



the Scottish Banner



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A' Bhratach Albannach

Volume 49 Number 7 NEWS FOR GLOBAL SCOTS January 2026

Experience Scotland in 2026

» Pg 12



Legends of the Cailleach

Scotland's Queen of Winter

» Pg 24



7 25286 84459 8 01

- 3000-year-old secret of the Peebles Hoard revealed» Pg 3
- The Irvings of Bonshaw» Pg 11
- Tom Weir - One of Us» Pg 17
- 2026 - A Year in Piping & Drumming» Pg 21
- Up Helly Aa: Fire in Winter» Pg 23



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Distributed monthly in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA. ISSN 2209-8364

Australia Post Print Approved PP:100004806

Published monthly by Scottish Banner Publications
PO Box 6220, Marrickville South, NSW, 2204, Australia

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The Banner Says...

Scotland's unique New Year celebrations



by Sean Cairney

W elcome to 2026 and I hope the year ahead is filled with happiness, health and meaning.

Though many attending Hogmanay celebrations may wake up a bit late, and possibly a tad worse for wear, on January 1st in one part of Scotland there is however no time for that.

The New Year's Day Ba' in Orkney is a centuries-old street football tradition played in Kirkwall, pitting two local teams—the Uppies and the Doonies—against each other in a fierce, rule-free contest.

A battleground for the Ba'

Every 1st of January, the narrow streets of Kirkwall transform into a battleground for the Ba' game, a custom believed to date back to the Norse era. The match, which also takes place on Christmas Day, begins under the steeple of the stunning St Magnus Cathedral, where a hand-crafted leather ball is thrown into a dense crowd of players. From there, chaos ensues: the Uppies aim to force the ball to Mounthoolie Lane at the town's upper end, while the Doonies strive to reach Kirkwall Bay at the harbour. Victory is achieved when the ball touches the designated goal, often after many hours of pushing, grappling, and strategic smuggling through the throng.

The Ba' is divided into two fixtures: the Boys' Ba' in the morning and the Men's Ba' in the afternoon, ensuring the tradition is passed down through generations. There are no time limits, no fixed team sizes, and virtually no rules, apart from the shared understanding of the goals. Men often

wear the same shirt each year so fellow teammates can identify each other in the scrum.

High drama

Shops and homes along the route are barricaded in advance, as the surging scrum can spill into doorways and windows. Long periods of the scrum making little progress are interspersed with bursts of high drama, excitement, and thunderous stampedes when a player manages to make a break with the Ba'.

Beyond its physical intensity, the Ba' embodies Orcadian culture.

Beyond its physical intensity, the Ba' embodies Orcadian culture. Players join sides based on family allegiance, birthplace, or tradition, reinforcing Kirkwall's social fabric. Though there have been numerous injuries during this unique event, for locals the Ba' is more than a game—it is a living link to Orkney's unique Viking past, a celebration of resilience, rivalry, and belonging that continues to captivate islanders and visitors alike.

In this issue

As New Year is upon us there are many reasons to make 2026 your year to visit Scotland. In this issue we list a variety of new experiences, some great events and even how you can find a bit of Scotland on your screens no matter where you are. We also have a great overview how you can hear Scotland this year with the year in piping and drumming from The National Piping Centre.

Tom Weir was a beloved Scottish climber, writer, and broadcaster. Known for the *Weir's Way* television series where he championed Scotland's landscapes. Long time readers to *the Scottish Banner* may recall his older sister actress,

broadcaster and author Mollie Weir was also a long-time contributor to these pages. Tom Weir was a son of Glasgow, but he inspired generations with his environmental passion, storytelling, and deep love for the hills and heritage of his homeland.

Scottish folklore is rich in stories and superstition. As Scotland plunges into the heart of winter this month we learn about Scotland's goddess of winter Cailleach. The Cailleach is considered the divine hag of Celtic mythology. She made Scotland's mountains and islands, brings about winter every year and many Highland stories tell of encounters with the Cailleach in the guise of an old woman.

Old Hogmanay

For some in Scotland however New Year traditions did not take place on January 1st. Old Scots Hogmanay is on January 11 which marks Scotland's New Year under the Julian calendar, preserved in rural communities long after the Gregorian switch in 1600. It reflects deep-rooted traditions of fire, kinship, and renewal. Before calendar reform, Scots celebrated New Year on January 11. Even after Britain adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752, many Highland and island communities clung to the old date, calling it "Old Hogmanay." This was especially true in places like Shetland and the Outer Hebrides, where Norse influence and local custom ran strong.

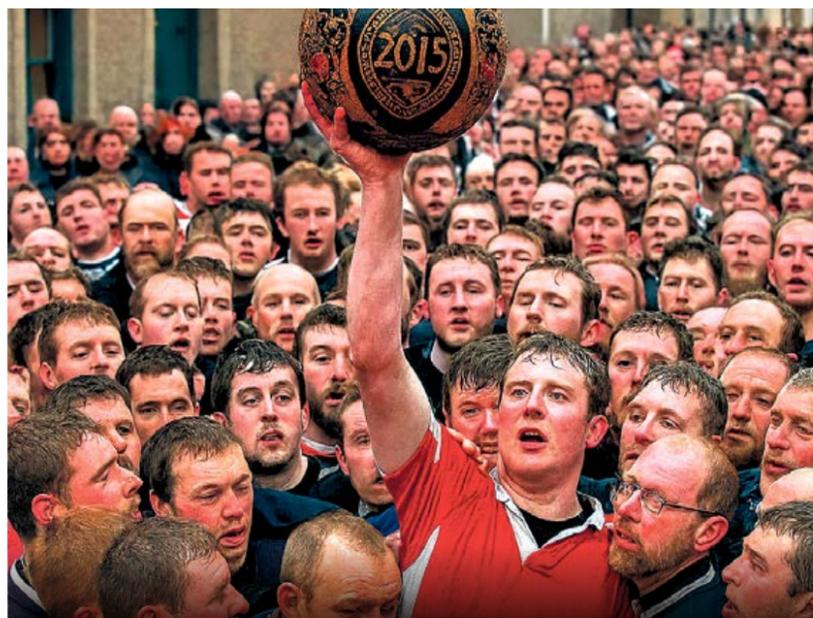
If visiting Scotland this month you could enjoy two different Hogmanay's and head to Burghead, Moray for when the Burning of the Clavie takes place. The townspeople of Burghead light a 100kg barrel of tar which is then carried around the town. Tradition dictates that members of the 'Clavie Crew' must be natives of the town.

If like me you will not be in a scrum with hundreds tearing down Kirkwall's historic streets on New Year's Day, I do hope you are still able to start the year off on the right foot. Wishing all our readers, advertisers, followers and friends a wonderful year ahead—may it be a good one for all of us. 🍀

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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We appreciate your support and hope you enjoy this edition.



Gracing our front cover: One of the many places to visit in 2026, the Isle of Iona. Photo: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam.

3000-year-old secret of the Peebles Hoard revealed



The bronze rattle pendant from the Peebles Hoard before conservation. Photo: © National Museums Scotland.

A year on from its acquisition by National Museums Scotland, initial conservation work has revealed exceptionally rare silver-coloured objects in one of the most significant hoards ever discovered in Scotland. Dating to 1000–800 BCE, the Peebles Hoard comprises over 500 unusual bronze and organic objects and components, many without archaeological parallel anywhere in the world.

The defining technological characteristic of the Bronze Age is the widespread use and production of bronze, an alloy of copper and tin that is usually a deep golden colour. Conservation of the Peebles Hoard has revealed rare silver-coloured objects from an era when silver was unknown. Analysis at the National Museums Collection Centre revealed

the colour is the result of high levels of tin on the surface. This is thought to be the product of a deliberate enrichment technique by highly skilled craftspeople.

The hoard was discovered by a metal detectorist in the Scottish Borders in 2020 and allocated to National Museums Scotland through the Treasure Trove legal process in 2024. It was extracted from the ground in a single block and excavated under laboratory conditions at the National Museums Collection Centre in Edinburgh.

A secret revealed after 3000 years

The bronze objects emerged encrusted with earth and green copper patina. After months of careful preparatory work to stabilise, assess and document the material in the hoard, conservators are painstakingly removing thousands

of years of dirt and corrosion to reveal the spectacular lustre of the original surface. It is estimated that it will take three years to complete the conservation of this exceptional Bronze Age discovery. Bethan Bryan, Peebles Hoard Conservator at National Museums Scotland, said: “Working on the conservation of the Peebles Hoard is a rare privilege and definitely a career highpoint. As well as removing dirt and corrosion it is essential that we preserve as much precious organic material as possible for future research. Getting to this point has been a challenging and incredibly time-intensive process, but the moment the silvery surface began to emerge was magical, a secret revealed after 3000 years.”

The use of many of the objects in the hoard is yet to be discovered but it is believed that some may have adorned a horse or wooden vehicle. The tin-enriched decoration would have added to its impact, signifying high status and wealth through exquisite craft. Efforts to secure funding for the continued research and conservation of the hoard are ongoing. Dr Matthew Knight, Senior Curator of Prehistory at National Museums Scotland, said: “The Peebles Hoard is truly a one-of-a-kind discovery, and I have never seen anything like the stunning, silver-coloured finish of these Bronze Age objects. They almost glow. Thanks to the generous support of our donors we are making significant progress. However, there is more to be done to prevent further deterioration of these fragile objects and continue our research to uncover more of the Hoard’s secrets.”

More centenarians in Scotland



The number of people aged 100 and over has risen by four percent in the year to June 2024, according to National Records of Scotland (NRS). The latest estimates from NRS show there were 1,020 centenarians living

in Scotland. There were 830 female centenarians and 190 male. The number of males reaching the age of 100 is rising faster. In the 10 years between mid-2014 and mid-2024, the number of male centenarians rose by 58% while the number of females rose by 5%.

Andrew White, head of population and migration statistics at NRS, said: “Scotland’s population of centenarians is a little over 1,000. There were more than four times as many female centenarians as males. However, the number of male centenarians has risen more quickly in the last ten years, and they were the fastest growing group in Scotland. Estimates on the numbers of people in the oldest age groups are important for those planning and providing services such as housing, health and social care.”

In mid-2024, there were an estimated 46,980 people aged 90 and over in Scotland. The number of people in this age group has increased by 19% in ten years. The number of males in this age group has increased by 47% since mid-2014, while the number of females has increased by 8%.

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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?

GG on Two Wheels



My name is George Talbot and would love to share my story with you in the hope that it might resonate.

My story is called "GG on Two Wheels." It began after I lost my wife, Gaynor to terminal cancer on the 02-04-2025 after a 4 and ½ year battle. In order for me to try cope with her loss I wanted to honour her memory and to keep a promise I made to her, I am taking her ashes with me on a solo motorcycle journey across Australia over 6824 Km from December 2025 to the 9th January 2026. Where I hope every mile I take is a way of keeping her close, remembering her warmth, her strength, and the love we shared. What began as a personal journey through grief has become a mission of purpose and purpose to now support and raise as much money as I can for a cause, I will be documenting this journey through daily blog updates, sharing the highs, lows, memories, and moments from the road, you can follow my story online and during this trip I will be trying to raise funds for Strathcarron Hospice.

As I said earlier my overall aim is to help raise awareness and funds for Strathcarron Hospice. The Hospice had been one of the most incredible places that allowed Gaynor to die with dignity and love and more importantly

where I was no longer a carer but a husband again. We had been together for over 22 years. But during this time in the hospice I got to fall even more in love with Gaynor all over again during those final 22 days, knowing she was going to pass away and I would lose her, and knowing all this I would do it all over again just to spend those last minutes with her again. Strathcarron Hospice was such a beautiful place for Gaynor and as her health declined, this allowed us to cherish every moment, the laughter, the conversations memoires and the love we had for each other.

Once Gaynor passed, she went at peace, with ease, dignity and respect.

I decided to do something to raise funds for Strathcarron Hospice as a thank you. I along with my close friends help organised a ball which was held in October and raised an amazing £30,000. And in a matter of months with other fundraising events that we held the total is now £41,000 and rising daily. I then decided this was not enough and wants to raise enough funds to cover the cost of running the hospice for 22 days, to reflect the number of days that Gaynor spent there.

To support the fundraising further I have since commissioned a bespoke campervan to be designed and fitted by my good friend at Rolyan Design. This van was created especially for the fundraiser it is not my personal vehicle, and I am now raffling it to raise vital funds for Strathcarron, whose care and compassion meant so much to Gaynor and me. And 100% of the funds are going to the hospice.

For updates and to support the cause please visit: www.ggontwowheels.com
George Talbot
Scotland

Ed note: What an amazing thing you are doing George, we wish you safe travels.

The Great Melbourne Bagpipe Bash



Congratulations to all the Aussie pipers who broke the World Record for the largest ever bagpipe ensemble (*Melbourne breaks World Record with The Great Melbourne Bagpipe Bash, the Scottish Banner, December, 2025*). What a fun experience for all those involved. I was a bit surprised that 374 bagpipers was record breaking with all the massed band displays across the world but what a fantastic achievement.

I love the pipes and drums and enjoy attending many Highland Games and seeing the bands when we have them here in Canada. I love all the traditional tunes but also think it is great that modern music, or even AC/DC's *It's a Long Way to the Top*

is being played to help keep young players interested in pipes and drums. I also love the Red Hot Chilli Pipers who bring a real modern flair to Scottish music. It is however *Highland Cathedral* for me that is my favourite piping tune, it always stops me in my tracks, and I fill with much emotion.

Love the stories in *the Banner!*

Gayle Anderson
Cobourg, Ontario
Canada

Ed note: Thanks Gayle and we agree they did a wonderful thing in Melbourne. We would love to hear from other readers their favourite piping tune.

Spooky Scotland

I have a few spooky stories to share. My daughter and I stayed in room 8 at Tulloch Castle. Karen set up her infrared camera and in the morning the film showed the chandelier swinging-it did not wake me in case I was too scared! On another occasion we had the same room, and I woke to feel pressure below

my collar bone , I half woke and told it to go away but it returned so it got a mouthful of Aussie instructions! I did have a feeling of deep bruising for nearly a week after that, but no marks.

We also went to Dover Castle and Karen saw a man in striped pyjamas and I saw a man wearing a bomber jacket, they both went through the wall, and we both saw just one person.

At home I have been woken by my blanket being pulled up and had my toes squeezed as well. My daughter came to visit me once and a ghost passed straight through her, the ghost used to visit between me and my neighbour.

I don't know why I have had all these experiences. My maternal grandmother was from Glasgow and a great believer.

Thanks for a great paper and I hope to be in Scotland in 2026!

Jocelyn Layton
Wyndham, Western Australia

Burns... the Haggis

Chorus Chant... "We`re nae fu` yet" ...
The Haggis Cull is noo complete
All we hae` to dae... is eat
Chorus... "Ye`ll ne`er tak` me alive" ...

Wi` neeps `n` tatties
There`s nane... sae sweet
Chorus... "Och aye" ...

When whisky chasers
Donce... the feet
Chorus... "Scots wha hae" ...

The skirl o` pipes the world sae richt
When feastin` on this rare... auld nicht!
Chorus... "O flur o` Scotland" ...

A comment sae` Braw... ye`r` ee` tae greet
As ye toast... to "Burns" an`...yon "sonsie"
faced meat

To Burns... for you... an` ane an` a`
Chorus... "Will ye no` come back agen" ...
Heed ye a` the ca`!

THE PHANTOM POET

Copyright © 2009
George Ian Caldwell (T.P.P4)
I wrote this for Burns night hope it amuses fellow Haggis hunters...

Brisbane Celtic Festival



I enclose a photo at the Brisbane Celtic Festival at Moorlands Park, Auchenflower, Brisbane in October. A wonderful event which I enjoyed immensely. I am a new subscriber to *the Scottish Banner* and love it. I look forward to future editions.

John Harper
Bunya, Queensland
Australia

FROM OUR SOCIAL MEDIA



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

Highland beauty



The beauty of winter at Buachaille Etive Mor. **Mik Coia**

Forth Bridge



The incredible Forth Bridge-a symbol of Scotland!
Fly - Caledonia

Tantallon Castle



The incredible Tantallon Castle with the Bass Rock in the distance.
Jamie Taylor Photography

Loch Lubhair



Capturing reflections at Loch Lubhair. **Robert Gibb**

Pose your questions on Scottish related topics to our knowledgeable readership who just may be able to help. Please keep letters under 300 words and we reserve the right to edit content and length. Letters can be emailed to info@scottishbanner.com or online at www.scottishbanner.com/contact-us, alternatively you may post your letters to us (items posted to the Scottish Banner cannot be returned). Please ensure you include your full contact details should you require a reply. This page belongs to our readers so please feel free to take part!

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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.



“The granting of the lease for the Lighthouse for this exciting new purpose not only brings a much-loved Charles Rennie Mackintosh building back to full productive use, but also allows the creation of a space where innovation and investment in a growing sector will help drive the economy of Glasgow in the future.”

