



**Newcastle Family History Society Inc**  
**Newsletter of the Scottish Special Interest Group**  
**No 10** **Martínmas 2025**

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**Faílte !**

**Welcome to this Martínmas newsletter!**



River Ness in Inverness - see page 19 for more about Inverness - photo by Lea Harris 2024

## Clan Ross



**Clan Crest:** Features an arm with a clenched fist holding a garland of juniper, the clan's plant badge. It is also surrounded by the clan motto: Spem Successus Alit, or Success Nourishes Hope.

Article by Kerren Robards

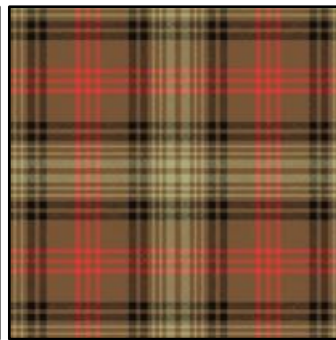
**Clan Tartan:** There are several Ross tartans. The Ross Red tartan features red, green and navy-blue colours. The Ross Hunting tartan is a specific tartan for hunting. It comes in modern, ancient and weathered variations. The ancient version is a green based tartan with orange overchecks.



Ross Red Ancient Tartan



Ross Ancient Hunting Tartan

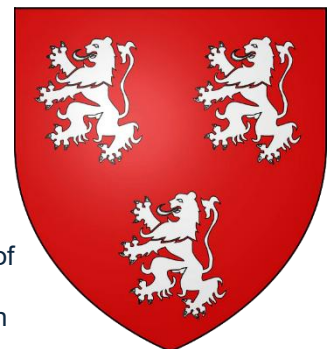


Ross Weathered Hunting Tartan



Ross Modern Hunting Tartan

**Clan Coats of Arms:** Are described as 'Gules three lions rampant Argent, armed and langued Azure'. This means three silver lions rearing up on their back legs with their heads in profile, against a red background.



One of the Ross Coats of Arms - Ross of Balnagown/Balnagowan

**Clan Ross distribution in Scotland:** Highland (historic counties of Caithness, Inverness shire, Nairnshire, Ross and Cromarty and Sutherland), Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Moray, the Western Isles, Dundee City, Angus and Perth and Kinross.

**Clan Ross associated family names (Septs):** Anderson, Andison, Andrew, Andrews, Corbet, Corbett, Crow, Croy, Denoon, Denune, Dingwall, Duthie, Fair, Gair, Gear, Gillanders, Haggart, Haggart, MacAndrew, MacCullie, MacCulloch, MacLulich, MacTaggart, MacTear, MacTier, MacTire, Taggart, Tullo, Tulloch, Tyre, Vass, Wass.

### **Where does the name Ross come from?**

It is commonly accepted that the Clan took their name from their key territory of Ross-shire, but there is some debate about the origins of this name. In the Ancient Celtic language, a Ros was a promontory or headland, which is a high area of ground that juts out over the sea, or a large loch.

This could have been inspired by the land between the Cromarty and Dornoch Firths. Another possible origin is the West Norse word for Orkney, *Hrossey*, which means 'horse island', as the area of Ross-shire once belonged to the Norwegian earldom of Orkney.

### **Clan Ross**

The lands of Ross-shire existed long before the birth of Clan Ross. It was from this beautiful and fertile Highland County that the Clan took their name, and where they settled, establishing their early homes in the 11th century.

The Clan's ambitious and bold nature meant that they quickly expanded their territory when one brave Ross made a powerful allegiance with the Scottish King. In 1214, King Alexander II led an army to squash a rebellion started by a rival claimant to the throne, and was aided on his mission by Clan Ross Chief, Fearchar Mac an t-Sagairt. This means 'son of the priest' in English. He was known as a brave warrior and supporter of the Scottish monarchy. The King knighted the Chief, rewarded him with the title 'Earl of Ross', and granted his son lands in Skye and Lewis in thanks, helping to grow the already distinguished Ross name.

### **Balnagown Castle**

Balnagown Castle is the historic seat of Clan Ross, it is located in the Highlands of Scotland just outside of Kildary and it was originally built in 1375 for Clan Ross by the Ross family. The castle was owned by the Ross family until 1978, however in the 18th century the main branch of the Ross family had to sell the castle as they were in a lot of debt, they ended up selling to the Ross's of Hawkhead.



## Clan Ross and Clan Munro

In 1250, The Earl of Ross's son William was abducted in a revolt against the Earl. He was quickly rescued with the help of the Munro Clan, which cemented a long-standing alliance between the Rosses and the Munros.

### Ross in the News

Sir James Clark Ross (1800-1862) accompanied his uncle, Sir John Ross, on his first and second polar voyages. He discovered the first magnetic pole in 1831. In 1847, he published his *Voyage of Discovery*. The Ross Barrier, Ross Sea and Ross Island are named after him.

Sir Ronald Ross (1857-1932), grandfather of the current Chief of Clan Ross, discovered the malaria parasite. He became Professor of Tropical Medicine at Liverpool University and won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1902.

### Ross Connections in the Scottish Special Interest Group (SIG)

Two of our members have recently discovered connections to the descendants of Alexander Ross, from Duntulm, on the northwest coast of the Isle of Skye. Alexander and his family sailed on the ship *Ontario* in 1852 to Sydney. Unfortunately, Alexander died on the voyage and his eldest son died in quarantine. The remaining family settled in Largs, NSW and then moved to various places in NSW.

