



Newcastle Family History Society Inc

Newsletter of the Scottish Special Interest Group

No 8

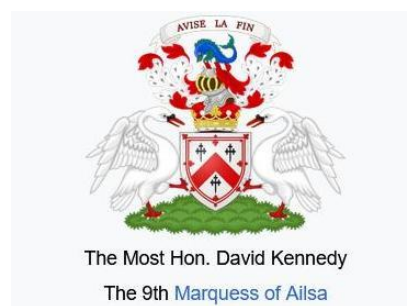
Whitsunday 2025

Faillte !

Welcome to this Whitsunday newsletter!



Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow - from the Glasgow & West of Scotland Family History Society Facebook [page](#). See page 21 for information



Article and photos by Kirstie Carrick

The Kennedys are one of the great clans of the Scottish Lowlands, based in the south-east of Ayrshire in the region known as Carrick. The clan septs include the surnames Carrick, Cassels, Casillis and McWalrick. The origins of the family are somewhat obscure. One story is of emigration from Ireland under a leader known as Céndetig ('ugly head'). Another story is that they came from the Western Isles and that the name was originally MacKenane (son of Kenneth). Alternatively, they were possibly descended from the early lords of Galloway to the south.

The first known documentary evidence is from 1158 when a Henry Kennedi was named as a rebel against the Earl of Galloway. Additionally, a charter in the reign of William the Lion (1165-1214) was witnessed by a Gilbert MacKennedi. By 1260 the name appears to be more common, with three MacKenedi men being members of the assize court at Ayr in 1260. The 'Mac' prefix seems to have been dropped in the late 13th century and the terminal 'i' changed to 'y'. Kennedys fought for Wallace and Bruce against the English in the first War of Scottish Independence. Later, Kennedys fought for the French against England, a group of Scottish mercenaries fighting for Joan d'Arc in the early 15th century were led by a Kennedy.

In 1346, John Kennedy was named as head of the Kennedys of Dannure. His first wife Marjorie Montgomerie brought with her the lands of Cassillis, near Dannure, and Cassillis Castle became their main residence. His second wife was Mary de Carrick, thus linking the Kennedys with the Earldom

of Carrick. In 1372 Robert II rewarded John Kennedy as 'chief of his name and baillie of Carrick'. The Carrick Earldom ended up merged with the titles of the Scottish crown, and an act of the Scottish Parliament in 1469 declared that the eldest son of the King would hold the titles of Duke of Rothesay and Earl of Carrick. These titles are currently held by Prince William.



Dannure Castle, dating from the 13th century

As time went on, the Kennedy family gained land in the Carrick region and influence in the Royal court. In 1457 John's great-grandson Gilbert Kennedy, was created Lord Kennedy and was also a regent to the infant James III of Scotland. Gilbert's brother James Kennedy became a Bishop and was briefly High Chancellor of Scotland. Later, he became Archbishop of St Andrews and was instrumental in setting up the first college of the University of St Andrew (St Salvator's College) in 1450. The Kennedys acquired land in the south, near Stranrear in Wigtownshire in 1482, later developed as Castle Kennedy.

Gilbert's grandson, David, Third Lord Kennedy, was created Earl Cassillis in 1509. Unfortunately, he was killed at the battle of Flodden in 1513. The second Earl Cassillis (another Gilbert) was murdered in 1527 by Sir Hugh Campbell of Loudoun, Sherriff of Ayr. The Third Earl (also Gilbert) inherited the title when just 12 years old and one of his first acts was to sign the death warrant of Patrick Hamilton, the first Scottish Protestant martyr, who was then burned at the stake outside St Salvator's College in St Andrews. Later this Gilbert was Treasurer of Scotland and was one of the Scottish Commissioners who organised the marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots to the Dauphin of France. He and three other commissioners were poisoned on their return to Scotland in 1558. Gilbert, 4th Earl Cassillis, was 15 years old when he inherited the title. He became so powerful that he was known as 'the King of Carrick'. He was host to Mary, Queen of Scots when she visited Dunnure Castle in 1563. The Earl's sister Jean became a companion to the Queen in exile, and it is said that she tied the handkerchief around the Queen's eyes before her execution at Fotheringay in 1587.



Maybole Castle (16th century) was a winter residence of the Kennedy chiefs. It is in Maybole, the capital of Carrick



Gatehouse of the Bishop's Palace, Crossraguel Abbey

Meanwhile, Gilbert, 4th Earl Cassillis and his brother Sir Thomas became infamous for their cruel treatment of Allan Stewart, the Commendator of Crossraguel Abbey, who had been awarded the holdings of the Abbey after the Reformation. However, the Earl Cassillis wanted the lands himself. Initially Stewart held out, but he was captured and brought to Dannure Castle in 1570, where he was tortured – tied to a spit and roasted over a fire. He signed the lands over to the Earl. He was rescued by a Kennedy of Bargany (his brother-in-law and head of a cadet branch of the Kennedys). He survived and appealed to the Crown, but Earl Cassillis was too powerful, the King did nothing and the Earl kept the lands. He did not enjoy his win for long, dying in 1576, leaving two young sons, two-year-old John, now the 5th Earl, and a younger son, Hew. Sir Thomas became known as ‘the Tutor’ as he was young John’s guardian. He was also awarded the lands around Culzean on the coast of Carrick from Ayr to Girvan and inland to Loch Doon, quite

a spread, for his loyalty to Mary Queen of Scots and her son James VI (and later 1st of England). The dispute with the Kennedys of Bargany dragged on and resulted in the deaths of both Bargany (in 1601) and Sir Thomas, who was ambushed and killed in 1602.

John, 5th Earl Cassillis was now undisputed head of the Kennedy clan. He had Kennedy Castle developed as a mansion house in 1607, on the site of an earlier castle. He died childless in 1615, and his 17-year-old nephew inherited, as John, 6th Earl Cassillis. The influence of the family remained strong and he was Lord Justice General of Scotland from 1649 to 1651.

The 6th Earl was considered ‘grave and solemn’ and has been remembered in folklore as a cuckolded husband, a story that may not be true at all. He married Lady Jean Hamilton, daughter of the 1st Earl of Haddington and they had several children. The story goes that the Earl went to London on business, and while he was gone, his wife ran off with Johnny Faa and a group of gypsies. They were caught and the gypsies were hung in front of Jean, who was then incarcerated in Cassillis Castle. The story recurs in ballads across Europe, as the *Gypsy Rover* or the *Raggle-Taggle Gypsies*.



Cassillis Castle. The pale tower is the original castle, the stone wing in front of it is a 19th century addition.



Castle Kennedy, west face

The 6th Earl and his son (John, the 7th Earl from 1668) were firm Protestants and supported Cromwell in the Civil War. They suffered for this after the Restoration but managed to keep their lands intact, although Castle Kennedy was sold off to the Earl of Stair in 1677. The Earl of Stair planted the wonderful gardens around the castle that now are open for visitors. The castle itself burned down in 1716. The son of the 7th Earl (also John) died a year before his father, so his son (yet another John) became the 8th Earl Cassilis, at only one year old in 1700.