Councillor Ruairi Kelly, Convener for Built Heritage and Development at Glasgow City Council, said they have granted a long-term lease to Sustainable Ventures for the use of the Lighthouse in Glasgow city centre as a location to help climate tech firms grow. This lease will bring life to the council-owned building, which has not been in full productive use for several years. The Lighthouse, designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh in 1895, is an A Listed building formerly home to the Glasgow Herald and also Scotland’s Centre for Architecture, Design and the City. This is the second Mackintosh building, after the Martyrs’ School at Townhead, in Glasgow where a new and sustainable use for the property has been found last year.

“Many of those working in our city’s thriving visitor economy and cultural sectors are often unable to find affordable housing in the city, making it difficult

for them to live close to where they work. In addition, the Council has declared a housing emergency, with more and more people presenting as homeless and not enough social homes available to meet this demand, and so too many residents have to use temporary accommodation, often in bed and breakfasts or hotels, taking vital capacity away from what should be tourist accommodation. This will ensure affordable homes are available for visitor economy workers in the city and means that bed and breakfast and hotel rooms can be used for their intended purpose - to welcome visitors to Edinburgh.”

Edinburgh City Council Leader Jane Meagher said councillors have agreed the first spend programme for funding raised by the Edinburgh Visitor Levy. They approved plans for the £5m Housing and Tourism Mitigation Fund, which could help deliver 472 affordable homes between 2026/27 and 2028/29, with more than 75% potentially available for social rent. The levy applies to paid overnight accommodation booked after 1 October 2025, if the stay takes place from 24 July 2026 onwards. It is a 5% payment on the accommodation-only cost and applies to the first five nights’ stay.



“Advanced manufacturing has been a key part of Glasgow’s history and economic development, with the city making world-leading contributions to industries including textilemaking, shipbuilding, engineering and the life sciences. It’s remarkable to think that, when Glasgow was founded, the invention of the printing press was still more than 250 years in the future, but today at the JWNC we’re able to write on silicon at the wavelength of light.”

Professor Martin Weides, the James Watt Nanofabrication Centre’s director, at the University of Glasgow said Researchers at the University of Glasgow have joined the city’s 850th anniversary celebrations by creating a tiny tribute – an image of Scotland etched in unprecedented detail at the wavelength of light. The etching, made on a circular silicon wafer six inches in diameter, includes what the team believe to be the world’s smallest depiction of the River Clyde, which is just 50 microns across – the width of a human hair. The piece was made using the £35m cutting-edge facilities of the University of Glasgow’s James Watt Nanofabrication Centre (JWNC).

“Dingwall 800 is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to come together as a community to reflect on our past, take pride in our present, and shape the future. The programme of events taking place is shaping up to be really exciting. In spring 2026, you can expect a number of sporting, cultural and environmental events, which will be announced in the New Year, including a pollinator parade and big seed giveaway. Come summer, we will have a series of festival weekends filled with music, dance, literature, history, heritage and more.”

Siobhan MacIntyre, Event Producer, Dingwall 800, said 2026 will see a year-long celebration to mark 800 years since Dingwall was granted Royal Burgh status

by King Alexander II. To celebrate the historic milestone, Dingwall 800 is a year-long programme of events, exhibitions, performances, storytelling and wider activities in the community.



“Essentially, many parts of Waverley could be replaced with more modern materials and fittings which may last longer, but collectively that would change the look and feel of the ship. Preserving Waverley is about maintaining her as far as is possible as she was intended to be. We are preserving her truly unique character. As the world continuously changes around Waverley she becomes even more special as she represents a moment in time when she was first designed and built.”

PS Waverley general manager Paul Semple said as an appeal has been launched to raise £135,000 to replace Waverley’s two timber masts and most of the Dining Saloon windows ahead of the 2026 sailing season. 2022 marked 75 years since Waverley’s, the world’s last seagoing paddle steamer, maiden voyage on June 16, 1947.

“Hosting the FIFA Women’s World Cup in 2035 would be transformational for girls’ and women’s football in Scotland. Scotland has a proud footballing heritage and a rapidly growing women’s game, and we believe we can deliver a tournament that is innovative, inclusive and truly world class. It would be a momentous milestone for the women’s game in Scotland and we are ready to rise to that challenge.”

Shirley Martin, the Scottish Football Association’s head of girls’ and women’s football, said two Scottish stadiums have been included in an official bid from the United Kingdom to host the 2035 Women’s World Cup. Glasgow’s Hampden Park and Edinburgh’s Easter Road are among the 22 stadiums lined up to host matches. If the UK bid is successful, matches will be played across 15 cities across the UK in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

SCOTWORD

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

CLUES ACROSS:

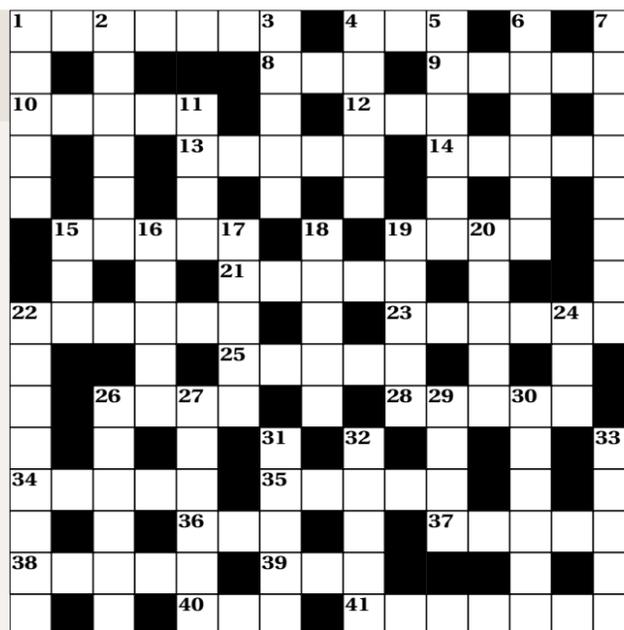
- 1) Fishing town on Banff Bay (7).
- 4) To make a Scot do something (3).
- 8) Blade! (3).
- 9) Town near Blairgowrie (5).
- 10) The mountain ash (5).
- 12) Time period (3).
- 13) A Scot off the straight (5).
- 14) The deil (5).
- 15) Strath near Bridge of Cally (5).
- 19) Scots cowshed (4).
- 21) Winter sportsman (5).
- 22) Village on River Lossie (6).
- 23) Town on Cromarty Firth (6).
- 25) Miss Laurie (5).
- 26) Cautious (4).

- 28) A Highlander’s dagger (5).
- 34) Praise lavishly (5).
- 35) Power units (5).
- 36) The first lady (3).
- 37) Male voice (5).
- 38) Hooked claw (5).
- 39) Scots view with them! (3).
- 40) On it you’re alone (3).
- 41) Site of 1645 victory by Montrose (7).

CLUES DOWN:

- 1) Firth stretching from Inverness (5).
- 2) Village near Nairn (6).
- 3) Shetland island (5).
- 4) Colourful regiment (5).
- 5) Island east of Skye (6).
- 6) An evergreen shrub (6).

- 7) Pipes for beginners (8).
- 11) Joiner’s fastener (4).
- 15) Away to a Scot (3).
- 16) Mouth of a river (5).
- 17) A composition (5).
- 18) Tell a Scotsman no! (5).
- 19) Scots hillsides (5).
- 20) A series of hills (5).
- 22) Town near Edinburgh (8).
- 24) Transgression (3).
- 26) Interwoven building twigs (6).
- 27) Change one’s mind (6).
- 29) A large Scots box (4).
- 30) Place of business (6).
- 31) Peebles’ river (5).
- 32) Scots street gutter (5).
- 33) City on River Tay (5).



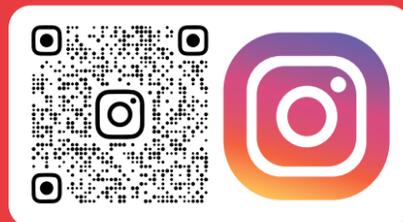
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Why visit Glasgow in 2026?



2026 is shaping up to be one of the most exciting years yet for Scotland's vibrant cultural capital. From global sporting events and world-class music to an ever-evolving food scene and a growing reputation for sustainability, Glasgow continues to shine. Recently, *Condé Nast Traveller* readers named it the friendliest city in the UK and ranked it fourth overall in the prestigious Readers' Choice Award.

A city of music and celebration

A UNESCO City of Music, Glasgow stands as Scotland's musical capital. Home to one of the most vibrant and diverse music scenes in the world, where everyone from global stars to local new talent fill the city's stages, bars and legendary live venues every night. Among the highlights are Celtic Connections, the world-renowned



winter celebration of Celtic and folk traditions, Counterflows, taking place in April, which champions boundary-pushing experimental sounds and underground talent from across the globe.

For the first time since 2019, The Royal National Mòd will return to Glasgow 9-17 October. Gaeldom's most highly anticipated annual event strong which celebrates the Gaelic language heritage, history, and culture. Summer brings music to the heart of the city, with TRNSMT lighting up Glasgow Green in June and Glasgow's iconic Summer Sessions are set to return with a spectacular line-up, including Teddy Swims and My Chemical Romance headliners. SEC venue, OVO Hydro is set to welcome major popstars such as Olivia Dean, Louis Tomlinson, Raye, and host popular annual events like Country to Country. The Big Nights Out concert series will also return, transforming the Kelvingrove and Queen's Park bandstands into vibrant open-air venues, with an exciting line-up of homegrown talent and international favourites.

Sporting spirit: The 2026 Commonwealth Games

In 2026, all eyes will turn to Glasgow as the city proudly hosts the Commonwealth

Games, welcoming athletes and visitors from across the globe. The Games will not only showcase internationally acclaimed sporting talent but also shine a spotlight on Glasgow's passion, community spirit, and commitment to sustainable major events. Taking place from Thursday 23 July to Sunday 2 August, the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games will take place and will feature a 10-sport programme including the largest ever Para Sport Medal Event Programme. Beyond the arenas, the excitement will ripple through every corner of the city, with celebrations capturing the spirit of Glasgow.

A taste of Glasgow: food and drink flourish

The city's fast paced and dynamic culinary scene continues to evolve, with cult-favourite events returning, and a wave of new openings in the restaurant scene. From stylish cocktail bars to locally inspired dining, Glasgow's food and drink offering has never been more diverse and exciting for foodies to explore. Scottish National Whisky Festival will return to Glasgow's SWG3 in January 2026, bringing together exhibitors from across the whisky industry with hundreds of whiskies and spirits available to sample. Guests will also be able to enjoy live music and entertainment from celebrated Scottish artists.

Also set to return to SWG3 is Meatopia. In June 2025 the first Meatopia brought together 6,000 people with 40 chefs, DJs and eclectic bands for a three-day-long event of food and fun. In 2026, the event is set to return to Glasgow with its top chefs and ethically sourced food and sustainable cooking materials. Glasgow Clydeside Containers are set to open early 2026, bringing a vibrant outdoor space to the Clydeside for locals, tourists, and event-goers can come together and enjoy high quality, affordable food and entertainment.

The highly regarded Princes Square is set to welcome a cookery school, the Scottish Academy of Food and Drink which will offer masterclasses in cooking, cocktails, and whisky, along with a deli counter and coffee stand open to the general public. Finally, the ever-evolving

restaurant scene continues to impress Glasgow's ever-evolving food scene continues to impress, with a new wave of restaurant openings capturing the city's adventurous spirit. Fook Mei, Malocchio, and Grilled by Ajay Kumar have quickly become the talk of the town, drawing locals and visitors alike with bold flavours and inventive menus. Having opened their doors in late 2025, these hotspots are already making their mark and their popularity is only set to rise.

Arts and culture

Glasgow's arts scene continues to thrive, with Barbie®: The Exhibition set to make its Scottish debut at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum from 13 June 2026, promising to draw visitors from near and far to experience the history and design of one of the world's most famous dolls. The showcase will feature over 250 objects including 150 remarkable dolls, including a Barbie from 1959, a rare first edition.

Heading into its 22nd year, the Glasgow Film Festival is set to take place from 25 February to 8 March and as always, will bring together a packed programme of international premieres to sit alongside the best of Scottish cinema, special events and Q&As. Also returning for 2026 is Sonica Glasgow, an 11-day biennial festival dedicated to globally celebrated audio-visual art and sound, produced by Cryptic. Presenting the best International and homegrown talent, the festival takes place in numerous venues across the city exploring visual music, sonic and digital arts in collaboration with renowned co-producers.

The 2026 Glasgow International Comedy Festival runs from 11 to 29 March, bringing three weeks of laughter to the city. One of Europe's largest comedy festivals, it features stand-up, sketch and improv from Scotland and beyond. Audiences can enjoy local talent plus see their favourite acts from across the world at some of Glasgow's iconic venues including the King's Theatre, Oran Mor, The Stand and Barrowland Ballroom. With a mix of rising stars and household names, the festival spotlights Glasgow's signature humour, cementing the city as a renowned destination for comedy. The 11th edition of Glasgow International, the city's biennial contemporary art festival, will run from 5 to 21 June, transforming venues citywide with cutting-edge contemporary art. The exciting festival will bring together a mix of artist-led projects, large scale installations and public art for a celebration of the city's vibrant creativity.

For more information and inspiration for things to see and do in Glasgow check out: visitglasgow.com



Raise a glass to Robert Burns

Looking for a line-up of whiskies, all of which are linked to the life (and loves!) of Robert Burns? Here are details of five drops, with poems they can be associated to, which went down well at a Burns Night in Inverness last year, as Hamish Malcolm explains.

Glenlivet 'Illicit Still', 12-year-old single malt

Glenlivet, founded in 1824, is undoubtedly one of the most respected and established distilleries, based in the 'heartland' of Scotch whisky, Speyside. This limited-edition version, comes in at 48% ABV, which is stronger than the majority of most Glenlivet official bottlings; harking back to the days of a more rugged style of production. The concept of illicit distilling links us to Robert Burns brief career as an exciseman, when he was employed to crack down on the 'not so legal' aspects of whisky distillation and production. This was at something of a turning point in Burns' life, after he had shelved his plans to emigrate, and was looking to gain a steadier source of income.

See Burns' poem: *An Extemporaneous Effusion to being Appointed to the Excise.*

2. Douglas Laing 'Timorous Beastie' 25-year-old Blend 46.8% ABV. Limited edition, one of 1600 bottles

A bottle which is clearly a reference to the line from one of Burns most famous poems *To a Mouse*. While in some sectors 'blended' malt whisky can be overlooked in favour of single malt, there is a great range of excellent whiskies to be found in

the blended segment; often representing strong value for money. It is clear from Burns work, that he was very much a 'man of the people', and so would spoken up for blends as being the 'underdogs' of the whisky market. Douglas Laing have been at the forefront of the independent bottling market since 1948. See Burns' poem: *To a Mouse*.

3. Glen Scotia 15-year-old, 48% ABV

Glen Scotia, founded in 1832 is one of three distilleries in Campbeltown - which was once the 'world capital' of the whisky world, with more than 30 active distilleries located in one single town. As is often the case in Scottish history, the 'boom' was followed by 'bust', leaving the once vibrant area with only two distilleries - one short of the number required to still be recognised as a 'region' in Scotch whisky. Today sees Campbeltown very much in a period of renaissance, with planning permission for a further three distilleries. Mary Campbell, better known as 'Highland Mary', was one of Burns lovers, spent part of her life in Campbeltown, before she died at the age of only 23. They had planned to emigrate to Jamaica together.

See Burns' poem: *The Highland Lassie O, Highland Mary* and *To Mary in Heaven*.



4. Glen Wyvis; single cask, Oloroso Quarter Cask 61.9% Limited edition, one of 153 bottles

A hefty, sherry-based whisky from one of the Highlands newer distilleries, which started production on St Andrews Day 2017. GlenWyvis is based in Dingwall, close to the location of long shut Ferintosh distillery; immortalised in Burns poem *Scotch Drink*. GlenWyvis is unique in being both crowdfunded and also being the world's first fully community owned distillery. See Burns' poem: *Scotch Drink*.

5. Lochlea (exclusive bottling for the Aberdeen Whisky Shop) 60.3%

To finish this 'Burns themed' tasting; a lightly peated dram from another one of this century's distilleries, Lochlea. Lochlea launched their inaugural whisky on Burns Night 2022. Burns father farmed the very land on which the distillery is now located, giving it a very unique link to the Bard See Burns' poem: *John Barleycorn, A Ballad*.

Hamish Malcolm, known as The Dram Caddy, offers unique whisky experiences in the Scottish Highlands. For more information visit: www.dramcaddy.com

WestJet returns to Glasgow with new direct route from Toronto



A WestJet plane over Toronto. Photo: AGS Airports.

WestJet, one of Canada's largest airlines, has confirmed it is to return to Glasgow Airport in 2026 with the launch of direct services to Toronto. The inaugural flight to Toronto Pearson International airport will take off on 15 May with WestJet operating four services per week using one of its growing fleet of Boeing 737 Max aircraft.

It is the first time WestJet will have operated at Glasgow since 2022, with the new service further strengthening links between the economic powerhouses of Scotland and Canada. The new Toronto route will not only provide fantastic access to the fifth largest city in North America, it will also provide further onward connectivity across Canada thanks to WestJet's extensive network from Toronto.

