

AUTUMN TREATS from fungi spotting to Halloween fun

HISTORIC SCOTLAND

AUTUMN 2026

THE MAGAZINE FOR HISTORIC SCOTLAND MEMBERS



Who was mapping our past with this compass?

Southern odyssey

Our guide to seven historic gems

REVEALED

Scotland's follies

Eccentric legacies in the landscape

WILD BLOOMS

Tips from the Gardening Team

Discover a property near you



Whithorn Priory P24



Linlithgow Palace P28



Caerlaverock Castle P39



Urquhart Castle P37



Mischiefous fairies from Gaelic folklore

Leave a Gift for the Scotland You Love

At Dryburgh Abbey, a unique carved stone capital is being safeguarded for future generations. Centuries of weathering and the growing impacts of climate change threaten this remarkable piece of Scotland's history with irreversible loss.

Conservation work is now underway thanks to a generous legacy gift left to the Historic Scotland Foundation.

By remembering us in your Will, you can help protect the historic places that tell Scotland's story. Every gift, large or small, supports vital conservation work and helps ensure these special places are looked after for generations to come.



Leave a gift that stands the test of time.
Find out how at hes.scot/legacies

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Welcome to HISTORIC SCOTLAND

“Hello autumn, we’ve been expecting you. But that doesn’t mean an end to heritage adventures at our places and properties.

Far from it. In this issue of *Historic Scotland*, we’re not short of ideas for seasonal days out, where you can discover even more about Scotland’s spellbinding history.

Let’s begin with our guide to seven wonderful sites across the south of Scotland – places that have witnessed power struggles and events that have shaped our past and present. Don’t forget to add to your collection of History Hunt cards on your travels (page 20).

If you’ve been enjoying the Historic Scotland Podcast, or have yet to tune in, join podcast host Sarah MacGillivray on page 34 as she takes us behind the scenes to meet the team bringing history vividly to life.

On page 28, we head back in time at Linlithgow Palace, where finishing touches are being made to a wondrous centrepiece fit for a royal visit. And we revel in a feast of follies – stone eccentricities in the landscape – to celebrate the bicentenary of Scotland’s unfinished National Monument (page 42).

To make the most of the October break, turn to pages 52-55 for experiences and activities for all ages, plus exclusive events just for members.

Bring on those glorious autumn days!

Claire Bowie

CLAIRE BOWIE
Head of Membership & CRM

LIVING LEGENDS

Would you like to confront a knight of the realm or a Norse warrior? Or be soothed by some sounds courtesy of a medieval minstrel? Maybe you’d prefer to chat with royalty? Our Big Living History Week is back at sites across Scotland, promising a glittering line-up of characters with enthralling tales to share. Well, that’s the October break sorted.

● Find out more on page 52.



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is an award-winning columnist and arts writer for *The Herald*.
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SARAH MACGILLIVRAY
is an award-winning actor and writer, and host of the Historic Scotland Podcast.
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JOE WATERFIELD
is an Archivist for HES, who recently gave a talk about 18th-century Tours of Scotland.
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Photography

All images provided by Historic
Environment Scotland unless
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or email images@hes.scot

Historic Scotland is published
quarterly and printed on Galerie
Brite Bulk, which is from well-
managed FSC®-certified forests
and from other controlled sources.

The views expressed in the
magazine do not necessarily reflect
those of Historic Environment
Scotland. All information is correct
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Scottish Charity No. SC045925.



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Hear great stories
from the Historic
Scotland Podcast team



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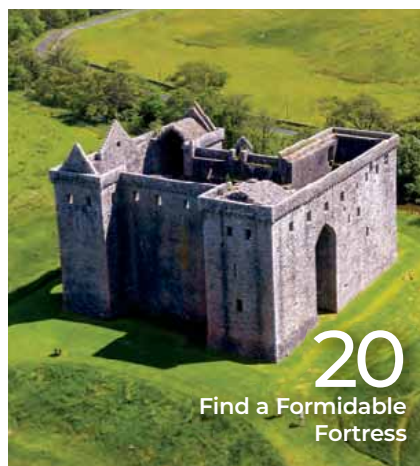
Your *Historic Scotland*
magazine is also available
as an accessible PDF.
You can find it at
hes.scot/members-magazine
or get in touch with our
Membership Team to
request a copy.