By 1759, when the 8th Earl died, there were no remaining male-line descendants of the 4th Earl. The Earldom was disputed and ultimately awarded to the 3xgreat-grandson of Sir Thomas the Tutor. Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean became the 9th Earl Cassilis. The Culzean Kennedys had lived in Culzean Castle for generations, and the 9th Earl decided to remain there rather than relocate to Cassillis Castle. He instituted a program of land improvements on the estate. He also went on a Grand Tour of the continent and acquired the beginnings of his art collection of old masters and classical sculpture. On his return he began improvement of the old tower-house castle. He died in 1775 and the Earldom passed to his brother, David, who became the 10th Earl.

The 10th Earl was determined to remodel Culzean into a substantial stately home. He commissioned Robert Adam (already a famous architect) to design improvements. The original tower house on a dramatic clifftop formed the centre of the new structure, with additional wings, an impressive oval staircase and magnificent round drawing room overlooking the sea. David spent vast amounts of money on the building work, of the castle and on the estate, as well as on fittings and furnishings. By the time of



Culzean Castle

his death in 1792 the estate was almost bankrupt. Thomas and David had been two of 20 children, but only seven survived to adulthood, and by 1792 there were no male heirs, as neither Thomas nor David had married. The title and estates passed to a cousin, Archibald Kennedy, also a descendant of Sir Thomas the Tutor. Archibald now the 11th Earl Cassillis was a wealthy Naval Captain from New York who had also had the sense to marry an heiress. The influx of American money saved the estate, but Archibald did not live to enjoy it, he died in 1794.

Archibald the 12th Earl Cassillis, the son of Archibald the 11th Earl, inherited at the age of 24. He had the energy and the wealth to complete the building projects and transform the grounds. He had good business sense and was a patron of the arts. He had met the Duke of Clarence in America and they remained friends, in fact one of Archibald's sons married an illegitimate daughter of the Duke. When the Duke became King William IV in 1841, Archibald became the first Marquess of Ailsa. The name was chosen for Ailsa Craig, a granite stack in the sea off the coast of Carrick. It can be easily seen from Culzean Castle. It is mined for the rock to make curling stones.



Ailsa Craig

In 1846 another Archibald became the 13th Earl Cassillis and second Marquess of Ailsa. He had amassed gambling debts in his youth but was able to sell part of the estate to pay these off. He sensibly took up permanent residence in the Castle. His family (five children) grew up in Culzean, which at last became a family home. The Marquess became a Knight of the Thistle in 1859: membership was restricted to the sovereign and 16 knights, so it was an exclusive honour. He later became Lord Lieutenant of Ayrshire (in 1861). In this capacity, he represented the Queen at local events in the county. He was thrown from his horse while hunting in 1870 and died a few days later, aged 53.

The 14th Earl Cassillis and Third Marquess Ailsa, another Archibald, inherited at 22 years old and spent the rest of his life improving the Culzean estate and indulging his passion for sailing. The Marquess made some excellent financial investments, like developing the golf links and an exclusive hotel at Turnberry and his interest in yachts led to the development of the Ailsa Shipbuilding Company. However, the estate could not keep up with the expenses and by 1933 it was decided to disentail the estate and form a limited company to own and run the estate, with family members as the Directors. The Marquess died aged 90 in 1938. Three of his sons inherited the titles in succession, Archibald, Charles and then Angus, the 6th Marquess. In 1945 ownership of Culzean Castle and estate was transferred to the National Trust with the stipulations that the widow of the 4th Marquess have the use of the West Wing for her lifetime and that the main top floor be converted into a flat for the use of General Eisenhower, as a gesture of Scottish thanks for America's support in WWII. That flat is now a holiday rental through the National Trust for Scotland.

The Kennedy family retained ownership of other estates; they held Cassillis Castle until 2009 for example. The current Clan Chief is David Kennedy, the 9th Marquess Ailsa and 20th Earl Cassillis. He has a son, Lord Archibald, so the succession is secure for another generation.

The Kennedy family maintained continuity over the centuries as heads of the clan and holders of their estates. The wider family scattered across Scotland and the world. This was partly due to the suppression of the influence and authority of clans following the Jacobite Rebellions of the 17th and

early 18th centuries culminating in the Battle of Culloden in 1746. However, the Kennedy clan was lowlander and Protestant and did not take part in the Rebellion although people with the Kennedy surname were present on both sides. In fact, a 13-year-old named Angus Kennedy was among those prisoners who were transported to the West Indies and an Archibald Kennedy, a jeweller's apprentice from Edinburgh, was executed in November 1746 for his involvement.

A Kennedy of more positive note was Lieutenant General Sir Clark Kennedy (from the Moray Branch of the clan) who served throughout the Napoleonic Peninsular War and in 1815 he led the central squadron of the Royal Dragoons at the Battle of Waterloo. He is credited with personally capturing the eagle and colours of the 105th Regiment of French Infantry during the battle.

It should probably be noted that John F Kennedy, the US President, was descended from Irish Catholic Kennedys, not Scots. However, Scottish Kennedys may have been among the Ulster Plantations when many Protestants were settled there to dilute the rebellious Irish population in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

The popularity of the works of Sir Walter Scott, King George IV's visit to Scotland and later the affection held by Queen Victoria for Scotland all led to a resurgence of interest in Scottish culture, clans and tartans in the 19th century. Tourism and interest in family history have also contributed to the redevelopment of the idea of kinship through a clan system. Today the Scottish Chief of Clan Kennedy recognises all Kennedys world-wide as part of the clan.

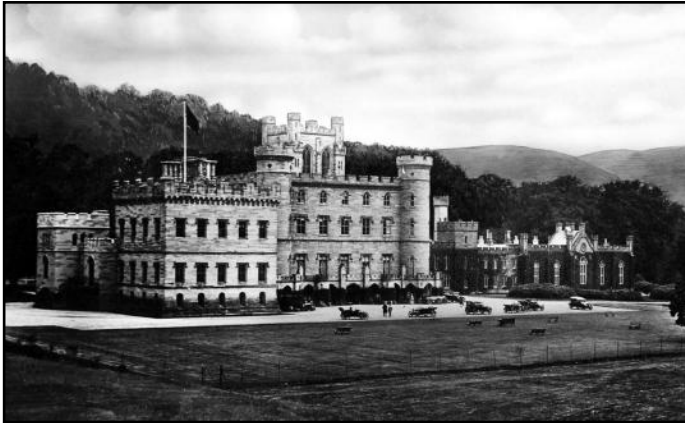
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Who Gets to Own Scotland?

Article by Kim Gray

The last issue of our jam packed interesting Scottish SIG Newsletter included my article on the McAlpins of Killin about my ancestors who lived in a wee village in the Loch Tay area of the Scottish Highlands. This is an area not only known for its amazing scenic beauty but also its fascinating history including dramatic clan rivalries, the most powerful clan being the Campbells.