Matt Hazlewood, Chief Commercial Officer at AGS Airports, said: "We are thrilled to welcome WestJet back to Glasgow Airport with its direct Toronto service. Glasgow Airport has a close affinity with WestJet, due to the fact it was the first UK airport the airline ever operated from when it first touched down back in 2015. The airline's decision to re-establish this route highlights its confidence in the Glasgow market and demonstrates the strong demand that clearly exists from both leisure and business passengers for transatlantic connectivity. It also underlines our commitment to delivering key routes and services for our passengers and with Glasgow playing host to the Commonwealth Games next year, the timing of this announcement couldn't be better."

Canada remains one of Scotland's most valuable international tourism markets. In 2024 alone, Canadian visitors contributed £135 million to the Scottish economy. With approximately 4.8 million Canadians claiming Scottish ancestry, the cultural and historical bonds between the two nations continue to drive strong demand for travel. The announcement comes at a time of renewed momentum for Glasgow's international profile, following recent news of resumed direct flights to New York and the city's upcoming role as host of the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

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IN SCOTLAND TODAY



Scotland to face Brazil, Morocco and Haiti on FIFA World Cup return

For the first time since 1998, the Tartan Army will be marching to a FIFA World Cup later this year. Scotland will face Brazil, Morocco and Haiti on their return to the FIFA World Cup, after being drawn into Group C. Steve Clarke's side will kick off against Haiti in Boston on Saturday, 13 June before facing Morocco in the same stadium six days later. They round off their Group C campaign with a match against Brazil in Miami on Wednesday, 24 June. Scotland were in Pot 3 for the draw, after sealing their return to the world stage with a dramatic 4-2 win over Denmark in Glasgow in November.

Scotland's last competitive meetings with Brazil and Morocco both came in our last FIFA World Cup appearance in 1998, while Scotland have never faced Haiti before in a competitive match. Brazil have won the World Cup on a record five occasions, while Morocco reached the semi-finals in Qatar in 2022. Haiti, meanwhile, are competing in their first World Cup since 1974. The World Cup kicks off in Mexico City on Thursday, 11 June and will run until Sunday, 19 July when the final takes place in New York.

Scotland Head Coach Steve Clarke: "There's lots of positives from the draw. I'm happy not to draw any of the European teams because we play them a lot obviously. It feels like a World Cup because we play three teams from three different continents and that's what the World Cup is all about. It's a strange quirk of fate to draw two teams that we faced at the last World Cup we were at in 1998. Sometimes that happens in the draw. Since I took the job six and a half years ago, the team has been progressing. We hadn't qualified for a major tournament in over 20 years and we've now qualified for three of the last four so the team have done fantastic. I've got a great group of players who are determined to do well for their country every time they go on the pitch and I'm sure next summer will be no different."

Gaelic and Scots officially recognised as official languages in Scotland



The Gaelic and Scots languages have gained official status in Scotland. The designation forms part of a range of measures which came into effect on St Andrew's Day November 30, 2025 through the Scottish Languages Act 2025. These include powers for ministers to commission research into the use of Gaelic and Scots and establish teaching standards for the languages.

Measures of the Act include: empowering parents to ask for a Gaelic school to be established in their area, supporting the creation of areas of linguistic significance in Gaelic communities so that ministers can better target policies to support the language's growth, enabling parents in every part of Scotland to apply for Gaelic nursery and early years places for their children, ensuring that more qualifications are available in Gaelic and introducing targets on the number of people speaking and learning Gaelic.

Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes said: "St Andrew's Day is a fitting time to celebrate Scotland's identity by recognising Gaelic and Scots as official languages. This is a historic milestone which acknowledges the vital place these languages hold in Scotland's culture and heritage. This has been made possible through the Scottish Languages Bill which received unanimous support from MSPs. To support the continued growth of both languages the Scottish Government has already allocated £35.7 million for Gaelic and Scots initiatives this year, ensuring that this milestone translates into meaningful change for communities across the country."

St Mungo's Well brought back to life

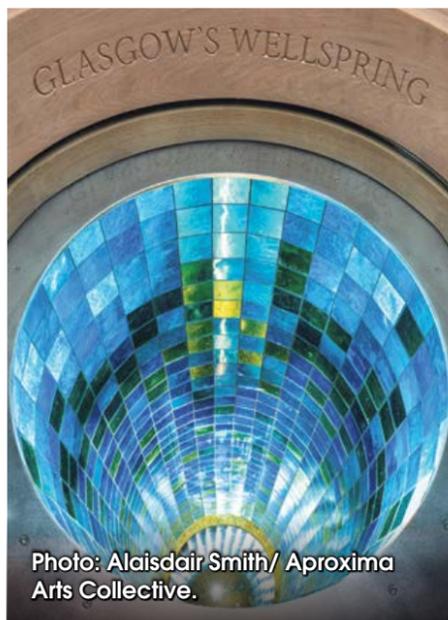


Photo: Alasdair Smith/ Aproxima Arts Collective.

Hidden deep within the Crypt of Glasgow Cathedral lies one of the city's oldest treasures – St Mungo's Well, once central to both pagan and Christian ritual. Though the well played a pivotal role in Glasgow's

early history, its story has faded from public memory however the well has now been transformed with the installation of an all-new mosaic artwork. For the first time in 70 years, the well was excavated by Aproxima Arts Collective, working with Professor Stephen Driscoll, leading archaeologist at Glasgow University and his long-time collaborator David Sneddon of Clyde Archaeology. The well has been transformed by a striking, yet sensitive, artwork created by Aproxima Creative Collective and acclaimed Scottish artist Joanna Kessel. Long before Glasgow became a city, the site of the well marked a place of deep spiritual significance. It is believed to be where St Kentigern, also known as Mungo, established his cell and performed baptisms in the waters of the Molendinar Burn below. The natural well was later incorporated into the very walls of Glasgow Cathedral, forming the heart of the Kentigern Shrine in the crypt.

Over the centuries, this sacred site grew in prominence, becoming one of Britain's major pilgrimage destinations for more than 300 years. The well not only predates Christianity as a sacred site, but also symbolically and literally marks the starting point of what would become the city of Glasgow. The circular mosaic has been created with nearly a thousand glass plates, each hand-blown in Venice and inlaid with 24-carat gold leaf. Lord Provost of Glasgow Jacqueline McLaren said: "We have been reminded of our medieval origins and the chequered journey that shaped our city and brought us to where we are today. The reawakening of the ancient well within the Cathedral Crypt is a powerful symbol of Glasgow's heritage, a place where communities gathered in hope, healing, and reflection. This remarkable project not only honours our past but also breathes new life into a site of profound significance in our city's story, blending archaeology, contemporary art, and music in a celebration for all Glaswegians and visitors alike. The project will serve as a lasting legacy from Glasgow 850 and one that can also inspire our future." Visitors to Glasgow Cathedral can now view the well.

Stirling proud to be named happiest place to live in Scotland again



Stirling is beaming with pride after being named as the happiest place to live in Scotland for the second year in a row. A study conducted by Rightmove ranked Stirling as the eighth happiest place to live overall in the UK, climbing up from 12th place last year. Stirling Council Leader Cllr Susan McGill said: "We are proud to be named as the happiest place to live in Scotland two years in a row. We've got some of the most spectacular scenery in the country, incredible history and heritage

and a thriving and dynamic economy that is forecast to be the fastest growing in Scotland over the coming years. When you add in our amazing communities with their strong sense of civic pride, a vibrant city centre, world-class attraction, as well as our excellent transport links in the heart of Scotland, you understand why Stirling is a fantastic place to live, visit and work in."

A recent report from Ernst and Young suggested Stirling will have the fastest-growing economy in Scotland over the next three years and be among the top four for growth in the UK.

Stirling was recently crowned Scotland's cultural capital, while travel specialists *Lonely Planet* rated Stirling as Scotland's top tourism destination. The Stirling Council area also includes parts of Loch Lomond and the West Highland Way, both of which also featured highly on the *Lonely Planet* list. Further accolades have been bestowed on Stirling's communities this year, with Dunblane named Scotland's friendliest town, while Bridge of Allan was hailed as the best place to live in Scotland.

Famous glen managed by Scotland's forestry agency joins UK's largest rewilding landscape



The world-famous Glen Affric National Nature Reserve managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) has joined Affric Highlands, the UK's largest rewilding landscape – becoming the 20th landholding to sign up to the ambitious community-focused initiative.

Affric Highlands aims to restore nature across more than 200,000 hectares of the central Highlands, through a linked network of landholdings stretching from Loch Ness to Kintail, including Glens Affric, Cannich, Moriston, Shiel and Urquhart. Coordinated by charity Rewilding Affric Highlands, the landscape brings together a wide coalition of landowners, local people, charities, businesses and others to boost biodiversity, tackle climate change, and create extensive social and economic opportunities for people.

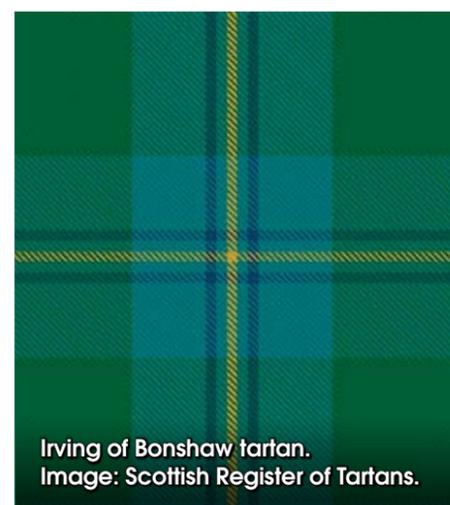
Glen Affric is also a Caledonian Forest Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest, National Scenic Area, and holds several European conservation designations.

"This is a huge step forwards for the entire area to become richer in nature, with new opportunities for people, including jobs, re-peopling and health. Glen Affric is at the heart of Affric Highlands, and FLS's work in this special place is hugely important," said Stephanie Kiel, Rewilding Affric Highlands executive director.

Often described as the most beautiful glen in Scotland, Glen Affric contains one of the best, and third largest, examples of the globally unique Caledonian forest that once covered much of the Highlands, but which is now reduced to less than 2% of its original extent. The Affric Highlands landscape, which aims to cover over 700 square miles, is mostly owned by 56 large estates, and Rewilding Affric Highlands is encouraging more landowners to join up.



The council and its members not only liaise actively with their clan societies but also with umbrella groups in the US and Canada. Back home, the council also works closely with the Scottish Government both in furthering Scottish interests around the world and in raising awareness within Scotland of the vital role played by heritage tourism in the economy. Today, there are more than 135 members of the council, including the heads of almost all the major Clans and Families in Scotland. Both Rupert Irving of Bonshaw and Alexander Irvine of Drum are members of The Standing Council.



Irving of Bonshaw tartan. Image: Scottish Register of Tartans.

Tartan

This was in itself a unique event that is being continued annually in Edinburgh. I have to say this great fun and there were a good number of Chiefs available to march in the parade. I was particularly impressed with the number of people in the parade itself and strong sense of community on the day. For 2026 Tartan Day, there are planned to be 2,500 participants and the Chiefs will be taking a leading role in the parade.

look just as excellent in formal or day wear, so our view is that if you like them then why not wear either or both of these tartans. I have both kilt and trews, and I do prefer wearing the kilt as this has become recognised worldwide as Scottish National dress.

Going forward

There is growing interest in Scottish heritage and family history with contact from Clan members over the years increasing in followers in recent times. The website www.clanirving.com is proving to be the primary point of contact and people's interest is highlighted when they recognise and understand their Border Reiver heritage.

If you have any questions, the best place to start is probably to drop me a note to clanchief@clanirving.com. A lot of the questions I am asked are to do with research and I help as best I can to steer people in the right direction. It is genuinely a pleasure to hear from people.

By: Rupert Irving of Bonshaw, Chief of the Name and Arms of Irving of Bonshaw

The Irvings of Bonshaw have a deep-rooted history with its line of Clan Chiefs dating back to 1506 in unbroken succession.

Further research has indicated there are records going back to the 1120s and this work continues. As a Clan we are fortunate to have *The Book Of The Irvings &c* that was put together by Colonel J.B. Irving, in 1907, a remarkable achievement given this was done without computers and modern technology.

I am led to understand there is a Location Index for originals at Bonshaw Tower with books located worldwide: The House of Commons Library in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and in the United States of America including the Library of Congress, Washington DC.

With that history and family connection to it, we felt it would be a good idea to have the book cross-referenced and checked for validity by professional ASGRA researchers and what we found is quite surprising. The Book itself is 98% correct with a couple of anomalies that were ironed out by the research.

The Clan Chiefs Irving of Bonshaw

My father was encouraged to matriculate his Arms when he retired as we discovered the last person to do so was back in the 1890s, so we decided it was time to do something about it. In 2014, the Lord Lyon King of Arms formally confirmed my father as Chief of the Name and Arms of Irving of Bonshaw a direct descendant of William Irving of Bonshaw, who was the first to be registered in the 1672 Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland, a legal record of every coat of arms registered in the country. This was a significant moment for us as a family as it reaffirmed what we knew about our history and role within the Clan. On my father's passing in 2021, I felt that it is important to continue with matriculation of the Arms and this was kindly approved by Lord Lyon in March 2021.

To have this formal recognition carries with it a certain responsibility I believe that still has relevance in today's digitally driven environment. The role of Clan Chief evolves over time and today there is a particular focus as the guardian or keeper of each Clan's history, its roots and above all else its unique identity.

The Irvings & Irvines in Scotland

Within the Irvings & Irvines, we have a situation with two Chiefs being granted Arms formally recognised by the Court of the Lord Lyon. In itself this is not unique, given other clans such as Fraser, Stewart and Macleod for example.

The Irvines of Drum, located in Aberdeenshire, are a Scottish Family being appointed by the monarch in 1324 to the Forest of Drum with the barony created in 1326. Their present Chief is Alexander Irvine of Drum 27th Baron. The Irvings of Bonshaw, located in Dumfries & Galloway, are a Scottish Border Reiver Clan with Gaelic origins and earliest records back to 1120s. The present Chief is Rupert Irving of Bonshaw 20th Clan Chief.

The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs

The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs was formed in March 1952 in Edinburgh, with the Earl of Elgin, Chief of the House of Bruce, as its founding Convener. At the annual meeting this year his grandson, Lord Charles Bruce, agreed to become the new Convener, succeeding Sir Malcolm MacGregor of MacGregor.



Bonshaw Tower and Manor House.



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Celebrating 60 Years



SCAN ME

Experience Scotland in 2026



The Isle of Iona. Photo: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam.

Scotland is set to shine in 2026 with a captivating lineup of new attractions, world-class events, and soul-stirring experiences. From walking in the footsteps of *Outlander's* final season to witnessing the long-awaited opening of the Inverness Castle Experience, visitors will find Scotland bigger, bolder, and more cinematic than ever.

The unveiling of the magnificent Paisley Museum will further elevate the country's cultural landscape, celebrating a globally renowned design legacy in a striking new setting. On Lewis, the reimagined Calanais Standing Stones Visitor Centre will immerse visitors in ancient wonder, while Glasgow buzzes with the energy of the Commonwealth Games. Each corner of the country offers a new way to connect with history, imagination, and community.

Scotland in 2026

Blending heritage with contemporary trends, Scotland embraces everything from noctourism in Galloway's brand-new dark sky observatory to learning about Scotland's fascinating history.

Whether seeking adventure or a mindful escape, travellers will find experiences that nourish the senses and ignite inspiration. Scotland in 2026 promises to be a year where every moment feels made for the soul, discover the latest trends and experiences on offer for visitors below:

Paisley Museum, Paisley, late 2026

Preserving Paisley's remarkable legacy, the Paisley Museum will reopen in 2026 as a world-class visitor attraction at the heart of the town. Home to over 350,000 objects, including the globally unrivalled collection of 1,200 Paisley shawls, studio ceramics, and astronomical instruments, the museum celebrates the town's rich heritage. As part of its transformation, the museum will share Paisley's world-changing stories with new audiences, revitalise the High Street, and become a vibrant community hub for learning, creativity, and connection. Look out for even more exciting news from the museum which will be revealed in the coming months! For those keen to uncover Paisley's charm check out Paisley Tours, which opened five months ago and take visitors on a journey through the town's historic streets, revealing its stunning architecture, legendary shawl-making heritage, and hidden cultural gems.

The Inverness Castle Experience, Inverness, now open



Artist impression of the Inverness Castle Experience.

The Inverness Castle Experience transforms the city's iconic castle into a must-see cultural destination. Once home to courts and a prison, the castle and its esplanade gardens are being reimagined through the rich landscapes, heritage, culture, and people of the Highlands. Visitors will follow the voices of the seanchaidh (storyteller) through the South Tower Experience, discovering stories in every room. The ticket also includes access to contemporary exhibits in the North Tower - Cèilidh Rooms and the North Tower Gallery. The castle has now opened for a winter preview, with a full opening coming in 2026.

Calanais Standing Stones Visitor Centre, Isle of Lewis, spring 2026



Photo: VisitScotland.

The Standing Stones of Calanais are a renowned Neolithic monument known for evoking a powerful, mysterious, and atmospheric feeling in visitors. While their original purpose remains largely a mystery, people report a range of personal and spiritual effects from visiting them. Now, a major new chapter is beginning for the site itself.

