken your country

The most northerly town on the Scottish mainland.

How well do you know Scotland? To test your knowledge we have assembled ten fun questions on its geography, history and culture — but if you get stumped, the solutions can be found underneath. Good Luck!

- 1) What does the word "ceilidh" translate as?
- 2) Who wrote the words of *Scots Wha Hae*?
- 3) Which American park did the Scots conservationist John Muir found?
- 4) If a Scot is said to be sprack, what is he?
- 5) Whose dying words were, "So little done. So much to do"?
- 6) What physical characteristic is supposedly associated with the Clan Campbell?
- 7) Name the most northerly town on the Scottish mainland?
- 8) Which much-derided Scottish King was known as Toom Tabard, or empty coat?

- 9) How did James I of Scotland (1394-1437) die?
- 10) Who was Scotland's longest serving First Minister?

Answers:

- 1) A visit.
- 2) Robert Burns.
- 3) Yellowstone National Park.
- 4) Lively or alert.
- 5) Sir Walter Scott in Edinburgh.
- 6) Crooked mouths!
- 7) Thurso in Caithness.
- 8) John Balliol (1150-1313).
- 9) He was assassinated in a Perth privy.
- 10) Nicola Sturgeon was in power for over eight years or 3,051 days. Sturgeon was Scotland's longest serving and first ever female First Minister.

HUNTER VALLEY Highland Games

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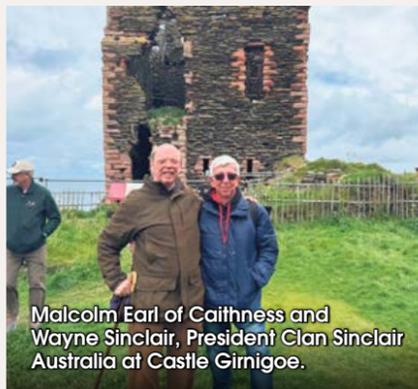
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SCOT POURRI

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?

International Clan Sinclair Gathering



Malcolm Earl of Caithness and Wayne Sinclair, President Clan Sinclair Australia at Castle Girnigoe.



International members of Clan Sinclair.

Clan Chief Malcolm, Earl of Caithness and John Viscount of Thurso organised a Gathering of the Clan in Thurso, Scotland in July. Twenty-two members of Clan Sinclair Australia travelled to join Sinclair's from UK, USA, Canada, Italy, Norway and Romania to celebrate the Clan. Over three days we attended

a garden party, the Halkirk Highland Games, Church service, a visit to Sinclair Castle Girnigoe, AGM and formal farewell dinner. It was a great opportunity to connect with old and new friends.

Liane Sinclair
Secretary Clan Sinclair Australia

Sons of Scotland Pipe Band



The Sons of Scotland Pipe Band of Ottawa took its annual trip to Scotland in August, and they had a terrific time. With players from all across Canada, Australia and Uruguay, the band played at the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow, at three shows in Edinburgh, and two concerts in Stirling. Pipefest was a great fundraising effort in Princes Street Gardens, and playing alongside the Brazilian Pipes and Drums a great show!

Many of their attendees enjoyed lots of visiting and enjoying shows, and going to the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo was a highlight – we had two competitors with us participating in the Tattoo, and its 75th anniversary was so memorable. We had great weather, we had a lot of fun as a group, and came away with wonderful memories. We welcome you to join us in future trips – go to our website at www.sospb.com for all the details!

Pipe Major Bethany Bisailion
Sons of Scotland Pipe Band
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada

Hunter Valley, New South Wales

Seeing the Hunter Valley Highland Games advert in the August edition of *the Scottish Banner* reminded me of the early settlement of the region, and in particular a family of MacDougalls. Recruited in London by Governor King they were amongst the very first free settlers to come to New South Wales. They arrived in Port Jackson on board the Barwell and were given considerable areas of land and

convicts to assist them. Originally from Kelso in the Borders Region, they were brought out to provide skills and balance in an otherwise convict/military colony.

Their initial holdings were in an area north of Parramatta and called them Baulkham Hills after the low hills behind their native Kelso. Subsequent properties were in the Castle Hill area, extending quickly to the Windsor and Hunter regions. Having a large family typical of the day subsequent generations spread far and wide, establishing many further properties in the early days of the colony.

Despite all of this, little is known of them, other than what appeared in the newspapers of the day. They must have made some impact because at one stage they were known as Australia's Royal Family.

My wife is a descendant of the Kelso MacDougall lot and has quite a story around her 3x great grandmother. The latter's father was a senior officer in Napoleon's army and was captured by the British at the battle of Corunna (Spain) in 1809. As a prisoner of war, he was transferred to Portland and as was the custom of the day well looked after. Subsequently, he was paroled to work with the MacDougall family in Kelso. As it happened Bartholemi Bonnet sired a child, Anne MacDougall Bonnet. In due course she married and amongst her children was one who in turn married Albert Edwin Elworthy Lee Tucker, a successful businessman and Minister in the Victorian Parliament. One of his grandchildren was the famed artist, Albert Tucker.

Now back to the Royal Family bit! One of Albert senior's descendants did in fact marry into several real royal families, this time of an earlier Scotland and of later European countries. Most of these now live in Australia!

Ron Layton
Crafer
South Australia

Ed note: Thank you Ron for this interesting piece of history.

The Border Reivers



What a fascinating article on the Border Reivers (*The 500-year-old curse of the Border Reivers, the Scottish Banner, August, 2025*). Our family has links to the Borders area and have often heard of these lawless people. Border Reivers were ruthless raiders—burning homes, stealing cattle, kidnapping rivals, and defying law across Scotland's wild frontier lands. I have never however heard of the 1069-word curse put on them, what a fascinating history Scotland has!

These were brutal times and how folk lived is something none of us can really truly imagine. I am so very proud of my Scottish ancestry, even with all the dark and chequered past it unravels to us today.

The Scottish Banner offers us of Scottish descent a great insight into where we came from, keep up the great work.

Chris Maxwell
Columbia, Maryland
USA

World Pipe Band Championships



Congratulations to all the bands that travelled to Scotland for the World Pipe Band Championships. The event had some great talent on the field and I really enjoyed watching the performances via the Livestream service. It was so great to see so many countries involved and I would be making a great understatement by saying this is on my bucket list. To see the spectacle of so many band's men and women from across the world competing in friendship is an incredible thing. The pipe band fraternity is a very special one and I have no doubt some great connections are made at such an international event.

I love visiting Glasgow as well so will make sure I get to the 'World's' myself one day, to celebrate the music, bands and my heritage.

John Wilson
Summerville, South Carolina
USA

Ed note: I hope you get that off your bucket list soon John!

FROM OUR SOCIAL MEDIA



Sent to our Facebook, Twitter or Instagram accounts—send us your photos or letters via social media (#ScottishBanner or #TheBanner):

Heilan Coo



Just waiting for the weekend...
Derek A Grist

The Mirror Man



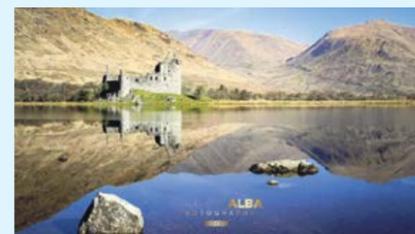
Lovely light on the Loch Earn sculpture Still – known locally as The Mirror Man.
Mik Coia

The National Wallace Monument, Stirling



Sir William Wallace taking in the sunset.
The Kilted Photographer

Kilchurn Castle



Kilchurn Castle resting on the shores of Loch Awe.
Soul of Alba Photography

Scottish brothers set new World Record after completing cross Pacific row



Three Scottish brothers have set a new world record after completing the fastest human-powered crossing of the full Pacific Ocean. Rowers Jamie, Ewan, and Lachlan Maclean arrived in Cairns, Australia on Saturday August 30, following a mammoth 139 days 5 hours and 52 minutes at sea as they rowed 9,000 miles across the world's largest ocean. The Edinburgh-born trio are the first team ever recorded to row from South America to Australia. The previous fastest time to cross the full Pacific Ocean was 159 days 16 hr 58 mins, achieved by Fedor Konyukhov (Russia), who rowed 7,393 miles (6,424 nautical miles; 11,897.9 km) from Chile, to Australia in 2014.

The trio took on the epic challenge to raise awareness and fund projects that provide clean water for life to people living in Madagascar through their Maclean Foundation, and have so far raised more than £1,000,000 as supporters from around the globe – including megastars Ewan MacGregor, Mark Wahlberg, and Flea – rallied behind the campaign. The voyage, which began on April 12, threw significant challenges at the rowers, including Ewan and Jamie facing crippling seasickness for the first two weeks; a terrifying scare with Lachlan thrown overboard during a night shift only to be pulled back on the boat by his older brother Ewan; and a race against time to complete the row as extreme weather conditions stalled their progress, and caused a fast-depleting food supply to complete the row. The adventurers also had to deal with a broken water maker, faulty auto helm, and countless injuries as they spent up to 14 hours per day on the oars.

Once-in-a-lifetime adventure

The Scots were reunited with more than 50 friends and family who made the trip from the UK, including their mum, Sheila, as well as hundreds of fans at Cairns Marlin Marina. Middle brother Jamie (31) said: "Things got tough towards the end and we seriously thought we might run out of food. Despite how exhausted we were, we had to step up a gear and make it before supplies ran out, but now we get to eat proper food. Ocean rowing has given us newfound appreciation for things we used to take for granted – like going for a shower, lying in bed, or simply leaning on something stationary. It was the most incredible, relentless and often surreal experience of my life. While I might miss the routine, the solitude, the sunsets, and sunrises and so much more, right now I'm just very glad to be back on land with my friends and family who I've missed so much. The whole thing will take a while to sink in."

While the mid-Pacific, from California to Hawaii, is well travelled, relatively few have attempted the full Pacific from South America to Australia. Earlier this year,



Lithuanian solo rower Aurimas Mockus had to abandon his Pacific crossing attempt due to Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Ewan (33), who left his job as an engineer at Dyson to take on this once-in-a-lifetime adventure, added: "The days have been long and yet the weeks have flown past, it's strange to think of the time that we've spent out here. This has been the hardest thing I've ever done, and I couldn't have even contemplated it without my brothers. There have been countless setbacks to overcome, some leaving us lost, but we've always lifted each other up. We've shed tears of joy and laughed till our cheeks hurt. And at times we've cried with sadness and with fear, but our spirits have been lifted, time and time again, by the support of so many rallying behind us."

Global attention

The row captured global attention, with Wahlberg – who said he wanted to play the trio in a movie – keeping especially close attention, even joining the brothers for an Instagram live to wish them luck in the others prior to arrival. Jamie played bagpipes to Ewan McGregor from the ocean, while Sam Heughan and Flea from the Red Hot Chilli Peppers were also among those calling in to the boat to show support. The All-American Rejects invited

Jamie to join the band's performance at Comic Con in San Diego live from sea, playing the intro to their hit *Swing-Swing* on the bagpipes. As well as online donations, many have been inspired to take on a charity challenge of their own, from Chamberlain Care Home's weekly physio rowing sessions to a five-year-old running a mile every day of his school holidays.

Youngest brother Lachlan, who marked his 27th birthday during the five-month voyage, was inspired to support clean water projects in Madagascar after visiting the country following university. He said: "We've completed the row, but the journey isn't over. We have a charity target of £1 million (\$2.06m AUD) which will provide clean water for life to 40,000 people living in Madagascar, and we won't stop until we get there. Clean water is the most basic of needs, and it's too often taken for granted. While we're looking forward to getting back to Scotland to see our dad, and to enjoy life back at our croft in Nedd in the Highlands, we're also very excited to get back out to Madagascar as it's a very special place for us."

The brothers' boat, *Rose Emily*, was named after the sister they never knew, as their parents lost her during pregnancy. The boat, which the brothers built alongside ocean rowing legend Mark Slats, is believed to be the fastest and lightest ocean rowing boat ever made. The brothers first caught the bug for ocean rowing in 2019 when they set out to row the Atlantic Ocean. Despite being relative novices to the sport, the trio broke three world records when they rowed from La Gomera in the Canary Islands to Antigua in 35 days.

The expedition was in support of The Maclean Foundation, which funds clean water projects in Madagascar and beyond. To donate and keep up with The Maclean Brothers, visit www.themacleanbrothers.com.

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SCOTSPEAK

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



"Monty Python and the Holy Grail is an iconic film which has been loved by audiences for 50 years. To celebrate the anniversary of its release, we're delighted to host showings of the film in the historic Doune Castle which served as the backdrop to a number of filming locations."

Gillian Urquhart, Events Manager at Historic Environment Scotland, said ahead of a special screening at Doune Castle of the cult classic comedy *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Released in 1975, it was filmed at Doune Castle, with the castle serving as Castle Anthrax as well as other locations.

"I'm delighted that our funding will restore so much more peatland over the next year. The best thing about restoring peatlands is that everyone benefits."

"As well as being good for nature and climate action, it provides jobs, often in remote rural locations, and helps to protect communities and businesses from flooding and wildfire risk. It's a triple win for people, nature and climate."

Claudia Rowse, NatureScot Deputy Director - Green Economy said Scotland's peatlands, and the people, communities and wildlife that depend on them, are set to benefit from the highest-ever round of restoration funding this year. NatureScot Peatland ACTION is currently issuing funding worth more than £20m over three years. This is the highest round of peatland restoration funding ever awarded by the organisation. Healthy peatlands - where the water table is close to the surface to keep the peat wet - are the world's largest and most efficient land-based store of carbon.



"As a coastal city, we all need to take care of the fantastic waterways that surround us. This includes the Water of Leith which runs the breadth of Edinburgh, and the popular and well visited Firth of Forth which is home to a huge diversity of marine species and is one of the best places in Scotland to see passing dolphins. It is important that we play our part in protecting the waterways in and around our city. This new commitment supports not only our net zero target and the fight against climate change but the United Nation's vision to address issues facing the ocean, so we can continue to protect and preserve our rivers and coasts for future generations."

Edinburgh Council Leader Jane Meagher said in recognition of its coasts, canals, lochs and estuaries, Edinburgh has become the first Council in Scotland to adopt a 'Motion for the Ocean'. Launched by a group of ocean experts, the formal declaration commits local authorities to promote and prioritise ocean recovery during the United Nations' Decade of the Ocean.

"For many children and young people, reading a story or comic in Scots for the first time can be a transformative learning experience. We work very hard to improve Scots language provision for young Scots speakers in Scotland's schools. It's good to be recognised by the Scottish Government for our efforts, especially if it means we can help more young Scots speakers enjoy and learn about their own Scots language."

Matthew Fitt, a co-owner of Scots Hoose Yaldi, said at the unveiling of a new Scots language children's book. *The Auchtermichty Aw-Stars* is being produced by Scots Hoose Yaldi and features three Scots language plays about a youth football club. It is part of a series of Scots books and comics which will be printed and distributed to hundreds of schools and nurseries. Census figures published last year found that 35% of people aged 15 or under had some Scots skills, an increase of 6% from 2011.



The cliffs of Eshaness, Shetland. Photo: © VisitScotland/Stuart Brunton.

"Each one of Scotland's UNESCO sites tells a story of Scotland's rich and varied culture, history and heritage. Together, they form a powerful showcase of Scotland's unique proposition as a year-round sustainable tourism destination. The UNESCO Trail has been a pioneering project led by VisitScotland in partnership with sites across the country and this analysis shows the clear value of the initiative as it helps build a compelling story that is attracting tourists and visitors from across the world to our incredible, unique UNESCO sites up and down the country."

Scotland's Business Minister Richard Lochhead said as a new study of the world-leading Scotland's UNESCO Trail has been hailed a success. It finds that the trail not only raised Scotland's profile as a holiday destination but also as a "global leader" in promoting UNESCO values and responsible, sustainable tourism practices - with other countries inspired to create their own version. Scotland's currently has 16 UNESCO designated sites across the country.

"This is a landmark moment - not just for science, but for the future of land use in the UK. Truffle farming offers a low-input, resilient crop that could bring real economic opportunities to island and rural communities. With the rise of food tourism, this could just as easily support a boutique agri-tourism industry as it could offer new income for landowners."

Professor Paul W. Thomas, Honorary Professor at the University of Stirling, said they successfully cultivated a black truffle on the Isle of Bute, where a pioneering truffle science project is being trialled. It is thought to be the first cultivated truffle recorded on a UK island, in a breakthrough that could transform land use, tourism, and economic development in rural and coastal areas.

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SCOTWORD

Here is a wee Scottish crossword for you to try! If you're stuck, answers can be found on page 22.

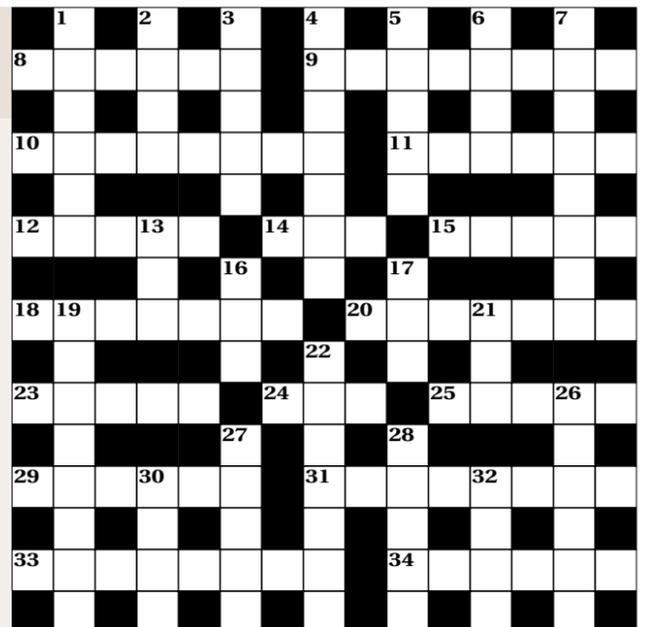
CLUES ACROSS

- 8) Above if you're a Scot (6).
- 9) Scots vests (8).
- 10) Deeside village (8).
- 11) A cured haddock (6).
- 12) A Scottish serving plate (5).
- 14) Racecourse town on the Clyde (3).
- 15) A man-made waterway (5).
- 18) Tatties for Burns Nigh! (7).
- 20) Find them at St Andrews (7).
- 23) Part of the Highland Dress (5).
- 24) Twisted humour! (3).