From taymouth-castle.com

Coincidentally just after I submitted the article for publication, I spotted the recent article Who Gets to Own Scotland? in *The New York Times*, (26 February 2025) about a new land-reform bill aimed at disrupting the centuries of feudalism in Scotland. The article highlights the once powerful Campbell clan's, Taymouth Castle, built in the early 1800s near Kenmore. It was sold to pay off gambling debts in 1922 and had various uses afterwards which included serving as a hotel,

a World War II hospital, a training site for nuclear war preparations and a drama school. Apparently other private buyers in the subsequent decades tried to restore the estate but mostly ran out of money. Until recently locals and visitors were able to stroll in its grounds because of a '2003 land-reform law that enshrined the public's "right to roam" Scotland's majestic landscapes without interference from private landowners'. The article goes on to talk about the controversy surrounding the American real estate developer, Discovery Land Company who acquired the estate in 2018 to develop the land into a luxury residential community and golf club encompassing 7,775 acres. Much of the restoration of the castle is complete with work still ongoing to build the 145 luxury homes and refurbish the golf course. Community concerns revolve around the impact on the environment and on local housing costs and public access to the land. But Scotland's concentrated patterns of land ownership, that is, much of the private land in the hands of relatively few wealthy landlords, goes back centuries. The new bill in parliament 'aims to claw back some of that land by expanding community ownership and giving more power to tenant farmers and smaller landholders. The law would give elected officials the ability to break up parcels of more than 1,000 hectares when they come up for sale, allowing more communities, farmers and small businesses the chance to buy at affordable prices'. For young locals who are experiencing a housing crisis this may be the first step towards a more equitable system. It certainly is food for thought and will be interesting to follow how Scotland balances preserving its ancient castles whilst also looking after the housing needs of the next generation.



From taymouthcastleclub.com

Interpreting Scottish Records

Article written by Kirstie Carrick

Something about the position of people in Scottish society can be gleaned by paying attention to the prepositions used to describe their place of abode in old records. There is a distinct difference intended in early records between a person 'of' a place, 'in' a place and 'at' a place. I found a statement about this in the course notes for the program in Genealogical, Palaeographic and Heraldic Studies offered at the University of Strathclyde. In a chapter on 'Feudalism, Nobility and Landed Gentry' by Graham Horton (C8.1, page 14), it is stated:

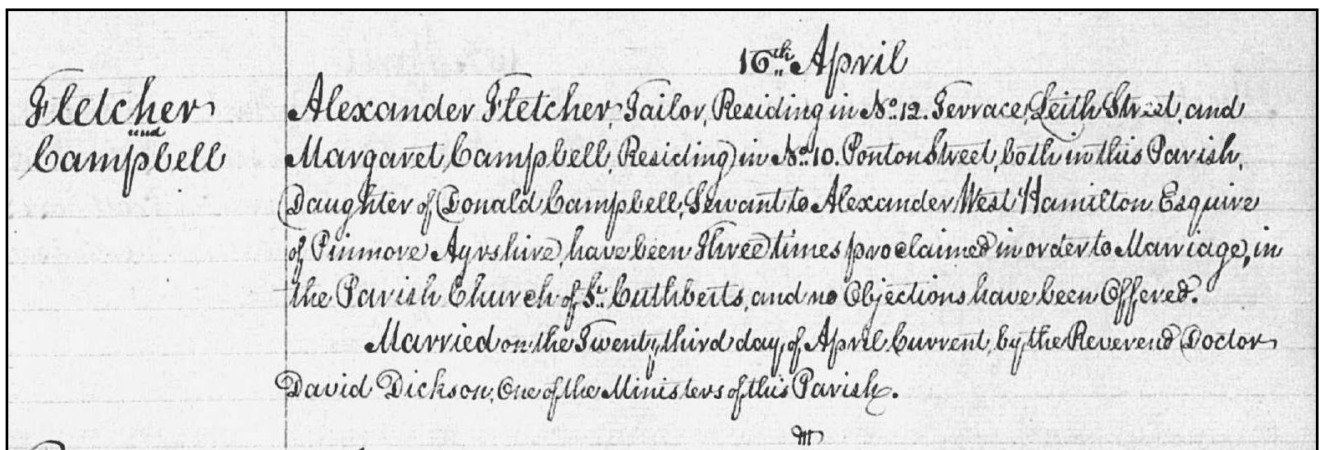
Heritable proprietors '... of ...'

Tenants '...in ...'

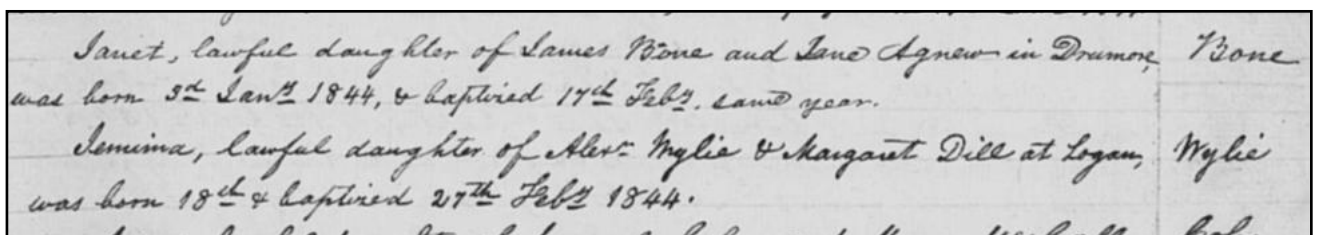
Sojourners '...at ...'

A 'heritable proprietor' owns land that can be passed down through his heirs. Family members might also be referred to using the 'of' form of nomenclature. A tenant pays some form of rent to a proprietor, whether for land or a residence. A sojourner is a temporary resident and may include workers on a farm.

Example 1: Alexander Fletcher and Margaret Campbell are listed as 'residing in' their homes in Edinburgh, while Margaret's father is described as the 'servant to Alexander West Hamilton Esquire of Pinemore, Ayrshire.' *Pinemore* was the principal property of Alexander West Hamilton.



Example 2: The first couple are 'in' Drumore, while the second couple are 'at' Logan.



If you have difficulty reading the handwriting in old records, there is a lot of help available online. There is a free course available on Future Learn, an online learning site. There, the University of Glasgow presents a course called 'Early Modern Scottish Palaeography: Reading Scotland's Records'. Go to <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses> and enter the title in the search bar. The tutorials available on <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/scottish-handwriting> are also free. The National Archives (Kew, UK) also have Palaeography tutorials, but more orientated to English handwriting. You can find a link at <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/palaeography/>

If you have difficulty reading a specific record, you can get help by posting the page on the Scottish Indexes Facebook Group (obviously you would have to join first) as the members are very knowledgeable and helpful.

Scottish Oatcakes Recipe

Provided by Mel Woodford

Daily News (Perth, WA : 1882 - 1955), Saturday 22 February 1919, page 6

SCOTCH OATCAKES.