The Calanais Visitor Centre on the Isle of Lewis is undergoing a stunning transformation, reopening in spring 2026. This £10.1 million redevelopment will create a state-of-the-art hub that brings the iconic Calanais Standing Stones and their dramatic landscape to life like never before. Visitors can look forward to enhanced exhibitions, a welcoming café, a vibrant shop, and improved accessibility, all designed to celebrate local heritage and culture in fresh, inspiring ways.

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh Palm House, Edinburgh, 2026

After four years of careful conservation, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is entering an exciting new chapter as its historic Palm Houses reopen. Now transformed into a cathedral-like temperate space, the beautifully restored 19th-century glasshouses will welcome back nearly 600 extraordinary plants, from delicate begonias to towering palms and lush ferns, each meticulously nurtured during the restoration. This highly anticipated redevelopment significantly elevates the experience, making it a must-see for both visitors and locals keen to explore the Garden's new offering. Guests will embark on a captivating journey, uncovering the stories behind each specimen, enjoying stunning films, and exploring the collection through guided multimedia tours. Abbot House, Dunfermline, date TBC.

Discover Dunfermline's rich medieval heritage with the exciting addition of a new visitor centre planned for Abbot House. Known fondly as the 'pink hoose' by locals due to its distinctive pink colour, Abbot House is located within Dunfermline's Heritage Quarter next to the Dunfermline Abbey and the Dunfermline Carnegie Library & Galleries. Once the project is complete, the visitor centre will feature immersive themed rooms, rare historical artefacts, and innovative digital storytelling to make history accessible and engaging for everyone. From sensory experiences to online resources, Abbot House promises a unique journey through the city's past that's perfect for history lovers and curious explorers alike.

Tomb of the Eagles, South Ronaldsay, April 2026

After a five-year absence, the legendary Tomb of the Eagles returns in 2026 ready to welcome visitors once more. A cornerstone of Orkney's Neolithic heritage and a must-see attraction in South Ronaldsay, the site will feature a brand-new viewing platform, refurbished visitor centre, enhanced interpretation, and guided walks that bring its fascinating history to life.

Perched high above the dramatic cliffs of South Ronaldsay, the Isbister Chambered Cairn - better known as the Tomb of the Eagles - is one of Orkney's most captivating archaeological treasures. Discovered by local farmer Ronnie Simison in the 1950s, this remarkable Stone Age tomb revealed an extraordinary collection of human and animal bones, placed here some 5,000 years ago. Visitors can step back in time by entering the tomb itself via a 3-metre passageway. Whether one chooses to crawl or hop aboard the ingenious trolley, exploring the chamber beneath its skylit roof is a unique experience.

Scottish Dark Sky Observatory, Dumfries & Galloway, late 2026

The Scottish Dark Sky Observatory will reopen on the banks of the Clatteringshaws Loch in Galloway Forest Park in late 2026. The site, within a "gold tier" dark sky park, has been selected for the exceptional quality of its dark night skies.

The £1.5m development will comprise of two observing domes, each with a large telescope, and a 360-degree planetarium offering immersive educational shows and night sky simulations. The site will also offer educational spaces, an exhibition area, gift shop and cafe for visitors with a love of the night sky.

Saxavord Spaceport Visitor Centre, Unst, Shetland, now open

As we await the UK's first vertical rocket launch from the island of Unst, Saxavord Spaceport has recently opened their new visitor room titled "The Place for Space." It features a mix of interpretive boards, video content, a kids' corner themed around their education mascot Fredo and his resources, and an interactive activity where visitors can design their own launch site.

Macduff Marine Aquarium, Macduff, Aberdeenshire, spring 2026

Reopening spring 2026, visitors will have plenty to see and do at the new-look aquarium after a multi-million pound extension and redevelopment. Enjoy a habitat trail showcasing the diversity of the Moray Firth alongside new displays and fresh interpretation. Learn about the lifecycle of lobsters at a new Lobster Hatchery and get hands on in the new learning room, before enjoying a break in the upper floor café/restaurant with fabulous views over the Moray Firth.

Raise a glass to Scotland

Did you know Scotland has over 150 whisky distilleries, making it the greatest concentration of whisky production in the world. In addition, the country packs in nearly 100 gin distilleries and Scotland produces 70% of the UK's gin. You can find distilleries spread across the country and new for 2026 why not consider some of the following:

Isle of Barra Distillery, Isle of Barra, October 2026



This £12 million development transforms this Outer Hebridean icon into a full-scale whisky distillery, visitor centre, café, and retail space. Alongside the thrill of arriving on the Isle of Barra via its world-famous beach runway (one of the most unique airport approaches in the world!), visitors can explore a distillery that celebrates Scotland's unique coastal flavours with sustainably sourced seaweed botanicals and honey vodka, offering a taste of the island's heritage.

Galloway Distillery, Dumfries & Galloway, now open

Sam Heughan, actor, philanthropist and owner of The Sassenach Spirits, has announced the launch of his new distillery in his hometown of Galloway. Sam and the distillery team will significantly develop and expand the visitor offering over the coming 12 - 14 months, so that it becomes a signature attraction and an ultimate destination for the South of Scotland.

Eden Mill Distillery, Fife, now open

Just outside St Andrews on the banks of the Eden Estuary, Eden Mill unveiled its new state-of-the-art distillery and visitor centre on 11 October 2025.

Fully operational for gin and single malt whisky, the site offers guided tours, immersive tasting experiences, a top-floor cocktail bar with panoramic estuary views called “The Lookout”, and a golf simulator. Built sustainably with 100% renewable electricity, Eden Mill blends traditional flavours with modern, low-carbon design.

Glencadam Distillery, Angus, now open



Glencadam Distillery has unveiled a brand-new visitor centre in Brechin to celebrate 200 years of whisky making heritage. Newly opened on 15 November 2025, visitors can enjoy guided tours, tutored tastings and an interactive exhibition, tracing Glencadam’s journey from its 1825 origins to its place among Scotland’s most celebrated single malts today.

Stornoway Distillers Co., Isle of Lewis, now open

Stornoway Distillers Co. have opened a gin distillery right in the heart of Lewis. Visitors can enjoy tastings and even distil their own gin using local Hebridean botanicals. A spirited way to connect with the island’s natural elements.

Scotland on screen



Photo: Starz.

Scotland is stepping into the spotlight like never before, as the silver screen continues to shape travel dreams in 2026. From the sweeping Highlands immortalised in *Outlander*’s final season, to the gothic allure of *Frankenstein*, and the intrigue of hit series like *The Traitors*, Scotland’s landscapes and landmarks continue to be global stars. VisitScotland recently published an insight report revealing that the cultural and economic impact of *Outlander* remains strong across Scotland. According to this research, around one in five visitors to Scotland say that film, TV or literature inspired their decision to travel, with the figure rising to over a third among European and long-haul visitors.

The enduring impact of the hit television series *Outlander* has driven dramatic visitor growth at many locations featured in the show, making it a prime example of how storytelling can power regional tourism and year-round interest.

Scotland’s starring roles in 2026:

***NEW, Outlander Season 8 (Final Season), 6 March 2026, Starz**

As the beloved saga of *Outlander* heads into its much-anticipated final chapter with Season 8, viewers will be transported back to the rugged heart of Fraser’s Ridge. With new arrivals, hidden betrayals and the question of what the Frasers will sacrifice to stay together, this season promises a sweeping, emotionally resonant finale. A date to note: the epic closing chapter premieres 6 March 2026 on Starz; The series is set to premiere in the UK on 7 March 2026 on MGM+.

***NEW, The Odyssey, July 2026**

Scotland’s cinematic pull reaches new heights in 2026 with *Odyssey*, Christopher Nolan’s epic reimagining of Homer’s classic tale, set for release in July 2026. With a star-studded cast – including Tom Holland, Matt Damon, and Anne Hathaway - bringing the myth to life, the production has transformed parts of coastal Moray into striking backdrops for Odysseus’s perilous journey.

***NEW, Spiderman: Brand New Day, 31 July 2026**

Get ready for the blockbuster spectacle of 2026: *Spider Man: Brand New Day* swings into cinemas on 31 July 2026, and it boasts a major Scottish twist. Filmed on the streets of Glasgow, with city-centre locales such as Merchant City, George Square and Trongate standing in for New York’s high-octane action zones, the film showcases Glasgow’s dramatic urban landscape in full superhero mode.

Available now, Frankenstein, Netflix

Dive into the gothic grandeur of *Frankenstein*, where sweeping Scottish landscapes and historic streets become

characters in their own right. Released on Netflix in early November, discover Scotland’s cinematic secrets and explore the places where legend and film collide.

Scotland 2026: A year of culture, creativity, and celebration

From world-class art and design to music, comedy, cinema, and centuries-old traditions, Scotland in 2026 promises a year brimming with energy, imagination, and inspiration. Across cities, islands, and countryside, visitors will discover bold new festivals, major anniversaries, and one-of-a-kind experiences that celebrate the nation’s creativity, community, and cultural heritage.

Whether drawn by the fiery glow of Up Helly Aa, the active Commonwealth Games in Glasgow or the tradition of Highland Games, 2026 will showcase Scotland at its most dynamic and diverse. A place where every visitor will find something to be inspired by, whether through sport, visual arts, or Scotland’s many cultural traditions. The Commonwealth Games 2026 takes place in Glasgow, 23 July – 2 August 2026, with 3000 athletes, 11 days and 10 sports. Glasgow welcomes athletes and fans from across the Commonwealth for a spectacular celebration of sport, unity, and culture in one of Europe’s most vibrant cities. In 2026, The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo invites audiences to unite at the Edinburgh Castle Esplanade for an unforgettable evening of spectacle, storytelling, and celebration. *A Call to Gather* will run from 7 - 29 August.

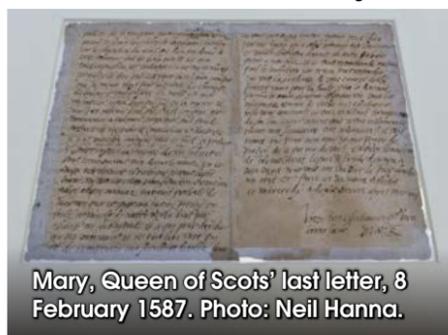
A large number of events and festivals will again fill the calendar across Scotland, hopefully you too can experience Scotland in 2026.

Discover more events happening in Scotland in 2026 at www.visitscotland.com

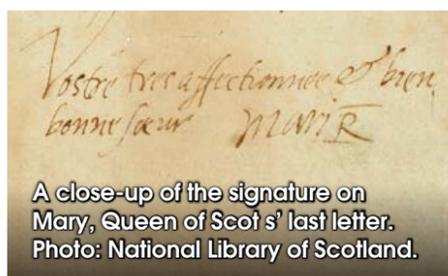
National Library to send Mary, Queen of Scots’ Last Letter to Perth



Portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1587). Reigned 1542 – 1567. Unknown artist. Oil on canvas, painted c.1610–1615. Courtesy of the National Galleries of Scotland. Purchased 1925.



Mary, Queen of Scots’ last letter, 8 February 1587. Photo: Neil Hanna.



A close-up of the signature on Mary, Queen of Scots’ last letter. Photo: National Library of Scotland.

owing somewhat to its historical and cultural significance, but primarily for conservation reasons.

The letter will be on display at Perth Museum from 23 January until 26 April. The letter will form the centrepiece of an exhibition and events programme bringing Mary’s story and connections to Perthshire to life. Some 500 metres away at AK Bell Library, other items from the National Library’s collections will be on display to complement the letter in an exhibition entitled *The Legacy of Mary, Queen of Scots*. This display will feature Robert Burns’ poem *Lament of Mary, Queen of Scots*, *On the Approach of Spring* written in Burns’ own hand, and early manuscripts from Liz Lochhead’s iconic play *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*.

Mary’s story continues to resonate

Ashleigh Hibbins, Head of Audiences and Learning at Culture Perth and Kinross, said: “We are so proud to welcome Mary, Queen of Scots’ last letter to Perth Museum, the first time this precious piece of history has travelled north of Edinburgh in the modern era. Perth and Kinross is at the heart of Mary’s story, particularly her imprisonment, abdication, and dramatic escape from Lochleven Castle. Mary’s poignant last words will be displayed within a wider immersive exhibition, directly above the Stone of Destiny and objects from the reigns of her son and grandson, so we really do view this as a homecoming. Mary’s story continues to resonate with people, which is why we are also delighted to be able to share a

companion display of original material from Robert Burns and Liz Lochhead at AK Bell Library, two equally iconic Scots who were inspired by the doomed queen. It’s an honour that the National Library has entrusted us to display these cherished objects as part of the OUTWITH programme, which will be such a boost for our local communities.”

Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Angus Robertson, said: “Mary, Queen of Scots is one of the most well-known figures in Scottish history. Her last letter, penned just hours before her execution, is a priceless record from somebody who lived over 400 years ago and we owe an immense debt of gratitude to all those who have preserved it from her hand to the care of our national library. Scotland’s history belongs to all of us, so I am delighted that it is going on display in Perth, as part of the library’s centenary celebrations. Due to its age this letter is rarely on display, so I would strongly encourage people across Scotland and beyond to make the most of this opportunity, before it goes back into storage for safekeeping.”

The Last Letter of Mary, Queen of Scots will be on display from Friday 23 January until Sunday 26 April 2026 at Perth Museum. To find out more about the exhibition and events visit: www.perthmuseum.co.uk/mary.

The Legacy of Mary, Queen of Scots display will be held at AK Bell Library, Perth from Friday 23 January until Saturday 25 April 2026. Access to both exhibitions is free.

Mary, Queen of Scots’ Last Letter will go on display in Perth Museum this year, giving people a once-in-a-generation opportunity to see the manuscript up close. At 2am on Wednesday 8 February 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots wrote what is

believed to be her last letter, writing to her brother-in-law in France to put her affairs in order. Her execution at Fotheringhay Castle was to take place six hours later.

Several centuries later, Mary remains a key figure of Scotland’s history and culture. Her last letter will go on display as part of ‘OUTWITH: National Library around Scotland’ – a special programme of loans, events and activities taking place at locations around the country to mark the National Library’s centenary. Mary’s letter is rarely seen outside of storage. While the vast majority of the Library’s collections can be accessed by anyone in the reading rooms, the letter leaves the vaults only in very special circumstances,

THIS MONTH IN SCOTTISH HISTORY

Names & Places In The News From Today And The Past

1 - King James V married Magdalene of France. 1537

1 - First celebration of New Year in Scotland on this date (was March 25th till then). 1600

1 - Charles II crowned at Scone, the last coronation on Scottish soil. 1651

1 - The constitution is drafted for the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, making it the oldest in Britain. 1783

1 - A Scottish Region of British Railways begins to operate as a result of nationalisation of rail transport in Great Britain under the Transport Act 1947. 1948



1 - The west coast shipping services of David MacBrayne are merged with those of the Caledonian Steam Packet Company as Caledonian MacBrayne. CalMac, is the major operator of passenger and vehicle ferries, and ferry services, between the mainland of Scotland and 22 of the major islands on Scotland's west coast. 1973

1 - The United Nations examines claims of ownership of the Scottish island of Rockall (an uninhabited extinct volcano), after a request from Denmark, which has sovereignty over the neighbouring Faroes. The 1972 Island of Rockall Act, passed by parliament in Westminster, formally declared it to be part of Inverness-shire, though it is closest to North Uist in the Outer Hebrides. 2011

2 - The Traverse Theatre opens in Edinburgh. The Traverse has embraced a spirit of innovation and risk-taking that has launched the careers of many of Scotland's best-known writers. 1963

2 - Ibrox Park disaster, 66 supporters killed on stairway 13. The disaster led to the rebuilding of Ibrox Park as an all-seater stadium. 1971

3 - General George Monck dies, he was Oliver Cromwell's Military Governor in Scotland. General Monck persuaded the British parliament to restore Charles II to the throne and was crowned King at Westminster Abbey on 23 April 1661. 1670

4 - The death of George Cathcart. Cathcart was a doctor from Edinburgh who instigated the annual series of concerts now known as the Proms, short for promenade concert. 1951

5 - 89,000-tonne Liberian-registered *Braer* oil tanker, carrying 84,500 tonnes of crude oil, hit rocks on Shetland Isles in heavy seas. 1993

6 - A.J. Cronin, author of *Keys of the Kingdom* and creator of the British television series *Dr Finlay's Casebook* died. 1981



7 - Glasgow University founded at the request of James II and Bishop Turnbull. 1451

8 - King Alexander I crowned. 1107

8 - The first newspaper in Scotland was published. *Mercurius Caledonius* offered coverage of "the Affairs now in Agitation in Scotland, with a Survey of Foreign Intelligence." It ceased publication on 28 March after only nine issues. 1661

8 - Earl of Stair, held responsible for the massacre of Glencoe, died. 1707

8 - Rationing of sugar, bacon and butter introduced. 1940

8 - Scottish Government papers reveal that a fragment of the Stone of Scone/Destiny gifted to Alex Salmond in 2008, and thought to be lost, is being held by the Scottish National Party at its headquarters in Edinburgh. 2024