- 25) Describing Burns' best-laid plans (5).
- 29) A dirty Scot! (6).
- 31) Firth north of Inverness (8).
- 33) Gardens on Isle of Gigha (8).
- 34) Wee land groups (6).

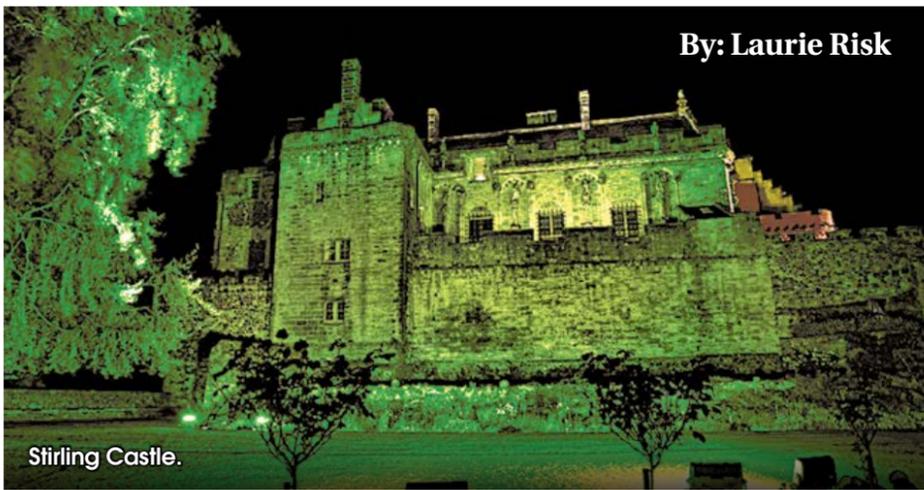
CLUES DOWN

- 1) Berries of the mountain ash (6).
- 2) Hero (4).
- 3) Scottish soup (5).
- 4) Birds of prey (7).
- 5) A skean dhu is one (5).
- 6) Scots family group (4).
- 7) To roam aimlessly (8).
- 13) Tree (3).
- 16) 6/8 tempo (3).
- 17) Aberdeen waterway (3).
- 19) Inlet north of Dunoon (4, 4).
- 21) A Scots listener (3).
- 22) Scots fern (7).
- 26) Landed property (6).
- 27) Supreme court of the kirk (5).
- 28) A dismal Scot! (5).
- 30) It's loud at Hampden! (4).
- 32) Colleague (4).



Ghost stories from Stirling Castle

Text and images courtesy of Historic Environment Scotland.



By: Laurie Risk

Stirling Castle.

Stirling Castle has all sorts of ghost stories to tell. Laurie Risk began working for Historic Environment Scotland (HES) as an Admissions Assistant at Stirling Castle and shares some of the castle's spooky tales in the lead up to Halloween. As an evidence-based organisation HES cannot say if these tales are true, but if you like a good story this article is for you!

Nothing beats a ghost story from Stirling Castle, which is notorious for the tales of who – or what – haunts its walls! Castles are rich with the weight of history. After all they've witnessed warfare, murder, births and deaths. It's no surprise these events should pass into the frightening folklore of our favourite places. I'm a bit of a sceptic when it comes to ghosts, but there is a type of phantom that fascinates me – the female ghost.

The figure of the female ghost has cropped up at historic sites across the world for centuries. Nearly every culture has its own legend of this irresistible maiden. She even comes in a handy array of colours to help us identify her! For instance, there is a ghost known as 'The White Lady'. Typically, a destitute figure dressed in a flowing white gown, her afterlife activities have been reported all over the world.

In Medieval England she was seen as an omen of death. One of the most famous examples is Henry VIII's wife Anne Boleyn, said to haunt the Tower of London. In Scotland, she has been seen as the desperate soul of a girl who threw herself from a tower. She's even been spotted in Malta, where she is said to have thrown herself to her death to escape an unwanted marriage.

A ghost of many colours

We don't have any White Lady ghost stories at Stirling, but other phantoms are available. There is said to be a 'Black Lady' who haunts the back walk. We don't know much about her, or why she lingers in this spot. However, it is said she creates



Photo: Rob McDougall.

a foreboding atmosphere for anyone wandering the path at night... We've also had reports of a 'Pink Lady' – or rather a 'pink aura' permeating the Kirkyards around the castle.

This lady manifests as a sense of longing or unrequited love felt by people walking there. Some think she was a woman whose sweetheart died prematurely in battle. The poor soul is now doomed to roam the earth full of all the passion unfulfilled in life. Our most notorious shade of female ghost though, is the infamous 'Green Lady'.

Stirling's Green Lady



Stairs leading to the Princes Tower.

We've heard several versions of the 'Green Lady' ghost story at Stirling Castle. In one tale she appears at the top of the steps to what used to be the military base of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. She was seen gliding down the steps in flowing green finery, devastatingly beautiful. Luckily she seems to have been in a benevolent mood that day, and simply passed through the young soldier who spotted her!

There are different tales of her origin, but the one that stems from some historical evidence is that she was a young Highland girl who attended the castle as a servant of Mary, Queen of Scots. She was said to be highly superstitious, and convinced that a terrible fate would befall Mary on the night of 13 September 1561.

The story goes that the girl was sure a terrible fire would break out in Mary's room at the castle. She vowed to remain awake

all night to guard the queen, but couldn't quite manage it. In her drowsiness, she accidentally set fire to the queen's bed-curtains with a candle. The queen survived, but the poor girl fell victim to her own vision and died that night in the fire.

We have records to show that this fire took place. But there is no written evidence of the existence of the girl, or her foretelling of her own terrible death. Still, her story has become legendary. Her tragic ghost is said to haunt the castle, a bitter spirit who brings misery and doom to those unlucky enough to find themselves in her company...

Dark and grisly past



The door to the uniform room looks unassuming...

When I heard this tale from a colleague, I didn't think I'd ever run into her. But one day I descended the stone steps towards the room at the base of the Prince's Tower where he said she resides, and the door

handle mysteriously turned by itself. A few months later, I returned to find some of our uniform rails had tipped over. When I went to investigate the windows began to rattle, which did make me wonder – albeit briefly – if I had overstayed my welcome in the Green Lady's domain!

I suspect these female phantoms are simply the result of the dark and ghostly perceptions we all hold about castles. If a place has a dark and grisly past, our imaginations are bound to run wild. Who doesn't love a romantic tale of the tormented figures who once stood between these ancient walls? For me, there is something irresistible about phantoms who don't conform to our standard conventions of femininity by meekly going off to eternal rest. Perhaps they represent women who have been oppressed throughout history, only now able to express their rage of life's restrictions? Perhaps death is their chance to finally make their stories heard.

In any case, the legend of the Green Lady and her colourful counterparts will continue to terrify and enthrall us in castles, palaces and other historic nooks and crannies all over the world for years to come.

Do you have any favourite ghost stories, from Stirling or farther afield? Share your story with us! Historic Environment Scotland is the lead public body established to investigate, care for and promote Scotland's historic environment. For more details see: www.historicenvironment.scot

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Barra Castle – A family home for over 800 years



By: Wade King

Barra Castle is located in the Garioch district of Aberdeenshire beside B9170 road that leads from Inverurie to Meldrum. It is about two miles, or three kilometres, south of the village of Meldrum (called Oldmeldrum on modern maps but “Meldrum” to its inhabitants). Although called a castle, correctly Barra Castle is a fortalice or fortified house. It was built originally in the early 1200s and was then the seat of the King family who served as lairds of the surrounding Barra Estate. It served that purpose until 1596, when the Kings were forced to leave.

Since 1600 the castle has been home to several families, recently the Ramsay family whose later generations the Bogdans made major renovations in the 1970s. The current owners are Sir David and Lady Sarah Stephen, who live in the

castle and operate a produce shop and a wedding venue onsite. The Stephens also renovated the castle more recently.

A Scottish fortified house

The castle has been renovated several times and stands now as a fine example of a Scottish fortified house, or fortalice. For defence, there are no windows or doors other than the main door at ground level. The plan of the castle is a variation on the L-plan, with the main block of the castle lying north to south. There is a circular tower at the south-west. A D-plan tower at the south-east, corbelled square at the top to give a watch room, links to a large square wing.

At its north-west angle, this wing has a second circular tower. The castle's entrance is in the main re-entrant angle: it contains the entrance door and main stair, which has a trip-step for defence. The towers have conical roofs. The main gables are crow stepped.

The buildings around the courtyard are three storeys high and built of pinned boulder rubble. This type of construction has stood the test of time. All additions made over the centuries have copied the original so that the castle today looks as if it was all built at the same time. The older parts of the structure date from the early 13th century, when Barra Castle was built to be the seat of the King family.

These older parts include the kitchen which still has the large stone open fireplace at which the King ancestors would have warmed their hands in the 1200s.

Fine symbol of Scots history

Barra Castle has been acclaimed by many historians and architects. Nigel Tranter, the Scottish historian of the twentieth century, wrote in his book on Scottish fortified houses, “Barra is assuredly one of the most attractive of the lesser castles of this great country”. From the 1940s on, Mrs. Mhaire Bogdan (née Ramsay) lived in Barra Castle. Her eldest son Nicholas was an architect and he lived in Barra Castle all his life, from 1947 until 2002. Nicholas undertook extensive restoration of the castle to make it a comfortable family home.

Sir David and Lady Sarah Stephen who live there now renovated the castle further when they took over and they developed the barn as a glamorous wedding venue with B&B accommodation. Thanks to their care, Barra Castle will go into the 21st and succeeding centuries as the fine symbol of Scots history that it is.

Rediscovering lost Gaelic words



An online dictionary which has rediscovered lost Gaelic phrases and word meanings is one of 12 projects set to benefit from Scottish Government funding. *Faclair na Gàidhlig* (the *Historical Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic*) seeks to provide a better understanding of Gaelic's history and culture. It is the first dictionary of the language which aims to detail the origins and meanings of every known Gaelic word. Compilers expect that it will contain more than 100,000 entries.

As part of the initiative, researchers have investigated historical manuscripts dating back to the 12th century.

Rediscovered phrases and word meanings include:

- The phrase “Cìod fo na rionnagan” (“what under the stars”), which was used in the early 1900s to emphasise a point similar to “what on earth”.
- The Gaelic word for prickly pear fruit, “peur stobach”, was first used in a letter documenting a visit to Saint Helena in 1900.
- “uircean”, which is the Gaelic word for “piglet”, also used to mean “whale calf” in the 1800s.

Gaelic is a core part of Scotland's culture

The investment will build on 20 years of work by helping *Faclair na Gàidhlig* to reach new audiences including learners, researchers, writers and speakers of Gaelic. Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic Kate Forbes announced the funding as part of a wider £500,000 package to support the language's growth across Scotland. The investment will also support the publication of Gaelic language books, local mòd events throughout Scotland and Gaelic cultural activities including a summer school and musical events.

Ms Forbes said: “The dictionary initiative is providing researchers, writers, speakers and learners of Gaelic with new insight into the language and it will be a valuable resource for future generations. Gaelic is a core part of Scotland's culture, heritage and history. To support the language's growth across Scotland, I am announcing funding for a range of Gaelic publishing, education, arts and community projects today. This will build on measures set out in the Scottish Languages Bill to strengthen Gaelic education provision and our investment of £35.7 million in initiatives to promote the language in 2025-26.”

Ola Szczesnowicz, Senior Editor of *Faclair na Gàidhlig*, said: “*Faclair na Gàidhlig* will be the most comprehensive dictionary of Scottish Gaelic compiled on historical principles, similar to the Oxford English Dictionary. This is a big undertaking, and we welcome the Scottish Government's funding to help continue our work. Our dictionary entries are already going online, freely available to Gaelic speakers and everyone interested in the language.”

Faclair na Gàidhlig is available to read online at: www.faclair.ac.uk

Champions crowned at Cowal Gathering 2025



This year's World Highland Dancing Championships with World Juvenile World Champion Ailsa Gocan-Wright 5th from left back row, World Junior Champion Eilidh Gammons 6th from left and World Adult Champion Marielle Lesperance 7th from left.

This year's Cowal Gathering was again full of fierce competition, as thousands of spectators from across the globe descended on Dunoon to witness one of Scotland's most iconic and family-friendly events. Regarded as one of the country's best days out, the Gathering's grand finale more than lived up to expectations. From Highland dancing and pipe bands to daredevil ducks, live music, and traditional heavy athletics, ‘Super Saturday’ delivered non-stop entertainment from early morning until nightfall.

More than 1,000 competitors showcased their skills, with dancers, pipers, wrestlers, and heavy athletes battling it out for coveted Cowal silverware.

Adding to the excitement were this year's Chieftains—renowned stars of STV News Sean Batty and Laura Boyd, who oversaw the day's action. The event culminated in the World Highland Dancing Championship Finals—the largest competition of its kind globally. Dancers from the UK, Australia, Canada, and the USA competed for international glory.

World Juvenile Champion – Ailsa Gocan-Wright from Ontario

- 2nd: Ellie Murgha from Queensland
- 3rd: Lucy McMaster from Carlisle
- Best Scottish Juvenile Dancer was Lucy McMaster
- Best Overseas Juvenile Dancer was Ailsa Gocan-Wright

World Junior Champion – Eilidh Gammons from Helensburgh

- 2nd: Katjana Bruinsma from Alberta
- 3rd: Maria Monk from Glasgow
- Best Scottish Junior Dancer: Eilidh Gammons from Helensburgh
- Best Overseas Junior Dancer: Katjana Bruinsma from Alberta

World Adult Champion – Marielle Lesperance from Nova Scotia

- 2nd: Rebecca Thow from Aberdeen
- 3rd: Rosey Watt from Macduff
- Best Overseas Adult Dancer: Marielle Lesperance from Nova Scotia
- Best Scottish Adult Dancer: Rebecca Thow from Aberdeen

Cowal Gathering Chairman David Mitchell MBE hailed the 2025 event as one of the most memorable yet: “We've just experienced a Cowal Gathering that will go down in history. From outstanding performances to electric crowds and family-friendly fun, it's been a celebration of everything that makes this event so special. I want to thank the people of Dunoon and the wider Cowal community, as well as our fantastic competitors, sponsors, and visitors from around the world. This year's event has been marked by world-class talent and incredible support, and we're already looking forward to welcoming everyone back in 2026.”

A full list of the results is available at: www.cowalgathering.com

Scotland's History Village

By: David McVey



The Kiln at Preston Mill.

East Linton is an East Lothian village with a certain old-world appeal; picturesque cottages and town houses with distinctive orange-red pantiles, quiet corners, narrow wynds and open green spaces. It must be a great place to live; just off the A1, good local bus services and a new railway station which opened in 2023. It even has a small bookshop! But what really makes it stand out is a sense of history, both within the village and in its immediate surroundings.

I suspect that many people have visited East Linton without quite knowing it, for its visitor attractions tend to be very much on the periphery (unless, like me, you view bookshops as visitor attractions in themselves). There is one relatively recent tourist draw, though, that runs right through the village. The John Muir Way (JMW) is an increasingly popular long-distance walking trail that runs right across the waist of Scotland, from Helensburgh in the west to Dunbar in the east.

Dunbar is the usual starting-point as it was the birthplace and childhood home of the man it commemorates, the John Muir who emigrated to America and became a nature writer and early pioneer of conservation. If you're walking east-to-west (towards the sunset), East Linton is the first refuelling stop after Dunbar. Just about the only thing the humdrum commuter village near Glasgow where I live has in common with East Linton is that the JMW goes through both!

Preston Mill

Perhaps the best-known local feature is Preston Mill. It sits by the River Tyne (a different, smaller river than the English one that runs through Newcastle) just north-east of the village and is run by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS); the JMW, following the Tyne, runs right by.

There's been a mill on the site since the 1500s but the current buildings date from



Preston Mill and its Mill Pond.

the 1700s. The mill operated commercially until 1959, but the buildings were restored to working order when the Trust took over in the 1960s. The buildings often feature on Scottish calendars, perhaps because of the eye-catching conical structure in the distinctive East Lothian pantiles. This is actually the kiln, where the grain - usually oats - was dried before milling. Visitors from Kent will spot the resemblance to their famous Oast Houses (unique agricultural buildings), which were, after all, designed for a similar purpose, drying hops. You can also see the mill pond, the wheel which powers the mill and there's an informative display in the visitor centre.

It's an amazingly green, peaceful and scenic location for what is, after all, an industrial site. Various paths (including the JMW) offer pleasant, easy walking nearby but the most popular runs around 500m to Phantassie Doocot, an astonishing 16th century survival that is also preserved by the NTS. Shaped like a gigantic beehive, this dovecot is thought to have housed around 500 pigeons which were used as a cheap and convenient source of meat. The dovecot is not managed for this now, but apparently local pigeons do nest there, happy that they won't end up as dinner; not for humans, anyway.

The remarkable and exotic name is supposed to be derived from the Gaelic *fàn taise* which means, unremarkably and very much *not* exotic, 'damp slope'! The legendary Scottish engineer John Rennie was born at nearby Phantassie Farm so presumably was raised partly on pigeon-meat from the doocot.

You won't be in East Linton long before you notice the frequent express trains hammering past on the East Coast Main Line. The railway arrived in the village in 1846 and enabled East Linton to become a centre of agricultural trade with an impressive hexagonal building being provided as a venue for auctions. The Mart, as it became known, continued in this role until the 1960s when the original East Linton Station closed. However, in recent years it has been repurposed as a community venue with shops, places to eat and event spaces. A Sunday market is also held there. The new East Linton Station is nearby and brings central Edinburgh within around twenty minutes of the village.

History doesn't stop

The history doesn't stop. Just upstream from the village, on the banks of the Tyne is Hailes Castle. Based around a 13th century tower with later additions, the castle is associated with the Hepburn family, but has been in ruins since the 17th century. It's cared for by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and is normally open to the public. However, HES has been conducting a programme of safety surveys on its properties. At the time of my visit, it was Hailes' turn and it was closed, so if you want to visit, check HES's website in advance.