When an English cook makes oatcakes she uses cold water, and very often makes matters worse by using flour and baking powder too. Oatcakes must be made with boiling water, not water that has been boiling and simmering for hours, but some that has just come to the boil. And the more quickly you can get the cakes into the oven after mixing, before the water has had time to get tepid, the better the cakes will be. Ingredients: 1lb. medium oatmeal, 2oz. beef dripping, lard, butter, or margarine, 1 saltspoon salt, boiling water. Method: Rub the dripping or other fat into the oatmeal, and mix ingredients to a fairly stiff dough with boiling water. Roll out very thinly, and bake in a sharp oven for about 15 minutes. They should really be cooked on a griddle, but unless you have a large range and a roaring fire it is far easier to bake them in the oven.

National Library of Australia



Photo from Google

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article81841707>

Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies

Article by Lea Harris

I thought I'd write about two amazing feats of engineering that Ken and I visited during our trip in Scotland in 2024. If you have been in Scotland since 2002, you may have visited the Falkirk Wheel. Or since 2013 you may have been to the nearby Kelpies. When we were in Scotland last year, the lady who owned the B&B where we stayed just outside Edinburgh, highly recommended that we visit both these places on our way through to Glasgow. I remember thinking wow when we first spotted them and then being quite awed when we found out more details.

The Kelpies are in fact horses. Being an Aussie I was ignorant as my first thought when kelpies were mentioned was dogs because of our Australian Kelpie sheepdog. I was about to learn something new.

Falkirk is a town in the Central Lowlands of Scotland, historically within the county of Stirlingshire, approximately half-way between Edinburgh and Glasgow.



Falkirk Wheel



We arrived at the wheel before it had opened so had a wander around and took a few photos. Then we waited at the doors for opening time. Luckily, I was at the front because a lot of people arrived soon after, actually a bus load of people amongst them. Because I was at the front, I was the first to get tickets for the first tourist ride of the day therefore we got front row seats on the boat where we enjoyed great uninterrupted views.

The tourist ride takes 50 minutes and includes two turns on The Wheel. You board on either the MV *Antonine* or MV *Archimedes* in the Falkirk Wheel basin

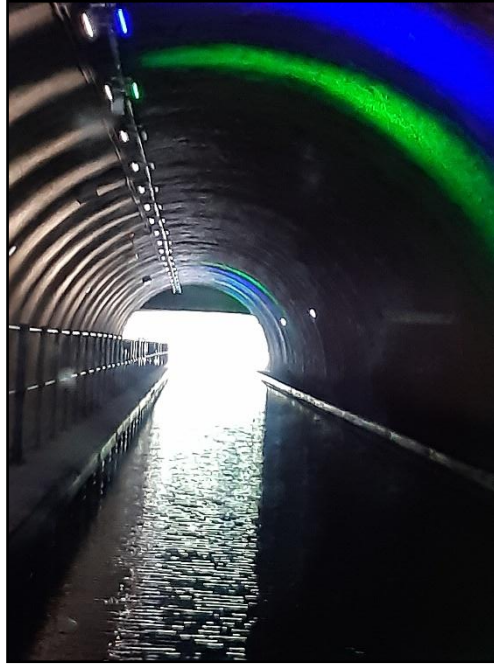
ready to enter. Once the boat has been cleared for rotation, you enter the caisson in the Wheel's lower gondola and sail through the sky to join the Union Canal 35 metres above in only 5 minutes! You then sail along the aqueduct, through the Roughcastle Tunnel (complete with lighting installation) to the mouth of the Union Canal, before doing a full 180 degree turn and completing the entire trip in reverse where you can enjoy amazing views of the top of the wheel as well as the countryside.



We were on the MV Archimedes



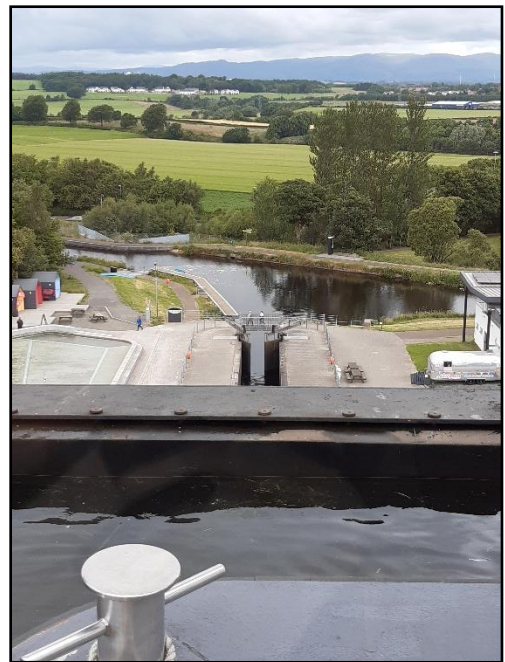
Roughcastle Tunnel North Portal - length 180 m