9 - The Diocese of Glasgow was elevated to an Archdiocese by Pope Innocent VII. 1492

9 - Income tax introduced for the first time. 1799

9 - The first women's golf tournament took place in Scotland, at Musselburgh. 1811

9 - Liner *Queen Elizabeth*, launched at John Brown's shipyard, Clydebank, in 1938, caught fire and sank in Hong Kong where it was to serve as a floating marine university. 1972

9 - Author and *Scottish Banner* columnist Nigel Tranter died. Tranter published more than 130 novels and biographies during his 60-year-long career, most covering famous Scots and their place in the country's history. 2000

10 - First Minister Humza Yousaf confirms those in Scotland convicted because of the Post Office scandal will be cleared following a similar announcement at Westminster for England and Wales. The British Post Office scandal involved the Post Office pursuing thousands of innocent subpostmasters for apparent financial shortfalls caused by faults in the post office accounting software system. 2024

11 - John A MacDonal, first Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, born at 20 Brunswick Street in Glasgow. 1815

11 - The Scottish National Blood Transfusion Association was created. This independently funded service was responsible for Scotland's blood and blood products. The National Blood Transfusion Service in England and Wales was not set up until the 26 September 1946. 1940

12 - John Buchan, author (*39 Steps* etc) and diplomat (Governor General of Canada, 1935/1940) died. 1940

13 - Death of St Mungo, patron saint of Glasgow (and also known as St Kentigern) and is buried at his church in Clas-gu which later becomes Glasgow. 603

13 - Mary Slessor, missionary in West Africa and known to many as "Ma", died in Calabar. 1915



14 - Skye Terrier Greyfriars Bobby died after staying by his master's grave for 14 years. The terrier belonged to Edinburgh policeman John Gray who died of tuberculosis in 1858. His gravestone reads: "Let his loyalty and devotion be a lesson to us all". A statue of Bobby is now one of the most popular in Edinburgh. 1872

14 - Alexander Graham Bell demonstrated his telephone to Queen Victoria. She made the first call in the British Isles from her residence on the Isle of Wight. 1878

15 - The Great Glasgow storm leaves 20 dead across central Scotland including 9 in Glasgow. The hurricane was described as Central Scotland's worst natural disaster since records began and the worst gale in the United Kingdom. 1968

15 - Neil M Gunn, author of *The Silver Darlings* and many other books and short stories, died. 1973

15 - Strathclyde Regional Council applies for 250,000 summary warrants against residents refusing to pay the highly controversial "Poll Tax", introduced in Scotland in 1989. 1990

16 - Treaty of Union of Scottish and Westminster Parliaments ratified. 1707

16 - Retreating Jacobite army defeated Hanoverian forces at Battle of Falkirk. 1746



17 - Duddingston Curling Society became formally organised, one of the earliest in the history of curling - though Kilsyth lays claim to a date of 1716. Curling dates back to the sixteenth century in Scotland, with Scots taking the sport across the world where it still flourishes. 1795

17 - Author Compton Mackenzie (*Whisky Galore* etc) born. *Whisky Galore* is based on a real-life true story. In the middle of war time rationing, the SS *Politician* ran aground with a cargo of 264,000 bottles of malt whisky. 1883

18 - Death of Sir John Pringle, President of the Royal Society from 1772-1778 and physician to King George III. Sometimes called the "father of modern military medicine", the Scottish-born physician focused on the need to adopt a clean medical environment for the treatment of wounded soldiers. He also coined the term "influenza". 1782

18 - The launch of the Scottish Labour Party. The inaugural meeting of the breakaway party was held in Glasgow. It was formed as a result of the dissatisfaction several Labour MPs felt with their party over its stance on devolution for Scotland. 1976

18 - Raasay House on Raasay off Skye was badly damaged in a fire. The building was undergoing a £4m restoration project. The former stately home had been run as an activity centre since 1984 and was being restored for that purpose again. The sprawling 258-year-old mansion once belonged to the Clan MacLeod. 2009

19 - A Scottish army under the Earl of Leven crossed the river Tweed into England. It remained in England for three years playing an important part in the Civil War. 1644

19 - Birth of James Watt, mathematical instrument maker, developed the steam engine, invented the condenser and copying machine. 1736

20 - The chemist Thomas Graham, was born. Graham is famous for discovering the diffusion rate of gasses, which is known as "Graham's Law". He is also called the "father of colloid chemistry", and was the author of, *Elements of Chemistry*. 1805

20 - Benny Lynch crowned world flyweight champion. Recognised as probably the greatest boxer Scotland has produced, Lynch enjoyed a meteoric rise to the top of the sport. 1937

21 - Sweetheart Abbey, near Dumfries, founded by Devorguilla, mother of John Balliol. 1290

22 - Poet George Gordon Byron (later Lord Byron) born. He moved to Aberdeen at the age of four and attended Aberdeen Grammar School. The title was inherited from an uncle. 1788

23 - James Stewart, the Regent Moray on the abdication of Mary Queen of Scots, murdered in Linlithgow, triggering civil war. 1570

24 - Birth of Publius Aelius Hadrianus, who built Hadrian's Wall to cut off Scotland from the rest of Britain. 76



24 - First train over Forth Rail Bridge. The bridge is considered as a symbol of Scotland and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. 1890

25 - Robert Burns born Alloway. Burns Night is celebrated around the world on this night. 1759

25 - First Minister Alex Salmond launches a consultation on the SNP Government's proposals for a referendum on Scottish independence. The referendum on Scottish independence was held on 18 September 2014 saw Scotland vote to remain part of the United Kingdom, with 55% voting against the proposal for Scotland to become an independent country and 45% voting in favour. 2012



26 - One o'clock gun fired for the first time from Edinburgh Castle. The gun was created to complement a time ball on Nelson's Monument which was not reliable during Edinburgh foggy days. It was fired towards Leith docks so ships can set their clocks accurately. 1861

26 - Kirkpatrick McMillan, inventor of the bicycle, died. The thought of patenting his invention or trying to make any money out of it never crossed MacMillan's mind, but others saw its potential, and soon copies began to appear. However, Macmillan was quite unconcerned with the fuss his invention had prompted, preferring to enjoy the quiet country life he was used to. 1878

26 - The 1st Glasgow Scout troop was registered, the first to be formed. 1908

27 - *Glasgow Herald* newspaper first published. It is the longest continuously published daily newspaper in Britain. Today the paper is simply called *The Herald*. 1783

27 - First public demonstration of TV by John Logie Baird. 1926

28 - William Burke, murderer and body snatcher of "Burke and Hare" fame, executed. The duo was accused of killing 16 people over the course of 12 months, in order to sell their cadavers as "subjects" for dissection. 1829

29 - The first adoption of GMT by Scotland. The subject has been the source of controversy ever since. 1848

29 - Earl Haig, Commander in Chief of British forces 1915-18, founder of the British Legion, died. 1928

29 - Members for Scottish Parliament (MSPs) vote 64-54 to back calls for a second Scottish independence referendum. 2020

30 - King Charles I executed. His execution caused a change of sides by most of the Scots who had previously supported the Parliamentarians in the English Civil War as, for all his faults, Charles was still a Scottish Stuart king. 1649

31 - Lachlan MacQuarie, the "Father of Australia" born Ulva. Lachlan Macquarie was the governor of the colony of New South Wales from 1810 to 1821. 1761

31 - Charles Edward Stewart, "Bonnie Prince Charlie" died in Rome. 1788

31 - 270 Royal Navy servicemen were killed whilst on practice missions with other Royal Navy vessels in the Firth of Forth. 1918

31 - *Princess Victoria*, Stranraer-Larne ferry, sank in a storm with the loss of 133 lives; 44 were rescued. 1953

31 - The Scottish Court in the Netherlands convicts a Libyan and acquits another for their part in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 which crashed in Lockerbie in 1988. Lamin Khalifah Fhimah (aged 44) is cleared, but Abdelbaset al-Megrahi is found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment (in Scotland) with a recommended minimum term of twenty years. Megrahi was released from prison on compassionate grounds in 2009; as doctors reported he had terminal prostate cancer, and he died on 20 May 2012, aged sixty. 2001

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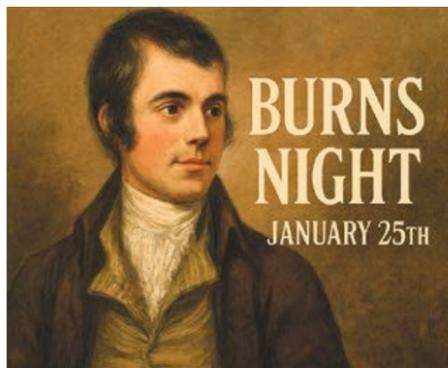


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IN THE SCOTTISH KITCHEN - BURNS NIGHT RECIPES



The Burns Supper on January 25th is an institution of Scottish life: a night to celebrate the life and works of the national Bard. Suppers can range from an informal gathering of friends to a huge, formal dinner full of pomp and circumstance, enjoy!

*Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the pudding-race!*

Scotch Broth

Ingredients:

- 250g/8oz. carrots, peeled, diced
- 250g/8oz. turnips, diced
- 2 onions, peeled, diced
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 1 leek, white part only, sliced
- 75-125g/3-4oz. pearl barley
- 125g/4oz. dried peas, soaked in water for 4-5 hours, drained
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2.3litres/4 pints lamb or mutton stock
- 85g/3oz kale, chopped (optional)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method:

Heat all the ingredients, except the kale, in a large saucepan until boiling. Reduce the heat and simmer gently for 2-3 hours, or until the peas and pearl barley are soft. Stir in the kale and cook for a further 10-12 minutes, or until the kale is tender. Season, to taste, with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Haggis, Neeps and Tatties

Ingredients:

- 400g/14 oz. of haggis – purchased from a good quality butcher
- 4 baking potatoes
- 50g/2oz. butter
- 50g/2oz. cream
- 1 turnip
- 8 shallots
- 1 sprig of thyme
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 50g/2oz. of sugar
- salt
- 200ml/7oz. of red wine
- 80ml/3oz. of port
- 500ml/17oz. of brown chicken stock
- 10ml/.5oz of whisky
- 200ml/7oz. of cream

Method:

Scrub the potatoes and bake them whole in the skins in the oven at 180 degrees until cooked. Remove from the oven and scoop out the flesh of the potatoes and pass through a fine sieve or potato ricer. Add in the cream and butter and mix.

At the same time, peel and dice the turnip and cook in salted water then pass through a fine sieve or potato ricer.

Follow the butcher's instructions for the haggis based on size. Use a round metal ring and layer with one third of haggis layer followed by a third of mashed turnip before adding the mashed potatoes to fill the ring.

To heat put in a medium oven until warm. Make a stock from the port, red wine, sugar, garlic, thyme and salt. Simmer in a pan together with the shallots until tender. Remove the tough outside layer when cooked. Make a whisky sauce with the brown chicken stock and cream before adding the whisky at the end to taste.

Serve the timbale of haggis with 2 shallots and the whisky sauce.

Whisky Sauce

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp. cracked black peppercorns
- 1½ chicken stock cubes
- 400ml/14oz. double cream
- 60ml/2oz. whisky

Method:

Heat a small pan over a medium-low heat and toast the black peppercorns for 1-2 mins until fragrant. Dissolve the stock cubes in 100ml boiling water.

Pour this into the pan with the double cream, bring to the boil and cook for about 30 seconds, then reduce the heat to low. Pour in the whisky and cook for 2 mins more, then season to taste. Will keep chilled for up to 48 hrs. Reheat in a pan over a low heat to serve.

Selkirk Bannock

Ingredients:

- 1 x 7g sachet fast-action yeast
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- 500g/1lb 2oz. strong white flour
- 125g/4½oz. unsalted butter, melted
- 250g/9oz. dried mixed fruit
- 50g/2oz. light muscovado sugar
- beaten egg, for glazing

Method:

Mix together the yeast, caster sugar and 250ml/9fl oz lukewarm water in a large bowl. Leave to stand for 10 minutes until the mixture is frothy.

Add the flour and butter and mix thoroughly. Tip onto a lightly floured surface and knead for about five minutes to form a smooth elastic dough.

Place the dough into a clean, lightly oiled bowl and cover with a damp tea towel. Leave to prove in a warm place for about one hour or until doubled in size.

When the dough has risen, remove the tea towel and punch the dough down. Tip onto a lightly floured surface and knead in the fruit and muscovado sugar until well combined.

Shape the dough into a round shape and place on a lightly greased baking sheet. Cover again with a damp tea towel and leave to rise in a warm place again for 30 minutes or until it has doubled in size.

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Brush the bannock with a little beaten egg to glaze. Bake for 45-50 minutes until risen and a rich brown colour. If the bread is getting too dark, cover lightly with parchment paper or foil. When the bread is ready it should sound hollow when the underneath is tapped gently.

Leave to cool slightly before slicing and serving warm with plenty of butter.

Cranachan



Ingredients:

- 570ml/1-pint double cream
- 85g/3oz. porridge oats
- 7 tbsp. whisky
- 3 tbsp. honey
- 450g/1lb. raspberries
- fresh mint, to garnish

Method:

Toast the oats in a frying pan, being careful not to burn them. Lightly whip the cream until it reaches the soft peak stage, then fold in the whisky, honey, oatmeal and raspberries. Serve in dessert glasses garnished with a few raspberries and mint.

Shortbread--January 6th is National Shortbread Day



Ingredients:

- 125g/4oz. butter
- 55g/2oz. caster sugar, plus extra to finish
- 180g/6oz. plain flour

Method:

Heat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5.

Beat the butter and the sugar together until smooth.

Stir in the flour to get a smooth paste. Turn on to a work surface and gently roll out until the paste is 1cm/½in thick.

Cut into rounds or fingers and place onto a baking tray. Sprinkle with caster sugar and chill in the fridge for 20 minutes.

Bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes, or until pale golden-brown. Set aside to cool on a wire rack.

Bobby Burns Cocktail

Ingredients:

- 60ml/1.5 oz. Scotch whisky
- 30ml/3/4oz. red vermouth
- 2 dashes Benedictine

Method:

In a mixing glass with ice, add the whisky, vermouth and Benedictine and stir until condensation forms along the outside of the glass. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a twist of lemon peel.



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 was designed to celebrate the opening of the Inverness Castle Experience. The colours and threadcount were chosen to celebrate the long history of the castle

and its position in Inverness. The grey and brown sections are intended to reflect the physical materials used to construct the castle over centuries, the grey stone and rocky base paired with the deep timber colours used latterly within the former courthouse. The threadcount 105 and 35 has been used, representing the latitude and longitude position of the castle.

The dark blue section of 43 threads reflects the nearby River Ness and 43 was chosen as the castle is 43 feet above sea level. The 9 light blue threads represent a new chapter of the castle for 2025. The 13 sandstone threads represents the first recorded year of a castle being present, 1057, 1+0+5+7 = 13. This tartan (reference: 15104) was designed by Clare Campbell and registered in November, 2025.

Tom Weir - One of Us

By: David McVey



Tom Weir's statue.



Campsie Glen, where adventures begin.

In 1980 a packed crowd gathered for a gig in the University of Strathclyde's Student Union, a renowned music venue back then. Tonight, in one of the smaller rooms, it was standing room only. A huge cheer welcomed the main act - a little round man in his late 60s with a beefy face, a prominent red nose and a tiny grey moustache. He didn't sing or play; he just gave a talk and slide show about his life as mountaineer and naturalist. This was Tom Weir.

I first encountered Weir when he presented short filmed segments about hills, legend and history on STV's *Scotland Today* news programme. Later, they were edited into the first series of *Weir's Way*, a programme that was a huge hit in Scotland and was picked up by some English ITV regions. Weir was an experienced mountaineer who had climbed in the Himalaya, in Kurdistan and Norway, yet he could find things worth seeing just down the road.

Later, I got to know Weir's writing; he was a regular in the *Glasgow Herald* and *The Scots Magazine* but from his books I learned that Weir, like me, had been born in Springburn in northern Glasgow; like me, he had started his outdoor life in the Campsie Fells, getting there, like me, on the Campsie Glen bus. Mountaineers and explorers were often Old Etonians or ex-Sandhurst types. Tom Weir was one of us.

He was born in 1914. His father died in 1916, a victim of the First World War in Mesopotamia, and in his early teens Weir had to leave school and work as a Co-operative delivery boy. When he found a full-time job in the local Co-op grocery, his mother happily described it as 'a job for life'. Tom, though, dreaded a lifetime in a shop; 'born a man,' he summed up his likely fate, 'and died a grocer.'

The world was opening up

In the 1930s, Weir became part of the first wave of working-class people to discover outdoor leisure. After Saturday's half-shift, thousands of Glasgow people flocked to the countryside, joining those unemployed people who had already decided to walk the hills rather than the streets. There he met his early outdoor companions including John McNair, a railwayman on the West Highland Line (still the best way to reach the hills from Glasgow), and Matt Forrester, a Glasgow butcher. Matt was a gifted writer who encouraged Tom to take an Art of Writing class and to submit his work to magazines and newspapers. By the outbreak of war, much of his work was being published. 'The world was opening up,' he later wrote, 'just as Hitler was shutting it down.'