References:

Wikipedia, [scotsconnection.com](http://scotsconnection.com), [scotlandshop.com](http://scotlandshop.com)

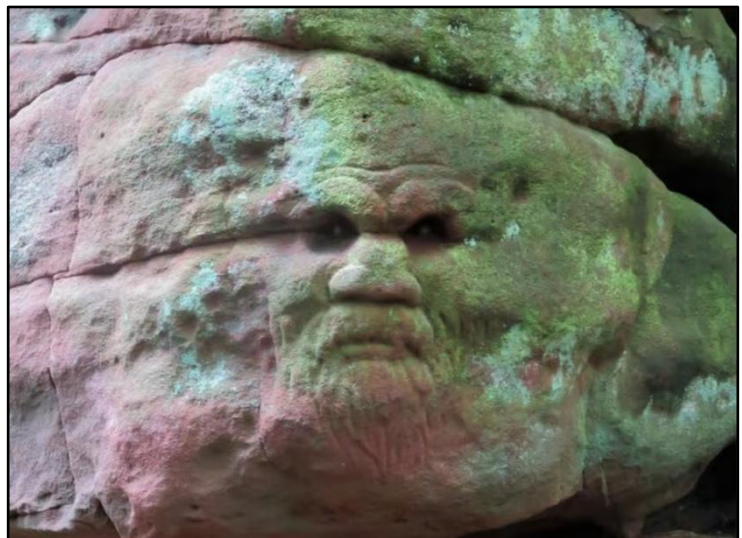
## The Dunino Den

Information by Lea Harris

The Dunino Den is an ancient Scottish druid site where stonework tells of an unearthly past. Dunino Village is in the East Neuk of Fife just ten minutes away from St Andrews (Scotland's famous home of Golf). The area is home to an 'unusual' strip of natural woodland where a pre-Christian holy site resides alongside Kinaldy Burn; the Dunino Den.

Located behind Dunino Church, the den is a mysterious spot which is thought to have been a Pagan place of worship prior to the arrival of Christianity in Scotland - historians have also described it as an 'ancient ceremonial site' for Druids.

To read more about Dunino Den, click [here](#) and [here](#).



## Orkney Islands

Article by Kirstie Carrick

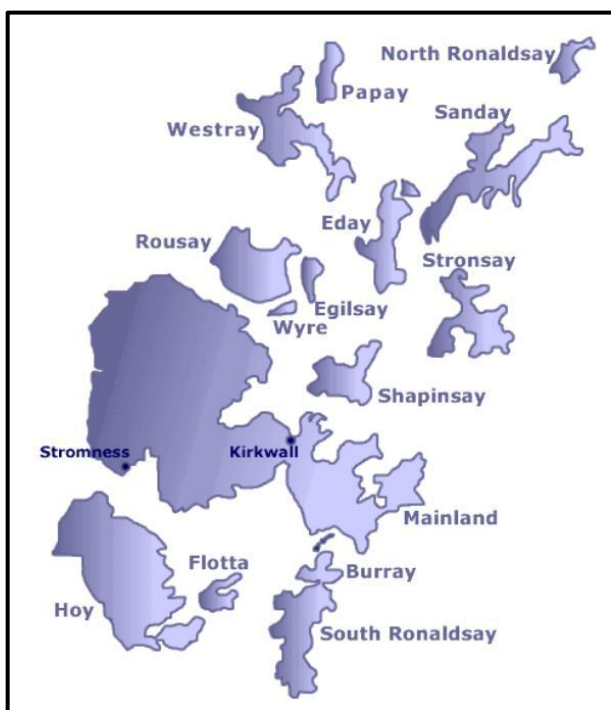
Orkney, or the Orkney Islands, lie about 10 miles (or 16 km) off the north-east tip of Scotland, across the Pentland Firth. The plural form of the name, 'Orkneys', has fallen out of use. The name seems to have come from the Romans who called it Orcades, but this itself may have come from the Pictish tribal word for young pigs 'orc'.

The archipelago contains around 70 islands, 20 of which are inhabited (according to Wikipedia).

The largest of the islands is called Mainland and it is here that the largest settlement and administrative centre, Kirkwall, is located. The second town, Stromness, is also on Mainland. The islands are divided into two groups, the North Isles and the South Isles (referring to their relative position to Mainland). Mainland itself is divided into the East and West Mainland, linked by a narrow isthmus, about 3 km



The north of Scotland showing Orkney, labelled with Kirkwall the administrative centre of the Orkney Islands



The major islands of Orkney

wide. The islands were formed by glacial erosion of underlying sandstone, limestone and igneous rocks, forming low undulating hills.

The local people are called Orcadians and speak a distinct dialect of Scots as well as English. Norse settlers arriving in the ninth century renamed many of the islands, adding the suffix '-eyjar' meaning island, to the ends of island names. This shows up today in the -ay or -say ending of most island names, especially the northern isles. Many topographical features also have Norse names.

The islands have a mild climate (relatively speaking), the average temperature is 12°C in summer and 4°C in winter. The soil is fertile, and agriculture is an important part of the economy: beef, pork, eggs and dairy are the main products. Farms are small, owner occupied and average about

35 acres or 14 hectares. Moorland and peat areas remain, especially on the outer and unoccupied islands. Wind and marine energy generation is a growth area, as is tourism. There is an oil terminal and helicopter services for the North Sea oilfields. The short rivers are home to trout, and seasonal fishing is popular with visitors. The landscape is open with rolling hills, which rather deceptively can sometimes deliver one up to a sheer cliff at the islands' edge. The westerly winds and gales account for the lack of trees. Taller and steeper mountains exist on Hoy, one of the larger islands south of Mainland.



The mountains of Hoy from Mainland

Orkney has been occupied for at least 8,500 years. The islands have some of the best-preserved Neolithic sites in Europe and thus are designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There is some evidence for the presence of Mesolithic nomadic tribes around 6500 BC. The earliest Neolithic settlement is a farmstead on Papa Westray, dating to about 3500 BC. The best-preserved Neolithic settlement is Skara Brae, inhabited about 3100 BC. There are many other remains from this era, including the standing stones of Stenness, Maeshowe passage grave and the Ring of Brodgar. Many of the settlements were abandoned about 2500 BC, due to climate change, or so it is thought.

On the first day of my visit to Orkney, we saw Skara Brae, two burial mounds (Unstan and Maes Howe) and two sets of standing stones, the Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness.

Skara Brae is part of a Neolithic settlement, uncovered from sandhills during a wild storm in 1850. A seawall has been built to prevent further erosion, as it is suspected that part of the village was washed into the sea in the far distant past. Ten stone houses remain dating from about 3200 BC.



Plan of Skara Brae



Building 1 at Skara Brae

The walls are sunk into the ground, or else earthen banks, possibly waste middens, were built up round the walls, which helped support and insulate them. Within the houses there are stone structures that appear to be furniture, beds and shelves, and a central hearth in each house. The houses averaged 40 square metres in area. Additionally, some of the houses had a small antechamber with a drain leading towards the ocean – possibly an early indoor toilet system.