Lighting inside Roughcastle Tunnel



Entering back into the gondola for the descent

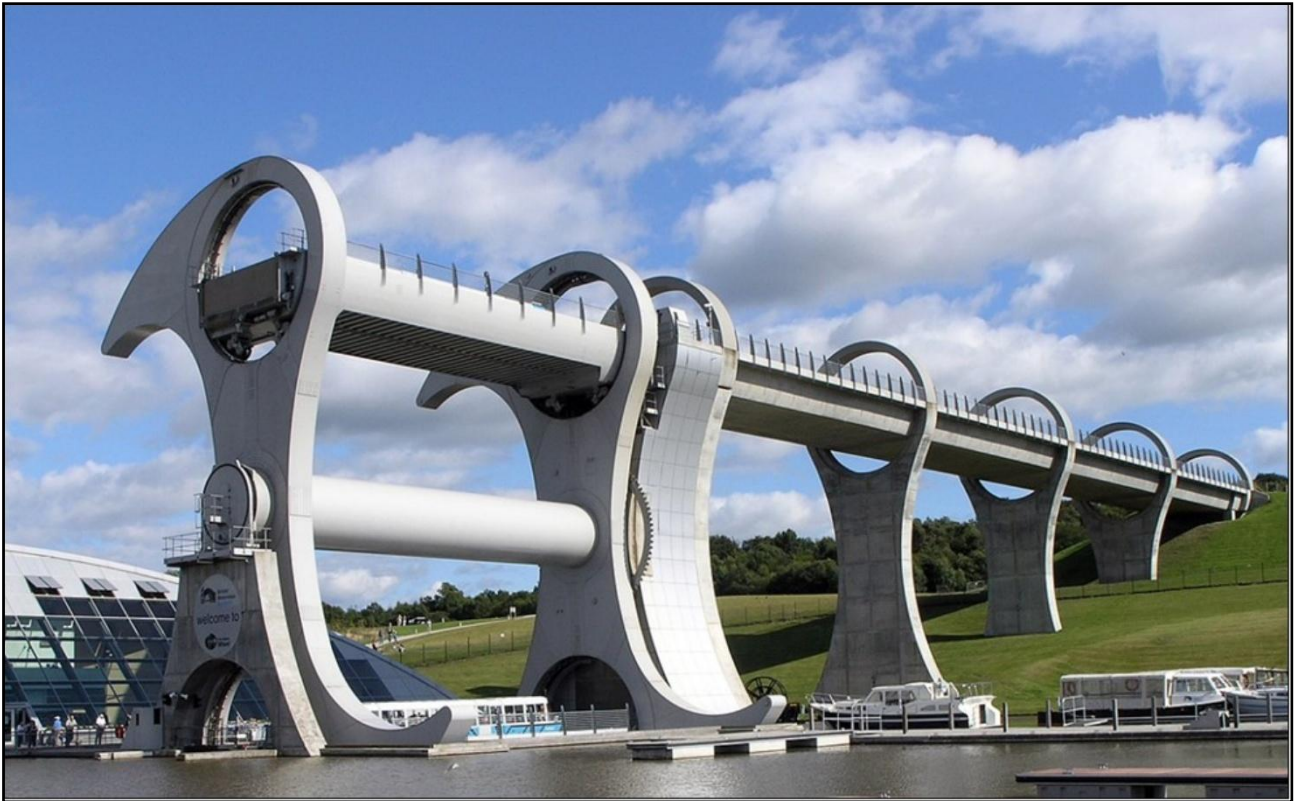


View from the top

The Falkirk Wheel is the only fully rotating boat lift in the world. The wheel was built as part of the £85.4m Millennium link project to reunite the Forth and Clyde and Union Canals in Scotland. The canals had previously been linked by a staircase of 11 locks which took nearly a day to pass through. The locks were dismantled in 1933. The wheel is based on Archimedes' principles.

The wheel uses two gondolas which raise boats by 24m. As the Union Canal is 11m higher than the aqueduct at the top of the wheel, boats then go through two locks to reach the canal. The Falkirk Wheel is one of two boat lifts in the UK – the other is the Anderton boat lift in Cheshire, north west England. Built in 1875, the Anderton lift closed in 1983 and was restored and re-opened in 2002.

Before the Falkirk Wheel was constructed it wasn't possible to get from the Union Canal to the Forth and Clyde by boat. It now takes about 10 minutes for a boat to be lifted from the Forth and Clyde to the aqueduct 24m above that leads to the Union Canal. Since the wheel was opened by the Queen in 2002 more than 5.5 million people have visited it - benefiting tourism and the local community.



Falkirk Wheel photo taken from the web. It is extremely difficult to take a photo of this whole section from the visitor centre area

The Falkirk Wheel was designed to last 120 years and 1,000 people took part in the construction. Early challenges included tar and mercury contamination as the ground had previously been used as a mine and tar works. Other early-stage work included laying 600m of access to roads to get plant and materials to the site. Once the area was cleared, engineers dug deep foundations for the structure and used 22m concrete piles socketed onto the bedrock for support. The wheel was constructed and fully assembled at the Butterley Engineering plant in Derbyshire. It was then dismantled and driven to Falkirk in 35 lorry loads. Workers reassembled it into five sections which were lifted into place.

As the wheel rotates in alternate directions, the changing load can cause stress to parts of the structure. To avoid fatigue – weakening caused by repeatedly applied loads – engineers bolted sections together instead of welding them. The Falkirk Wheel is 35m tall – the same as eight double decker buses stacked on top of each other. 1,200 tonnes of steel were used in its construction. The wheel has more than 15,000 bolts, matched to 45,000 bolt holes. Each bolt was tightened by hand. Each gondola, used to raise the boats, holds 500,000 litres of water, the same amount as an Olympic swimming pool.

It was fascinating taking a ride on the wheel and the canals. And the views from the top of the wheel were amazing.

If you would like to see more about the construction and workings of the wheel, have a look at this YouTube video [here](#). Well worth the time.

The Kelpies

Helix Park, located between Falkirk and Grangemouth, is the home of the Kelpies. The park was created as a space for the communities in the Falkirk area to come together. It is a beautiful area of 100 hectares with boardwalks and paths around the grounds. There are lagoons with ducks and plenty of flora to view making for a very enjoyable walk to the sculptures.

After a reasonable walk through the park alongside a canal, you come to a point where you can actually see the sculptures and you think 'wow they are big' But when you actually get to them, they are huge.

The works of art were created by artist Andy Scott, and completed in October 2013 with an unveiling ceremony taking place in April 2014. They are the largest equine sculptures in the world standing at 100ft tall and weighing more than 300 tonnes each. The magical Kelpies are a man-made wonder and a feat of engineering.



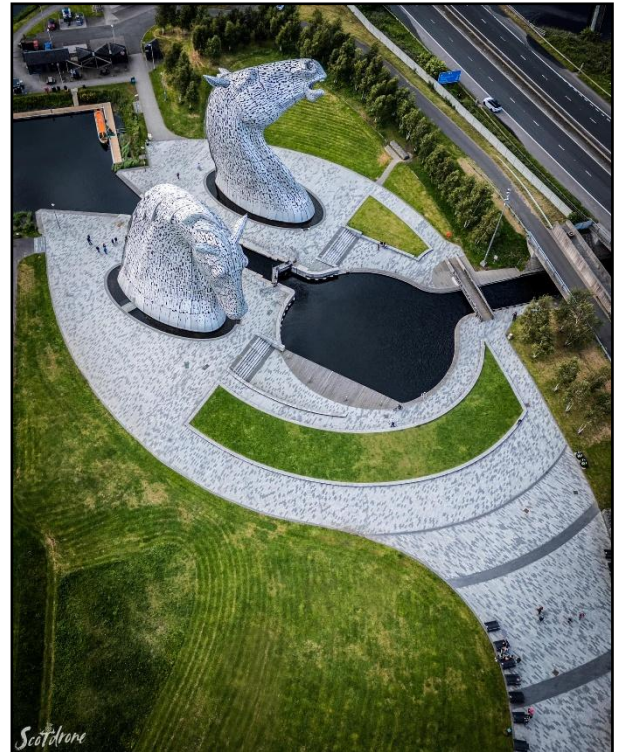
They have become iconic on the landscape after being modelled on real-life icons of times gone by — the Clydesdale horses Duke and Baron. The Kelpies represent the lineage of the heavy horse of Scottish industry and economy, pulling the wagons, ploughs, barges and coal ships that shaped the geographical layout of Falkirk.

The Kelpies' name reflects the mythological transforming beasts that possess the strength and endurance of 100 horses; a quality that's comparable with the transformational change of the area's landscapes, endurance of its inland waterways and the strength of its communities.

You can actually do tours which take you inside of them, however as we needed to be in Glasgow by 1.00pm, we just wandered around them.