A couple of miles south of East Linton is Traprain Law, a northern outlier of the Lammermuir Hills, which reaches 221m/725ft. That isn't high, even by the standards of the Lammermuirs, but it's a short, sharp climb on steep paths, and the views to the Forth over East Lothian are astonishing. A really active walker could walk from East Linton to the summit of Traprain Law by way of Hailes Castle using footpaths and quiet roads. Even if you just start from the car park at the foot of the hill, stick to the path; the slopes on the south (crag) and east (quarrying) should be avoided. However, Traprain Law isn't just about walking and the outdoors. Here's where The History Village moves into prehistory.

Traprain Law has a number of archaeological features and may have been an occupied site from the Bronze Age until Roman times. The later dwellers seem



The Millwheel.

to have come to some arrangement with the Romans, co-existing and trading with them. In 2019 the Traprain Hoard, a cache of Roman silver, was found there. You can see it at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh.

If you have travelled between Edinburgh and London by train you have probably sped through East Linton at 100mph. Or you may have driven past on the A1, in neither case giving it a second thought. It's worth slowing down, though, and taking time to explore in and around 'The History Village'.



Phantassie Doocot.



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IN SCOTLAND TODAY



Photo: The Scottish Government.

First Minister meets President of the United States

First Minister John Swinney has met with the President of the United States Donald Trump at the White House. The 50-minute meeting took place ahead of the US President's State Visit to the United Kingdom, with the First Minister confirming to the President he would attend the State Banquet at Windsor Palace. During the meeting in the Oval Office, where the President was accompanied by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the First Minister used this latest opportunity to make the case for a better tariff deal for Scotch whisky. The First Minister also raised the international situation including the ongoing conflict in Gaza and Qatar.

First Minister John Swinney said: "With the US state visit to the UK just days away, we are now entering the critical days on which hopes of a better tariff deal for Scotch whisky rest. Scotch whisky holds a unique position, as it can only legally be produced in Scotland. During my discussions with President Trump, I made the case to reduce the tariffs on the Scotch whisky industry – something the US industry supports. The United States is the largest market for Scotch whisky but Scottish distillers also spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year buying Bourbon casks from Kentucky. The negotiations themselves are, of course, for the UK negotiating team but given whisky exports to the US were worth almost £1 billion in 2024, its importance to the Scottish economy cannot be underestimated and I am determined to do all that I can to protect and safeguard this iconic Scottish product."

The trip directly supports the Scottish Government's key priority to grow the economy with Scotland's whisky industry employing more than 20,000 workers, many located in rural areas.

The historic Kinloch Castle on the Isle of Rum has been put up for sale



NatureScot has been working with Savills to bring the Category-A listed castle to the open market after research found that

most islanders agree the building should be sold to be redeveloped and brought back into use. The study by the Scottish Government's Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) found that many islanders feel that the sale and redevelopment of the castle would have a positive impact on the Rum community.

Chris Donald, NatureScot's Head of Operations for Central Highland, said: "Through this study, islanders made it clear that the most important aspect of any sale is a long-term commitment to contribute to the community and nature on the island. We are therefore asking prospective buyers to set out, alongside their offer, how they plan to use the castle and grounds and how they will support the nature, sustainability, culture and economy of the Isle of Rum. For the right buyer, this offers a rare opportunity to be part of Scotland's heritage by restoring an iconic building and grounds which are of historical and cultural importance to the Isle of Rum and beyond. We look forward to hearing from prospective buyers and will of course be keeping island residents directly informed of progress."

The castle boasts an array of historic contents, seven reception rooms, 20 bedrooms, a ballroom, library, gardens and woodland walks all set on 18 acres. The current market valuation for the castle, grounds and contents is £750,000.

Glasgow's historic Citizens Theatre reopens



After a seven-year regeneration project, one of the city's most celebrated venues will reopen with a homecoming celebration and a new season of performances. The category B listed building in the Gorbals opened in 1878, as a variety theatre.

Since 1945, it has been home to the Citizens Theatre Company which, over the following decades, built an international reputation at the theatre – known affectionately as the Citz – for productions of both modern and classical works.

However, by 2017, the building was in urgent need of refurbishment and modernisation.

Kate Denby, Executive Director of Citizens Theatre, said: "The reopening of the Citizens Theatre marks a hugely significant moment – not just for the building, but for everyone who holds this theatre close to their heart. This homecoming year is a celebration of creativity, community and connection. The Citz has always been a theatre for the people of Glasgow; now, more than ever, we want everyone to feel welcome here."

The Citizens Theatre Building is now one of the few remaining old buildings left in the area and has been at the heart of the Gorbals since it opened as His Majesty's Theatre in 1878. It was then known as the Royal Princesses Theatre until the building was first leased to James Bridie's Citizens Theatre Company in 1945. The building has significant community and historical relevance for the city of Glasgow, and specifically for the Gorbals.

Robert Burns family flute played again after 150 years



A treasured Burns family heirloom has been brought back to life, and heard in public for the first time in over a century. The four-keyed German flute, once owned by James Glencairn Burns, the poet's son, has been in the Ellisland collection since the 1930s. It was recently restored and played at a special event in Edinburgh. The boxwood instrument, made by Gerock of London in the early 19th century, is extremely rare. The restoration was carried out by Lydia Messerschmitt of Phoenix Conservation, with technical repairs by early flute specialist Robert Biglio. Decades of exposure to dirt and soot while Ellisland was a lived-in home had left the instrument in poor condition. Conservators cleaned and oiled the boxwood, repaired its keys, and replaced worn parts with authentic replicas based on other Gerock flutes.

The newly restored instrument made its debut at the Blackie House Library and Museum in Edinburgh's Old Town, where acclaimed flautist Claire Mann performed alongside Robyn Stapleton (vocals) and Wendy Stewart (harp). The trio played songs from The Ellisland Songbook, including *Auld Lang Syne*, *John Anderson, My Jo*, and *Ye Banks and Braes*, all composed by Burns during his years at the Dumfriesshire farm. Joan McAlpine, Project Director of the Robert Burns Ellisland Trust, described the experience: "This beautiful instrument connects us directly to the Burns family. James Glencairn Burns may well have inherited his love of the flute from his father, who had also been learning to play while he lived here."

ScotRail removes peak fares



In a first for rail travel anywhere in Britain, peak fares have been scrapped for good for customers travelling on ScotRail services. Since September 1st customers now pay the same fare no matter what time they travel, or the day of the week. The policy announced by the Scottish Government in May this year is aiming to make train fares simpler, more flexible, and provide better value for money for rail users. A further aim of the change is to get more people to leave the car at home and travel by rail instead. Removing peak fares will mean significant savings for customers across the country, with some journeys set to reduce by almost 50 per cent – including those between Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Joanne Maguire, ScotRail Managing Director, said: "This is fantastic news, not only for our existing customers, but for everyone across the country considering rail travel for their commute or leisure journeys. Travelling by train remains one of the most convenient ways to get around, and with simpler, more affordable fares, we hope to see many more people choose ScotRail."

Shetland votes down Tourist Tax



Shetland Islands Council has voted to not pursue a visitor levy for visitors coming to the Shetland islands. The council were concerned about the impact on visitor numbers and how local accommodation providers would have to implement the tax. There was a consensus the risk outweighed any benefits from charging visitors a nightly tax on stays on Shetland.

The Visitor Levy (Scotland) Act 2024 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 28 May 2024 and received Royal Assent on 5 July 2024. This Act gives local authorities discretionary powers to introduce a visitor levy in their area, for visitors staying in overnight accommodation. Edinburgh was the first council area to announce the 'tourist tax', with a five per cent levy set to commence in 2026. Several regions such as Glasgow and Aberdeen have also confirmed their intention to implement the tax. Several councils, such as Orkney, are also now considering the option of introducing the tax to visitors on overnight stays with money raised to be reinvested in services and facilities largely used by tourists and business visitors.

The Braemar Gathering-A Highland celebration

All images courtesy of the Braemar Gathering Annual.



King Charles and Queen Camilla in the Patrons Pavilion with Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws.

There were smiles from HRH King Charles III and Queen Camilla as the royal couple and their guests received a resounding welcome as they arrived at this year's Braemar Gathering staged in the Princess Royal and Duke of Fife Memorial Park in the Highland village of Braemar. King Charles was in a kilt for the annual event, while Queen Camilla wore a blue coat with tartan collar. The Gathering was the third that the King has attended as monarch although he frequently attended while he was the Duke of Rothesay and with his family as a youngster.

Other guests alongside the Royal couple included *Absolutely Fabulous* actress Dame Joanna Lumley and her conductor husband Stephen Barlow as well as peer and human rights lawyer Helena Kennedy-Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws. The Gathering is perhaps the most famous event on the Highland Games circuit. Held close to the Royal Highland residence, Balmoral, it takes place every year on the first Saturday in September.

Traditional Highland Games

The popular event has been running in its present form since 1832. It is believed to have originated from ancient games held by King Malcolm III. It has been attended regularly

by the reigning monarch and other members of the royal family since 1848, when Queen Victoria was a guest. At that time, it was held at Invercauld estate and Balmoral castle on a rotational basis. In 1866, by command of Queen Victoria, Royal was added to Braemar Highland Society title and, in 1906, the Duke of Fife presented 12 acres of ground in the village to create the Princess Royal and Duke of Fife Memorial Park, the current home of the Braemar Gathering. The event features a host of traditional Highland Games contests, including tug-of-war and the caber toss, along with performances from pipe bands and Highland dancers. The programme this year featured more than 80 individual events. The reigning monarch is patron of the Gathering and takes on the title of Chieftain.

The next Braemar Gathering will take place Saturday 5th September 2026. For details see: www.braemargathering.org



The Royal Logistics Corp. tug of war team.



Massed bands in the arena.

Two National Pipe Band Championships come to regional New South Wales



For the first time, two Australian national pipe band championships will be staged together in regional New South Wales, with the Australian Solo Championships and the Australian Juvenile Championships taking place from Friday 3 to Sunday 5 October 2025 at The Scots School, Albury.

The event will feature more than 300 performances across the weekend, as competitors aged from 12 through to over 70 take to the stage in a celebration of music, culture, and competition.

Australian Juvenile Championships

The Australian Juvenile Pipe Band Championships shine a spotlight on the next generation of pipers and drummers. Held every second year in rotation with the Australian Pipe Band Championships, the Juvenile Championships provide a stage for young musicians to perform in both solo and band settings, with opportunities that extend beyond traditional contest elements.

This year's event continues that mission by creating a friendly, supportive environment for players who may be new to competition, while also showcasing the incredible talent and commitment of Australia's youth pipe band community.

Australian Solo Championships

The Australian Solo Piping Championships have a proud history dating back to 1961. In 2025 the Championships return to New South Wales. Over three spectacular days, Australia's top pipers and drummers will compete head-to-head for national titles across multiple disciplines; from marches, strathspeys and reels to hornpipes, jigs and the classical piobaireachd. This event represents the pinnacle of solo performance in Australia, crowning champions who are recognised as leaders of their craft worldwide with many performers either returning from or planning for competition in Scotland and Europe more broadly.

For further details see: www.pipebandsaustralia.com.au/championships



Strathclyde students bring Baird's pioneering television invention back to life



Scottish television pioneer John Logie Baird (left) and his television receiver.

Students at the University of Strathclyde have reconstructed a working version of John Logie Baird's original mechanical television, ahead of the centenary of the Scots inventor's groundbreaking demonstration. The team of final-year Engineering students recreated the televisor system – first used by Baird in 1926 to transmit moving images – using the same principles that underpinned the historic invention. This modern recreation also features a contemporary digital twist, producing an interactive demonstration allowing users to send images from their mobile phones, which are then converted and displayed on the television. Baird, born in Argyll in 1888 and a former student of Strathclyde's predecessor institution, the Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College, achieved worldwide fame as the first person to televise moving pictures. Images of 'Stooky Bill,' the head of a ventriloquist's dummy created by the inventor, were the first to be successfully transmitted by television.

Baird's prototypes

The replica project was created by Molly Barry, Guy Horne, Angus Mulligan, Lewis Gibney and Jade Graham, from programmes in Electronic and Electrical Engineering, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, and Computer and Electronic Systems at the University. The mechanical television recreation was designed to follow key characteristics of Baird's prototypes, including the utilisation of spinning nipkow disks for image encoding and decoding. It was found that many historic components, like florescent bulbs, used by Baird weren't available and modern counterparts, like LEDs, were instead used.

Their final-year project not only pays homage to Baird's work but also supports educational outreach. The system is already being used to inspire school pupils through outreach activities. It featured at the University's Engineering the Future for Girls event, aimed at encouraging young women into STEM fields. Guy Horn said: "It was a great project to do, especially with the 100th anniversary coming up, and it was one we were able to be very hands on with."

Inspiring experience

Lewis Gibney added: "Recreating John Logie Baird's invention was an interesting, grounding and inspiring experience and a real source of pride to be from Scotland's west coast." The centenary of his invention will be marked on 2 October 2025 when Baird first transmitted an image in his laboratory, with the first public demonstration anniversary following on 26 January 2026.

Professor Graeme West, from the Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering who oversees the Mechanical Engineering group projects, said: "It is fantastic to see how John Logie Baird's original innovation is being brought to the new generation of engineers and scientists through this interactive recreation of the mechanical televisor. Outreach demonstrators such as this are a great way



Strathclyde students with their project.

of explaining the fundamental principles that underpin the technology we use on a daily basis, inspiring school pupils to take up careers in STEM-related fields."

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Inverness and Loch Ness

The heart of the Scottish Highlands

Loch Ness from a Jacobite Cruise.

Inverness, the capital of the Scottish Highlands, offers the visitor a captivating blend of history, nature, and charm that makes it a must-visit destination. The neighbouring waters of Loch Ness are world famous for not just a monster but also incredible beauty. The Scottish Banner's Sean Cairney recently visited both and shares just some of the many highlights this Scottish must-see travel destination offers.

I recently had the opportunity to revisit one of my favourite parts of Scotland and jumped at the chance to again visit Inverness, the northernmost city in the United Kingdom. Inverness began as a Pictish stronghold in the 6th century and is today one of Europe's fastest growing cities. Nestled along the banks of the River Ness, this compact city which

has been named as one of the '50 Best Places to Travel in 2025' offers a walkable centre filled with cozy cafés, lively pubs, and independent shops, all set against a backdrop of Highland beauty.

Inverness Castle

One of the biggest attractions for the city this year will no doubt be the opening of the Inverness Castle Experience. Inverness Castle is set to reopen this year with a transformative visitor attraction, celebrating the spirit and stories of the Scottish Highlands. Once a courthouse and prison, the castle's red sandstone towers are being reimagined into a vibrant cultural hub that blends history, storytelling, and immersive design. I managed to get a sneak peek tour of the castle and really got to see how the unique blend of historic architecture, with creative modern building techniques, interactive spaces and innovative exhibits are being blended.



Inverness Castle. Photo: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam.

The castle will open with an exhibition on Scottish super group Runrig, which looks at their incredible career and developed, and designed alongside the band members themselves. The castle sits prominently above the city and River Ness and will become a year-round visitor experience for the city and region and it so great to see what they have done with this iconic space. Inverness Castle is getting ready to open and it should be on your list on your next visit to Scotland.

Inverness is such a walkable city and a stroll along the river is a must. I was fortunate to also be able to spend some time in MacGregor's Bar where traditional music blends with friendly locals and where some may already check in with their live-streaming traditional music sessions which take place each week and have a large international following of Celtic music lovers.

Loch Ness

One of Inverness's greatest draws is its proximity to the legendary and world-famous Loch Ness. Whether you're

chasing the myth of Nessie or simply soaking in the tranquil scenery, the loch offers boat tours, castle ruins like Urquhart Castle, and stunning photo opportunities. Urquhart Castle is one of Scotland's most iconic ruins, perched dramatically on the banks of Loch Ness. Its strategic location made it a key stronghold during the Wars of Scottish Independence, changing hands between English and Scottish forces, including Robert the Bruce. The castle's turbulent history includes raids by the MacDonald Lords of the Isles and its eventual destruction in 1692 to prevent Jacobite use. Despite its ruinous state, Urquhart's silhouette against the loch evokes centuries of conflict, resilience, and mystery. The castle is also linked to the legend of the Loch Ness Monster, adding a layer of folklore to its allure. You can get to the castle by road or boat, and the setting is the most famous on the loch.

Nature is the star of Loch Ness, and the cold dark waters are not only the most famous in all of Scotland, but it is also the largest body of water in Scotland by volume and contains more water than all the lakes in England and Wales combined. The Loch Ness monster still holds the imagination of many around the world and there have been several reported sightings already in 2025. Many still come to the area just to see if they too can catch a glimpse.

Getting on the loch gives you a great perspective of the water and allows you to take in the surrounding nature. I hopped aboard a Jacobite Cruises vessel, who have been plying these waters for 50 years, and enjoyed the commentary about Loch Ness and watching the unfolding nature surround us, however I did not spot any famous residents!

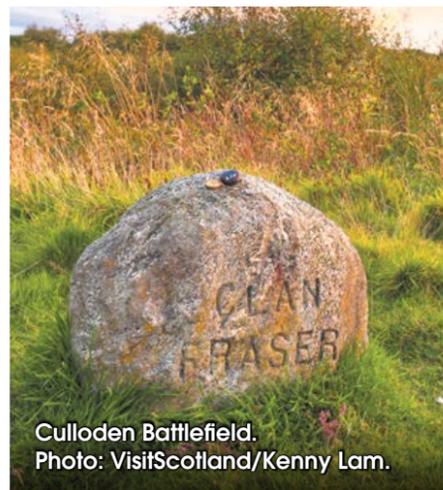
Culloden Battlefield

I was fortunate to spend the day with Grant Driving Tours whose local knowledge helped to create a great day in the region. We started at Culloden Battlefield a sombre and historic location which marks the site of the final pitched battle fought on British soil, on 16 April 1746. It was the brutal end of the Jacobite Rising, where Bonnie Prince Charlie's forces, largely Highland Scots, were crushed by the government army led by the Duke of Cumberland. The defeat not only dashed hopes of restoring the exiled Stuart monarchy but triggered sweeping changes across Scotland. In its aftermath, the British government imposed harsh laws to dismantle clan culture: banning tartan, Gaelic, and Highland dress, and disarming the clans.