Building 5 at Skara Brae

One building, House 8, did not have the internal furniture, but was separated into cubicles. Evidence of stone, bone and antler suggest this may have been a communal area for manufacture of bone needles, flint tools and other items. This building was not surrounded by earthen or midden banks and had thicker walls (over 2 metres thick). It was at ground level and had a porch at the door. Artefacts found in the village include carved stone balls, pottery, knives, lumps of ochre and shiny nodules of haematite (suggesting use to polish leather) as well as adzes, shovels, beads and ivory pins.

Near to Skara Brae and connected to it by a 'low road', is the Ring of Brodgar. This circle of standing stones within a surrounding ditch is the third largest stone circle in Britain at 104 metres in diameter. The age of the ditch is estimated at 2500 BC, with the stones possibly added later. Originally there were up to 60 stones, of which 27 remain standing. Some of the stones are split, at least one due to a lightning strike. The stones are about 3.5 metres tall. Technically it is not a 'henge' because there is no bank outside the ditch.



Part of the Ring of Brodgar



Ring of Brodgar: lightning struck stone

The other stone feature nearby is a circle feature containing the Standing Stones of Stenness. In the middle of the circular enclosure, consisting of a wide ditch and outer bank with a single opening, was a hearth, and grooved-ware pottery has been found nearby. The circle may have had 11 or 12 stones originally, now only four are left. A photo of the stones was used for the cover photo of a National Geographic magazine in 2014, which discussed many of the Neolithic features of Orkney.



Stones of Stenness

That issue included an article on the archaeological dig at the Ness of Brodgar, a Neolithic village between the Ring of Brodgar and Stones of Stenness. The site was closed when I was there, so I could not visit but apparently it is bigger than Skara Brae and lasted longer. Yet another Neolithic village, Barnhouse Village, is near the Stones of Stenness but we could not get there in the time we had. It was excavated in 1986 and 1991; similar in design to Skara Brae, it has 15 houses. It has been covered again, but there are some reconstructions of foundation layouts to see.



Stones of Stenness: central hearth and recumbent stone beyond

We visited two burial mounds in the vicinity of the Neolithic sites discussed so far. The smaller is Unstan Tomb, significant because it has both separate stalls for burial and a chamber, most such burial mounds have one or the other. It has very intricate and carefully laid stonework making up the structure. We walked in along a short and low passage, to see the interior. Excavations in 1884 and in 1934 found smashed pottery inside, called Unstan-ware, and similar pots have since been found elsewhere. Human remains and animal bones were also found within the mound.



Unstan Tomb



Inside Unstan Tomb

The largest burial mound in the area is Maes Howe. This is another tomb, but a spectacular one. A Neolithic chambered tomb covered by a turf mound, it is considered one of the best in the world. The mound is about 35 metres in diameter and 7 metres high. Again, access was by crouched walk through a long (10 metres) low tunnel, the main body of the tomb is square, about 5 metres a side, with three chambers, one on each side except the side on which the access tunnel enters. The roof is

Maes Howe



vaulted and about 5 metres high. Some Norsemen were stranded sheltering in here for three days in the 12th century (according to a Norse saga) and left behind lots of runic graffiti, including some Christian symbols.

On another day, I visited Rousay, one of the north islands. An interesting Neolithic feature here is Midhowe Cairn, a huge multi-stall burial mound from about 3500 BC, now protected from the elements by a large shed built over it in the 1930s.



The barn-like structure over Midhowe Cairn

This structure has elevated walkways allowing us to see down into the burial chamber. We could walk round the outside and see how the cairn was built (it was completely uncovered) with a base of large slabs positioned flat to the ground, then a course of diagonally laid slabs, and in one place, it was clear that a higher course of stones was on the other diagonal. The top of the mound had been removed at some point, possibly to build something else with the stone. The walls of the cairn



Looking down the aisle of the cairn

were quite thick, several metres, with an inner and outer set of walls. The burial chamber was about 1.5 metres wide and 23.6 metres long, with vertical slabs dividing the 'stalls'. The remains of 25 bodies were found in the cairn, along with Unstan-ware pots and bones of animals and fish. It appears that the burial mound had a forecourt on the north end, bounded by curved 'horns' that may have been large enough for a ceremonial space that could hold over a hundred people. Rousay has 14 other chambered tombs, but Midhowe is the largest and easiest to visit, despite a trek across a couple of fields.

We also visited two other tombs on Rousay: the Blackhammer Cairn and Taversoe Tuick. The latter is an interesting cairn because it has two burial chambers, one above the other, divided by slabs of sandstone, with separate entrances for each. The upper entrance is at the back, the lower at the front, and there is a separate burial mound just down the hill a few metres. All are turfed over, but we were able to get in via the upper entrance, once inside a dislodged flooring slab and a ladder gave access to the lower chamber.



Taversoe Tuick

Moving on 1,000 years or so, and Iron Age settlements in the islands featured 'brochs' or round towers and 'weems' or underground houses. Some brochs are surrounded by other stone dwellings and defences. There is great debate among archaeologists as to whether the brochs were dwellings of high-status individuals, community dwellings, or simply storage places for crops. Surviving evidence of Iron Age inhabitants includes quern-stones for grinding grain, whorls and combs for weaving and shards of pottery. I visited one such broch on Rousay, near the Midhowe Cairn.

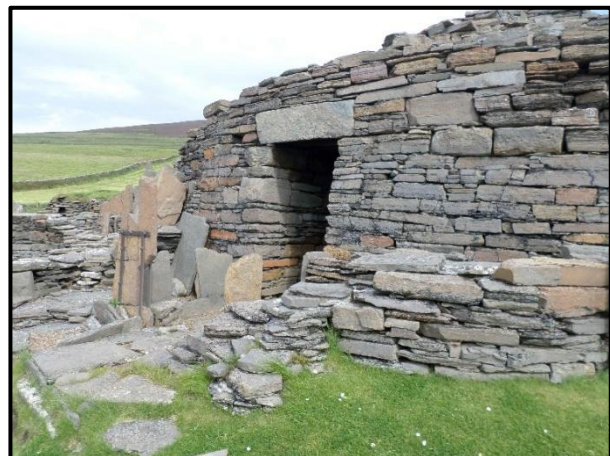


Midhowe Broch

Built in the Iron Age, about 2,000 years ago, it was positioned between two trench inlets from the sea. There was a defensive mound and ditch across the landward side. The circular floor plan (9 metres in diameter) was encompassed by two thick walls (4.5 metres deep) between which were stairways and usable but small rooms. The remaining walls (4 metres high) are estimated to be only half the height of the original broch. There were secondary stone buildings grouped around the broch.