During the Second World War Tom served in the Royal Artillery and trained as a gunnery surveyor. This experience helped him to get a job with the Ordnance Survey (OS) in 1946. He left the OS in 1950 to join the Scottish Himalayan Expedition, the first to be allowed into Nepal after the Second World War.

Later, Tom would walk and climb in many countries and expand his writing and photography. He married and settled in Gartocharn, a quiet village near Loch

Lomond's southern shore. He often wrote about Duncryne, a tiny 463ft summit near his home that he climbed every day. For its puny height, Duncryne offers a quite jaw-dropping panorama of Loch Lomond and the surrounding peaks.

His first book was *Highland Days*, written during the war and published in 1948. It's a moving record of his 1930s wanderings in the Highlands and is now a valuable historical document, describing meetings with local families in homes now vanished and trips to glens and straths now flooded by hydro schemes. It also captures the experience of tramping through the Highlands before the domination of the motor car. Weir wasn't one of those outdoorsmen indifferent to the people of the countryside; he did not want to see the glens become unpopulated wildernesses.

Tom Weir's Scotland (1980), a collection of previously published articles, is my favourite of his books. His pieces were unlike those you found in climbing magazines. Yes, he wrote about hills and mountaineering, but his enthusiasm carried him over into ornithology, wildlife and history. 'Taste the History Before the Climb', is an article in the book (about Criffel, the peak on the Solway shore); he was always true to that advice and demonstrated a welcome curiosity about how the countryside and its people had come to be.

Weir had the writerly knack of evoking a sense of place, but his deeper personality and feelings rarely broke through. In 1994 he published *Weir's World*, subtitled 'an autobiography of sorts' - apt since it gave little away beyond the mere facts of his life, wandering off instead to celebrate companions, conservation, mountains and wildlife. However, when Weir *did* write with passion - for example, in the 1990s when railing against a bulldozed track that had despoiled the Loch Lomond shore - the effect was powerful, even devastating.

A yearning for green places that would not be denied

I never actually met Tom Weir to speak to, but after hearing his talk at Strathclyde Union, I had two more encounters with him. In 1994 *The Scots Magazine* published

Jock, my short story about the working-class Scottish walkers of the 1930s. I was delighted to receive a kind letter from him praising the story. It's one of the daftest things I've ever done, losing that letter...

Then, in 2004, I was waiting for a bus at Balmaha on Loch Lomondside after a day's walking. Ahead of me in the queue were Weir and his wife Rhona. By now nearly 90 and frail, he could no longer explore the hills, but was still able to enjoy a bus trip along his beloved Loch Lomondside. He was chatting to a West Highland Way walker who was travelling back to his bed and breakfast in Drymen. He was from Germany and couldn't possibly know how revered a figure he had met.

Tom Weir died in 2006. A plaque commemorates him in Campsie Glen, and in 2014 a statue, sculpted by Sean Hedges-Quinn, was unveiled at Balmaha, barely a hundred yards from the bus stop where I'd seen him a few years earlier. He's portrayed wearing his trademark bobble hat and it's becoming a tradition for an *actual* woolly hat to adorn the statue. Balmaha is a tourist honeypot and the statue no doubt puzzles many overseas visitors, but it has become a place of pilgrimage for outdoor enthusiasts from all over the UK. In inspiring us, Tom Weir pulled off quite a trick: he made TV programmes that encouraged people to *go outside* and experience fresh air and exercise.

In *Highland Days* Weir described how, after his first adventure in the Campsie Fells, he returned home; ...with a yearning for green places that would not be denied. Mountains and birds seemed the most important things in life. The search for fulfilment in these things is the story of this book.

He inspired many others to do the same.



Balmaha.



Loch Lomond and the Luss Hills.

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



National Clan Cameron Australia Inc.

Celebrates those who trace their ancestry to Clan Cameron or are connected to the Clan through marriage or partnership or are from families acknowledged as Septs of Clan Cameron.

President: Alistair Cameron
Secretary: Terry Cameron

secy.nationalclancameronaus@gmail.com
www.clan-cameron.org.au



Clan Donald U.S.A. Inc.

Clan Donald USA is a nationwide organization of over 2,000 families who trace their ancestry to any of the branches of Clann Domhnaill. We embrace all of the MacDonalDs, no matter how spelled, and other surnames that are recognized as branches or adherents of the greatest of the Highland Clans.

Clandonaldusa.org

Clan Farquharson



BRAEMAR

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I Fear Nae Foe

ClanFarquharson.us



CLAN BELL

Invites membership inquiries from persons named Bell (all spellings), their descendants and friends. Various resources available for genealogical research. Quarterly newsletter. Tents hosted at major Scottish games nationwide.

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



CLAN CARRUTHERS SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

HEREDITARY CHIEF AND SOCIETY PATRON
Simon Peter Carruthers of Holmains
Chief of the Name and Arms of Carruthers

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Clan Carruthers Society - International
officially representing Carruthers worldwide
www.clancarrutherssociety.org
clancarrutherssociety@gmail.com

CLAN DONALD in VICTORIA

Proudly affiliated with Clan Donald Australia, Victorian Scottish Union and Scots of Victoria Coordinating Group. Represented at all major Highland gatherings in Victoria.

CLAN DONALD VICTORIA

President: Mr Norman A. Macdonald

Contact: secretary.clandonaldvic@gmail.com

Formed in 1934, with membership from many MacDonald, McDonald and Macdonald families living in Victoria. Membership available, with dance classes for Scottish Country Dance most Friday evenings in Gardenvale.

CLAN MACDONALD YARRAVILLE

Hon Chief: Mr Lindsay McDonald

Contact: secretary@clanmacdonaldyarraville.com

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www.blairsociety.org



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 donthitts@hotmail.com
Website: <http://clanfraseraustralia.org>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Pages/Clan-Fraser-Society-of-Australia/>
482236358590288



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 descent, 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



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contact@curriekindred.com
www.learnedkindredofcurrie.com

CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY

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

the Clan Buchanan

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www.theclanbuchanan.com
facebook: [theclanbuchanan](https://www.facebook.com/theclanbuchanan)



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, Edmondson, 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

Est: 1822 in Edinburgh Scotland

Patron: Sir Malcolm MacGregor of MacGregor Bt
Membership enquiries for USA: usa@clangregor.com

Rest of the World:
membership@clangregor.com

Web: www.clangregor.com

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clandonaldnsw.au@gmail.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

"Royal is our Race"



American Clan Gregor Society

Est 1909 Membership inquiries welcomed from MacGregors of all spellings and Septs

Gregor Grier MacAdams MacNish Magruder McGehee Gregory King Peter Fletcher Gregg Lecky Black and many others

Contact our registrar: **Jeanne P. Lehr**
11 Ballas Cr.
St. Louis, MO 63131-3038
Phone: 314-432-2842, registrar@acgsus.org
website: www.acgsus.org



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Secretary.clanmackenzie@gmail.com
www.clanmackenzienz.org




Clan MacNicol

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

and variant spellings

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Website: <https://macalpein.com/>



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 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
Europe. Bodo Bernd Schmitz Europe.Chairman@clan-macpherson.org phone +0152 538 19 355	New Zealand. Tony McPherson NewZealand.Chairman@clan-macpherson.org phone +64 274 587 812
Scotland & Northern Ireland. Moray G Cattaneach SandNI.Chairman@clan-macpherson.org phone +44 7810 860 528	USA. Dave McPherson UnitedStates.Chairman@clan-macpherson.org phone +1 408 781 5199

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 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; Peebles; Peoples; Turriff; Tweeddale; Yester

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Mark A. McLaren, President
President@clanmaclarenna.org



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: clanmacraeaustnz@gmail.com

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



CLAN HOPE of Craighall Society

INTERNATIONAL & AUSTRALIA
President & Commissioner: Stephen J. Hope
president@clanhope.org
www.clanhope.org

UNITED STATES of AMERICA
High Commissioner: Richard Rex Hope
highcommissionerusa@clanhope.org

Membership Chair: Cynthia Hope Henderson
membership@clanhope.org
www.clanhope.org

CANADA
Commissioner: Scott Hale
commissionercanada@clanhope.org
www.clanhope.org

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ClanHopeofCraighall>



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 or our website: <https://clanmacfie.com.au>



Clan MacLellan

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), McClellan(d), McLellan(d) and Gilliland.
Visit our website: www.clanmaclellan.net



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Need more info? Contact:
Dean McCraw, President
912-596-8624
dean.mccraw1@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!

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



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www.clanmaclennan-worldwide.com



Clan Maitland Society

Chief: Ian Maitland, The Earl of Lauderdale!
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North America: Rosemary Maitland Thom
rthomnvrdrca@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 Irwin Association

Chief and Patron
Alexander H.R Irvine of Drum,
27th Baron and Laird of Drum, Chief of the Name

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



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- 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 Morrison Society of North America

Clann MhicGillehoire: Morrison + Gilmore + Brieve

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www.clanmorrison.net

Clan Muirhead Society

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www.clanmuirhead.com
 Rev. Ret. Chev. Raymond L. Morehead, GOTJ, FSA Scot,
 Chief Officer Elect Clan Muirhead Society
 Email- raymondktj@msn.com or raymond@clanmuirhead.com

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 Nancy Ross-Anderson, VP Membership
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 membership@clanross.org
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 For information please contact
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www.scottishaustralianheritagecouncil.com.au

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 munro.ray@hotmail.com
 0410 663 760

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: clansinclairaustralia@hotmail.com
www.clansinclairaustralia.com

Scottish Associations and Societies

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Clan Sutherland Society in Australia Inc.

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

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

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 Olifant - Olifent and all descended
ClanOliphantMembership@gmail.com
www.OliphantOfNorthAmerica.org

Clan Sutherland Society of North America Inc.

 The Society cordially invites membership of all Sutherlands (however the name is spelled) and historically associated families: Cheyne, Duffus, Gray, Frederith and Mowat.
 Email: Secretary@ClanSutherland.org
 Website: www.ClanSutherland.org

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@scotsfaus.org.au
 Website: <https://scotsfaus.org.au>
 Facebook: [Facebook.com/ScotsOfVictoria](https://www.facebook.com/ScotsOfVictoria)

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

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

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

YOUNGS OF SCOTLAND

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

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2026 – A Year in Piping & Drumming

By: The National Piping Centre



National Piping Centre Junior Piping Championship.



Piping Live!

Last year was a fantastic year of events across the piping and drumming world, with packed out audiences watching great performances across the breadth of the traditional music world. We are already looking ahead to 2026 and what it holds.

On of the first piping and drumming events of the new year will take place in Christchurch, with the RNZPBA's Summer School from 7th-11th January, featuring an all-start teaching line up for a fantastic week of tuition.

The National Piping Centre's home city of Glasgow comes alive at the darkest time of year, as the UK's premier celebration of celtic music, Celtic Connections presents a full 17-day programme from 15th January – 1st February celebrating 32 years of world music. Piping and drumming features across the programme. On Saturday 17th January, take in the Gordon Duncan Tribute Pipe Band: Live 'N' Well @ 30. This high-octane show will be a heartfelt tribute to the music, arrangements, and innovation of a true master, bringing powerful, contemporary pipe-band tradition to the Celtic Connections stage. The on 24th January, a The Conundrum brings together leading exponents of the world's great piping traditions in a unique celebration of shared heritage and musical innovation. Featuring pipers Finlay MacDonald, Ailis Sutherland (Scotland), Michael McGoldrick and John McSherry (Ireland), alongside Brittany's Jean-Michel Veillon & Nicolas Quémener and the acclaimed pipe band Bagad Cap Caval. This is just two of a huge range of piping and drumming events at Celtic Connections this year. Head over to the website now find out more – www.celticconnections.com

Plethora of pipe band events

As well as Celtic Connections, solo pipers are heading to Kansas City once again this January as Winter Storm, organized by MHAf, returns from 15th – 18th January. The Competition League for Amateur Solo Pipers also returns in January, with an in-person event in Glasgow on 10th January. This league has an overall and online-only titles, and has recently introduced a practice chanter grade, so you can



Piping Live!

compete as an amateur solo player from anywhere in the world. The latest online event saw competitors from Hong Kong to Hawai'i join the event! If you are an amateur player and would like to find out more go to www.theclasp.co.uk. With summer in full swing in the Southern Hemisphere there is a plethora of pipe band events, solo competitions and more. The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo *The Heroes that Made Us* show will visit Brisbane, Australia from 12th – 14th February, then it will head to New Zealand stopping at Auckland's Eden Park 19 & 21 February 2026.

Also, on 21st February the National Piping Centre Junior Piping Championship will return, one of a host of fantastic contest for young pipers aged Under 18 across the country every year. It aims to encourage all young players to compete, with chanter competitions through to Piobaireachd events.

The 20-21st March see the 2026 New Zealand Pipe Band Championships being held in Taranaki, New Zealand, closely followed by the 2026 Australian Pipe Band Championships which will be held in Perth, Western Australia, at the iconic Subiaco Oval on Saturday 11 April. The Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville, Ontario are home of the North American Pipe Band Championships on July 31-August 1st.

On 21st March, the adult solo piping season kicks off in Scotland with the Duncan Johnstone Memorial Competition which is held at The National Piping Centre and managed by the Competing Pipers' Association for B and C graded pipers.

As we move into the Scottish summer (keeping everything crossed for some sunshine!) the piping season begins in earnest with a huge range of Highland Games across the country, all of which feature some kind of piping with pipe bands, solo piping and ceillidhs across Scotland. This year's World Pipe Band Championships has been announced as the 14th and 15th August. Keep up with all the pipe band news at; www.rspba.org

Piping Live! returns in full force to the streets of Glasgow in the run up to the World's once again as Glasgow hosts the world's biggest week of piping! This year, we are celebrating the 21st edition of our festival running from Sunday 9th- Friday 14th August, which attracts performers and audiences from across the world. In 2025, we welcomed performers from Ukraine, Brittany and Ireland performing on their own styles of bagpipes, as well as Scottish Pipe Bands from Australia, USA and Canada as well as from across Scotland. The reimagined outdoor, ticketed, festival site gave audiences two stages to choose from, and it will all be

back for another year in 2026! We can't wait for this year's festival – you can get tickets now and keep up with what's happening by registering for email updates at; www.pipinglive.co.uk.

Solo competition

At the end of August, the piping world turns its focus to top level solo competition, with the Argyllshire Gathering taking place in Oban on 26th and 27th August, and the Northern Meeting in Inverness happening on 3rd – 4th September. These see the world's best solo performers gather to compete for the most prestigious solo piping prizes, as well as a chance to qualify for the Glenfiddich Piping Championship.

The Glenfiddich Piping Championship takes place at the end of October each year, and in 2025 will celebrate its 52nd event on Saturday 31st October. 10 competitors will gather at Blair Castle to compete in Piobaireachd and March, Strathspey and Reel disciplines to be crowned champion. Tickets to join us in person at Blair Castle or to watch through the livestream will go on sale around mid-July through the National Piping Centre website.

But October isn't all about solo piping, as the World Solo Drumming Championship takes place, here in Glasgow, with the best drummers gathering to compete over several rounds to be crowned the best. The date is still to be confirmed for 2026, but it will likely be around 24th October – check the RSPBA website – www.rspba.org for

the latest updates. This will be a hotly contested event in 2026, that's for sure!

The Glenfiddich Piping Championship marks the end of the 2026 season, only for the 2026 season to start shortly after in London with the Scottish Piping Society of London's annual competition, which celebrates its 88th year in 2026 on Friday 13th – Saturday 14th November. Also, in the USA and Canada there are a number of piping events through November, with the An Crios Gréine - Sun Belt Invitational Solo Piping Competition taking place in Florida and the George Sherriff Memorial Invitational for amateur players taking place in Hamilton Ontario. Dates for these events will be confirmed later this year.

So, if you are travelling this year, come and hear piping in Scotland – or look out for it around the world!

You can find out more about all The National Piping Centre's projects at www.thepipingcentre.co.uk or get the latest news and results from the piping world at www.bagpipe.news which will give you details of events happening across the globe.



The Glenfiddich Piping Championship.

Winners announced: BAFTA Scotland Awards 2025



Ewan McGregor poses with the Outstanding Contribution to Film and Television Award. Photo by Euan Cherry/BAFTA/Getty Images.

BAFTA announced the winners of the BAFTA Scotland Awards 2025 at a special ceremony in Glasgow, hosted by presenter Edith Bowman. Actor Ewan McGregor attended to accept the Outstanding Contribution to Film & Television honour, whilst *Location, Location, Location* received recognition for its Outstanding Contribution to Scotland's Screen Industry. The BAFTA Scotland Awards honour excellence and celebrate talent across Scotland's screen industries. Other winners included *Lockerbie: A Search for Truth* which received the award for *Television Scripted*. The team behind the long-running series *Location, Location, Location* – including presenter Phil Spencer

and Head of Popular Factual at IWC Media, Gerard Costello received the *Outstanding Contribution to Scotland's Screen Industry*. One of BAFTA Scotland's highest accolades, the award celebrates the impact the Scotland-produced programme has had on the local industry and workforce.

Ewan McGregor was presented with the *Outstanding Contribution to Film & Television*, given in recognition of an exceptional standard of work across a long career, by his uncle and fellow actor Denis Lawson. 13 competitive awards in total were presented across the evening as well as two BAFTA special awards, and the BAFTA Scotland Audience Award..