Culloden is an active war grave and anyone who visits will be moved by the experience which is so well told by the team at the National Trust for Scotland who manage the site. It was slightly odd to see the clan stone for Clan Fraser now has to be roped off for protection due to the popularity of the main character in *Outlander*. Culloden today stands as a solemn reminder of Scotland's struggle for identity, faith, and sovereignty. The battlefield's haunting silence and preserved landscape offer a powerful space for reflection on the cost of rebellion and the resilience of Scottish heritage.



Urquhart Castle on the banks of Loch Ness. Photo: VisitScotland/Stuart Brunton.



Culloden Battlefield. Photo: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam.



River Ness. Photo: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam.

Clava Cairns

Just outside of Inverness are the Clava Cairns which is an interesting Bronze Age burial site near Inverness, dating back over 4,000 years. The complex includes passage graves, a ring cairn, and standing stones, all carefully aligned with the midwinter sunset. These cairns were likely built for elite individuals, reflecting deep ritual significance and astronomical awareness. The site's layout and solar alignment hint at a sophisticated understanding of time and cosmology. Clava Cairns remain a powerful testament and link to ancient Scottish people's and beliefs, and the fact you can freely walk amongst them is something special.

It has been a few years since I have walked the streets of Inverness and I was so glad to have returned. Inverness and Loch Ness have much to offer the visitor with natural beauty, incredible history and Highland culture. The surrounding country side is beautiful and if like me you are lucky you may just get up close and personal with Highland Coo, or two... I visited in late July and the area was busy with people from all



Clava Cairns. Photo VisitScotland.

over the world, the heather was just coming out and the nights were long. However, the area can be enjoyed year-round and a visit here is a must, or as it was for me a must come back...

VisitScotland can help you plan your trip to Inverness and Loch Ness at: www.visitscotland.com

The Caledonian Sleeper – A unique way to travel



This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of the modern railway. If you are combining your next visit to Scotland with a stop in London, the Caledonian Sleeper is a unique travel experience. The Caledonian Sleeper is a luxurious overnight train connecting London with destinations across Scotland, including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, and Fort William.

The Scottish Banner recommends the private en-suite rooms, which includes comfortable handcrafted mattresses, private en-suite with shower and Club Car access which allows you to meet fellow travellers and serves Scottish cuisine. Guests enjoy priority boarding, exclusive lounges and a very warm welcome from staff. Whether travelling for business or leisure, the service transforms travel and lets passengers sleep through the journey and wake in the heart of the Highlands or London.

With sustainability at its core, it's a romantic, efficient, and distinctly Scottish way to explore the country.

For details, or to plan your next Scottish adventure, visit: www.caledoniansleeper.scot



Jacobite Loch Ness Cruises at Urquhart Castle.

Plan your Inverness trip

Best Western Inverness Palace Hotel & Spa offers a relaxing break in Inverness city centre on the banks of the River Ness, opposite the Castle, with a lovely selection of rooms. www.invernesspalacehotel.co.uk

Culloden Visitor Centre and Battlefield is open year-round. www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/culloden

Grant Driving Tours offers great tours from Inverness filled with detailed knowledge and passion for the area. www.grantdrivingtours.scot

Urquhart Castle sits dramatically on the banks of Loch Ness and is open year-round. www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/urquhart-castle

Jacobite Loch Ness Cruises is celebrating 50 years of taking passengers out onto the world's most famous loch. They offer a range of cruises at: www.jacobite.co.uk

The Inverness Castle Experience will be a new visitor attraction in the centre of Inverness, celebrating the 'Spirit of the Highlands' through its stories of past, present and future and is due to open this year. www.invernesscastle.scot



Runrig exhibition at Inverness Castle.



The streets of Inverness. Photo: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam.



Artists impression of the new Inverness Castle Experience.

THIS MONTH IN SCOTTISH HISTORY

Names & Places In The News From Today And The Past

1 - Battle of Largs - Scots defeated the Vikings who were attempting to invade. **1263**

1 - Contract to construct the North Bridge, Edinburgh, signed. **1763**

2 - Birth of Sir William Ramsay, Scottish chemist who discovered helium, xenon, neon, argon, radon and krypton. **1852**

2 - Death of Sir Thomas Lipton, grocer, tea merchant and contestant for the Americas Cup. Lipton was born in Glasgow's deprived Gorbals area in 1848. **1931**



2 - The new paddle steamer *Waverley* was launched from A. & J. Inglis's yard on the Clyde. After providing services on the Firth of Clyde she has been preserved and still takes passengers "doon the watter" as the oldest sea-going paddle steamer in the world. **1947**

3 - Treaty of Berwick, freeing David II from imprisonment by the English. **1357**

3 - Last Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh before the Union with Westminster. **1706**

4 - Boys' Brigade founded in Glasgow by Sir William Alexander Smith. The first uniformed youth organisation in the world, from one small company of 35 boys it has grown into a worldwide organisation with companies in over 60 countries. **1883**

4 - The Northern Lighthouse Board decommissions its last Scottish lighthouse foghorn, at Skerryvore. **2005**

5 - Balloon flight by Italian aeronaut Vincenzo Lunardi from Heriot's School, Edinburgh to Ceres in Fife. **1785**

5 - The birth of Jock Stein, famous Scottish football manager. Stein was manager of Celtic between 1965 and 1978, during which time it was one of the most successful clubs in Europe, and in 1967 became the first British club to win the European Cup. He suffered a massive heart attack after watching Scotland draw 1 - 1 with Wales in a World cup qualifying match in Cardiff in 1985. **1922**



5 - The Glasgow Royal Concert Hall opens in Sauchiehall Street. **1990**

6 - Scot Ebenezer Henderson formed the first Congregational church in Sweden. He spent many years travelling throughout Scandinavia and Russia, giving out bibles translated into local languages. **1811**

7 - Birth of Charles McLaren, one of the founders of the *Scotsman* newspaper. **1782**

8 - Rev Henry Duncan, founder of the first savings bank, born in the Manse at Lochrutton. **1774**

9 - King James IV ratified the Charter incorporating the Surgeons and Barbers. **1506**



9 - Backwater Reservoir opened to supply the Dundee area. **1969**

9 - Scottish Parliament Building in Edinburgh, designed by Enric Miralles, is formally opened. **2004**

10 - Writer and geologist Hugh Miller born on the Black Isle, Cromarty. **1802**

11 - Letter from Wallace and Moray to the mayors of Lubeck and Hamburg saying that "The Kingdom of Scotland has, by God's Grace, recovered by battle from the power of the English". The Lubeck Letter was thought to have been destroyed during World War Two, but was found in a Lubeck Museum and is now on permanent loan to the Museum of Scotland. **1297**

11 - Ship *Great Michael* launched for King James IV. **1511**

11 - The British fleet, under the command of Admiral Adam Duncan (born in Forfar in 1731), defeated the Dutch off the village of Camperdown, Holland. **1797**

11 - Scotland's first First Minister Donald Dewar died suddenly at 63 after a fall on the steps of his official residence in Edinburgh. He was the first person to hold the position of First Minister following the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. **2000**

12 - Ramsay MacDonald, first Labour Prime Minister of UK, born in Lossiemouth. **1866**

12 - The birth of Magnus Magnusson, writer and broadcaster. Born in Iceland, Magnus moved to Scotland when only a baby. He made a career in journalism, finally achieving the post of Assistant Editor with *The Scotsman*. Magnusson died on January 7th 2007. **1929**

12 - Alex Salmond, former First Minister of Scotland, dies aged 69 in North Macedonia whilst attending a conference. **2024**

13 - Battle of Aberdeen, James Graham, 1st Marquess of Montrose, sacked the city. **1644**

14 - Second marriage of King Alexander III (to Yolanda de Dreux). **1285**

14 - Edward Bruce, brother of Robert the Bruce, killed in a battle near Dundalk, Ireland. **1318**

14 - Birth at St James' Palace, London of King James VII, second son of King Charles I and brother of King Charles II. **1633**

14 - The 50 pence decimal coin was first issued, replacing the ten shilling note. **1969**

14 - Introduction of plastic shopping bags charges in Scotland. The number of plastic bags handed out in stores was slashed by 80% - the equivalent of 650 million carriers - in the first year of Scotland's 5p charge. **2014**

14 - Robbie Coltrane, actor and comedian dies. Coltrane was known for decades on UK TV and international hit films such as Harry Potter, James Bond, and more. Coltrane was born in Rutherglen in 1950. **2022**



15 - Edinburgh's Balmoral Hotel opened its doors for the first time. The hotel was originally known as the North British. Acclaimed as one of the great railway hotels, it originally boasted 300 bedrooms and 52 bathrooms. It was later renamed The Balmoral—which means "majestic dwelling" in Gaelic. **1902**

15 - *HMS Hawke* was shot and sunk off the coast of Aberdeen by a German submarine. Launched in 1891 the ship was the sixth British warship to be named *Hawke*. 524 officers and men died, including the ship's captain, Hugh Williams, with only 70 survivors. **1914**

15 - Nicola Sturgeon succeeds Alex Salmond as leader of the Scottish National Party and First Minister of Scotland after she was the only candidate to put their name forward in the party's leadership election. Sturgeon was the first female, and longest serving, First Minister for Scotland. **2014**

16 - King James II born. **1430**



16 - Bridge to the Isle of Skye opened. Built as a private finance initiative, the bridge initially had the highest tolls in Europe which led to a decade of non-payment protests. The crossing became free in 2004 following protests from islanders and local businesses. **1995**

17 - Battle of Neville's Cross during which King David II was captured by the English. **1346**

17 - James "Paraffin" Young obtained a patent for the extraction of paraffin from shale, starting the chemical industry in West Lothian. **1850**

18 - The death of Margaret Tudor, English princess, sister of Henry VIII, wife of James IV, and mother of James V. It was through Margaret, a paternal great-grandmother (through Henry, Lord Darnley), and a maternal great-grandmother (through Mary, Queen of Scots), that James VI based his claim to the throne of England following the death of Queen Elizabeth I. **1541**

18 - Aberdeen - born Denis Law became the youngest footballer to play for Scotland. At the time playing for Huddersfield Town, he was 18 years and 7 months old when he played against Wales at Cardiff. Scotland won 3 - 0. Law died in January 2025 at the age of 84. **1958**

19 - The first public-hire sedan chairs became available in Edinburgh. A sedan was an enclosed chair for one person, carried on poles by two men. They reached the height of their popularity in the 18th century, when there were as many as 180 sedans for public hire in Edinburgh. **1687**

19 - Discovery of the Port an Eilean Mhòir boat burial, the UK mainland's first fully intact Viking ship burial site, at Ardnamurchan (the most westerly point on the island of Great Britain), is announced. **2011**

20 - Explosion at Clarkston Toll shopping centre, killing 12. **1971**

20 - Introduction of a minimum charge of 5p for single-use carrier bags in Scotland. **2014**



21 - Last tram car ran in Dundee. Trams ran in the city running for almost eight decades from 1877 to 1956. **1956**

21 - The Queen officially opened the Burrell Collection in Glasgow's Pollok Country Park. The museum's collection had been donated to the city nearly 40 years earlier by the shipping magnate Sir William Burrell. The Burrell Collection re-opened in 2022 after a multi-million-pound redevelopment. **1983**

22 - Foundation stones of main Post Office and National Museum of Scotland laid by Prince Albert in his last public engagement before his death. **1861**

23 - Treaty between King John Balliol of Scotland and King Philippe IV of France which promised mutual help against the English - the start of the "Auld Alliance". The Alliance, which was described in 1942 by Charles de Gaulle as 'the oldest alliance in the world' promised mutual help against the English, asserting that should either Scotland or France be invaded by England, the other country would invade English territory. **1295**

23 - Death of John Boyd Dunlop who re-invented the pneumatic tyre from the design of Robert W Thomson. **1921**

24 - Artist David Roberts born in Edinburgh. He died on 25 November 1864 whilst working on a painting at St Pauls Cathedral. **1796**

25 - Elvis Presley touched down at Prestwick Airport in Ayrshire, his only visit to Scotland. This was also the only time "The King" set foot on British soil. **1960**

26 - George III crowned, beginning a 60-year reign, one of the longest in British history. **1760**

26 - Poet Sorley MacLean born on the island of Raasay. Sorley MacLean was the greatest Gaelic poet of the 20th century. He died in 1996. **1911**

26 - Following the death of Donald Dewar, Henry McLeish is selected to be First Minister of Scotland by the Scottish Parliament, and is officially appointed by The Queen. **2000**

28 - Birth of Robert Liston in Linlithgow who was to carry out the first operation in Britain with the aid of an anaesthetic. **1794**

28 - Dr Henry Faulds, a Scots medical missionary working in Japan, published a letter in "Nature" which gave the first evidence that fingerprints could be used as proof of guilt or innocence in legal cases. **1880**

29 - James Boswell, biographer of Dr Johnstone, born at Blair's Land, Parliament Square, Edinburgh. **1740**



30 - Caledonian Canal opened. The Caledonian Canal links the west of Scotland to the East, and makes it possible to navigate a canal boat journey coast to coast right through Scotland's Great Glen, between Fort William and Inverness. It is scenically spectacular along its whole length, surrounded as it is by Scotland's highest mountains and most beautiful scenery. **1822**

30 - First moving image on a television screen when John Logie Baird transmitted the image of a 15-year-old office boy in his London workshop. **1925**

30 - Glasgow born Scottish aviator Scottish aviator Jim Mollison died. Mollison became the RAF's youngest serving officer, the first person to fly solo east to west across the Atlantic and flew from Scotland to Australia in 8 days, 19 hours and 28 minutes. **1959**

31 - Pneumatic bicycle tyres were patented by inventor John Boyd Dunlop from Ayrshire. **1888**

31 - Hampden Park Stadium opened in Glasgow as the home of Queen's Park Football Club. The national stadium of Scotland bears the name of an English politician John Hampden and is actually the third venue to be called Hampden Park in Glasgow. **1903**

Romantic fact surpasses fiction as couple wed at world's first Airbnb Bookshop

Photos: Colin Hattersley.



In a tale worthy of a romantic fiction bestseller the first ever wedding has taken place at the Open Book Airbnb bookshop. Located in Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town and home to its world-famous annual festival, the Open Book is rented to people who adore the idea of spending their holiday running a bookshop. But recently it had a very different role, becoming the focus for the fulfilment of a love story that stretches back over the decades and which crosses continents.

During a small and intimate ceremony in the heart of the tiny rural Galloway town Aubree Williams and David Casey from the USA finally became husband and wife – 35 years after first meeting in Norman, Oklahoma, and falling in love. David was a 23-year-old from Texas, attending the University of Oklahoma, and Aubree was

18 and came from Norman. Aubree said: "We met 35 years ago, it was our first proper adult relationship. But after a while we realised we were in over our heads. It was just too much for a couple of young kids, so we went our separate ways."

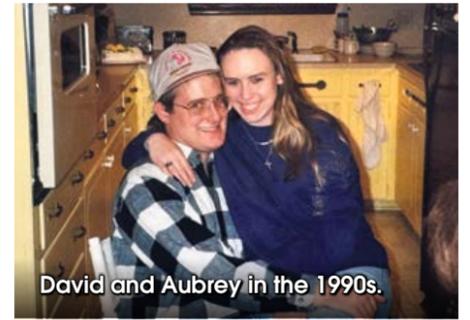
Both married other people, with David returning to his home town of El Paso, Texas while Aubree stayed in Oklahoma where she has a career in marketing. The pair reconnected through social media after 20 years but the connection was distant for a long time, simply exchanging birthday and Christmas greetings.

The Scottish town where the bride feels part of her soul resides

But later, when going through a divorce, Aubree found she needed someone outside her family and social circle – with a fresh

perspective – to talk to and the friendship with David was truly rekindled. "It was so good to have someone to really talk to again," she said. In 2024 Aubree, an avid reader since the age of three with a particular taste for books about human endurance, found another, very different love – The Open Book. She says: "It had always been my dream to run a dusty little bookshop, to not have to care about making a ton of money, but just to share my love of books and reading. And there it was, this Airbnb that let you do that, and in my favourite country in the world. I followed what people said about it on Facebook and couldn't believe it. No place could be that lovely, that magical. My sister and I booked it in 2022 and came over in March of 2024. When we arrived we found it was true. I just fell in love with the people and the place, and I left part of my soul there."

When Aubree and David (a keen fantasy and sci fi reader) decided to wed the question came up of where to have the ceremony and David had a great idea. He said: "We had thought about just a register office, or perhaps Las Vegas, but I knew she felt that part of her soul is in Wigtown so



David and Aubrey in the 1990s.

that seemed the obvious place – I want to marry Aubree in her entirety." They contacted Wigtown Festival Company (WFC), which runs the Open Book (established more than a decade ago as the world's first Airbnb bookshop), to ask if it would be possible. Because the Open Book is booked up for a long time in advance, the company contacted the people who were due to be the tenants at the time the couple wanted to wed and asked if they minded hosting the special event.

Anne Barclay, WFC operations director and one of the bride and groom's witnesses, said: "The Open Book has a very special magic and has become the bookshop at the heart of stories rather than just selling them. It simply couldn't be more romantic – a teenage couple who were too young to make it work coming back together after decades and travelling thousands of miles to wed in the Scottish town where the bride feels part of her soul resides. It's a wonderful love story and we were delighted to be able to help Aubree and David fulfil their dream. We all wish them every happiness for the future and hope they will return to visit us again in the future."

Boost for Inverness pub thanks to live music videos



An Inverness bar has experienced a major boost to visitor numbers, thanks to its online social media following. MacGregor's Bar in the town's Academy Street has built up a strong international following on social media, ever since it started live-streaming traditional music sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. As a result, the bar has seen a huge rise in visitors this year, especially those travelling from North America.