The defensive inlet



The Broch entry



A crannog in Wabister Loch

Rousay has an internal Loch, Wabister Loch, in which are two Iron Age crannogs. Crannogs are artificial islands built in lochs to provide some defence and are usually built on wooden piles. The stone foundations of the Wabister crannogs are probably because of a lack of trees on the island and also helped preserve the structure. Excavations have found evidence of buildings and cooking fires.

Moving forward in time, there is some evidence that the Dal Riata kingdom may have extended to the islands in the early 5th century and Christian

missionaries, followers of St Columba, are said to have arrived in 565 AD. The 'Papa' element of some island names apparently commemorates the presence of hermits.

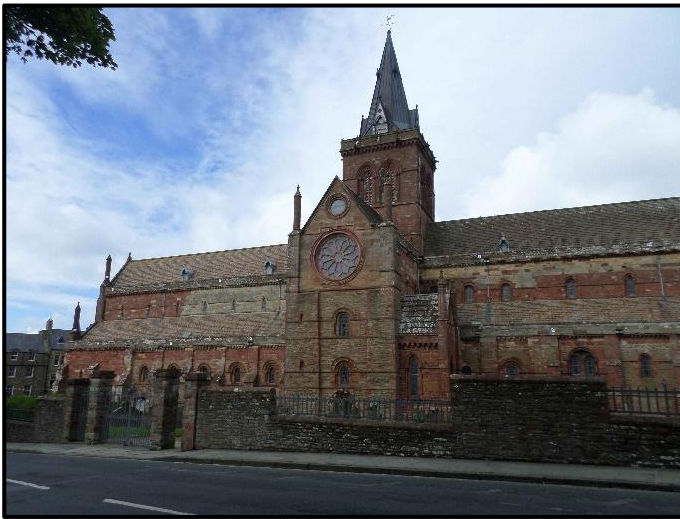
Harold Hårfagre (fair hair) annexed the Orkney and Shetland islands for Norway in 875 AD, after a period of Viking raids. An archaeological dig at Quoygrew, on Westray, explored the succession of buildings and occupation across the site.



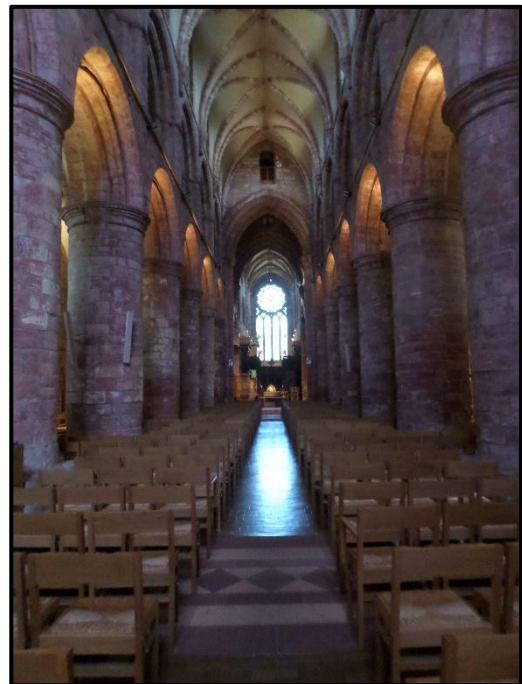
The Quoygrew site

It was a fish processing plant set up by the Norsemen in 950 to 1000 AD, producing so much good quality fish (they found bones suggesting 2-metre-long cod) that there was an export trade to Norway. As the buildings deteriorated, over time, new ones were built further up the hillside and the old ones were used for cattle and later became middens (for domestic rubbish). The final occupants of the croft left in 1937; they had combined farming, fishing and kelp collection.

Christianity was accepted at some point during the Norse occupation and many churches were established in the 12th and 13th centuries. St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall was founded in 1137, by the Viking Earl Rognvald in honour of his uncle, St Magnus, who was martyred on the island of Egilsay. His bones are interred in one of the columns of the Cathedral.



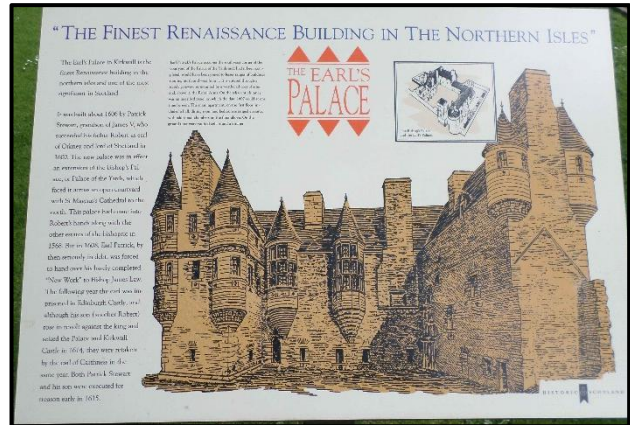
St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall



Nave of St Magnus Cathedral

It took 300 years to complete the cathedral, and it was formally assigned to the inhabitants of Kirkwall by King James III of Scotland in 1486. The British Government carried out a restoration in 1845 to 1850, and another restoration occurred between 1905 and 1930, when the pyramidal cap on the tower was replaced by a steeple.

Norwegian Earls ruled Orkney until 1231, when the bloodline died out, the earldom was peacefully passed to Magnus, the second son of the Earl of Angus, but remained under the rule of the King of Norway. However, in 1468, the islands of Orkney and Shetland became the dowry of Margaret (daughter of Christian I of Norway) when she married King James III of Scotland. Originally the islands were posted as a sort of bond until a cash dowry could be paid, but since that never happened, the islands became Scottish. There was still an Earl of Orkney in 1471, one William, presumably a descendant of Magnus, when the earldom was exchanged for the castle and lands of Ravenscraft, in Fife. The following year the earldom was annexed to the Crown, by an act of parliament.