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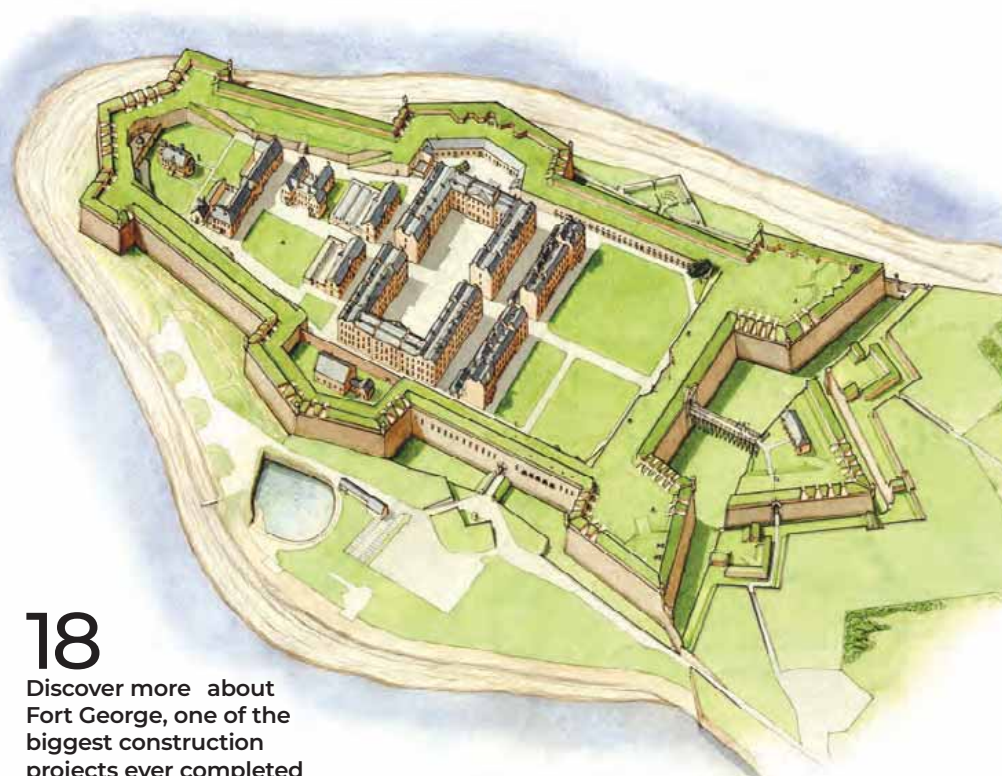
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in the Highlands



BIG PICTURE

CAIRNPAPPLE HILL

Commanding beautiful views over the Bathgate Hills, this summit was a significant ceremonial and burial complex for four millennia

Cairnpapple Hill in West Lothian is a local landmark with an impressively long prehistory. Its antiquity was first revealed in 1947-48 by Professor Stuart Piggott from the University of Edinburgh.

His excavations suggested that the hill had been a hub of activity for over 4,000 years – dating from the early Neolithic period (c. 3800 BC) to the early Christian era (AD 500-1000).

The earliest recorded activity at the site were six hearths, which when

excavated contained shards of pottery and two stone-axe fragments from axe factories discovered in Wales and Cumbria. This pointed to Cairnpapple Hill's early Neolithic farmers having connections with other areas of the British Isles.