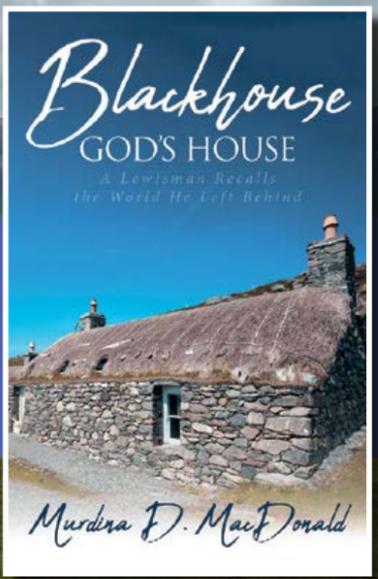
MacGregor's Bar, which was named Best Bar or Pub at the Scottish Thistle Awards National Final for 2022/23, celebrates the best in Scottish food, drink, music and culture. Owners Bruce MacGregor and Jo De Sylva started the online 'Live at 5' show from the bar during lockdown in 2020. It continues to attract a worldwide audience and has also led to a successful line of merchandise. Bruce said: "Every Friday at 5pm, we broadcast the show from our bar. We have a real community out there of 3,000 to 6,000 people watching from South Africa, Australia, France, New Zealand, the USA and Canada. We started our 'Live at 5' music sessions during lockdown. We had just been named Best Music Bar in Scotland and then two months later we went into a national lockdown. They have kept going

ever since – very ad hoc and interactive – and with a huge local and international following. I would say that 80% of our guests this summer have been North American. We're also seeing visitors from Europe, but we have been especially popular with visitors from the US and Canada.

"It really is quite incredible how popular the show has become. Music is a very important part of it, but our customers are also interested in the history and culture of Scotland. We have a cocktail menu with drinks named after and dedicated to famous Scots. It's the history, culture and music - all of it - that our customers want to be a part of. We have also started a new merchandise line which has proved popular with this market. All of our sessions are broadcast on Facebook Live and we use technology that allows us to stream live on two to three pages, such as the hugely popular Music from Scotland page, as well as at live events such as Stonehaven Folk Festival and Piping Live. It has been amazing, the best thing we have ever done. My wife Jo and I quite enjoy the filming side of it and have learned new skills, which is an added bonus. We also feel an immense loyalty to those who have joined us from day one. Many people who can't make it outside of their home, look forward to it and tune in every week. What we want to make sure is that our bar is accessible to everyone and portrays a realistic versions of Scotland life. The show is interactive, ad hoc and people are fond of making a fool of themselves! This all adds to its appeal!"

For more information on MacGregor's Bar, visit: www.macgregorsbars.com.

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IN THE SCOTTISH KITCHEN

Scotch Eggs



Ingredients:

4 eggs, hard boiled and shelled
2 level teaspoonfuls seasoned flour
Worcestershire sauce
½ lb/2.25 kgs. sausage meat or skinless sausages
1 egg, beaten
Dry breadcrumbs
Deep fat
Parsley

Method :

Dust the eggs with the flour. Add a few drops of Worcestershire sauce to the sausage meat and divide into 4 portions. Form each into a flat cake and work round an egg, making sure there are no cracks in the sausage meat.

Brush with the beaten egg and toss in the breadcrumbs. Heat the fat until it will brown a cube of bread in 40-50 seconds. (As the sausage meat is raw, it is essential that the frying should not be hurried unduly, so the fat must not be too hot). Fry the eggs for about 7 to 8 minutes. When they are golden brown, remove them from the fat and drain them on kitchen paper. Cut the eggs in half lengthways. Garnish with the parsley and serve hot with tomato sauce or cold with salad.

Pumpkin risotto



Ingredients:

For the pumpkin risotto:
570ml/1 pint vegetable or chicken stock
1 small onion, chopped
12 fresh sage leaves, chopped finely
2 tbsp. olive oil
170g/6oz. Arborio (risotto) rice
250g/9oz. pumpkin or butternut squash, diced small
50g/2oz. butter
salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the crispy sage:

12-16 fresh sage leaves
2 tbsp. sunflower oil

To garnish:

Fresh Parmesan, or vegetarian
Parmesan-style grating cheese (optional).

Method

Heat the stock until almost boiling and then keep over a very low heat. In a separate heavy-based saucepan fry the onion in the oil over a low heat until soft but not browned. Add the chopped sage and cook for a couple more minutes. Add the rice and mix well for a few seconds to coat the grains with oil, then pour in one-third of the stock and bring to a gentle simmer. Cook until

almost all the stock is absorbed. Add the pumpkin or squash and a little more stock, and continue to simmer gently until the stock is absorbed. From then on add more stock a little at a time, until the pumpkin is soft and the rice nicely al dente (has a little bite to it). You may not need all the stock, but the texture should be loose and creamy.

When the risotto is almost ready, heat the sunflower oil in a small pan and quickly fry the sage leaves until crispy - it only takes a matter of seconds. Stir the butter into the risotto, and season well with salt and pepper. Divide into 4 bowls and sprinkle a few crispy sage leaves over each portion. Bring the cheese and a grater to the table for your guests to serve themselves.

Witches Brew

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. olive oil
onion, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
650g/23 oz. frozen petits pois/small green peas
750ml vegetable stock
6 rashers streaky bacon
1 tbsp. butter, optional

Method:

Heat the oil in a saucepan. Add the onion and gently cook over a medium heat for 5-6 minutes until softened but not coloured. Add the garlic and cook for a further min. Stir in three-quarters of the petit pois, then pour in the stock. Bring to the boil and simmer for 10-12 minutes. Meanwhile, grill the bacon until crisp. Allow to cool for a few minutes, then carefully transfer to a food processor and whizz until smooth. You might need to do this in two batches, depending on the size of your processor.

Return the soup to the pan and add the remaining petit pois. Bring to the boil and simmer for 2 minutes or until the whole peas are tender. Season to taste, then stir in the butter, if using. Break the bacon into pieces and scatter over bowls or mugs of soup. The soup can be made up to a day ahead; just grill the bacon on the day.

Wizard's hat pasties

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. olive oil
small onion, finely chopped
250g/9 oz. pumpkin flesh (buy a large wedge and peel, or use leftovers from lantern-making), cut into small cubes of about 1cm
2 tsp tomato purée
pinch grated nutmeg
75ml vegetable stock
375g/13 oz. pack ready-rolled puff pastry
egg, beaten
50g/1.7 oz. cheddar, grated
2 tbsp. roasted pumpkin seeds (from a packet)

Method

Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan, then add the onion and cook for 5 minutes until softened and lightly golden. Stir in the pumpkin and tomato purée. Season with nutmeg and salt and pepper to taste. Pour in the stock and bring to the boil before turning down to a simmer for 8-10 minutes.

The pumpkin should be just tender and almost all the liquid evaporated. Spoon into a bowl and set to one side to cool. Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. Unroll the pastry and roll it out slightly thinner with a rolling pin. Cut out 8 diamond shapes approximately 10cm wide x 15cm long. Brush each pastry diamond with beaten egg. Stir the grated cheese into the cooled pumpkin mixture, then divide between the diamonds, placing the mix on the top half of each piece of pastry.



Halloween, celebrated on 31 October, is widely assumed to be a North American festival but

it's actually an ancient Celtic pagan celebration. The term Halloween comes from All-hallow-even or All Hallows' Eve - the evening before All Hallows' Day, or All Saints' Day.

The festival originated as a pagan ritual among the Celts in Ireland and Britain, who regarded 31 October as the last day of summer, November being associated with the death and slaughter of animals that provided meat for winter. In the old Norse religion, sacrifices were made to the elves, and food was blessed and stored for winter. Irish and Scottish immigrants carried Halloween festivities in the 19th century.

Fold the bottom of the diamond over the filling, pressing the edges together firmly to make a well-sealed triangle. Brush all over with egg glaze and scatter over a few pumpkin seeds, in star or moon shapes if you like. Chill for 30 minutes, or overnight, covered with cling film, if you are making ahead. Bake for 20-25 minutes until golden and puffed.

Roast pumpkin seeds



Ingredients:

100g/3½oz pumpkin seeds
¼ tsp celery salt
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
¼ tsp paprika
1 tsp vegetable oil

Method:

Brush a frying pan with a very small amount of oil and place over a medium heat. Add the pumpkin seeds, stirring frequently. They will expand and brown quickly, and when this is done, place them in a bowl and add the salt, celery salt, freshly ground black pepper and paprika. This is delicious if the pumpkin seeds are reasonably fresh.

Witchcraft

Ingredients:

25ml/1fl oz black vodka
1 tbsp lemon juice
2 tsp vanilla extract
25ml/1fl oz blackberry liqueur
25ml/1fl oz fresh apple juice

To garnish:

1 lychee, peeled
½ tsp strawberry jam
1 blueberry

Method:

Place the vodka, lemon juice, vanilla syrup, blackberry liqueur and apple juice into a cocktail shaker filled with ice and shake well. Pour into a cocktail glass. To garnish, cut a small hole into the lychee. Fill with strawberry jam, then stick the blueberry into the jam to create an 'eyeball'. Float the 'eyeball' in the cocktail and serve.

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Lewis monument shortlisted for prestigious UK sculpture award



A monument on the Isle of Lewis has been named the only Scottish finalist in a prestigious UK-wide public sculpture award. na Dorsan in South Galson is one of only five UK sculptures to have made the shortlist for a PSSA Marsh Award for Excellence in Public Sculpture. na Dorsan, which means “the doors” in Scottish Gaelic, is a monument that commemorates a century of transformation and celebrates the unity of a resilient community. Unveiled on November 1st, 2024, it stands as a testament to the strength of the people of the Galson township on the Isle of Lewis, and their enduring commitment to reclaiming their home. The monument’s design, a circular structure, on the moorland, symbolises unity, offering a sense of safety and belonging. The three doorways facing north, south, and east invite locals and visitors from all directions.

The monument was commissioned by Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (Galson Estate Trust) and designed by renowned artists Will Maclean and Marian Leven. It reflects the determined spirit of the people who, after being forcibly cleared from their land in 1863 to make way for a sheep farm, were able to return in 1924, when 52 families found new homes in Melbost, South Galson, and North Galson. The story of Galson’s transformation is not just about a physical resettlement, but about the reclaiming of identity, culture, and shared history.

The Public Statues and Sculpture Association (PSSA) champions the historical, artistic, and social context of public statues and sculpture, and The Marsh Award is decided on by a judging panel made up of practitioners, academics, conservators, art critics and sculpture specialists knowledgeable in the fields of public sculpture, fountains and conservation.

The public has the opportunity to vote from the shortlisted entries for the most popular new sculpture in the 2025 Marsh Award for Excellence in Public Sculpture.

Thought-provoking yet peaceful design

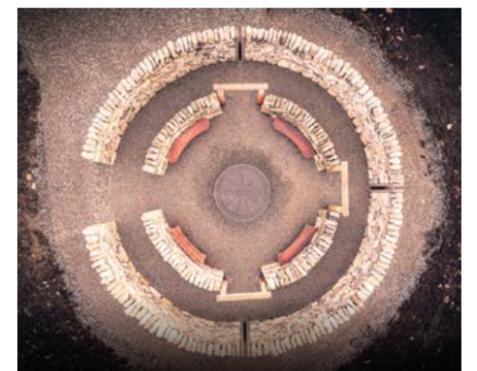
na Dorsan is shortlisted alongside Looping Boat (The Industry) by Alex Chinneck (Sheffield & Tinsley Canal), Alluvia by Jason de Caires Taylor (Canterbury), Know Not Your Place in the World by Ryan Gander (London) and Ribbons by Pippa Hale (Leeds). Will Maclean commented: “It was wonderful to work on na Dorsan. Our idea was to create a monument which reflected the re-establishment of the Galson village, using the symbolism of the doorway to represent the homes and the welcome which are at the heart of this community. It has been a source of pride and satisfaction to see the concept of na Dorsan come to fruition and it is a privilege to have our work recognised in the PSSA Marsh Award for Excellence in Public Sculpture this year. We hope that na Dorsan is not merely a place of remembrance, but one of reflection, providing a quiet space for those who visit to ponder the challenges of the past and recognise the sacrifices made by those before us, allowing the current community to be in the position that we find ourselves in now; living and working in a thriving community-owned estate.”

Agnes Rennie, Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn chairperson, added: “Will and Marian’s work on na Dorsan builds on their prior accomplishments, such as their designs for the Iolaire and Sùileachan

monuments in Lewis, which similarly reflect the themes of remembrance, loss, and resilience. Their artistry is marked by a sensitivity to place and history; honouring community and identity through meaningful, thought-provoking yet peaceful design, utilising lasting materials from the surrounding environment. na Dorsan stands as a beacon of pride for the people of Galson. This monument is a testament to the power of community, the strength of collective action, and the hope that doors, once closed, can always open again.”

The Galson Estate is a community-owned estate of 56,000 acres of coast, agricultural land and moor in the North West of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. The estate comprises 22 villages running from Upper Barvas to Port of Ness with a population of nearly 2,000 people.

Voting is now open to the public and closes on Sunday 5th October. View the shortlisted sculptures and cast your vote here: <https://pssauk.org/2025-pssa-marsh-award-shortlist-for-excellence-in-public-sculpture>



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 are courtesy of the Scottish Register of Tartans (SRT).

This tartan is intended to be a tribute to the spirit of Scotland by the designer. Colours: light purple is intended to represent the thistle; white was inspired by the cross of the Saltire; blue is for Scotland’s rivers and lochs, as well as the blue of the Saltire; green is for magic, resilience, and spirituality, and the Highlands and Lowlands; black is intended to honour the memory of those who died defending Scotland and brown is for humility, rural life, honesty, simplicity, and hard work. This tartan (reference: 14967) was designed by Ania Belloso Garcia and registered in August, 2025.

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Calling the Clans

Welcome to our "Clansified" listing of Scottish Clans, Societies and Clubs. If you would like to add your Clan please contact our office for full details. Our contacts are located on page 2. If you are contacting your Clan be sure to tell them you saw them in *the Scottish Banner* and please support these great community organisations.

Clan Baird Society Worldwide



Membership is open to those descended from Baird, Barde, Bard, Beard, Beaird, Brd, Bayard, Bardt, Barth and Biard or varied spellings of the name of Scottish origin.

In addition to the Society newsletter and the opportunity to associate with fellow clansman members may query the Society genealogist. **For information write:**

Clan Baird Commander

Richard Baird of Rickarton, Ury and Lochwood
Rickarton House, Stonehaven, Scotland.

Hereditary President of Clan Baird Society Worldwide

Debra J. Baird, Ph.D. FSA Scot, CBSW Convenor
Email: djbaird4@gmail.com
Website: clanbairdsocietyworldwide.co.uk



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President: Mr Norman A. Macdonald
Contact: secretary.clandonaldivic@gmail.com

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Hon Chief: Mr Lindsay McDonald
Contact: secretary@clanmacdonaldyarraville.com

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Website: www.ClanBell.org

Online membership: <https://clanbell.org/membership.html>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ClanBell>

Email: President@clanbell.org

Clan Bell North America

49 Greystone Lane NW

Cartersville, GA, 30121



CHISHOLM

Clan Chisholm Society of Australia Inc

Membership is invited from Clan Chisholm descendants of all spellings of the name (Chisholm, Chisolm, Chism, Chisum, Chisam, etc)

Contact: Kim Polley OAM

PO Box 84, Longford, Tasmania, 7301

Email: kim.polley13@gmail.com

www.clanchisholmsociety.org/public/AUSmembership.php



Clan Donnachaidh Society of New South Wales Inc., Australia

Duncan Robertson Reid

People who bear any of the above names or other Sept names of Clan Donnachaidh

"The Children of Duncan" are invited to join in our activities by participating in the Scottish Gatherings held in NSW.

For information and membership application, contact Richard Harvey, Secretary

Email: lh100@tpg.com.au



Clan Fraser Society of Australia

Invites all Frasers and Fraser septs to join our clan society.

All members receive a copy of our quarterly newsletter "Strawberry Leaves"

Membership enquiries to Don Chitts

Ph: (03) 9754 5120 donchitts@hotmail.com

Website: <http://clanfraseraustralia.org>

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Membership open to all who share the Sept names Robertson, Duncan, Reid (and others) and anyone who has an interest in Clan Donnachaidh, its clanlands, history and heritage.

Visit our website for more information on the Society, our Clan Museum and Struan Kirk in Scotland, our DNA project, and to locate a branch near you.



Website: www.donnachaidh.com

E-mail: admin@donnachaidh.com

Facebook: Official Clan Donnachaidh page (Robertsons, Reids, Duncans and others)



Clan Galbraith Society

Includes name variations such as Galbreath, Culbreath, Gilbraith etc.

DNA testing project, members only databases, Biennial gatherings, blog, Quarterly journal.

www.clangalbraith.org



Family of Bruce International, Inc.

Family of Bruce International, Inc., the only such organization recognized by the hereditary chief of the Name of Bruce, The Rt. Hon. Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, is a non-profit organization established to create kinship amongst its family members and promote interest in the Family of Bruce and its history. Membership is open to persons who qualify by surname, by decent, or by recognized septs: Carlisle, Carruthers, Crosby, Randolph and Stenhouse.

Membership inquiries should be directed to:

Donald E. Bruce Polly A. (Bruce) Tilford, Secretary
President 5561 Earl Young Road
1051 Eagle Ridge Trail Bloomington, IN 47408
Stillwater, Minnesota 55082 www.familyofbruceinternational.org



Clan Davidson Society in Australia Inc.

CHIEF Grant Davidson of Davidston cordially invites to membership all who bear one of the Clan Names, and all who can trace their descent from an ancestor bearing the name Davidson or one of the Septs shown on the member application form available from the Clan's Facebook Group link <https://www.facebook.com/groups/360160657504253/> or by contacting the Hon. Secretary:

Dennis Hill, PO Box 519
Baulkham Hills NSW 1755
E: dhill1@bigpond.net.au, P: 0431 527 662



Edmonstone Clan Society

Invites membership to anyone of the surname or variations: - Edmiston/e, Edmondston, Edmanson, Edmeston, Edmonson, Edmundson, etc. Chieftain Sir Archibald Edmonstone Bt of Duntreath

Contact: Mal Edmiston
3 Laguna Ave
Kirwan, Qld, 4817
61 (0)7 4755 4370
m.edmiston@bigpond.com



CLAN GREGOR SOCIETY

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Patron: Sir Malcolm MacGregor of MacGregor Bt

Membership enquiries for USA: usa@clangregor.com

Rest of the World: membership@clangregor.com

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Elliot Clan Society, U.S.A.

Jim Dougherty - Clan President welcomes membership of all who are connected with this great border family.