Artist's rendition of the Earl's Palace

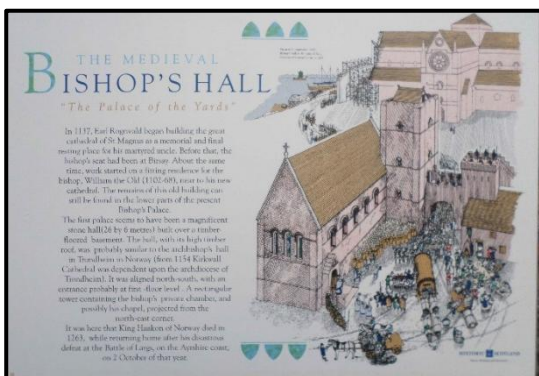
In 1564 Lord Robert Stewart (illegitimate son of James V, half-brother to Mary Queen of Scots) was created sheriff of Orkney and Shetland, becoming Earl of Orkney in 1581, under James VI. Robert's son Patrick inherited the title. He began the construction of the Earl's Palace in Kirkwall in 1607. Patrick was infamous for his 'godless nature and tyrannical rule' and was executed for treason in 1615. After his execution the earldom again reverted to the Crown. The Earl's Palace is promoted as the finest relic of renaissance architecture in Scotland, and it did have impressive oriel windows and decorated doorways. It had lost its roof by the end of the 18th century.



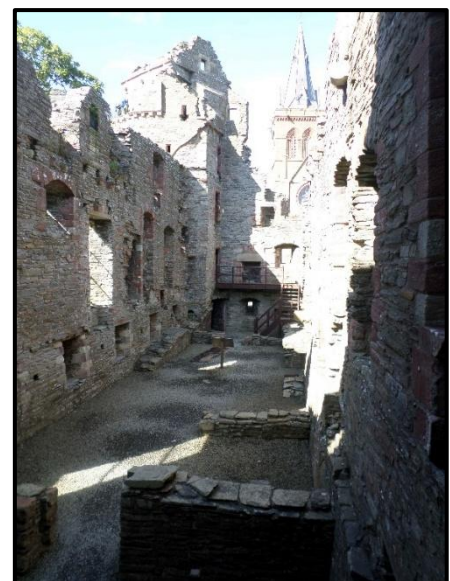
Remains of the Earl's Palace

Near to the Earl's Palace and the cathedral, lies the Bishop's Palace. It was originally a simple rectangular building dating to the foundation of the cathedral in the 12th century. Bishop Roger Reid (1541 to 1558) heightened the walls and added the tower, and

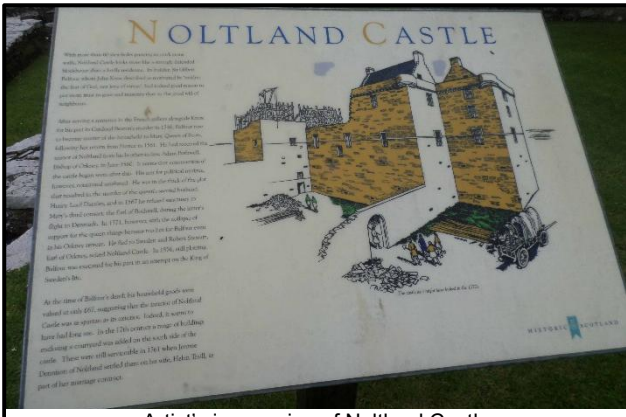
Earl Patrick added an extension at the same time as he had the Earl's Palace built. Currently it is roofless, but one can climb up the spiral stair to the top of the tower for excellent views of the cathedral.



Artist's impression of the Bishop's Palace



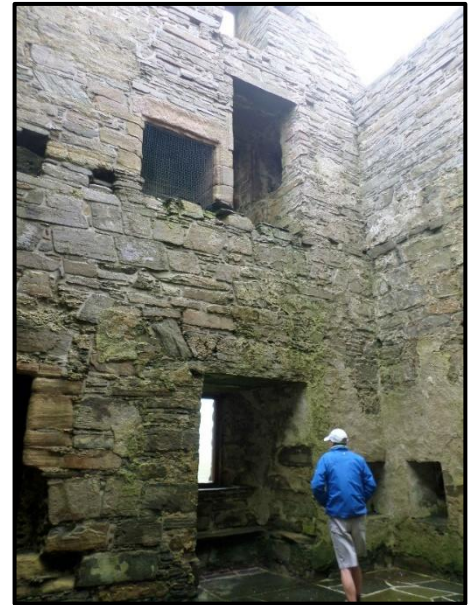
Interior of the Bishop's Palace



Artist's impression of Noltland Castle

Balfour was heavily into political intrigue. He was implicated in the murder of a Bishop in St Andrews in 1546 and involved in the plot that led to the murder of Henry, Lord Darnley, the Queen's consort, in 1567. As support for the Queen waned, he fled first to Noltland and then to Sweden in 1571, where he was executed a few years later for his part in a plot against the King of Sweden! The castle was seized by Lord Robert Stewart in 1571. The Castle survived well into the 18th century, despite being set afire by Covenanters in the 1650s and finally by Hanoverian forces in 1745. The inscription over the main door reads 'When I see blood I will pass over you in the night', a quote from Exodus that seems to sum up Balfour's character.

Somewhat before construction of the Earl's Palace, Noltland Castle was built by Gilbert Balfour on Westray. Balfour was Master of the Household of Mary Queen of Scots, and brother-in-law of Adam Bothwell, the Bishop of Orkney at the time. He had the castle built as a stronghold, but it was never fully completed.



Inside Noltland Castle



The castle is a Z plan, the central block having two square towers on the diagonal. There are a kitchen and storerooms on the ground floor, with a great hall above, supported by barrel vaults. Above the great hall were further living quarters, but the upper floors have collapsed. A lovely wide red sandstone spiral stair in one of the corner towers connects the floors.

The spiral stair, Noltland Castle

Near to Noltland Castle, is the Peirowall Lady Kirk, a church originating in the 13th century but much reconstructed in 1674. It has a couple of 17th century tombstones against an inner wall. Derelict and roofless its floor is now below the outside ground level due to sand thrown ashore in a 19th century storm! The locals dug down to expose the doors and repositioned the windows upwards. Later burials were dug into the new level, above pre-existing graves.