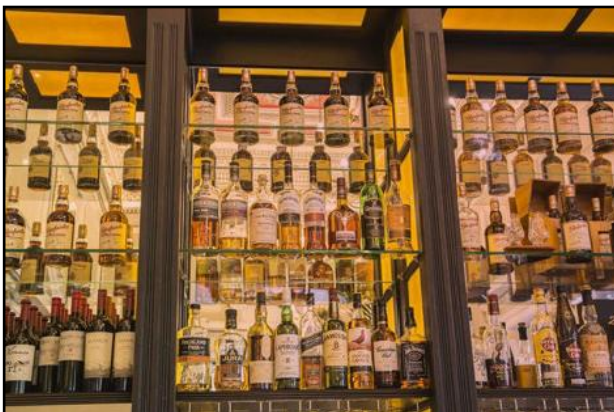
This photo to the right has been taken from the FB page of Scotdrone. Showing the Kelpies from above. The angle reveals the mythical Kelpie horse hoof shaped design to the surrounding paving/landscaping! The arrangement of colourings of the paving stones also mirrors the design of the Kelpies. Incredible attention to detail

Definitely an amazing feat of engineering.



Do you know the answer?

See last page to find out if you're right



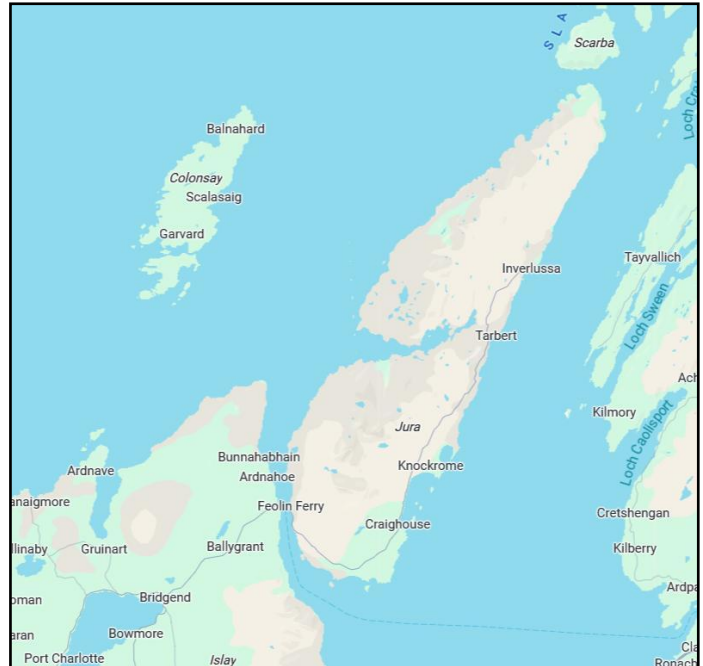
The Gaelic for whisky is Uisge Beatha. What is its literal meaning?

- ☐ Spirit of Scotland
- ☐ Heart-warming liquid
- ☐ Good Health
- ☐ Water of Life

The Isle of Jura

Article by Kirstie Carrick

Jura is one of the islands of the Inner Hebrides, lying alongside the north-east coast of Islay and running north east towards the coast of Argyll. It is 48 km long and 11 km wide at most and has an area of 368 sq kms. It is nearly divided in two by the sea loch, Loch Tarbert, about half-way up the island. There is one road, and that is single track with passing places. The road, the A846, essentially starts at the ferry jetty of Feolin and runs round the south tip of the island and up to the village of Craighouse. From there it runs north along the east side of the island, through various named places (some populated) and up to somewhat short of the far north tip, a mile beyond Lealt, although a walking track continues north.



Map of Jura



The Paps of Jura, from Port Askaig on Islay

The most obvious feature of Jura are the three mountains known as the Paps of Jura, although from Islay only two can be seen. The highest, Beinn an Oir (Mountain of Gold, in Gaelic) is 785 metres (2575 feet), Beinn Shiantiaidh (holy mountain) is 757 metres and Bienn a'Chaolais (mountain of the kyle or strait) is 733 metres. It is said that they can be seen from Northern Ireland and from Skye, on a clear day. They are formed of quartzite, so their peaks are pale rock, appearing to be snow-covered on a sunny day.

Perhaps more famously, Jura's position causes tidal flows that form the Corryvreckan whirlpool off the north coast, between Jura and the small island of Scarba. It is officially classed as unnavigable by the Royal Navy. Jura is also where George Orwell rented a farmhouse in the north of the island, Barnhill, between 1946 and 1949, while he completed the novel *1984*. There are moves to set up a George Orwell Library on the island, to contain copies of the novel in different languages and become a writing retreat. There was an exhibit on the island celebrating the 75th anniversary of the book's publication in 2024 (BBC.com, 5 Sept 2024, James Cheyne '*Campaign for George Orwell library on Jura*').

From the 1700s, the population of Jura fluctuated as many people emigrated to the new world, hoping to own their own land and lead a better life. The peak recorded population was in 1831 of 1,312 people. By 1881 it was 946, of whom 86% spoke the Gaelic. Gradual shrinkage has continued to the current low of approximately 200 residents (of whom it is estimated only 10% have the Gaelic).

In terms of history, there is some evidence of occupation in the Mesolithic period and a Neolithic chambered cairn has been found. There are also a number of standing stones on the island. Christian expansion from Ireland included Jura, and it is believed that Jura might have been the island (known as Hinba) to which St Columba retreated to when Iona got too busy for a contemplative life. Jura is also associated with St Earnan, St Columba's uncle who came to Jura to take charge of a monastery. Killearnadil (Church of St Earnan) is the name of the cemetery at Keills.



Killearnadil Cemetery, Keills

Jura was included in the Viking occupation of the region and was later taken over by Sommerled in the 12th century. His son Dougall inherited the area of Jura north of Loch Tarbert, while Donald (Sommerled's grandson) got the south of Jura and Islay. The MacDougalls backed the losing side in the dispute between John Balliol and Robert the Bruce (end of the 13th century), and the MacDougall lands were handed over to the MacDonalds. There is more to the story, including assassinations and strategic marriages. However, by the early 16th century the MacDonalds were out of favour with the king. The Campbells of Craignish took over control of Jura. There was ongoing disputation but in 1607 the Campbells paid off the remaining MacDonalds. There were still MacLeans in the north, but they were bought out in 1737.

There is a story (from Wikipedia) that in the 1700s the Campbells evicted a seer, who prophesied that the last Campbell to leave the island would be one-eyed with all his possessions in a cart drawn by a white horse. After WWI, Charles Campbell fell upon hard times and sold up the island in several estates. Campbell was blind in one eye from a war injury and in 1938 he led his white horse down to the old pier and departed the island, never to return.

Most of the north of the island was sold in 1920 to Waldolf Astor, the American-born British politician and husband of Nancy Astor, the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons. Part of that estate still remains in Astor family possession. There are now seven estates on Jura all in separate ownership. There is also a small area owned by Forestry and Land Scotland.