Direct inquires to: Marianne Elliott, Membership Chair
Email: marianne@mmelliott.com

Website: www.elliotclan-usa.com



Clan Gregor Society Australasia

All MacGregors and Septs of our clan are invited to join the Clan Gregor Society Est 1822. If you live in Australia or New Zealand, please contact our clan representative:

Frank McGregor
PO Box 14 NORTH HOBART TAS 7002

Email: clangregoraustalia@gmail.com

Web: www.clangregor.com

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National Clan Cameron Australia Inc.

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President: Alistair Cameron
Secretary: Terry Cameron
secy.nationalclancameronaus@gmail.com
www.clan-cameron.org.au



Clan Donald Queensland

Commissioner: Neil Macdonald
Ph: 0412 090990
Email: clandonaldqld@optusnet.com.au
Web: www.clandonaldqld.org

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ClanFarquharson.us



American Clan Gregor Society

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Contact our registrar: **Jeanne P. Lehr**
11 Ballas Crt.

St. Louis, MO 63131-3038

Phone: 314-432-2842, registrar@acgsus.org

website: www.acgsus.org



Clan Hamilton Society

Hamiltons and those of Hamilton descent are cordially invited to join the society. Inquiries to be sent to: Sheri Lambert, Treasurer P.O. Box 5399 Vernon Hills, IL 60061 visit our website: www.clanhamilton.org



McAlpin/e

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MacLaren

Clan Labhran

Clan MacLaren Society of Australia

Information about the Clan and application for CMSA membership is available on the website or via the email address below. Membership is open to MacLarens (all spellings), Septs, individuals and families with an association to the Clan. <https://clanmaclarenau.org/>
clanmaclarenau@gmail.com



Clan MacNicol

Chief: John MacNeacail
of MacNeacail and Scurrybreac
Contact: Secretary Mal Nicolson
55 Arcadia Ave
GYMEA BAY NSW 2227
www.clanmacnicol.org



Clan Hay

April Rich
28 Oxbow Drive
Willimantic, CT 06226
clanhaymembership@hotmail.com

The American Branch of the First Family of Scotland welcomes inquires from descendants of: Hay(s); Haye(s); Hayne(s); Hey(s); Alderston; Arml; Ayer(s); Constable; Con(n); De La Haye; Delgatie; Delgatie; D' Ay(e); Dellah'aY; Errol(l); Garrad; Garrow; Gifford; Hawson; Haygood; Hayter; Hayward; Haywood; Haynie; Hayden; Hayfield; Hayne(s); Leask(e); Leith; Lester; MacGaradh; Peebles; Peoples; Turriff; Tweeddale; Yester
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President@clanmaclarenna.org



Clan Macpherson Association

Clan Macpherson welcomes enquiries from Macphersons and members of our Associated families. For information about local activities visit our web site www.clan-macpherson.org/branches

Africa: Derek Macpherson African.Chairman@clan-macpherson.org phone +265 999 512 620	Australia: Pam Rhemrov Australian.Chairman@clan-macpherson.org phone +61 407 789 924
Canada: Denise Lagundzin Canada.Chairman@clan-macpherson.org phone +1 519 507 4465	England & Wales: William Macpherson EandW.Chairman@clan-macpherson.org phone +44 7877 363 507
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The Clan Macpherson Museum is located in Newtonmore, Inverness Shire PH20 1DE, at the junction of the A86 and B9150 It is open from 1st April to 31st October. Ph + 44 1540 673 332. See <http://www.clan-macpherson.org/museum/>



CLAN HOPE of Craighall Society

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www.clanhope.org

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membership@clanhope.org
www.clanhope.org

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Macfie Clan Society of Australia

Invites anyone interested in our Clan and its ancestral heritage to contact us. Various Clan names include McPhee, MacFee, Macfie, McAfee, Fee, Phee, McDuffy, Duffy, McCathie and many more.

For more information please email: colonsay@bigpond.net.au, visit us at [facebook.com/clanmacfieaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/clanmacfieaustralia) or our website: <https://clanmacfie.com.au>



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Kevin S Gates
Treasurer
2610 Kuykendall Dr.
Arlington, TX
76001-6726
Email: treasurer@clanmaclellan.net

Invites all MacLellans and their descendants regardless of surname spelling to join in preserving our heritage. Various family names are MacLellan(d), McClelland(d), McLellan(d) and Gilliland.
Visit our website: www.clanmaclellan.net



The Clan MacRae Society of Australia and New Zealand

If your surname is MacRae, or you are descended from a person having the surname MacRae (any spelling) or that of a Sept of the Clan then you are eligible to join our Society.

Australian Contact: Roslyn MacRae 0412 291 054
email: clanmacraeaustrnz@gmail.com

NZ Contact: Sue Tregoweth
email: sue.treg1@gmail.com



CLAN IRVING

HEREDITARY CHIEF AND PATRON

Rupert Irving of Bonshaw
Chief of the Name and Arms and 20th Clan Chief

Cordially invites all Border Irvings & Irvines and variations of the Name to join in preserving our Clan and Family history!

DISCOVER YOUR HERITAGE!
www.clanirving.com



Clan MacInnes

Int'l Assn. of Clan MacInnes (Aonghais)

Worldwide, we welcome descendants of all spelling variations, including (Mc)Angus, (Mc)Canse, (Mc)Ginnis, (Mc)Guenis, (Mc)Inch, (Mc)Innes, (Mc)Innis, (Mc)Kinnis, (Mc)Masters, (Mc)Neish, (Mc)Ninch, and more.

Scott McInnis, Member Services: scott@macinnes.org or visit www.macinnes.org



Clan MacLennan worldwide

- Newsletters
- Extensive Clan Genealogy & Books
- Videod talks - linked from Genealogy page
- Highland Games
- DNA Project
- Research assistance

Become a member now
www.clanmaclennan-worldwide.com/join

www.clanmaclennan-worldwide.com



Clan MacRae Society of North America

Granted Arms in 2008

We invite MacRaes of all spelling variations and their descendants to join our Clan MacRae Society. Learn your Scottish MacRae history and family lineage!

www.macrae.org
Need more info? Contact:
Dean McCraw, President
912-596-8624
dean.mccraw1@gmail.com



Clan Irwin Association

Chief and Patron
Alexander H.R Irvine of Drum,
27th Baron and Laird of Drum, Chief of the Name
www.clanirwin.org
IRWIN • IRVINE • IRVIN • IRVING • ERWIN
We welcome all: no matter the spelling.



Clan Mackenzie Society in Australia

Inviting all Mackenzies to join us in celebrating our heritage.

Visit our website for further information
www.clanmackenzie.org.au



Clan MacLeod Societies of Australia

Membership is open to MacLeods and Septs (of any variant spelling) and descendants. **Septs:** Askey, Beaton, Bethune, Caskie, Harold, Lewis, MacAndie, MacAskill, MacAulay, MacCabe, MacCaig, MacCaskey, MacClure, MacCorkill, MacCrimmon, MacGillechallum, MacHaigh, MacRaild, MacWilliam, Norie, Norman, Tolmie, Williamson

- NSW, ACT & Qld - Peter MacLeod 02 4397 3161
- Victoria & Tas - Rhonda McLeod 0411 227 330
- South Australia - Alex McLeod 08 8327 0925
- Western Australia - Ruth MacLeod 08 9364 6334

Email: peter.macleod@exemail.com.au



Clan Maitland Society

Chief: Ian Maitland, The Earl of Lauderdale!
We are all related! Contact your local society

North America: Rosemary Maitland Thom
rthomnvrprdcn@aol.com www.clanmaitlandna.org

Australia: Amanda Maitland
clanmaitlandaustralia@gmail.com
12 Settlers Way, Westleigh, NSW, 2120

New Zealand: Judette Maitland judette@xtra.co.nz
33 Disley Street, Highbury, Wellington 6012. NZ

We welcome all with Maitland, Lauderdale, Maitlen and similar name spelling. See the entire list and your family history at: www.clanmaitland.org.uk



Clan Little Society, Inc.

Welcoming Little/Lyttle/Lytle and the like.

- Promoting our Scottish heritage
- Hosting tents at Scottish games
- Connecting our families
- Maintaining our genealogy and DNA

www.clanlittlesociety.org
Registered in the State of Georgia, USA
Proud Member of COSCA



Clan MacKenzie Society of New Zealand

We welcome all MacKenzies
All spellings and from all Septs
Secretary: clanmackenzie@gmail.com
www.clanmackenzieng.org




CLAN MACNEIL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

invites all MacNeils, regardless of surname spelling, to join us in celebrating our heritage!

website: ClanMacNeilUSA.us
Find us on Facebook, Twitter, & Instagram
@ClanMacNeilUSA




Morrison

Clann MhicGillehoire: Morrison + Gilmore + Brieve

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.
www.clanmorrison.net

Clan Muirhead Society

 A NON-PROF. CORP.
 Muirhead, Muirbde, Morehead, Moorhead
 and all Variant Names
www.clanmuirhead.com
 Rev. Ref. Chev. Raymond L. Morehead, GOTJ, FSA Scot,
 Chief Officer Elect Clan Muirhead Society
 Email- raymondktj@msn.com or raymond@clanmuirhead.com

Clan Ross America
 Representing the great Highland Clan of Ross since 1976.

 Michael Ross, President
 Nancy Ross-Anderson, VP Membership
 18865 Cooper Street, Apple Valley, CA92308
membership@clanross.org
info@clanross.org
www.clanross.org

Scottish Associations and Societies

 THE AMERICAN-SCOTTISH FOUNDATION, INC.
 Through our platform of projects and events ASF helps share and strengthen the heritage and cultural message of Scotland's past and future. A bridge between the United States and Scotland.
www.americanscottishfoundation.org

 The American-Scottish Foundation

Scottish Gaelic Society of Victoria
 Founded in 1905
www.scottishgaelicvictoria.com
Scottish Gaelic Language Classes
 Wednesdays 7:00 - 8:30 pm during school terms
 at Kathleen Syme Community Centre,
 251 Faraday St, Carlton and on Zoom.
Scottish Gaelic Choir of Victoria
 Tuesdays 7:00 - 9:00 pm during school terms
 at Kathleen Syme Community Centre,
 251 Faraday St, Carlton and on Zoom.
 Enquires: scottishgaelicvictoria@gmail.com

CLAN MUNRO ASSOCIATION
 AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

 We would be pleased to welcome as a member, anyone interested in their Clan heritage with the names; Munro, Monro, Monroe and the septs, Foulis, MacCulloch, Dingwall, MacLulich and Vass.
 BECOME A MEMBER, VISIT
www.clanmunroassociation.org.au
memberships@clanmunroassociation.org.au

Clan Sinclair Australia

 Membership and inquiries from all Sinclairs, Sinclair Septs and Sinclair descendants.
 For further info contact
 President: WayneSinclair 0417 146 174
 Secretary : Liane Sinclair 0410 045 263
 E: clansincliraustralia@hotmail.com
www.clansincliraustralia.com

Caledonian Society of WA Inc.

 Promotes Scottish Culture and Traditions in Perth, Western Australia
 For further details contact John: 0427 990 754
 Email: caledoniansocietyofwa@gmail.com
www.caledoniansocietyofwainc.com

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

 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 352, Mt Gravatt, QLD 4122
www.standrewsociety.com

Discover Your Nesbitt/Nisbet Ancestry

ibydeit.org
nesbittnisbet.org.uk

Clan Sutherland Society in Australia Inc.

 Contact: M Williams, Secretary
clansutherlandsocietyaustralia@gmail.com
<http://goldenvale.wixsite.com/clansutherlandaus>
 Facebook: Clan Sutherland Society in Australia

Hunter Valley Scots Club Inc

 Promotes and supports all forms of Scottish culture in Newcastle, Hunter Valley and surrounding areas.
 Members and interested people are welcome to attend activities such as Burns Night, Caledonian Night, St Andrew's Day, and other social functions.
 Web: hvscots.org Email: hunterscots@gmail.com
 P.O. Box 34, Kotara NSW 2289

Scots of Victoria Coordinating Group
 Supporting the Scottish Community in Victoria
 Suite 87, 139 Cardigan St
 Carlton Vic 3053
 Email: resource_centre@scotsofaustralia.org.au
 Website: <https://scotsofaustralia.org.au>
 Facebook: [Facebook.com/ScotsofVictoria](https://www.facebook.com/ScotsofVictoria)

OLIPHANT CLAN & FAMILY ASSOCIATION of North America

 The only home for all Clan Oliphant in the Americas.
 Oliphant - Olyphant - Oliphint
 Olifant - Olifent and all descended
ClanOliphantMembership@gmail.com
www.OliphantOfNorthAmerica.org

YOUNG
 Youngs of Scotland in Australia

 Invites all those of the name of Young, or descended of a Young, to join our international collective organisation.
 Convenor: Ian J Young AM FSAScot
membership@youngsofscotland.au
www.youngsofscotland.com

The Robert Burns Club of Melbourne Inc.

 > Promotes interest in the works, life and milieu of the Scottish Poet Robert Burns
 > Celebrates Scottish Culture
 > Conducts Annual Burns Supper, Poetry Afternoon & Pleasant Sunday Afternoon
 For Membership Information contact:
 Secretary: Melissa Ventre - 0405 182 458
 Email: secretary@robertburnsclubmelbourne.org.au

St Andrew Society of W.A.

 Promoting Scottish dancing, singing, literature & other cultural activities.
 For further information contact:
secretary@saintandrew.org.au
<https://saintandrew.org.au/>
Celebrating All Things Scottish

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

YOUNGS OF SCOTLAND
 Membership inquiries:
 Ms. Laura Young,
 33 McKeen Street,
 Jarvis, Ontario,
 Canada N0A 1J0
4scottishthistles@gmail.com

Scots Canada

 Join our 90+ members in celebrating your Scottish Heritage while promoting your growth and success
 Find out more and how to belong at scotscanada.com
 Clans and Scottish Societies of Canada

Victorian Scottish Heritage Cultural Foundation

 Pipe Band Support
 Highland Dance Awards
 Scottish Gaelic Scholarship
 Literature & Performing Arts
 Schools Scottish Music Prizes
 Scottish Festivals & Exhibitions
 Highland Games • Young Fiddler Awards
 email: info@vshcf.com.au
 website: <https://www.vshcf.com.au/>

Clan Ross in Australia

 for information contact Commander Des Ross
 (By appointment David Ross Bt Chief of Clan Ross and Balnagowan)
 We would be pleased to hear from anyone with Ross Clan heritage and interest.
 Contact: Commander Des Ross at
lonepiper.ross@gmail.com M 0403 830 853

Clan Wardlaw Association

 Founded 2004
 Worldwide organization for all Wardlaws or related families. We invite you to join us.
 Email: clanwardlaw2004@gmail.com
'Wardlaw ivermair!'
www.clanwardlaw.com
Wardlaw Tartan and Ancestry Books

The Scottish Australian Heritage Council

 Membership is welcome from all of Scottish descent.
 For information please contact
members@scottishaustralianheritagecouncil.com.au

www.scottishaustralianheritagecouncil.com.au

Victorian Scottish Union Inc
 Established 1905
 Umbrella group representing the interest of Scottish Clans and Societies in Victoria.
 Affiliated Clans & Societies
 Brunswick Scottish Society
 Clan Donald Victoria
 Clan Grant
 Clan Hay
 Clan Macdonald of Yarraville
 Clan Sinclair
 Geelong Scottish Dance
 Glenbrae Celtic Dancers
 Maryborough Highland Society
 Scottish Country Dance Society of Victoria
 Robert Burns Scottish Festival Camperdown
 The Robert Burns Club of Melbourne
 Warrambool & District Caledonian Society
 Warrambool Highland Dance
 Chief : Mr Grant McKinna
 President Norman Macdonald
 Secretary Jan Macdonald
 Contact details:
 Email: secretary@victorianscottishunion.com
 Mobile 0438 584 930
 Address: PO Box 116, Cobden, Victoria 3266
www.victorianscottishunion.com

Leading the Way

Robert Marshall completes his 100th walk – championing the future of the West Highland Way.

Robert Marshall made history recently by becoming the first person to complete the full 96-mile West Highland Way 100 times. What began as a personal challenge over 30 years ago has evolved into a lifelong passion. Robert first attempted the 96-mile route in 1993, abandoning the walk at Rowardennan on the first day due to heavy gear and unsuitable footwear. Just weeks later, he returned, determined to succeed, and completed the route in three days with

only trainers and a lighter pack. Since then, the West Highland Way has become his “keep fit walk,” keeping him healthy both physically and mentally.

Landmark achievement

Over the years, Robert has walked the trail in all seasons, camping, bivvying, and sometimes using baggage transfer services. He has carried on despite health challenges, including two heart operations in 2017 and 2023. Now retired, he has been



Robert Marshall at the ‘Man with Sore Feet’ statue at the end of the West Highland Way at Fort William with his six children and The Munro Bagpiper, who piped them across the finish line.

walking the route almost every month, determined to reach his 100th journey before his 70th birthday in November 2025. For his 100th walk, Robert was joined by his six children, Kirsty, 46, David, 43, Jennifer, 40, Yvonne, 40, Ciaran, 25 and Ross, 22, by his side. “I’ve had so many special moments on my walks. No two days or journeys are ever the same, but walking this time with all the family can’t be beaten. I’m pleased that this walk has helped raise attention to the need for all of us to support the maintenance along the 96 miles,” he said.

This landmark achievement is not just a personal triumph – it is also a fundraising mission. Robert has already raised thousands of pounds for the West Highland Way Trust, the new charity dedicated to protecting and maintaining the trail. Climate change and increasing visitor numbers are placing growing pressure on the route, making ongoing investment essential to keep it safe and accessible. Funds raised will support vital work, including drainage, signage, bridges, gates, vegetation management, and environmental care.

Scotland’s most loved trail

Carol Matthews, a trustee of the new West Highland Way Trust, joined the crowd at Fort William to cheer Robert and his family across the finish line. She said: “Robert’s commitment is inspirational. We are so grateful that he has chosen to support the new West Highland Way Trust with this remarkable 100th walk. His efforts will help raise thousands of pounds to safeguard the future of Scotland’s most loved trail.” She added: “The West Highland Way is a global hiking icon, contributing around £20 million a year to Scotland’s rural economy. Its popularity brings huge benefits but also constant wear and tear. The Trust has been set up to fund the essential, often unseen work, renewing signs, maintaining drainage, repairing bridges, that keeps this 96-mile journey safe, sustainable and spectacular for the next generation.”

