



The Desert Scene

Whatever happened to January!!!...at least from my perspective the month just flew by. The very nice weather has a lot to do with it considering the mostly bad weather being experienced across the USA and Canada. The Coachella valley is to say the least an interesting area. What with Federal raids on the "Scottish Embassy" at the Celtic shop in Palm Springs! No doubt the Scottish parliament will have something to say about the seizure of kilts and sporrans...watch this space for future developments!!!

The Palm Springs film festival was a delight. One particular movie is on the "must see" for anyone of Scottish descent. It is named "The Stone of Destiny" and is Scottish and Canadian joint production based upon a true story of how four Scottish students broke into Westminster Abbey and removed the Stone of Destiny in the middle of the night and returned it to it's rightful home in Scotland.

For those who might not know the significance of this, the Stone of Destiny is a slab of stone which was the coronation stone of Scottish kings from centuries back. Edward I stole the stone in the early 1300s and had it placed under the throne of England. The message was that English kings then had the right to the kingdom of Scotland as they were crowned in the Abbey.

The movie stars Robert Carlyle well know for his portrayal of a Skye policeman in "Hamish Macbeth" and as a ringleader in the movie "The Full Monty". There is cast of young Scottish actors who add great character and humour to the movie.

Lastly while I am on a movie kick, Liz and I were delighted to meet Ernest Borgnine who was in Palm Springs to promote his autobiography. He was gracious enough to let us have our photographs taken with him. Only in Palm Springs eh!!!

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Scots and their Clergy

During the Highland Clearances in the early nineteenth century, residents of Kildonan parish in the far northeast corner of Scotland found themselves facing eviction from homes they had occupied for generations. Several Macbeaths, along with Bannermans, Sutherlands, Mathesons, Gunns, and McKays, were involved. They found a friend and advocate in Thomas Douglas, Sixth Earl of Selkirk, who offered to sell them land, on very favorable terms, in a settlement His Lordship was developing on the Red River in southern Manitoba. The Highlanders accepted the offer enthusiastically, but with one important condition: that a minister of the Scottish Kirk accompany them to the Canadian wilderness.

The minister was to be Donald Sage, son of their long-time Kildonan minister. As the first wave of immigrants prepared to leave in 1813, The Reverend Mr. Sage requested that his son's departure be delayed for a year, until his Gaelic improved. The Selkirk settlers, as they would become known to history, agreed to this delay as long as Lord Selkirk gave his guarantee, which he did. But Donald Sage did not come the next year, or even in 1815 with the second wave. In fact, he never came. One of the settlers, James Sutherland, had been authorized to perform marriages and baptisms, but the Scots wanted a fully qualified, Presbyterian minister.

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“Without our minister,” one of them declared bitterly before a Justice at Red River, “we would not have come.”

In 1820, an Anglican clergyman came to the Red River settlement and founded St. John’s Church. The Anglican congregation welcomed the Scots and together they worked out a compromise of their quite different liturgies by simplifying the Anglican worship service and adopting the Scottish Psalter. The Scots appreciated these gestures of hospitality and some of them converted to Anglicanism. Most, however, remained committed to their Presbyterian faith and they continued to press for a minister of the Scottish Kirk. The Anglican priest wrote of them in 1823:

These people brought their religion to this country along with them, and are conscientiously wedded to the rights and discipline of the Presbyterian form of worship, and nothing will make them forsake the Church of their forefathers.

Scots are not known for flexibility or short memories and over the years that followed, the Selkirk Settlers continued imploring the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Church of Scotland to send them a Presbyterian minister. One such petition to the Board of Directors of the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1844, fully 30 years after the immigration, read in part:

Before leaving Scotland, petitioners had a solemn promise from the late Earl of Selkirk that a clergyman of their own church would either accompany them to this country, or join them the following year in it. When His Lordship visited the colony in the year 1817, this promise was renewed . . .

Therefore, your petitioners would most humbly and respectfully implore your honourable board to send this colony a Presbyterian clergyman, of the Kirk of Scotland, for their edification and instruction; and, as their means will furnish him with but a small stipend, you would be pleased, according to your usual liberality, to contribute something towards his support.



How Scottish! Not only did they want the Company to provide a minister, but also to pay for it!

Their repeated pleadings and appeals fell on deaf ears. Lord Selkirk had died in 1820 and the Hudson's Bay Company claimed no knowledge of any promise about a minister. Moreover, the Church of Scotland had little interest in the problems of immigrants in another continent. Finally, the Presbyterian Church of Canada responded, arranging for The Reverend John Black to make the long and arduous journey from eastern Canada by rail, stagecoach, and birch bark canoe to the Red River. Here he preached his first sermon on

September 28, 1851, nearly 40 years after the first settlers arrived. There was some initial disappointment that Black, a Lowlander, did not speak Gaelic, but this feeling soon abated. A log manse was built and then in 1854 a church building was completed. The Reverend Mr. Black had a long and extremely successful ministry, until his death in 1882. A tall red granite memorial marks his gravesite in Kildonan Cemetery.

***Roy Macbeth Pitkin
La Quinta, California***

Scottish Supplement

This month's collection includes:

Special Royal Mail set of stamps to mark the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns on 25 January; ~ The City Chambers in Glasgow being

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used as the backdrop for a 15-minute "slide-show" illustrating the life of Burns; ~ The City Chambers covered in musical notation as part of the presentation; ~ "Auld Lang Syne" across the City Chambers at the end of the slide show; ~ A substantial clump of snowdrops (first of the year!) in bloom at the side of a country road, just north of Glasgow.