The Corran or Three Arch Bridge, built 1804

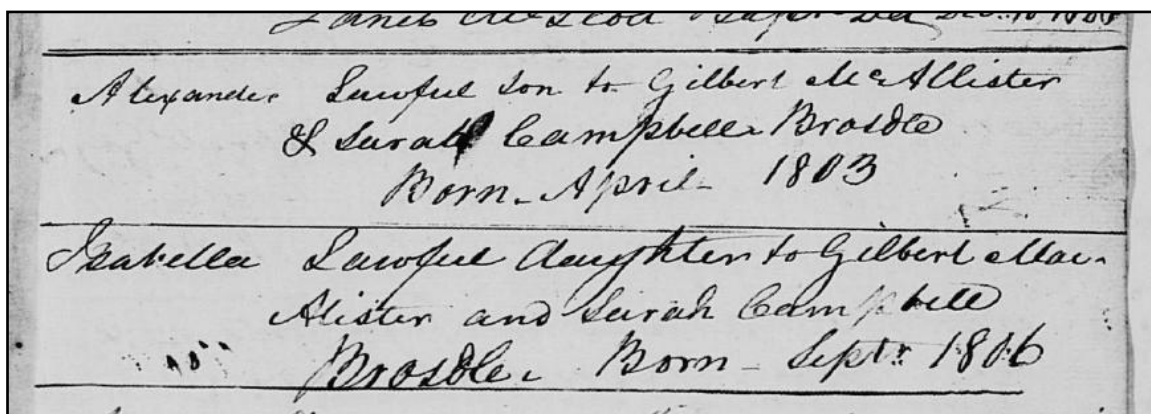
The Jura Distillery was founded in Craighouse in 1810 but fell into disuse around 1900. However, two of the estate owners went into partnership and re-equipped the distillery, re-opening in 1963. It has since changed hands and is now run by Whyte and Mackay, a subsidiary of a Philippines based group. In 2015 a distillery opened in the north, at Ardlussa, producing Lussa Gin; and in 2021 a small rum distillery opened in Craighouse, presumably importing the required sugar. There are more red deer than people on the island (5 to 6,000), and 'field sport' is provided in season on



A bay near Ardlussa

several of the estates. It is also a Special Protection Area for golden eagles. There is some modern crofting occurring on the island and various tourist focussed enterprises are developing (B&B, day tours, boat trips, destination weddings). There is a Jura Music Festival annually in September. The Jura Bard, Donald McKechnie (1836-1908) is well known in Gaelic circles for his poems and songs. His book of poetry '*Am Fear Ciuil*' (*The Musician*) included many prize-winning compositions.

I have a connection to Jura through my great-great grandmother Isabella MacAllister. She married John Carrick in 1829 on Islay, but she came from Jura. I have found an interesting baptism entry for her in Scotland's People. The page is headed 'Baptisms in Jura 1828'. Near the bottom of the page are two entries, for Alexander (born 1803) and Isabella (born 1806). The spelling varies between the two entries, but they are clearly siblings. I wonder why they were not baptised until 1828. I also don't know where *Brosdle* was, I assume it was a farm, but I'd love to know where. There is always the possibility that she was actually born somewhere else and was simply on Jura when the need arose to be baptised. Her parents certainly moved about a lot, based on where they were when their older children were born. Isabella's parents married in 1787 in Inverkip, in Renfrewshire, on the shores of the Firth of the Clyde. They were described as 'of this parish' but I can't find any baptism details for them there. Nor can I find any death records, but such records are notably scarce in Scotland.



Baptism record, Alexander and Isabella MacAllister



Crossman's Bridge, Ardlussa, Jura

are some small tarns in amongst the hills and streams running into the sea. I found it quite beautiful, in a stark sort of way.

For many years, cattle raised on Islay and Jura were herded up to Lagg Bay on Jura, and from there ferried across to the mainland for sale. This was because the crossing was shortest here.

We had a late lunch at Craighouse and made our way back to the Faolin Ferry. There was a Calmac Ferry at Port Askaig, which dwarfed the smaller Jura ferry. Once we returned to Islay we dropped in on Islay House for a restorative gin and tonic.

I visited Jura with my brother and sister-in-law in 2022, just as a day trip from Islay. The only access is via the small ferry from Port Askaig on Islay to the Faolin quay on Jura. We drove north up the coast to the Lussa Gin distillery, disappointingly closed. The road was blocked by a large, disabled piece of farm machinery so we parked and walked for a couple of hours. There were some lovely bays along the coast. It was too far to reach the Corryvreckan, and so we returned to our car to head back south. Most of the island is open moorland, the native forest kept down by the grazing deer, but there are areas of forestry. There



Lagg Bay, South of Tarbert, Jura



The ferry at Faolin, Jura

References:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jura,_Scotland

<https://isleofjura.scot/>

[https://www.thechaoticscot>isle of Jura](https://www.thechaoticscot>isle%20of%20Jura)

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George Orwell on Jura and *Wifedom*

Article by Kim Gray

In Kirstie's interesting presentation about her trip to Jura, at our March Scottish SIG, she briefly mentioned the famous writer, George Orwell's presence there. This reminded me that a perhaps less known reference to Orwell on the Scottish Isle of Jura can be found in Anna Funder's thought provoking book, *Wifedom*.

The book describes 'Mrs Orwell's Invisible Life' – about George's talented, but mostly unknown wife Eileen Blair, who dropped out of her Oxford scholarship Master of Arts in psychology to move into a rather austere country cottage to help George domestically and with his writing. Funder writes about how much she admires and has drawn on, George Orwell's body of work but in finding Eileen, Funder is most interested in revealing 'how a woman can be buried first by domesticity and then by history'. After Eileen's premature death at age 39 - Funder says from disregard and neglect - George searches in vain for a new wife to fill Eileen's shoes. He later spends time on the Isle of Jura writing his last work, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, inspired by Eileen's 1934 published dystopian poem called *End of the Century 1984*. Her friends describe how Eileen and George had worked together on his earlier novel, *Animal Farm* - the form of the book, as a satire, a fable rather than a critical essay on Stalin and totalitarianism, was Eileen's idea though never attributed to her.

Funder describes Jura as '*a treeless island on the far western edge of Britain, where the land fans into islets like frayed lace*'. She says that it takes her a day to get there from London – train to Glasgow, drive through the mountains and along magnificent lochs to the coast, then car ferry to Isle of Islay and passenger ferry to Jura. In Orwell's time it took 48 hours to get to the remote house he rented, *Barnhill*, the last eight miles on foot. He rented the house from Margaret Fletcher who when she met Orwell was struck by '*the very sad face he had ... He was tall and dark and very haggard a very sick-looking man*'. It is Margaret Fletcher's daughter, Kate, '*a magnificent middle-aged woman long past small talk*', who drives Funder the same potholed route in her old SUV many decades later.