Opened in 1980, the West Highland Way stretches from Milngavie to Fort William, linking Scotland’s largest city to its highest mountain, via its largest loch. It is one of the UK’s best-loved trails, completed in full by over 45,000 people annually and enjoyed in sections by thousands more. On 6 October 2025, the West Highland Way will celebrate its 45th anniversary.

Donations can be made at www.westhighlandwaytrust.org.



Carol Matthews, a trustee of the new West Highland Way charity, with Robert Marshall.



Robert Marshall at the start of the West Highland Way in Milngavie.

How a Scottish carer went from living in a car with his dog to US wrestling stardom



Former carer from Motherwell who once lived in his car with his dog is now body slamming his way to stardom in the United States. In a few short years Luke Scouler, better known to fans as Crixus, has gone from sleeping in a gym car park to cage fights andasket matches in the same wrestling promotion that launched the careers of John Cena and Batista.

The “Scottish War Machine” is now one of the breakout stars at Ohio Valley Wrestling (OVW), the cult American brand featured in the hit Netflix documentary *Wrestlers*. Luke was the first ever Scottish OVW champion.

Luke had previously been a fitness instructor before working in residential care with young people at Inspire Scotland, a social care organisation that supports children and young people.

The 33-year-old said: “I really loved that job. But it was tough emotionally. I’ve always had a bit of a Batman complex - I thought I was going to save everybody. I was in a bad place with it. I knew it wasn’t for me and I was burned out. I was in a bad place and I remember sitting in my house in Newmains watching TV with my dog, Odin, when wrestling came on and I just thought: ‘Screw it. Let’s go. Scots have made it big in this business – why couldn’t I?’”

That night, he jumped in his car to enroll in a wrestling academy in London run by former WWE star and current OVW head trainer Al Snow. The ‘Scottish War Machine’ continued: “I drove through the night with no plan and no place to stay. Me and the dog slept in the car for a bit. Eventually the guy who ran it asked if I was serious. I told him I’d already quit my job and left my house. That was it. We moved into the gym and didn’t go back.”

Battle-ready

He first landed a place at OVW in 2019, after placing first at a 300-person wrestling combine. But just as things were taking off, COVID hit and he was stuck in the UK for two years. Now based in Kentucky full-time, he’s one of the promotion’s biggest stars – something which he thinks his upbringing prepared him well for. Luke commented “We’ve got thicker skin, especially in Glasgow. You’re battle-ready by the time you leave primary school, so wrestling comes naturally to us. I’m cheeky, and the accent helps too. Over here in the States, people already think we’re mental which helps. I just turned my personality up to 11. I wasn’t pretending to be someone else- just the version of me you probably wouldn’t want to sit next to in a pub. I get to act up and they still love me. They boo you, but they’re cheering underneath.”

His rise comes as Scots are “having a moment” in the world of wrestling according to Al Snow, who has shared a ring with the Rock and Stone Cold Steve Austin.

Edinburgh’s Joe Hendry made his WrestleMania debut this year while Ayrshire’s Drew McIntyre – an OVW alumnus – became Scotland’s first WWE Champion in 2020.

Former WWE Hardcore and European champion Al Snow, who made his wrestling debut in 1982 against Kerry Von Erich, the wrestler portrayed by Zac Efron in the Hollywood movie *The Iron Claw*, commented: “With the success of Joe Hendry and Drew McIntyre, Scotland is increasingly a potential source of talent. ICW did amazing things. I know Grado - though don’t tell him I said this - but he’s incredibly charismatic and doing so well across TV, radio and stage. With Crixus, we may have another superstar on our hands. His dedication has been incredible. To make it in this business, you have to sacrifice and do things out of the ordinary. And that’s why I think he’s got what it takes.”

Crixus appears weekly on OVW TV. You can follow him at [@war.crixus](https://twitter.com/war.crixus).



Luke and Odin.

WHAT'S ON - SCOTTISH EVENTS

Enjoy Australia and New Zealand's top Scottish event listings in the Scottish Banner. Please check direct with event contacts for the most up to date information. You can also see our latest updates (including events listed across Scotland and North America) or add your event at: www.scottishbanner.com/events

Australia

OCTOBER 2025

CelticFest Warwick

4-6, Warwick, QLD

Celebrates the Southern Downs' rich Scottish and Irish heritage as well as contemporary Celtic culture with Highland Games, Celtic music and stalls, pipe bands, clans and more at Warwick Showgrounds. Info: www.celticfestqld.com.au

Armadale Highland Gathering & Perth Kilt Run 5, Armadale, WA

Featuring the Perth Kilt Run (registration required), some of WA's award-winning Pipe Bands, Scottish Clans, Scottish dancers, entertainment, Heavy Events, and much more. A free community event and WA's largest Scottish festival at Minnowarra Park. Info: www.perthkilt.com.au/highland-gathering

Canberra Highland Gathering 11, Canberra, ACT

Pipe bands will mass in Canberra to compete in the ACT pipe band championship as well as the community pipe band elements. Highland dancers will compete in the Canberra City Championship. There will also be other music types throughout the day, massed pipe band performances and other historic re-enactments and displays. A free community event at Kett St, Kambah. Info: www.canberragathering.com.au

Brisbane Celtic Festival 2025 12, Brisbane, QLD

A 100% free celebration of Celtic culture with music, dance, and tradition from the Celtic Nations including Ireland, Isle of Man, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, Asturias, and Galicia. Attendees can enjoy live Irish music, Highland dancing, Scottish country performances, and fun kids' games like the caber toss, while wearing their tartan and kilts for an authentic experience filled with the best of Celtic heritage at Moorland Park, Auchnflower. Info: www.ccaq.org.au/brisbane-celtic-festival-2025

Whisky Tasting 24, Brisbane, QLD

Indulge in a curated selection of exceptional whiskies while supporting a worthy cause. Whether you're a seasoned connoisseur or a curious beginner, this tasting will delight your palate all while raising funds for the Emmanuel College Highlanders to compete in the 2026 New Zealand Pipe Band Championships at the United Service Club Queensland. Info: <https://ssaqld.tidyhq.com/public/schedule/events/76753-whisky-tasting>

Society of St Andrew of Scotland, Darling Downs Branch Gala Dinner 25, Toowoomba, QLD

An evening of Scottish good, entertainment and more at Burke & Wills Hotel, 544 Ruthven St. Info: standrewddb@gmail.com

Gladstone Highland Gathering 2025 25, Gladstone, QLD

Presented by Gladstone Thistle Pipe Band with pipe band displays at the Pipe Band Hall. Info: 0439 677 513 or email: gandschurchill@gmail.com

Celtic Council of Australia Celtic Honours Luncheon 25, Penrith, NSW

Join the Celtic Council of Australia for their 2025 Celtic Honours Luncheon where they award personal Celtic honours for meritorious service to Celtic affairs at Penrith Gaels Club. Info: www.celticcouncil.org.au

Scottish Highland Dance Academy Quiz Night 25, Wembley, WA

A fundraising event to support the tuition, training and travel to Highland dancing championships at the Bendat Parent and Community Centre, 36 Dodd St. Info: www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1458370

NOVEMBER 2025

The Warringah Scottish Society Party Night 1, Collaroy, NSW

Party night is full of fun games, entertainment as well as plenty of dancing and Scottish music at the Masonic Hall, Pittwater Rd. Info: www.facebook.com/WarringahScottishSociety

Scotword answers from page 6

Across:

- 8 Border
- 9 Singlets
- 10 Ballater
- 11 Finnan
- 12 Ashet
- 14 Ayr
- 15 Canal
- 18 Champit
- 20 Doglegs
- 23 Plaid
- 24 Wry
- 25 Agley
- 29 Clarty
- 31 Cromarty
- 33 Achamore
- 34 Islets

Down:

- 1 Rowans
- 2 Idol
- 3 Broth
- 5 Knife
- 6 Clan
- 7 Stravaig
- 13 Elm
- 16 Jig
- 17 Don
- 19 Holyloch
- 21 Lug
- 22 Bracken
- 26 Estate
- 27 Synod
- 28 Dowie
- 30 Roar
- 32 Ally

RSCDS Adelaide and Districts Scottish Ball 2025 1, Prospect, SA

Come along and have fun, celebrate Scottish culture and enjoy live music from the very talented Iain Mckenzie! Dress to impress with a "touch of tartan" or "thistle" at Prospect Town Hall, 128 Prospect Rd. Info: www.rscdsadelaide.org.au/events/adelaide-ball-2025

2025 NSW Piping & Drumming Championships 2, Maitland, NSW

Pipe and drum competitions, concert band displays, stalls and food at Maitland Regional Athletics Centre, 208 High St. Info: 0409 918 260 or www.maitlandpipeband.org.au

Beltane Gathering 2025 7-9, Beerwah, QLD

May 1 is Beltane in the Northern Hemisphere, November 1 in the Southern Hemisphere, and on that day we honour nature's oldest love story. Beltane means bright fire, and in earth-based traditions, during Beltane, we will have a Feast and Ritual on Saturday, Handfasting, Broom Jumping, Maypole Dancing and lots of music. Info: Wayne 0415 800 888 or gathering@beltanefire.com.au

Wauchope Highland Gathering 8, Wauchope, NSW

Band displays, massed bands, quintet competitions, Highland dancing, Highland games at Wauchope Showground, High St. Info: www.facebook.com/PMWVRSRSLPipeBand

Silver Chanter Competition 9, Payneham, SA

Piping competition presented by the R U Brown Piobaireachd Society of South Australia Inc at Payneham RSL, 360 Payneham Rd. Info: www.rubrown.org.au

BBC Pipe Bands 85th Anniversary Concert 14, Brisbane, QLD

This highly professional show will showcase the amazing talents of our BBC Pipe Band members, who have performed on the world stage at World Championships and The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. They will be joined by the BBC Ceilidh Band, and champion Highland Dancers. Info: <https://aucbpfpa.sales.ticketsearch.com/sales/salesevent/154462>

St Andrew's Day Black-tie Dinner & Ceilidh 14, Sydney, NSW

This landmark evening marks the start of a new chapter in bringing together Scotland-minded people in Sydney – from business leaders and creatives to young professionals and friends of Scotland. Join the Caledonian Society of Sydney at the Fullerton Hotel Sydney for a night of Scottish music, food and celebration. Info: <https://events.humanitix.com/st-andrews-day-dinner-the-caledonian-society>

Melbourne Tartan Festival St. Andrew's Ceilidh Dance 21, Melbourne, VIC

Dance the night away with the Melbourne Tartan Festival and the Melbourne Scottish Fiddle Club and celebrate St Andrew's Day. Don't forget to wear some tartan at Collingwood Town Hall. Info: www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1453293

RSL Memorial Pipes & Drums Townsville St Andrews Ceilidh 21, Townsville, QLD

Celebrate Scotland's patron Saint with RSL Memorial Pipes & Drums Townsville at the Townsville RSL Club. Info: rslpipebands@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/RSLPipesDrumsTsv

Hunter Valley Highland Games 22, Lovedale, NSW

Experience Scottish tradition in beautiful Wine Country, with pipe bands, Scottish athletics and dance at Saltire Estate Winery, 113 Wilderness Rd. Info: 02 4058 3088 or www.huntervalleyhighlandgames.com.au

Scots on The Rocks' Dance Scottish: Easygoing Social 22, Sydney, NSW

An evening of danceable dances, with live music from Chris Duncan, Catherine Strutt and Jennifer Strutt at Leichhardt Town Hall, Cnr Marion and Norton Streets, Leichhardt. Info: Robert: 0435 154 433 or www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1446796

Scots on Show 22, Bendigo, VIC

Pipe band competition, Highland dancing and stalls at Truscott Reserve, Murdoch St, California Gully. Info: contact@goldencitypipeband.org.au or www.facebook.com/goldencitypipeband

2025 St Andrew's Eve Dinner 28, Brisbane, QLD

Don't miss out on this fantastic celebration of Scottish heritage and community. It's an event that promises unforgettable memories and new connections, join the Society of St Andrew of Scotland Queensland at the Royal on the Park Hotel & Suites. Info: www.ssaqld.tidyhq.com

St Andrew's Day Ball 29, Perth, WA

Come along to Perth's Premier Scottish event the St Andrew's Day Ball. Ticket includes the Ceilidh & beer, wine, soft drinks, & 3 course meal. And not forgetting a chance to win an overnight stay door prize. We will have our honorary piper, the Coastal Scottish Pipe Band, Perth Academy of Highland Dance & the Heel N' Toe Ceilidh Band. At the Rendezvous Hotel Scarborough, The Esplanade, Scarborough. Info: <https://saintandrew.org.au/upcoming-events>

St Andrews Day Burns Supper 29, Wetherill Park, NSW

Get ready for an extraordinary celebration where Scottish tradition meets Thai flair in an electrifying night of music, feasting, and fun! Join the world-class Governor Macquarie Memorial Pipe Band and the iconic Scottish singing sensation, Mary Kiani, for an evening of soulful songs, soaring bagpipes and spirited revelry at Thai Rock, Stockland. Info: www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1364918

St Andrew's Day Scottish Festival at Overnewton Castle 30, Keilor, VIC

Calling all clans to this four-acre Scottish Baronial Estate for a jam-packed day to celebrate St Andrews Day and all things Scotland. From 11am until 4pm, the castle grounds will come to life with games and activities for children, live Scottish music & dance, Highland Cows and the best culinary offerings from Melbourne's leading Scottish food suppliers. Info: <https://overnewtoncastle29.rezdy.com/606823/sunday-30th-november-2025-scottish-festival>

Happy St Andrew's Day 30, Nationwide

Saint Andrew's Day is Scotland's official national day. Celebrate St Andrew's Day (or in Scottish Gaelic 'Là Naomh Anndrais'), Scotland's patron saint!

New Zealand

OCTOBER 2025

Tartan Up the Green 4, Upper Hutt

Be blown away by the power of the Pipes and Drums as Tartan Up the Green returns for another rousing rendition of bagpiping, Highland drumming and dancing at Brewtown, 27 Blenheim St, Maidstone. Info: www.brewtown.co.nz/whats-on

Otago Scottish Heritage Council Centennial Dinner 4, Dunedin

A dinner in celebration of the Otago Scottish Heritage Council's centenary will be held at the Edgar Centre. Info: www.otagoscottishheritagecouncil.org

Kapiti Caledonian Society Highland Ball 2025 11, Waikanae

Come along for some real Scottish fun and enjoy the live music, the dancing and a wonderful supper at Waikanae Memorial Hall, 7 Pehi Kupa St. Info: kapitiscots@outlook.com or www.facebook.com/highlandball2017

Mini Pipe Band Contest Glenfield

The Postman's Leg in Glenfield will be host to NZ's top mini pipe bands, where they'll be battling it out across all grades. Bands will be kicking off from 12:00pm midday, with free spectator entry. Info: www.facebook.com/events/810960048122968

Wellington Gaelic Club Ceilidh 11, Wellington

A ceilidh is held in the City of Wellington Pipe Band Hall, corner Stoke and Hanson Street Newtown, from 8.00pm – 12.00am. We are a very family-oriented organisation and we encourage participation by all ages and encourage the opportunity for you to wear some tartan. Info: <https://wellington-gaelic-club-communn-gaidhealach-wellington.weebly.com>

Manawatu Scottish Pipes & Drums Highland Ball 18, Palmerston North

Dust off your dancing shoes and put on your best kilt and celebrate 100 years of Manawatu Scottish Pipe Band at Silks Lounge at the Awapuni Racecourse. Info: www.manawatuscottish.co.nz

Pipe Works – The Sounds of the Hamilton Caledonian Pipe Band 18, Hamilton

Experience the championship sounds of the Hamilton Caledonian Pipe Band and celebrate the Hamilton Caledonian Pipe Band's 100th year at Pipeworks 2025, an afternoon or evening performance of enchanting melodies at Southwell Performing Arts Centre. Info: www.facebook.com/HCSPP

VUW Wellington Scottish Interest Group-Neil Oliver 28, Wellington

We will watch a short documentary by Neil Oliver, Archaeologist and Historian famous for his television appearances and worldwide geographical documentaries (e.g. Coast New Zealand) at the Victoria University of Wellington Law School, Old Government Buildings, Lambton Quay. Info: <https://wellyscots.wordpress.com>

Come Ceilidh Dancing! 31, Auckland

A ceilidh is the traditional Scottish community dance. Everyone is welcome; our friendly caller will explain everything, and our live band will get you on your feet and dancing at St David's in the Fields Church, 202 Hillsborough Rd, Hillsborough. Info: www.eventfinda.co.nz/2025/come-ceilidh-dancing/auckland/hillsborough

NOVEMBER 2025

Canterbury Caledonian Society Ceilidh 1, Christchurch

This is a fun evening of music and dancing suitable for all members of the family. Info: www.canterburycaledonian.org.nz

Hororata Highland Games 8, Hororata

A Scottish Festival with a Kiwi twist! Pipe bands, Scottish dancers, stalls, Clans, heavy events and more at the Hororata Domain. A great family day out with lots of chances to take part and have a go in Scottish events. 45 minutes inland of Christchurch. Info: www.hororata.org.nz/highland-games

NZSG Scottish Interest Group – Greater Wellington Meeting 8, Tawa

November meeting. End of Year meeting with a guest speaker at Tawa Union Church Lounge, 6 Elena Place. Info: www.genealogy.org.nz

Wellington Gaelic Club Ceilidh 8, Wellington

A ceilidh is held in the City of Wellington Pipe Band Hall, corner Stoke and Hanson Street Newtown, from 8.00pm – 12.00am. We are a very family-oriented organisation and we encourage participation by all ages and encourage the opportunity for you to wear some tartan. Info: <https://wellington-gaelic-club-communn-gaidhealach-wellington.weebly.com>

Otago Scottish Heritage Council Centennial Book Launch 20, Dunedin

Launch of the book chronicling the first 100 years of the Otago Scottish Heritage Council. To be held in the Dunningham Suite, Level 4, Dunedin Public Library. Info: www.otagoscottishheritagecouncil.org

Dunedin St Andrews Day Celebrations 23, Dunedin

Annual celebration of Scotland's national day, held by the Dunedin-Edinburgh Sister City Society. In 2025, the major theme will be the centenary of the Otago Scottish Heritage Council. The event will be held in the Octagon. Info: www.otagoscottishheritagecouncil.org

Come Ceilidh Dancing! 28, Auckland

A ceilidh is the traditional Scottish community dance. Everyone is welcome; our friendly caller will explain everything and our live band will get you on your feet and dancing at St David's in the Fields Church, 202 Hillsborough Rd, Hillsborough. Info: www.eventfinda.co.nz/2025/come-ceilidh-dancing/auckland/hillsborough

Happy St Andrew's Day 30, Nationwide

Saint Andrew's Day is Scotland's official national day. Celebrate St Andrew's Day (or in Scottish Gaelic 'Là Naomh Anndrais'), Scotland's patron saint!