Alan Gunning. Photo by Jeff Spicer/BAFTA/Getty Images.



Jamie Roy and Harriet Slater, *Outlander Blood of My Blood*, at the 2025 BAFTA Scotland Awards. Photo by Euan Cherry/BAFTA/Getty Images.



James McAvooy. Photo by Euan Cherry/BAFTA/Getty Images.

WHAT'S ON - SCOTTISH EVENTS

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

Canada

JANUARY 2026

78th Fraser Highlanders Annual Burns Night 10, Calgary, AB

Join us for a fun night of Scottish traditions, delicious food, and exciting auctions to support the 78th Fraser Highlanders Youth Band at Southview Community Association, 2020 33 Street Southeast. Info: www.78frasercalgary.ca

Robbie Burns Dinner at the Scottish Centre 17, Victoria, BC

All Traditional Burns toasts including Immortal Memory and Address to the Haggis. Performances by Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's) Pipes and Drums and Kathy White Highland Dancers. Info: www.vicscotcentre.ca

A Celebration of Robbie Burns with Blackthorn 17, Coquitlam, BC

Celebrate Scotland's National Bard, Robbie Burns with Celtic band Blackthorn and fiddler Rosie Carver, a special guest piper and Highland dance company display at Place des Arts, 1120 Brunette Ave. Info: www.placedesarts.ca/events

Great Canadian Kilt Skate-Calgary 18, Calgary, AB

Join the St Andrew-Caledonian Society of Calgary for their annual kilt skate, celebrating with bare knees and ice Scotland's contribution to Canada's multicultural heritage. Entertainment will include performances by the Society's Choir, the Society's Highland dancers and bagpipers at Prince's Island Park. Info: www.standrewcaledonian.ca

St. Andrew's Society of Montreal Burns Night 22, Montreal, QC

Join the Society's annual celebration of Scotland's beloved bard, Robert Burns, at L'Espace Canal at Restaurant L'Ambroisie, 4020 Saint Ambroise St. Info: www.standrews.qc.ca

2026 Burns Dinner

23, Toronto, ON

The St. Andrew's Society of Toronto is hosting a traditional Burns Dinner in conjunction with the University Club of Toronto. The event follows the time-honoured format with the Address to a Haggis, the toast to The Immortal Memory and toasts to the Lassies and Laddies. Info: www.standrewstoronto.ca

Halifax Robert Burns Club Supper 2026

24, Halifax, NS

A celebration of the life and poetry of the poet Robert Burns (25 January 1759 – 21 July 1796), at Hotel Halifax, 1990 Barrington St. Info: www.hfxburnsclub.com

Robert Burns Dinner hosted by the Greater Moncton Scottish Association

24, Riverview, NB

A night of Scottish tradition, Scottish culture, food, and kinship at the Dan Bohan Family Centre, 5 Fatima Dr. Info: www.greatermonctonscots.org

Ruthven Park's Burns Night Supper 24, Cayuga, ON

Step into the spirit of the Scottish Highlands with Scottish entertainment and cuisine at Ruthven Park, 243 Haldimand Highway 54. Info: www.ruthvenpark.ca

Fergus Pipe Band's Robbie Burns Dinner 24, Fergus, ON

A night of pipes, drums, poetry, and Scottish cheer you won't want to miss at Fergus Legion Branch 275, Blair St. Info: www.ferguspipeband.com

Penticton Scottish Festival Robert Burns Night 24, Penticton, BC

Join the Penticton Scottish Festival at the Penticton Lakeside Resort, 21 Lakeshore Drive W, for an evening of poetry, music, dancing, and cheer. Info: www.pentictonscottishfestival.ca

Scottish Society of Ottawa Robbie Burns Supper 24, Ottawa, ON

Join the Scottish Society of Ottawa and celebrate Burns at Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess, Queen Elizabeth Dr. Info: www.ottscot.ca

Burns Statue Celebration

25, Toronto, ON

Everyone is welcome to celebrate of the birthday of Scotland's national bard. There will be piping, haggis, neeps, tatties, singing, and good cheer at Robert Burns Statue (Allan Gardens -Sherbourne and Carlton). Info: www.standrewstoronto.ca

Happy Burns Night

25, Nationwide

Celebrate the life and legacy of Robert Burns on the anniversary of his birth in 1759. The tradition of the Burns Night Supper was first held in 1801 by the poet's friends, five years after his death. Pay tribute to Scotland's National Bard at events across the world!

St. Andrew-Caledonian Society of Calgary Robbie Burns' Night

31, Calgary, AB

Featuring the Address to the Haggis, the Immortal Memory, the Toast to the Lassies and their reply. Entertainment also includes Highland dancing, piping, singing and fantastic food at the Polish Canadian Cultural Centre, 3015 15th St. NE. Info: www.standrewcaledonian.ca

FEBRUARY 2026

60th Tartan Ball

7, Toronto, ON

A celebration of tradition, dance, and community at the Royal York Hotel. Info: www.dancescottish.ca/tartan-ball.html

Great Canadian Kilt Skate-Renfrew

22, Renfrew, ON

The City of Renfrew's first-ever Great Canadian Kilt Skate. If you don't have a kilt, wear tartan! Hosted by: Scottish Society of Ottawa in partnership with the City of Renfrew at myFM Centre Recreation Complex. Info: www.kiltskate.com

Seachdain na Gàidhlig-World Gaelic Week 2026

23-March 1, Nationwide

The Gaelic language will be celebrated as the annual initiative reaches its milestone fifth year of highlighting Gaelic's vitality and enduring presence as a living language. Under the banner Use It or Lose It (Cleachd i no cail i) – and organisers are encouraging people across Scotland and the global diaspora to get behind the rallying cry. Info: seachdainnagaidhlig.scot

Intro to Curling Social

28, Toronto, ON

This event is geared towards beginners and will feature a combination of instruction and play. There will be drinks after the on-ice session to raise a glass with teammates and new friends. Join the St. Andrew's Society of Toronto at High Park Club, 100 Indian Rd. Info: www.standrewstoronto.ca

USA

JANUARY 2026

Florida Keys Celtic Festival 2026

10-11, Marathon, FL

Features family-friendly Celtic rock and Traditional music, Irish & Scottish Dancing, captivating Pipes and Drums, and skilled sheepherding dogs at Marathon Community Park. Info: www.floridakeyscecticfestival.com

Winter Storm Weekend

15-18, Kansas City, MO

The pipes and drums event, a weekend filled with masterclasses, concerts, and competitions for piping and drumming performers and enthusiasts from across the USA and beyond. Info: www.mhaff.org

Burns Night Gala Celebration

16, New York, NY

Join the American Scottish Foundation at University Club for their Burns Supper which celebrates, in words and music, the immortal memory of Robert Burns and Scotland's heritage. The first recorded Burns celebration was held in 1801, when a group of his good friends gathered – and so was born the legendary Burns Supper. Info: www.americanscottishfoundation.com

Central Florida Scottish Highland Games

17-18, Winter Springs, FL

Experience traditional highland athletics, dance, art, music, culture and food at Central Winds Park, 1000 Central Winds Dr (East SR 434). Info: www.flascot.com

Prescott Area Celtic Society Burns Supper

24, Prescott, AZ

Dress up in your finest tartan and prepare for a memorable evening. Indulge in a delectable feast featuring the traditional haggis at Prescott Lakes Clubhouse. Info: www.prescottareacelticsociety.com

San Diego Scottish Highland Games Robert Burns Supper

Rancho Santa Fe CA, United States

Join the San Diego Scottish Highland Games for a night of tradition, entertainment and food at Rancho Santa Fe Garden Club, 17025 Avenidas De Arcadia's. Info: <https://sdhighlandgames.org/robert-burns-supper>

The Scottish American Society of South Florida Robert Burns Supper

24, Fort Lauderdale, FL

The Scottish American Society of South Florida Invites you to join them for a Dinner, Concert & Dance at the Tropical Acres Steakhouse, 2500 Griffin Rd. Info: www.sassf.org

The Robert Burns Society of Annapolis Burns Supper

24, Annapolis, MD

The Robert Burns Society of Annapolis will honor the life and legacy of Scotland's most famous poet with its annual Burns Supper at Annapolis Elks Lodge, No. 622, 2 Pythian Dr. Info: www.robertburnssocietyofannapolis.com

Sharpe House's Robert Burns Weekend 2026

24-25, Statesville, NC

Join in a Scottish celebration to honor the legendary poet on Saturday and a Kirkin o' The Tartans on Sunday at Statesville Civic Center 300 South Center St. Info: www.historicsharpehouse.com

Happy Burns Night

25, Nationwide

Celebrate the life and legacy of Robert Burns on the anniversary of his birth in 1759. The tradition of the Burns Night Supper was first held in 1801 by the poet's friends, five years after his death. Pay tribute to Scotland's National Bard at events across the world!

Celtic Arts Foundation Winter School 2026

29-February 11, Seabeck, WA

Some of the world's most accomplished Celtic musicians from Scotland, Ireland, Canada, and the US join to teach aspiring musicians. The Winter School is opportunity to learn tunes from some of the best players and the most creative instructors of Celtic music at Seabeck Conference Center. Info: www.celticarts.org

Suncoast Scots Highland Games

31, Sarasota, FL

A celebration of Scotland with pipe bands, clans, entertainment and more at Sarasota County Fairgrounds, 3000 Ringling Blvd. Info: www.suncoastscots.com

The Caledonian Club of San Francisco Burns Night

31, San Francisco, CA

Celebrate Robert Burns with a traditional Scottish supper. A night of poetry, song, and celebration awaits at San Francisco Elks Lodge #3, 450 Post St. Info: www.caledonian.org

FEBRUARY 2026

Tallahassee Highland Games

7-8, Tallahassee, FL

Experience the Tallahassee Highland Games and National Caber Championship along with the thrilling Stones of Strength events. Celebrate Scottish heritage & athleticism at Apalachee Regional Park at 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Info: www.tallyhighlandgames.com

Mount Dora Scottish Highland Festival

20-22, Mount Dora, FL

A weekend filled with bagpipes, Highland athletics, Celtic music, dancing, a vibrant tartan parade, and thrilling Pipes and Drums performances. Info: www.ci.mount-dora.fl.us/1291/Scottish-Highland-Festival

Seachdain na Gàidhlig-World Gaelic Week 2026

23-March 1, Nationwide

The Gaelic language will be celebrated as the annual initiative reaches its milestone fifth year of highlighting Gaelic's vitality and enduring presence as a living language. Under the banner Use It or Lose It (Cleachd i no cail i) – and organisers are encouraging people across Scotland and the global diaspora to get behind the rallying cry. Info: seachdainnagaidhlig.scot

Northeast Florida Scottish Highland Games

28, Green Cove Springs, FL

Enjoy events including athletics, dance, music event, parades and more at the Clay County Fairgrounds. Info: www.neflgames.org

Scotland

JANUARY 2026

Burning of the Clavie

11, Burghead, Moray

A pagan fire festival unique to Burghead, which greets the New Year. The significance of the 11th January dates back to the 1750's, when the Julian calendar was reformed in Britain. Every 11th January the flaming Clavie (a barrel full of staves) is carried round the town followed by a large crowd. Info: www.burghead.com/clavie

Celtic Connections 2026

15-February 1, Glasgow

Glasgow's annual folk, roots and world music festival, Celtic Connections celebrates Celtic music and its connections to cultures across the globe. Info: www.celticconnections.com

Northern Lights Dumfries 2026

15-19, Dumfries

A stunning free trail of light, sound and projection installations stretching right across the town centre, this is Dumfries at its brightest. Info: www.northernlightsdumfries.com

Big Burns Supper

15-25, Dumfries

Scotland's biggest Burns Night party and warmest Winter Festival set in historic Dumfries, every January. Info: www.bigburnssupper.com

Rabbie's Winter Village

16-18, Dumfries

Tucked in the heart of Dumfries, Rabbie's Winter Village is where the glow of Illuminate Dumfries meets full-on festive vibes. Expect twinkling lights, mouth-watering local food, cracking live music, and that unmistakable Dumfries cheer. Info: www.northernlightsdumfries.com

Scotland's Trade Fair Spring & Speciality Food & Drink Show

18-20, Glasgow

Scotland's biggest and only retail trade fair (Trade only event). Showcase for Scottish retailers at the SEC. Info: www.scotlandstradefairs.com

Happy Burns Night

25, Nationwide

Celebrate the life and legacy of Robert Burns on the anniversary of his birth in 1759. The tradition of the Burns Night Supper was first held in 1801 by the poet's friends, five years after his death. Pay tribute to Scotland's National Bard at events across the world!

Up Helly Aa

27, Lerwick, Shetland

Lerwick Up Helly Aa is a superb spectacle, a celebration of Shetland history, and a triumphant demonstration of islanders' skills and spirit, a tradition that originated in the 1880s and is today Europe's largest fire festival. Info: www.uphellyaa.org

Scotword answers from page 6

Across:	34 Extol	15 Awa
Macduff	35 Watts	16 Delta
4 Gar	36 Eve	17 Essay
8 Oar	37 Tenor	18 Dinna
9 Alyth	38 Talon	19 Braes
10 Rowan	39 Een	20 Range
12 Era	40 Tod	22 Dalkeith
13 Agle	41 Kilsyth	24 Sin
14 Satan	Down:	26 Wattle
15 Ardle	Moray	27 Relent
19 Byre	2 Cawdor	29 Kist
21 Skier	3 Foula	30 Agency
22 Dallas	4 Greys	31 Tweed
23 Alness	5 Raasay	32 Stank
25 Annie	6 Myrtle	33 Perth
26 Wary	7 Chanters	
28 Skean	11 Nail	

Up Helly Aa: Fire in Winter



Viking fire. Photo: Chris Watt Photography.

Up Helly Aa is a series of fire festivals held every winter in the Shetland Islands. January in Shetland means Vikings and one of the planet's greatest winter fire festivals. Scotland meets Scandinavia in Shetland with this Norse enriched event which lights up the dark Shetland nights and heralds soon a closing of winters door as Elsie Maclean from Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches explains.

The origin of the name 'Up Helly Aa' is uncertain, but we think it refers to a celebration of the last day of Christmas festivities: a day of fire, feasting and fun. The festival's roots date back to the early 1800s. Groups of young men in disguise would drag barrels of lighted tar on sledges through the streets of the islands' capital, Lerwick. Burning tar often spilled as the men tried to navigate

sledges along the narrow streets, causing damage to properties. Tar-barrelling was banned in 1874 in an attempt to stop such practices. The young men refined their activities, resulting in the first Up Helly Aa torchlight procession in 1881.

Other elements have been added to the festival over the years, becoming an integral part of the traditions celebrated today. Some of these elements incorporate Norse traditions and celebrate Shetland's Viking heritage.

Up Helly Aas

Up Helly Aa festivals are also organised in areas outwith Lerwick. These are referred to as 'country Up Helly Aas'. Although smaller in size than the Lerwick Up Helly Aa, they are nonetheless very impressive. For many people in Shetland, the Up Helly Aa festivals are the highlight

of the year. Participating communities spend hundreds of hours planning and organising them.

On the day of an Up Helly Aa festival, squads gather together for the torchlight procession, marching through the streets while carrying wooden posts topped with paraffin-soaked sacking. Each squad is dressed in themed costumes, and they are referred to as guizers.

The central figure in the proceedings is the Guizer Jarl, the chief guizer and leader of the Jarl Squad. This squad is made up of the Jarl's supporters and is the lead squad for the event. Each year the Jarl takes the name of a character from the Norse Sagas and there is great secrecy surrounding both the name and the costume he will don. The procession culminates in the burning of a replica Viking long-ship. The guizers gather round the vessel to sing the traditional *Galley Song* before throwing their torches onto it.

The Norseman's Home

Once it has burned, the guizers sing *The Norseman's Home* before visiting local halls where each squad performs an act or skit of some sort, usually of a humorous nature, and where drinking and dancing

are the order of the night. This is an extract of a recording of guizers singing *The Norseman's Home*, which was recorded at the Lerwick Up Helly Aa in 1982.

The Norseman's home in days gone by, was on the rolling sea,

And there his pennon did defy, the foe of Normandy.

Then let us ne'er forget the race, who bravely fought and died,

Who never filled a craven's grave, but ruled the foaming tide.

The Lerwick Up Helly Aa takes place on the last Tuesday in January every year. It is a spectacular sight so if you ever get the chance to go, we'd highly recommend it. The following day is known as 'Hop Night', when further dances and celebrations are held. If not, don't worry. The country versions take place between the middle of January and the end of March.

This article was written by Elsie Maclean from Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches, a project dedicated to the presentation and promotion of audio recordings of Scotland's cultural heritage.

It was originally published on the Historic Environment blog in 2018. www.tobarandualchais.co.uk



The night procession of Up Helly Aa. Photo: VisitScotland.



Up Helly Aa Vikings. Photo: VisitScotland.

City of Glasgow College student to be honoured with American Scottish Foundation Young Chef Wallace Award



Gary Maclean, National Chef of Scotland, Camilla G Hellman, ASF President, Kenneth Donnelly, ASF Chairman, and Young Chef Awardee Charlton Russel.