Peirowall Lady Kirk

During the Protectorate (1650s), a detachment of Cromwell's troops visited Orkney, and used St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall to stable their horses. A number of castles in the islands were destroyed by the troops. Skaill House, near Skara Brae, dates from the 17th century but, not being a defensive structure, it survived the Protectorate. It has Captain Cook's dinner service on display! It also has a large chest said to have been rescued from the wreck of one of the ships of the Spanish Armada.



Captain Cook's dinner service at Skaill House



Noup Head and Lighthouse

In the 19th century, many lighthouses were established on the coast of Scotland. One of these is at Noup Head on Westray, which is also now a nature reserve. The tall cliffs of the headland are a perfect place for seabird nests. Unfortunately, the puffins had left just before we arrived. The lighthouse was built by David A Stevenson, of the famous lighthouse-building Stevenson family, completed in 1898.

Representing Orkney in the 19th century, Stromness has links to both Australia and Canada. The Stromness main street is narrow with quite old houses, many of which had lovely flower boxes or pots, adding colour to an otherwise grey streetscape.



The narrow main street in Stromness



Eliza Fraser's house, Stromness

I found a house stated to be the former home of Eliza Fraser (1798-1858), who survived a shipwreck in Australia (in 1836) and about whom a film was made in 1976. She was born in England, but lived in Stromness for some years. She left three children in Stromness in the care of a Presbyterian minister before sailing to Australia with her husband, the ship's captain. Eliza and her children were later re-united and appear to have settled in New Zealand.



Memorial to Dr John Rae, Stromness

In the town museum I discovered that a local hero is Dr John Rae (1813-1893), a 19th century Arctic explorer who was left out of many history books because he found the remains of an earlier expedition to attempt the north-west passage and reported that there was evidence of cannibalism, which offended the relatives and friends of the original expedition. His father was an agent for the Hudson Bay Company in Stromness, they recruited Orcadians because they were more tolerant of cold conditions than southerners. The museum was full of interesting stuff, some about Dr Rae, a room full of model ships, a huge room with natural history items including many stuffed birds, and some exhibits of archaeological finds from Ness of Brodger.

Then we arrive in the 20th century, and the World Wars. Orkney was important for the sheltered water south of Mainland called Scapa Flow, a huge deep-water anchorage. In WWI the Royal Navy had a major base there to prevent German warships using a northerly route into the Atlantic. There was also a seaplane base on Scapa Flow, but strong winds and tidal problems reduced its effectiveness. At the end of the war, the German Navy was commanded to gather in Scapa Flow, but before a decision on its future was made, the entire fleet was scuttled by order of the German Admiral, rather than hand over the fleet for British use. However, many ships were raised again and those remaining below the sea are visited by scuba divers.



Site of the seaplane base at Skapa Flow

In the first month of WWII, on 14 October 1939, the Royal Navy battleship HMS Royal Oak was sunk by a German U-boat in Scapa Flow, with the loss of 835 lives. The wreck is a designated war grave; and it is not a dive site. Each year on the anniversary of the sinking a Royal Navy dive team goes down to replace the flag on the ship's stern, bringing up the flag positioned the previous year, and delivering it to St Magnus Cathedral where it hangs until the next year.



The Royal Oak memorial, St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall



To prevent further infiltration by U-boats, the Churchill Barriers were built between the eastern islands that protect Scapa Flow, from Mainland to Lamb Horn, Glimps Horn and Burray to South Ronaldsay. Completed in 1944, the total length is 2.3 kilometres. Now one can drive between these islands on a road atop the barrier, basically a series of four causeways.

One of the Churchill Barriers

Italian Prisoners of War were used as labour to construct the barriers. In their spare time they built a chapel in a Nissan hut, out of scrap. A painter and a blacksmith among the men did most of the work resulting in a beautiful artwork. The Italianate Chapel is now a tourist attraction on Lamb Holm.



The Italianate Chapel



The Italianate Chapel interior

If you have ancestors from Orkney, there is an Orkney Family History Society, which is based at the Orkney Library and Archives in Kirkwall. Formed in 1997, the society has about 1,600 members. Their website is at [www.orkneyfhs.co.uk](http://www.orkneyfhs.co.uk) and provides information in a members' area as well as links to useful resources. The most interesting of the resources are the digitised family trees of families with links to Orkney.

A few years ago, I heard a paper at a Shetland FHS conference on-line, it was titled '*Genetic Studies of Shetland and Orkney*'. It is a fascinating look at genetic groupings within the United Kingdom and reveals that the Orkney islanders are quite distinct genetically, from mainland Scots, English and Irish, and the Shetland Islanders are distinct as well.

Finally, I came across a One Place study on North Walls and Brims, which are at the southern-most point of Hoy, and which may be interesting if you have family in the area. There may be other Orkney One Place studies to look at as well.

The Orkney Islands were a wonderful place to visit. There is a regular ferry service from Aberdeen to Kirkwall and from Scrabster to Stromness. Loganair operates flights from a variety of centres to Kirkwall.

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## Got to love the Scots!!!



Published on the We love Scotland FB page 29 September 2025

## Crowdie

Submitted by Mel Woodford

A soft cheese made by crofters in Scotland often using milk from the family cow. It has a fresh, slightly acidic taste and dates back many centuries. It is often eaten with oatcakes or turned into a dessert called Cranachan.



From *The Pie Journal*

## Cranachan

Submitted by Mel Woodford

An old Scottish dessert consisting of:

Raspberries	Toasted Oatmeal
Crowdie	Whisky
Honey	

Made to celebrate the raspberry harvest in August each year.

Click here for the recipe:

<https://scottishscr.com/traditional-scottish-cranachan-recipe/>

(Try substituting the crowdie for ricotta or perhaps even Greek yoghurt.)



## Graveside Bagpipe Player Gets Lost!

From All Things Scottish Facebook page – 24 September 2025

As a bagpiper, I play many gigs. Recently I was asked by a funeral director to play at a graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper's cemetery in the Saskatchewan back country. As I was not familiar with the backwoods, I got lost and, being a typical man, I didn't stop for directions. I finally arrived an hour late and saw the funeral guy had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight. There were only the diggers and crew left and they were eating lunch. I felt badly and apologised to the men for being late. I went to the side of the grave and looked down and the vault lid was already in place. I didn't know what else to do, so I started to play. The workers put down their lunches and began to gather around. I played out my heart and soul for this man with no family and friends. I played like I've never played before for this homeless man. And as I played 'Amazing Grace', the workers began to weep. They wept, I wept, we all wept together. When I finished, I packed up my bagpipes and started for my car. Though my head hung low, my heart was full. As I opened the door to my car, I heard one of the workers say, 'I never seen nothin' like that before and I've been putting in septic tanks for twenty years'.