St Andrew's Day Lunch 30, Dunedin

Annual lunch in honour of St Andrew's Day, held by the Combined Clans. The lunch will be held at The Rope and Twine restaurant, in South Dunedin. Info: lynanicholson@gmail.com

Scotland

OCTOBER 2025

The Enchanted Forest 2025 2-November 2, Faskally Wood

Scotland's favourite sound and light show and spectacular immersive art experience in the beautiful Faskally Wood, near Pitlochry, Highland Perthshire. Info: www.enchantedforest.org.uk

Golden Spurtle World Porridge Making Championship 4, Carrbridge

A cook-off drawing competitors from across the globe to compete making our favourite oaty dish, at Village Hall. Info: www.goldenspurtle.com

Shetland Accordion and Fiddle Festival 9-12, Lerwick, Shetland

Over 40 invited musicians, including full 6-piece Scottish Dance Bands, smaller groups, and solo musicians, as well as countless local musicians, bands and various Scottish traditional dance clubs and attracts traditional music enthusiasts and visitors from all over the world. Info: www.shetlandaccordionandfiddle.com/festival

Royal National Mòd 10-18, Fort William

The country's foremost festival for Gaelic language, sports, art and culture. Alongside the competitions, a burgeoning fringe programme sees concerts, workshops, talks and sessions take over venues across Lochaber. Info: www.ancomunn.co.uk

Scottish Fiddle Orchestra Live in Glasgow 11, Glasgow

Enjoy a traditional evening of Scottish music to get the toes tapping and warm the soul. With guest artistes and pipe band at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. Info: www.sfo.org.uk

Scottish International Storytelling Festival 22-November 1, Edinburgh

The event presents world-class storytellers who celebrate the tradition, but also push the modern boundaries of storytelling as well, rooted in the past, resonating in the present. Info: www.sisf.org.uk

Orkney Storytelling Festival 23-26, Orkney

A celebration of the oral tradition in Orkney with tales focusing on the history and heritage of the islands. Info: www.orkneystorytellingfestival.co.uk

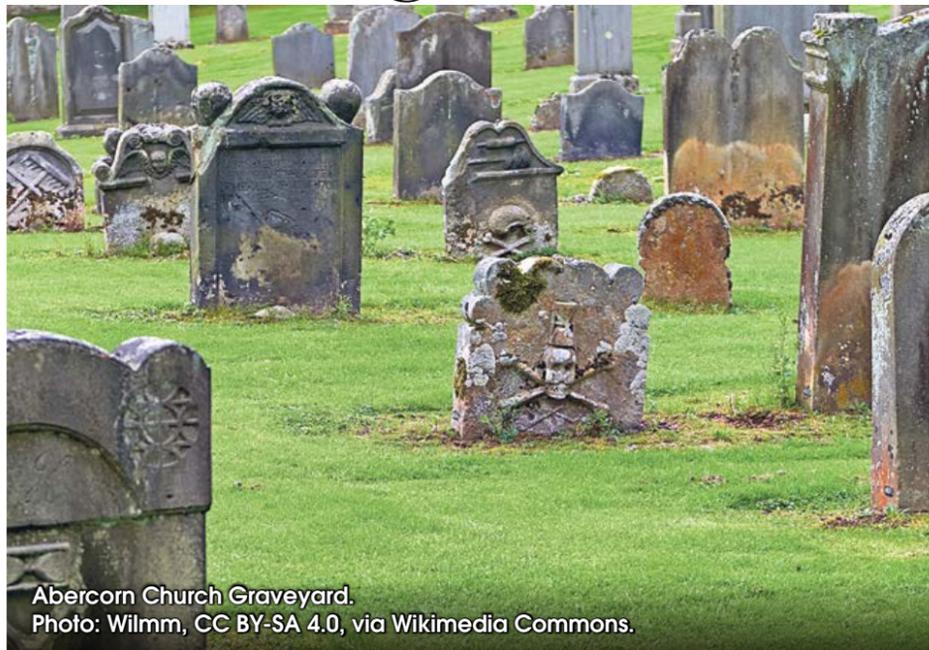
Glenfiddich Piping Championship 25, Blair Atholl, Perthshire

Held annually at Blair Castle, this is a celebration of solo piping excellence, tradition and expertise-also available to watch via online livestream. Info: www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/glenfiddich

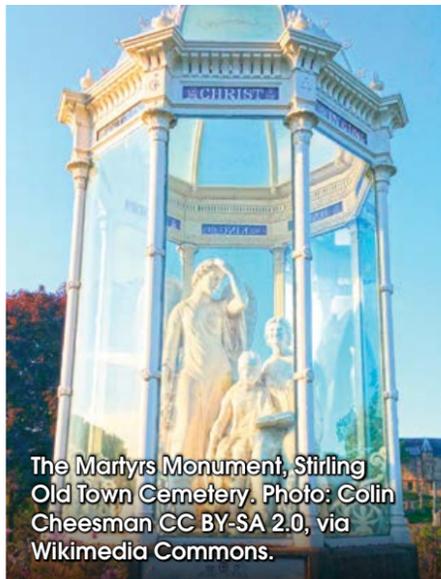
Shades of Amber 2025 31-November 2, Dunkeld, Perthshire

There will again be a series of concerts over the weekend in The Dalriadan at Cardney Steading, Perthshire where Dougie MacLean will be joined by musical friends from over the years, as well as Open Mic in the Rustic Cattle Shed and informal music sessions in the Old Mill and around the Firepit. Info: www.perthshireamber.com/shades-of-amber-2025

Searching out Scotland's historic graveyards



Abercorn Church Graveyard.
Photo: Wilmm, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.



The Martyrs Monument, Stirling Old Town Cemetery. Photo: Colin Cheesman CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

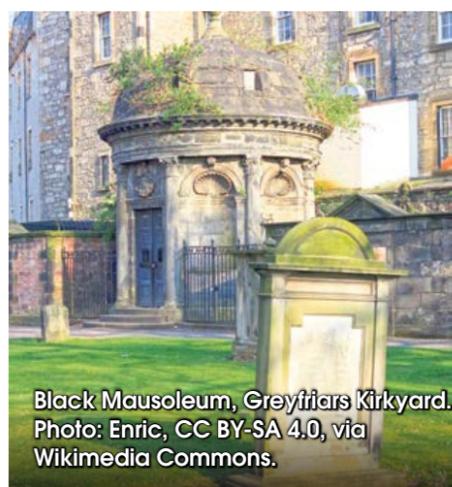
is uninhabited by the living; among its 300 or so deceased residents are Alastair Maclain, 12th Chief of Glencoe, who was killed during the massacre of 1692, and Big Duncan MacKenzie, a Jacobite fighter from Ballachulish. Each clan had its own "port of the dead" when they arrived with a body and legend has it that the island is guarded by the spirit of the last person buried there.

Symbols of eternal life

And not all famous connections are real. Abercorn graveyard, near South Queensferry and just a mile from Midhope Castle which stood in for Lallybroch, featured in *Outlander* as the site of Frank Randall's grave in season 4 of the hit show. You have to time travel a fair way further back to the origins of this beautiful spot – St Ninian is said to have visited in the 400s and a church was established on the spot sometimes afterwards. The gravestones date back to the 1600s and have some great examples of carvings, such as skull and crossbones, and hourglasses, reminding us that life is fleeting and death comes to us all. There are also yew trees in grounds, trees that, because of their longevity, became symbols of eternal life. They're often found in graveyards, with the most famous in one of Scotland's most beautiful churchyards at Fortingall in Perthshire.

The yew tree there is believed to be between 3,000 and 8,000 years old and is one of the oldest living things in Europe.

And for the plain and simply quirky, Old Town Cemetery in Stirling is hard to beat. The Star Pyramid, built in 1863, is a memorial to martyrs for civil or religious liberty and the Martyrs Monument contains an angel looking over two girls, Margaret and Agnes Wilson. Both were arrested for their Covenantor beliefs and sentenced to death by drowning in 1685. Agnes was saved but Margaret died. The cemetery also contains the elaborately carved Service stone, dating from 1636 and complete with musket ball dents thanks to Cromwell, and the reinterred remains of a Dominican monk who died 700 years ago.



Black Mausoleum, Greyfriars Kirkyard.
Photo: Enric, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.



Fortingall Yew. Photo: Colin Park, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Mort safes were another method of trying to thwart the body snatchers – metal cages put over the graves to stop them being dug up. As they were re-used once bodies were no longer fresh and therefore no use to the medics, or melted down for the metal at later dates, they are quite rare. Logierait Churchyard in Perthshire has three, two adult and one child, but the most famous are two in what is probably also Scotland's most famous kirkyard, Greyfriars in Edinburgh. Located in the heart of the capital city's Old Town, just yards from the National Museum, the churchyard is a favourite with tourists, mostly due to the grave of Greyfriars Bobby, the faithful dog who kept watch over his master's grave for 14 years, and the tombstone of Thomas Riddell, supposedly the inspiration for the *Harry Potter* villain.

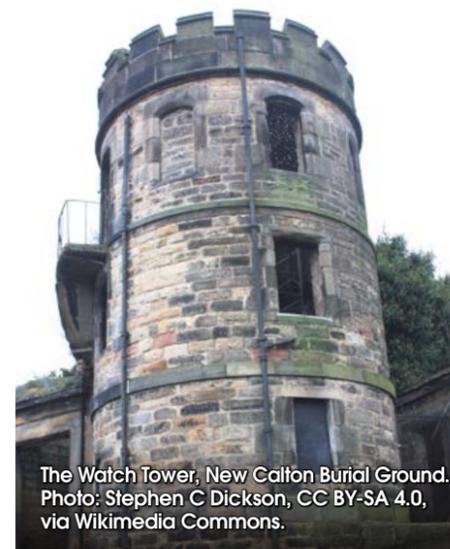
But deeper into the kirkyard is the site of the Covenantors Prison, a gated area, now lined with 18th century tombs, where hundreds of Covenantors – religious rebels – were kept prisoner after being defeated by the king's forces in battle. For four months they were held without shelter and only a meagre ration of bread. Many died. The ghost of Lord Advocate George Mackenzie, the man responsible for the king's policy of persecuting the Covenantors, is said to haunt the place, his poltergeist biting and scratching visitors – his grave, known as the Black Mausoleum, is one of the more ornate out of the 700 graves dating as far back as the 16th century.

Final resting place

The most famous names associated with Scotland's resurrectionists are William Burke and William Hare, although the pair bypassed the business of waiting for someone to die and digging them up by murdering their victims and selling their bodies to Edinburgh surgeon Dr Knox. When they were caught in 1828, Hare turned King's evidence against his former

partner – Burke was hanged while Hare went free, whisked out of the city by mail coach to Dumfries. There he was recognised – pamphlets with gory details of the case and sketches of the villains were best-sellers – and set on by a mob. He was extricated by the authorities but there the trail goes cold. The most popular legend is that he ended up in London, was recognised again and quicklime thrown in his face, ending his days as a blind beggar. There are also stories that he sailed for Canada or Australia but one story has him living in the remote Applecross peninsula under the name William Maxwell. He is said to have appeared there in 1840 and lived in the hamlet of Camusteel, working as a weaver. His house became the local "ceilidh house" and he became known as breabadair teine or the fiery or fire weaver – perhaps because he was said to have burns from a work accident. He married a local woman and was said to be an upstanding member of the community. And when he died in 1864 he was buried in Clachan cemetery, next to a drowned tramp called Clochan. It would be fitting if was Hare who found refuge in Applecross as the church and graveyard are said to be on the site where Irish saint Maelrubha established a monastery in 673 AD and the six-mile area around the church became a holy sanctuary, safe for anyone fleeing from pursuit.

More noble notable figures have found their final resting place at Reilig Odhráin (St Oran's Graveyard), the cemetery next to Iona Abbey on the sacred island off Mull. It is reputed to hold the bones of 60 kings, including the real MacBeth, and was a royal burial ground between the 9th and 11th centuries. While there are no markers for the kings' graves, visitors can still walk along Sràid nam Marbh – the Street of the Dead – where the pallbearers would have processed with their royal burdens. Another sacred island is Eilean Munde in Loch Leven, where several Highland clans - Camerons of Callart, MacDonalds of Glencoe and Stewarts of Ballachulish and Ardsheal – buried their dead. The island



The Watch Tower, New Calton Burial Ground.
Photo: Stephen C Dickson, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.



Abercorn Church and graveyard.
Photo: Rosser1954, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.



The Reilig Odhrain at Iona Abbey.
Photo: dun_deagh, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

By: Judy Vickers

As thoughts turn to Hallowe'en and all things spooky and supernatural, what could be more sinister than that horror movie favourite location – a graveyard? But while many of Scotland's cemeteries and churchyards teem with ghosts and grisly tales, many are also places of beauty and tranquillity, reflecting the changing times of the country's history in their tombs, carvings and mausoleums.

There's no doubt though that some of the most chilling features of Scotland's cemeteries, particularly those around Edinburgh, date from a dark period in its history. The body snatchers who dug up freshly deceased cadavers to sell to medical schools for anatomical study in the 18th and 19th centuries have left a physical mark on the cemeteries they tried to plunder.

Watch over the graves

Watch houses were often erected either at the entrance or within the kirkyard, built for the family or the community to literally keep a watch over the graves at night when the graverobbers would be most likely to commit their illegal acts. Unsurprisingly Edinburgh, with its famous medical school, has several examples including the magnificent three-storey circular watch tower at New Calton Burial Ground in the city's centre. Most watch houses are circular or square but there is a quirkier example at St Kessogs graveyard in Callander on the banks of the River Teith. The old medieval church that was the kirk for this kirkyard is long since gone but the picturesque cemetery – which has been restored over the summer by the community – has a small 19th century octagonal watch house.

Highland red deer tracked by GPS in innovative landscape-scale study



Red deer stag. Photo: Siân Addison.

A pioneering scientific research project using GPS collars has been launched to track red deer movement and behaviour in the west Highlands to help land managers take informed decisions about how to manage deer health, numbers and habitats. The study is a partnership project between charity Affric Highlands and Durham University, supported by the Association of Deer Management Groups. The study area includes a diverse network of landowners with different land management practices, such as sporting estates and conservation organisations.

Iconic and ecologically important animals

By strengthening understanding of how red deer move through and use the landscape, the initiative will provide scientific evidence to support future decisions and collaboration between landholdings on managing deer densities and restoring habitats such as native woodlands and peatlands.

“Red deer are a vital part of Scotland’s upland landscapes and rural economies

– but increased populations have led to challenges in balancing ecological health, biodiversity, and land management objectives,” said Nicola Williamson, field officer for Affric Highlands. “Strengthening our understanding of how these iconic and ecologically important animals move across estates and habitats is key to recovering ecosystems and improving deer health. This in turn supports rural economies and livelihoods through skilled deer management, and sustainable sport and nature-based tourism.”

Innovative research

While deer management is a much-debated topic in Scotland, limited scientific data is available to help inform and support approaches to practical management and achieve biodiversity goals at landscape-scale. The research in the South Ross Deer Management Group area will deploy GPS collars on 22 stags from Glen Affric to the west coast. Twelve stags have already been collared, to be followed by a further 10 this winter.

Six GPS ear tags have been deployed on deer calves to provide data on hind movements, with a plan to tag more calves next spring. The collars allow researchers to analyse where red deer prefer to be, and how they interact with the environment, including their habitat preferences during rutting, calving and foraging. Data will be stored on the collars, but also sent via satellite to EarthRanger – an app which allows deer stalkers to view deer movements and manually add their own observations.

Researcher Dr Eilidh Smith from Durham University said: “Through this

innovative research, we’ll be tracking and mapping red deer movements to assess their seasonal migrations, home range sizes, and responses to human activities such as fencing, culling and commercial stalking. We’ll also conduct habitat surveys in areas where the GPS data reveal that deer have been foraging or sheltering, to analyse their environmental impacts.”

Scotland’s largest surviving terrestrial mammal

The project team will work closely with landowners and deer managers to support collaboration across landholdings for better-informed and sustainable deer management. So far, 18 deer stalkers from 14 sporting estates are involved, bringing invaluable knowledge of deer behaviour, built over decades of experience. The team at Affric Highlands is currently working to secure additional funding for the initiative,

to enable more GPS collars to be deployed and to fund the collation of the two years’ worth of data for use by land managers.

The red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) is Scotland’s largest surviving terrestrial mammal, and a keystone species that plays a crucial role in natural processes, shaping the landscape by grazing grasses and sedges, browsing tree shoots and shrubs, and trampling and wallowing. But high red deer populations are a major barrier to the large-scale natural regeneration of native woodlands – continuing centuries of human-driven deforestation and negatively affecting deer health and welfare. Including roe deer and non-native sika, it is estimated there are around one million wild deer in Scotland, up from around 500,000 in 1990. Deer populations can range in densities, sometimes exceeding 40 deer per square km.

Deer management is the UK’s single largest terrestrial wildlife management operation.



Collared stag. Photo: Siân Addison.



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The sturdy canvas bag comes with a lovely pattern of Scottish Terrier Dogs. Includes an interior key/coin pouch and strong black webbed handles.
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Multi-Sheep Jute Shopper
The sturdy bag comes with a colourful pattern of Scottish sheep. With green webbed handle and interior zip key purse.
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The Multi Scottie Dog Canvas Bag
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Single Scottie Jute Bag
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Thistle Jute Bag
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Tartan Scottie Jute Bag
This braw wee shopper includes a tartan Scottie dog design. With tartan gusset and red handles and includes an internal zip key purse.
H30cm W30cm D20cm



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