During the later Neolithic period, the hearth phase was covered by a large henge monument – an oval earthwork enclosure. The purpose of the ceremonies that took place remain a mystery, but archaeologists believe they stopped around 4,000 years ago.

Despite this, the site clearly remained a spot of great reverence. During the early Bronze Age, several important figures were laid to rest within the henge. The first person to be buried wore a mask and had pots of food placed beside them – presumably to sustain them on their travels to the afterlife.

Today, the 1940s-built concrete dome you'll see at the site's centre mimics the footprint of the second Bronze Age cairn built here.

Step back to the prehistoric past





The ancient site within a modern landscape

SPEND A DAY AT CAIRNPAPPLE HILL

MUST-DOS

● See the visitor centre's new display of replica tools, learn how they were used and then try your hand at some prehistoric skills. You can also enjoy our fun fact-finding quiz while exploring the monument. Admire stunning views across the Forth Valley and, if weather allows, beyond to Arran.

ACCESSIBILITY

● The site is reached via 500 metres of rough, uphill ground and agricultural land. The path is reached by six stone steps with a handrail followed by a steep slope with 51 steps and a handrail.

DOGS

● Assistance dogs have full access to the site. Other dogs are allowed on site but not in roofed areas.



Plan your next day out at Cairnpapple Hill at historyawaits.scot

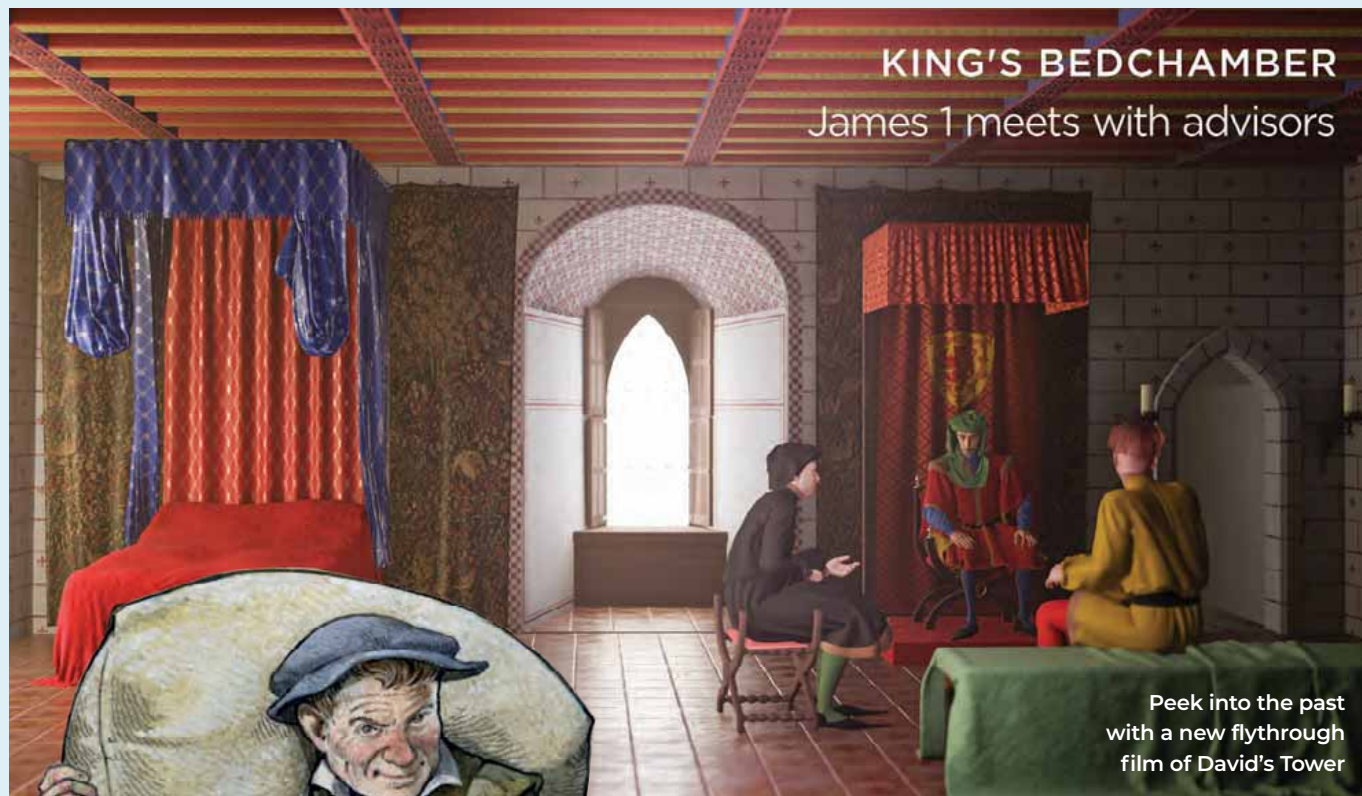
SHUTTERSTOCK



CAIRNPAPPLE HILL

Make the most of your membership

Spotlighting autumn's unmissable events, activities and updates



KING'S BEDCHAMBER

James 1 meets with advisors

Peek into the past with a new flythrough film of David's Tower

Discover Edinburgh Castle's latest experiences

It's all happening at Edinburgh Castle! See a short new flythrough film revealing the lost grandeur of David's Tower, once a royal residence, and unleash your detective skills along our Mystery of the Missing Unicorn Horn trail (for ages 7+).

Solve the clues, crack the code, then enter the password on your own device to unlock the case.