## Welcome to Inverness

Article written by Lea Harris. Information from an AI overview and the Kingsmills Hotel website

**Inverness**, the capital of the Highlands, is a city steeped in history and natural beauty. The city serves as the main gateway to the Scottish Highlands, offering access to stunning landscapes and attractions like Loch Ness. It is sometimes referred to as the ‘happiest place in Scotland’ and is one of the fastest-growing cities in Europe. Locals often refer to Inverness as ‘Inversneckie’. There have been settlers in this region since at least the 6th century when it was first ruled by an ancient tribe called the Picts.

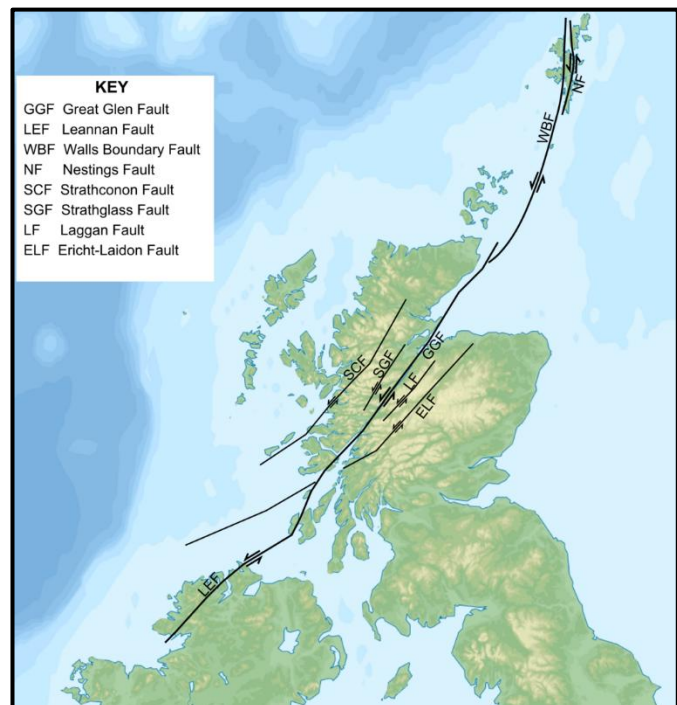


Image from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inverness>

The **name Inverness** comes from the Scottish Gaelic ‘*Inbhir Nis*’, which means ‘Mouth of the River Ness’. The word ‘*Ness*’, which also gives its name to Loch Ness, is of Pictish origin, coming from the river goddess ‘*Nessa*’. Legend has it that Dark Beira, mother of the gods, transformed *Nessa* into the River Ness. This was a punishment for running away from her duties, so she was forced to run forever in the water. However, she broke free of the river, forming the waters of Loch Ness. It is said that every year, on the anniversary of her transformation, *Nessa* appears from the loch, singing a sad and beautiful song.

The river goddess *Nessa*, and the origins of the River Ness and Loch Ness are only the start. You would have heard the tale of the Loch Ness Monster, the beast that is said to lurk in the depths of the loch. But there are many more great **myths and legends** of the Inverness area. Click here on the Kingsmills Hotel’s blog for more myths and legends such as the Mermaid of Kessock, the Fiddlers of Tomnahurich and the Ghosts of Culloden.

Inverness is the **most northerly city in the UK**. It lies on the Great Glen Fault, a fault line which stretches across Scotland from Inverness to Fort William. It is known as a strike-slip fault, where the rocks on each side of the line move in opposite directions. This makes it a site of great geological interest.



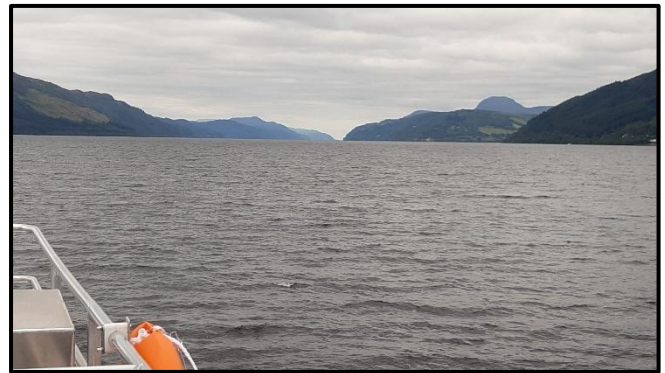
Map of the Great Glen Fault and other late Caledonian strike-slip faults in Scotland and northwestern Ireland. Image from Wikipedia



The **Caledonian Canal**, a historic waterway, connects the Moray Firth with the western sea and passes through Inverness. There are several historic bridges, including the Greig Street Bridge, that cross the River Ness. This bridge is nicknamed the ‘bouncy bridge’ due to its noticeable movement when people jump on it.

Caledonian Canal - image from much better adventures website

Nearby **Loch Ness** is Britain’s largest lake by volume. ‘Loch’ is the Scottish word for ‘lake’. And this lake is not only one of the most famous. It’s also one of the largest. Loch Ness is the largest lake by water volume, containing almost double the water of all the lakes in England and Wales put together! This is due to its great depth of up to 230 metres. And Urquhart Castle lies on the banks of Loch Ness.



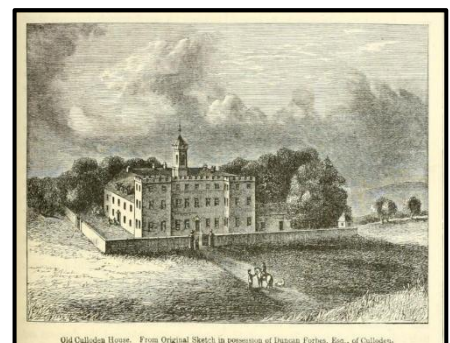
Part of Loch Ness - photo by Lea Harris 2024

**Inverness has three twins.** The city is twinned with Augsburg in Germany, as well as La Baule and Saint-Valery-en-Caux in France. The first twinning with Augsburg took place in 1956, as a way of promoting good will between Britain and Germany after World War Two. Then Inverness was twinned with La Baule in 1981, due to connections between the two town councils. Finally, Saint-Valery-en-Caux became a twin town in 1987, which stemmed from the way the two towns had supported each other during WWII. There is even an Inverness Town Twinning Committee, which encourages friendship and understanding between the people of Inverness and its linked towns, co-ordinating visits between them.