The American Scottish Foundation (ASF) has announced that 21-year-old Scottish culinary student Zayn-ul-Abidin Ahmad, an exceptional student from City of Glasgow College, will be awarded the prestigious Young Chef Wallace Award at the Annual American Scottish Foundation Burns Supper, held at the historic University Club, New York City. The annual award forms part

of the American Scottish Foundation Youth Bursary Program, recognising rising talent in Scottish culinary arts. It celebrates the next generation of chefs who embody creativity, craftsmanship, and a passion for Scottish food culture. The hospitality sector in Scotland remains one of the country's leading employment industries, making the importance of nurturing young talent more relevant than ever.

Glaswegian Zayn-ul-Abidin Ahmad has been selected for his outstanding technical ability, dedication to his craft, and his commitment to representing Scottish cuisine with pride and innovation. Receiving this award in New York marks a significant milestone in his emerging culinary career and highlights the world-class talent being developed within Scotland's college sector. Supporting this unique transatlantic collaboration is Gary Maclean, Scotland's National Chef and MasterChef: The Professionals Champion, who has long championed Scottish culinary talent on the international stage. His continued involvement strengthens the long-standing partnership between the American Scottish Foundation and City of Glasgow College. "This award highlights the incredible depth of talent coming out of Scotland's colleges," said Gary Maclean. "Zayn is a fantastic example of the passion, skill, and commitment we are seeing from young chefs today. Being recognised in New York is a huge achievement and one he should be incredibly proud of."

Scotland's remarkable young culinary talent

Camilla Hellman, President of the American Scottish Foundation, said: "The Young Chef Wallace Award shines a spotlight on Scotland's remarkable young culinary talent. We are proud to

partner with City of Glasgow College and thrilled to welcome Zayn to New York to receive this prestigious honour. This initiative embodies the Foundation's mission to build cultural bridges and create meaningful opportunities for young people."

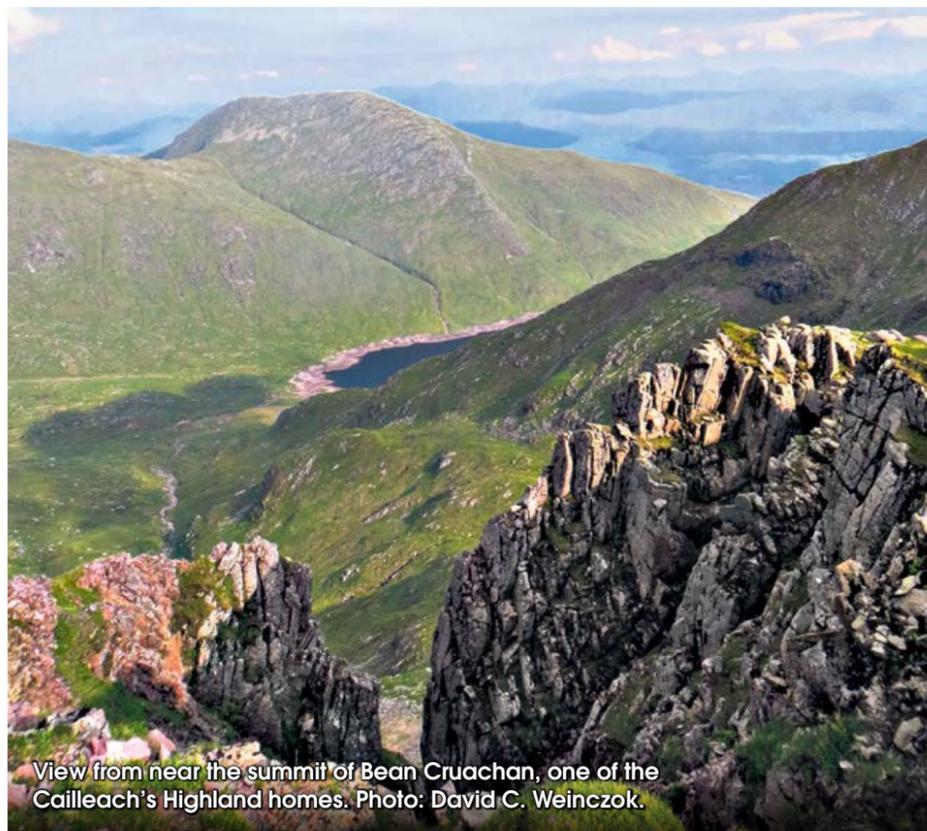
Reflecting on the college's role in shaping future culinary leaders, Paul Little, Principal and CEO of City of Glasgow College, said: "We are delighted to see Zayn recognised on such an international stage. The Young Chef Wallace Award strengthens cultural and educational ties between Scotland and the United States, while showcasing the innovation, ambition, and talent that define our students and Scottish cuisine as a whole."

The ASF Burns Night Celebration, at which the Young Chef Wallace Award Gala will be presented, will bring together leaders from the American-Scottish community and supporters of education and the arts for an evening celebrating not only Scotland's National Bard Robert Burns, but also innovation, tradition, and the bright future of Scottish education in Scotland.

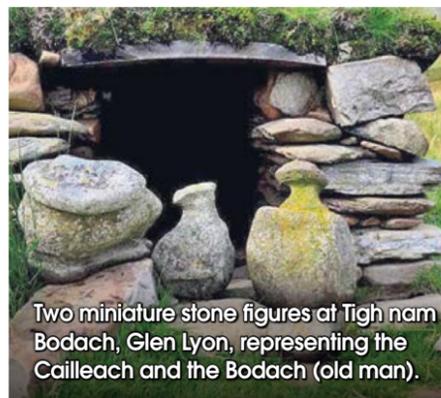
The Young Chef Wallace Award takes place 16th January 2026 at The University Club, New York as part of the annual American Scottish Foundation Burns Supper. For details visit: www.americanscottishfoundation.com

Legends of the Cailleach - Scotland's Queen of Winter

By: David C. Weinczok



View from near the summit of Bean Cruachan, one of the Cailleach's Highland homes. Photo: David C. Weinczok.



Two miniature stone figures at Tigh nam Bodach, Glen Lyon, representing the Cailleach and the Bodach (old man).

No one-trick goddess

Many flairs were added to the Cailleach's repertoire over the centuries. Some versions depict the Cailleach riding a chariot pulled by huge black hounds, perhaps a memory of the Bronze Age and Iron Age when tribal elites rode across battlefields in chariots. Sometimes she hurls fireballs from her chariot, blasting stones apart with their power. Whatever the particular twist, the Cailleach was clearly no one-trick goddess: whether fire and ice or water and rock, all of the powers of nature are at her disposal.

Above all else it is a just balance of forces which the Cailleach seeks to instill in her subjects, both human and animal. Though she is a protector of wild things, she also encourages deer hunts when populations rise to the point of denuding the landscape of other forms of life. She is known to have given some young hunters the power of exceptional accuracy or good fortune. Some tales connect the Cailleach with the Fianna, the warrior-bards of ancient Ireland and Scotland including Ossian, Diarmad, and Fionn mac Cumhail (Finn McCool), whose renown for hunting was unparalleled.

On the other hand, the Cailleach directly punished those who took too much. Poachers especially drew her wrath, but hunters who killed animals than they needed were also punished. The Cailleach would often send a deluge of water from the mountains to inundate the land which the offender lived on, ruining their crops and inflicting hardship for the winter ahead as the price of their greed. Similar judgments awaited those who, on encountering the Cailleach in the form of an old woman caught out in a storm, denied her their shelter, thus breaking the great taboo of 'guest rite'.

out of the basket she carried on her back, with Ailsa Craig off the shores of Ayrshire once being a mere pebble that shook loose and fell through a hole in her apron.

The Corryvreckan in the Sound of Jura is the world's third-largest whirlpool and is where the Cailleach washes her great plaid. When she hangs the plaid up to dry, ice crystals form upon it which then sweep across the land. This brings winter to Scotland, the season when the Cailleach is at her greatest power. When the Corryvreckan's white foam surged to its highest point it was said that the Cailleach had 'put on her kerchief'. Approaching the whirlpool in these conditions meant certain death.

In order to bring warmth and light back into the world, the Cailleach's subjects must rebel against her wintery rule. They do this on the 1st of May, a vital turning point in the agricultural year, by holding fire festivals and preparing for the return of Angus and Bride, the king and queen of summer and plenty. Thus the Cailleach's reign is ended, and she returns to slumbering in the upper reaches of sacred mountains like Ben Cruachan in Argyll, Beinn na Caillich in Skye, and Beinn a' Bhric in Lochaber.



Ben Cruachan looming over Connel Bridge in Argyll. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA-4.0.

The spectre of the Cailleach was used in social shaming when it came to the vital agricultural work required to sustain small, rural communities. The cutting of corn (meaning grains like barley and bere) took place in the autumn, and many communities across Scotland placed great importance on not leaving crops unharvested for too long. The first farmer in a district to finish cutting their corn made a little straw doll to represent the Cailleach. They passed the doll to their nearest neighbour, who in turn passed it to the next person to finish their harvest. The farmer who finished harvesting last of all was given the doll and expected to 'feed' it with some of his grain for the remainder of the year.

Belief

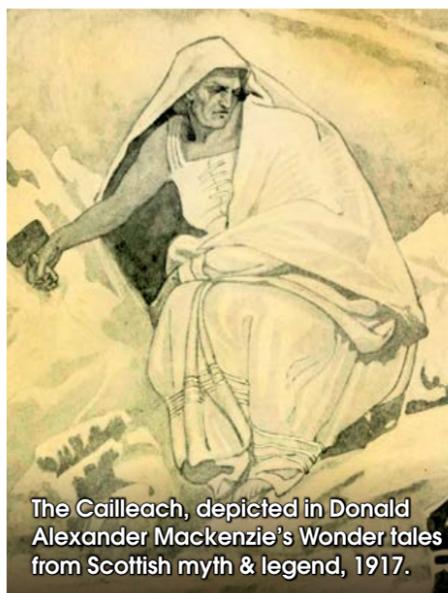
From the Iron Age through until the 19th century, belief in the Cailleach in the Highlands and Islands would have been nearly universal. Modernity, however, has taken its toll. As belief in the Cailleach has shrunk so, too, has the Cailleach herself, reduced now to the size of a garden fairy or teapot. There are some places, however, where the Cailleach still holds sway.

Deep in Glen Lyon is Tigh na Cailleach, the 'house of the Cailleach'. There you'll find a tiny shieling occupied by little stone figures barely larger than your fist. Every May Day (May 1st) these figures, representing the Cailleach, the Bodach (old man), and their family, are brought outside the shieling to face down the length of the glen. Glen Lyon, it should be noted, has long been central to the tales of the Fianna in Scotland. On Samhain (Halloween) the figures are placed inside for the winter.

The ritual movement of the figures at Tigh na Cailleach is believed to be the oldest Celtic ritual still practiced in its original form anywhere in Europe. The last named person to move the figures, local shepherd Bob Bissett, did so dutifully year after year. When he passed away, the people who took on the estate vowed to continue the practice. I am happy to confirm, by word of mouth from a recent visitor, that the figures are currently inside their shieling. No doubt that come May Day in 2026, they will feel the touch of the sun and stand guard over Glen Lyon once more.



Ballachulish Figure in National Museum of Scotland. Photo: David C. Weinczok.



The Cailleach, depicted in Donald Alexander Mackenzie's *Wonder tales from Scottish myth & legend*, 1917.

Imagine someone described as a force of nature. Who do you conjure? Perhaps a daringly dressed, larger-than-life dynamo who is constantly the centre of everyone's attention. Maybe an artist at the peak of their creative intensity, or someone completely unwavering in their single-minded pursuit of a goal against the odds. Or, how about a seemingly frail, elderly woman, walking alone as cold rain pours down who, in a gentle and calm voice, asks if you might share your shelter with her.

This unassuming woman is the Cailleach, not only a force of nature but the very embodiment of nature's elemental cycles. To the Celts of Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, the Cailleach is a creation goddess who was here before even the hills and seas. There are many variations on her name's meaning. Cailleach most directly translates to English as an "old woman", but her name can also be interpreted as "veiled one" or "divine hag".

Shaped Scotland

Indeed, the Cailleach shaped Scotland itself. The mountains and glens of the Highlands were made when, in giant form, she stomped across the land. The islands of Scotland's west coast were rocks that fell

A family history of 42 generations



Robert King leading the Atholl Brigade in the Charge on Culloden Moor, 16th April, 1746. Detail from the historically accurate painting by G.W. Baxter.

By: Wade King

Early in 2024, Wade King an occasional contributor to *The Scottish Banner*, published his family history, *History of the King Family of Scotland, the West Indies and Australia*. The book is of 550 pages. It records 42 generations of the King family over 1300 years.

All those generations have written evidence to support them, from 778 A.D. which was about the time of the beginning of written history in Scotland. Before that history was recorded orally and memorised by those that undertook that responsibility. As a scientist (a specialist physician), Wade chose to rely only on written evidence, even though the family obviously had earlier ancestors going back into the mists of time well before the 8th century A.D.

The work is considered likely to be the longest family history ever written. At least, it was described as such by Iain Ferguson, recent Director of the National Archives of Scotland, who helped Wade with his research. With his thorough knowledge of the records, Iain was an invaluable helper.

Wade had a “leg-up” in the form of his surname. The surname King was given in the 11th century A.D. to denote membership of the King’s family. The King to whom it referred was Duncan I, King of Scots 1034 to 1040 A.D. King Duncan had a daughter Princess *Bethóc* (in the Gaelic) who was Wade’s ancestor. The genealogy of King Duncan I was, of course, recorded, so Wade was able to trace his ancestry back to King Kenneth MacAlpine, the first High King of both the Picts and the Scots, who ruled 843

to 858 A.D. and before him to his father Alpin, lived 778 to 843 A.D. (whom Wade designated generation).

A long family history

Wade had another “leg-up” in the form of a family tree stored in the Manuscripts and Archives Section of the University of Aberdeen library. This document showed the generations of the family in Scotland from Princess *Bethóc* down to the 18th century A.D. From then on it was easy to trace the generations using the website ScotlandsPeople. The family tree showed 14 generations of the family who were lairds of the Barra Estate in the Garioch district of Aberdeenshire and until 1596 lived in Barra Castle (which is still standing and used as a family home).

It showed the generations after that who lived in the Ellon district of Aberdeenshire until 1652, when they were forced away from their estates in Ellon by Cromwell, who ravaged Aberdeenshire looking for royalists, Episcopalians and Tories who had supported King Charles I in the British Civil Wars. The King family moved to Renfrewshire, a Whig area where Cromwell would be unlikely to look for Tories. They settled in Port Glasgow on the River Clyde and developed a shipping company there. The family tree shows Robert King (of generation 33) who led the Atholl Brigade in the last great Highland Charge at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Robert is the subject of a previous article in *the Scottish Banner* (*Loch Lomond - A story of Culloden*, February, 2022).

The tree also shows John King (of generation 36), born in Port Glasgow in 1776. He moved to the West Indies in 1803 to open a branch of the family’s shipping and trading company, based in Port Glasgow on the Clyde. Specifically, John went to the island of St. Thomas in the (then) Danish West Indies and settled in its chief town Charlotte Amalie. St. Thomas is now part of the U.S. Virgin Islands. John’s son Dr. William King lived on the neighbouring island of Tortola, the main island of the British Virgin Islands. In turn, Dr. William’s son James King (of generation 38) travelled from Tortola in the 1880s and settled in Sydney, Australia. The family has lived in Australia for the four generations who followed that James. Wade is of generation 40 and his grandson James (James King the twelfth of his line) is of generation 42.

Of course, having a long family history does nothing special for the individual. Everyone alive has 42 generations of ancestors. The difference is that Wade and his many King cousins know who those ancestors were, where they lived and what they did during their lives. The published family history gives Wade and his cousins a sense of connection with his King forebears and the ability to visit the places in which they lived.

Have you been looking into your family history? How far back can you go? Share your story with us by email, post or at: www.scottishbanner.com/contact-us



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 in Scottish schools was a tawse?
- 2) Which American President is commemorated with a statue on Edinburgh’s Calton Hill?
- 3) A caber is made from which kind of wood?
- 4) What in Scotland is often referred to as Avern jelly?
- 5) Who led the English army at the Battle of Bannockburn? a) Edward I, b) Edward II or c) Edward III?
- 6) Do reindeer live in the wild in Scotland?
- 7) What are “thampit neeps”?

- 8) In which year did Scot Sir Alexander Fleming discover penicillin? a) 1928, b) 1930 or c) 1932?
- 9) In old Scots, what does the name Souter mean?
- 10) How old was Mary, Queen of Scots when she became Queen? a) 6 days old, b) 6 years old or c) 16 years old?

Answers

- 1) Though no longer in use, it was a leather strap used by the teacher to punish unruly pupils.
- 2) Abraham Lincoln.
- 3) Fir.
- 4) Wild strawberry jam.
- 5) b) Edward II.
- 6) Yes, in the Cairngorms in the Highlands.
- 7) Mashed turnips.
- 8) a) 1928.
- 9) A shoemaker or cobbler.
- 10) a) 6 days old.

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