But it is Funder's account of Orwell and his family's near-death experience in the Corryvreckan - apparently one of the most treacherous whirlpools in the world - that stayed with me after I'd finished reading *Wifedom*. Orwell, with his sister Avril, his very young child, Richard (who he had adopted with Eileen), and other family members decided to go camping on the other side of the island. On their return trip Orwell had misjudged the tides and in a small dingy with huge waves and multiple whirlpools the dinghy's engine came off its mountings and disappeared into the sea. Orwell's nephew, Henry manages to steer them with the oars towards an outcrop of rocks, the dingy turning over with the force of the waves. They surface, make land, manage to light a fire with collected kindling and Orwell's lighter and wonder how they will survive in this remote place. But miraculously a lobster boat passing by carrying tourists sees the fire and rescues them. Funder says that Richard Blair, Orwell and Eileen's son '*has been marked by the event in deep ways. As an older man, he has said that when he dies he would like his coffin to be put on his boat and set alight, then sent out on the flood tide in the setting sun into the Corryvreckan*'. Richard grew up happily with Orwell's sister, Avril, later becoming an agricultural engineer. In 1947 with the first draft of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* done, Orwell is found to be seriously ill with TB and in 1949 he dies of a massive haemorrhage at a hospital in London whilst planning his next book.

Postcards

The following article was published on the Glasgow & West of Scotland Family History Society Facebook page on 15 February 2025 (refers to the photo on page 1 of this newsletter)

Postcards arrived on the British scene in 1870 and soon became a popular medium for fast and cheap communications, the text messages of their day. A highly organised and efficient postal system (with up to 12 deliveries a day in some cities) meant that you could advise a friend that you would arrive for tea that afternoon.

The first postcards were plain with an imprinted halfpenny stamp and space for an address on one side, and another space for the message on the reverse. From the 1880s, images began to appear on the message side, developing into photographs in the 1890s.

In 1902, the divided back was introduced, with half for the message and half for the address, and an image on the reverse. Inevitably, postcard senders started to become more imaginative in their uses. Novelty postcards appeared which were 'Contrary to Regulations' and which sparked the wrath of the Postmaster General. (Remember him? He disappeared in 1969.) Attachments such as locks of hair resulted in the Postmaster's official stamp and initials on the card, stating that these were contrary to regulations, and the recipient had to pay for the delivery.

One type of novelty postcard was made from aluminium, usually with a printed view. The Postmaster General did allow the stamp and address to be attached to such cards but they had to be mailed in a transparent envelope. The most collectible examples of these relate to the Scottish aluminium smelting plant at Kinlochleven.

The example shown here is one of a pair kindly donated to the Society by a member, and forms part of our Ephemera Corner collection.

Book Recommendation

Recommended by our Scottish SIG member Su Carter

Su recommended the book *Queen MacBeth* by Val McDermid, an easy-to-read book that grabs you.

The description online about the book states: Shakespeare fed us the myth of the Macbeths as murderous conspirators. But now Val McDermid drags the truth out of the shadows, exposing the patriarchal prejudices of history.

A thousand years ago in an ancient Scottish landscape, a woman is on the run with her three companions a healer, a weaver and a seer. The men hunting her will kill her because she is the only one who stands between them and their violent ambition. She is no lady: she is the first queen of Scotland, married to a king called Macbeth.

As the net closes in, we discover a tale of passion, forced marriage, bloody massacre and the harsh realities of medieval Scotland. At the heart of it is one strong, charismatic woman, who survived loss and jeopardy to outwit the endless plotting of a string of ruthless and power-hungry men. Her struggle won her a country. But now it could cost her life.

Feedback

Article written by Lea Harris following feedback from Toni McLean, Hunter Valley Scots Club

Following the publication of Issue 7 of our *Caledonian* newsletter, an email was received from Toni McLean stating she had received feedback from one of their committee members, Robert Findley.

One of my cousins was a John Fraser, whose daughter was the first student of the school in Newcastle. Her name was Cecilia. John was a Lt. in the 73rd Highlanders who came to Australia with Lachlan Macquarie.

On further emailing, Toni sent the following (2 March 2025):

Many years ago, one of our very talented woodworking members made a scale model of Robert Burns' Cottage. It has miniature furniture and lights inside, also a horse and cart in the stable. I did call a couple of local Scottish historical societies – one may have been you [it was us], but no one had the room to put it in – understandable! I have attached a photo of the cottage – the sections of roof removed are so that the interior can be viewed. The thatched roof sections and picket fence are on the ground at the bottom of the picture, and you can probably make out a small replica of Burns' himself at the door.

I called a friend of mine, Helene Jessep, who is very much a part of the organising committee of Brigadoon in the Southern Highlands, and she is about to present a display in the window of Mittagong Tourist Centre this month to promote Brigadoon on the 5 April. She was delighted and I took the model down to her a couple of weeks ago and hopefully it will be on show soon.



Amazing scale model of Robert Burns' Cottage

More Fun Facts About Edinburgh

From Beauty of Scotland Facebook page

- Edinburgh Castle is built on an extinct volcano.
- The Royal Mile is actually one mile and 107 yards long.
- Edinburgh was the first city in the entire world to have its own fire service.
- Edinburgh has 112 parks and more trees per head of population than any other city in the U.K.
- J.K. Rowling wrote some of Harry Potter in an Edinburgh café (The Elephant) and took inspiration from the landscape for her characters and locations.
- The Encyclopedia Britannica was first produced in Edinburgh.
- St. Margaret's Chapel, located within the walls of Edinburgh Castle, is the oldest building in Edinburgh. It was built in memory of Queen Margaret, who is said to have died from a broken heart after the death of her husband.
- 'You'll have had your tea?' was once a common Edinburgh greeting and is still used today as a way to avoid putting on a kettle; it's believed the phrase originated in the 18th century with a nobleman named Mackintosh of Borlum who didn't like the sound of tea-slurping at social gatherings.
- The 'Stone of Destiny' is the traditional coronation stone of Scottish and English royalty and is kept at Edinburgh Castle with the crown jewels of Scotland; according to legend, the real stone was secretly swapped for a fake one at some point in its history.
- Edinburgh Castle's Great Hall has a small window high above the fireplace known as 'laird's lug' which translates into 'the Lord's ear.' The window allowed castle residents to eavesdrop on conversations taking place in the Great Hall.
- The National Monument on Calton Hill is known as 'Edinburgh's Folly' or 'Edinburgh's Shame.' It was modelled after the Parthenon in Athens, but funding for the build ran out and it was never completed.
- Edinburgh has more listed buildings than anywhere in the world.

Hurkle-Durkle

Sent in by Scottish SIG group member Dinah Stehr

Take time to
hurkle-durkle



Miscellaneous

Between now and the next issue of the *Caledonian*, the meetings of the Newcastle Family History Society Scottish SIG will be held at 1.00 pm in the Society's rooms on:

Tuesday 10 June 2025

Tuesday 8 July 2025

Tuesday 12 August 2025

Newcomers are always welcome.

If you would like to submit an article or pictures for a future issue of the *Caledonian*, please send them to [nfhsresident@gmail.com](mailto:nfhspresident@gmail.com)

Our next *Caledonian* will
be the Lamas issue on
28 August 2025

The Gaelic for whisky is Uisge Beatha. What is its literal meaning?

Answer

The correct answer is Water of Life

Whisky is Scotland's national drink and is enjoyed the world over. The law dictates that Scotch Whisky must be matured for a minimum of three years in Scotland to earn the name. Most Scotch whiskies are aged for much longer.