It’s a **Millennium City**. In the UK, official city status must be granted by the monarch. Simply having a cathedral or a university is not enough. So, Inverness was not officially a city until the year 2000, when it was granted city status by the Queen as part of the UK’s millennium celebrations, along with Wolverhampton and Brighton & Hove, in England.

The **Battle of Culloden**, a pivotal moment in Scottish history, took place just outside Inverness.

And talking about battles, did you know that there was once an **entire battle fought over cheese** in Inverness? The story goes that back in 1668, a gentleman named Finlay Dhu knocked some cheese into the River Ness and refused to pay for it. As a result, an almighty battle broke out throughout the entire town, resulting in a number of bloody murders. So, before you pinch that last slice of cheddar, you might want to think twice in Inverness.



Culloden House, in 1746, where the Jacobite leader Charles Edward Stuart had his headquarters and lodgings in the days leading up to the Battle of Culloden. Image from Wikipedia



Inverness Castle - photo by Lea Harris 2024

**Macbeth and Inverness Castle.** In Shakespeare's play Macbeth, Inverness Castle was the site where Macbeth murdered King Duncan. The castle features a few times in the play and is where Macbeth's descent into madness begins. Interesting! Today you can visit the castle and climb the viewing platform for spectacular city views. And, in the summer, the pipe band practice on the castle lawns in the evening.

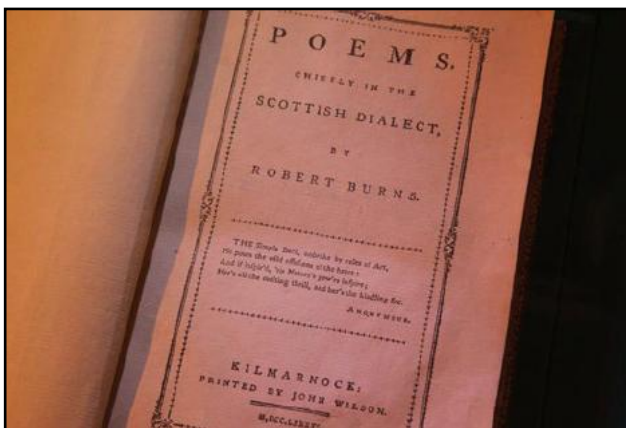
The **Old High Church** (Old High St. Stephen's) is the oldest church and congregation in the Highland capital, with its distinctive architecture and stained glass. The University of the Highlands and Islands is located in Inverness.



The Old High Church - Image from Wikipedia

## Do you know the answer?

See last page to find out if you're right



Which famous US novel based its title from a poem by Robert Burns?

- 'Catcher in the Rye' by J.D. Salinger
- 'Catch 22' by Joseph Heller
- 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' by Ken Kesey
- 'The Grapes of Wrath' by John Steinbeck

## Wingham Scottish Festival 2025

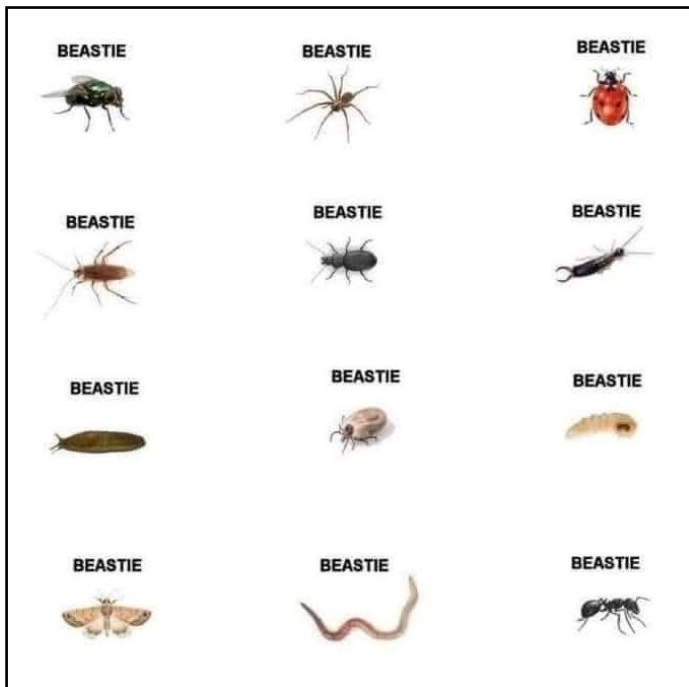
Thanks to one of our Facebook members, Candy Hawkins, who attended the Wingham Scottish Festival and gave us permission to publish some of her wonderful photos of the day. While she was there, she caught up for a chat with the City of Newcastle RSL Pipe Band, of which her mother was a member back in the 1950s.





## Scottish Wildlife Identifications

Forwarded by Ken Shilling – so now you'll know what you're looking at



## Scottish SIG

Visit our NFHS website to see what our Scottish Special Interest Group (SIG) is all about. You can also download previous issues of our *Caledonian* newsletter if you would like.

<https://nfhs.org.au/scotland/>

We also have a wonderful podcast presented by members of the Scottish SIG which outlines what the group does, reports on their Open Day held in August 2023 and gives an introduction to the Scottish Old Parochial Registers. To listen to the podcast, click on the link below.

<https://nfhs.org.au/nfhs-scottish-sig-group/>

**Miscellaneous**

# Scottish Special Interest Group

**Tuesday, 10 February 2026 at 1pm**

**Tuesday, 10 March 2026 at 1pm**

**Tuesday, 14 April 2026 at 1pm**



**All interested NFHS members are invited.  
New members to the group are always  
welcome.**

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

Our next *Caledonian* will  
be the Candlemas issue on  
28 February 2026

Which famous US novel based its title from a poem  
by Robert Burns?

## **Answer**

The correct answer is 'Catcher in the Rye' by J.D.  
Salinger

J.D. Salinger's famous 1951 novel 'Catcher in the Rye'  
based its title from a poem by Robert Burns 'Comin'  
Thro' the Rye'.