***For all these graphics and further information, see:
<http://www.rampantscotland.com/colour/supplement090131.htm>***

Who we are and where we are from.....

Moreen McGhie

Moreen was born in Dalry, Ayrshire, Scotland, and grew up in Kilbirnie, Ayrshire. Her mother was Peggy McArthur. The McArthurs came from the highlands, the McGhies originated in the borders.

She graduated from Moray House College in Edinburgh, as a teacher. (Moray House was the house of the Earl of Moray, who was the brother of Mary Queen of Scots.) She also graduated from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada with a B.Ed.

She married Bob Blair in Dalry Ayrshire, and gave birth to Rosalind Margaret in Irvine Central hospital, Ayrshire. Robert Samuel (Roy) arrived three years later in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Bob Blair

Bob was born in Barrmill, near Beith, Ayrshire, Scotland. His Blair ancestors originated in this area. His mother was a McBeth. He attended Spiers School then Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities. Bob, before retirement, was an agricultural scientist, researcher, and University professor. He is currently writing a book on "Organics".

The Blairs came to Canada in 1975. Bob was director of nutrition with Swifts in Toronto. They then moved to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where Bob was a professor in the University of Saskatchewan. Finally they moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where Bob was head of the Department of Animal Science at the University of British Columbia.

Moreen and Bob are Snowbirds who love to come down to Palm Springs for three months in the winter.

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Burns Supper

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped make our Burns supper a very successful event this year.

A special thanks to Rab Heggie and the Palm Springs pipe band for bringing the Royal Canadian Mounted Police pipe band here to perform for us.....they were fantastic. I saw them perform at several venues here in the desert this year, and I can honestly say that they saved their best performance for us.



A very special thanks to Ray Oliver, who came all the way from Canada as our special guest to MC and address the haggis. Ray did a magnificent job of addressing the haggis.

Thanks also to Marshall German who played for us. Marshall is only 16 years old and has already won many awards. He performed at the McCallum Theatre this year with the Royal Guards, and we were privileged to have him play for us. I hope that Marshall will be able to attend future Scottish Society events.

The Hyatt Grand Resort is to be complimented on the service and food they supplied, it was first class. Thanks also to Nicole Valdez of the Hyatt for all of her help in organizing the event.

***Ina Gibbons
President***

Footnote.....Amazing Grace

Overheard at the Burns supper was the question of where the tune "Amazing Grace" originated. I admit to being off with this one as I was sure it was Scottish in origin. It is actually a hymn composed by William Wilberforce, an Anglican clergyman (1725-1787). Wilberforce was early on in his life a captain of a slave ship. He completely turned around his life, found religion and become an Abolitionist who was very active in repealing the slave act in Britain ...A recommended movie is "Amazing Grace" which tells that story and is only a few years old.....

Amazing Grace never fails to bring emotion out in us all. Interestingly enough the hymn was very popular on both sides of the civil war conflict in America.

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Mark your Calendars

February 14-15	Queen Mary Highland Games, Long Beach
February 21, 2009	Luncheon at Billie Reeds Restaurant
March 14, 2009	Luncheon at Billie Reeds Restaurant
April 4, 2009	Celebrate National Tartan Day at Desert Falls Country Club
May 9, 2009	TBA
June 13, 2009	TBA

This month in History

February 5 1723

The Birth of John Witherspoon, the only clergyman to sign the American Declaration of Independence, at Yester, near Edinburgh. A son of the Reverend James Witherspoon and Anne Walker, he was educated at the University of Edinburgh, taking a master of arts in 1739 and a divinity degree in 1743.

February 7 1883

Birth of mathematician and science fiction writer, Eric Temple Bell, in Aberdeen. A son of James Bell and Helen Jane Lindsay-Lyall, he was educated at the University of London then emigrated to the United States in 1902.

February 8 1587

The execution of Mary Queen of Scots at Fotheringhay Castle, Northamptonshire, England. Mary, who had been Queen of Scots since her birth year of 1542, and briefly Queen of France as well, was a focal point of the religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in both Scotland and England.

February 13 1692

The infamous massacre at Glencoe, where over three dozen MacDonalds, suspected as being Jacobite supporters and late in swearing allegiance to King William, were brutally killed by soldiers commanded by Captain Robert Campbell of Glen Lyon.

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February 20 1874

Birth of opera singer Mary Garden in Aberdeen. The daughter of Robert Davidson Garden, an engineer, and Mary Joss, her father established himself in the United States and sent for his family when Garden was six years old. The family lived in New York, Massachusetts, and Chicago where her regular schooling was sporadic.

February 28 1638

Signing of the National Covenant in the Greyfriar's Churchyard, Edinburgh. Initiated by Scottish churchmen, it rejected attempts by King Charles I to force Scotland to adopt English church governance and liturgical practice, especially the Book of Common Prayer.

Membership

For Membership information please contact Dwight Fine

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Contact us

Any short pieces of interesting and relevant articles for future newsletters will be most welcome. Please contact us on topics with a Scottish connection and we will do our best to publish in future editions. Your newsletter contact is Alec Norrie at anorrie@radarinteractive.com

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