New interpretive panels offer extra insight into the stronghold's past,

and shield-shaped markers make it easier to follow the audio guide.

Intriguing new objects are now displayed in the Prisons of War exhibition. Sensory backpacks and ear defenders are available too.

We've also expanded the Portcullis Gift Shop, where you'll find St Andrews

Links golfing products, Edinburgh Castle tartan and more.

● Plan your day out at historyawaits.scot

Characters from history feature in new interpretive panels; inset right, solve The Mystery of the Missing Unicorn Horn





2 Draw inspiration from our archives

Celebrate inspiring illustrations held in our collections with the Drawn from the Archives exhibition, on show at Fort George until 23 November.

From archaeological site records to newly commissioned work from artists Caitlin Bowbeer, Vicki Herring, Cat O'Neill and Jack Spowart, discover how drawings connect us to and help us preserve our heritage.

- Plan your next day out at hes.scot/whats-on

**MEMBERS
EXCLUSIVE
EVENT**
MORE EVENTS
ON PAGE 55



3 See graffiti through the ages

Join the launch event for Blackness Castle's exhibition, Marking Time, to learn all about graffiti in Scotland with co-curators Sace and Learning Manager, Dr Alex Hale.

Spanning prehistoric rock carvings to contemporary street art, discover how these visual legacies help us better understand the world.

- Exhibition previews at 11.15am-12.45pm and 2-3.30pm on 11 November. Book at hes.scot/member-events

4 Tour the castle in the sea

Kisimul Castle, the former seat of Clan MacNeil's chief, has excitingly reopened its doors for special hard hat and boat tours.

Rising dramatically from a rocky islet in the middle of Castlebay on the island of Barra, Kisimul is the Western Isles' only significant surviving medieval castle. It represents centuries of Gaelic lordship stories.

- Check for visit and access details at historyawaits.scot



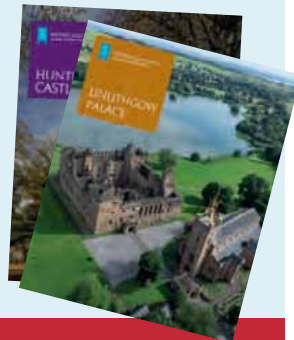
5 Grab a new guidebook

We've launched bag-friendly editions (measuring 155mm x 195mm) of our Linlithgow Palace and Huntly Castle guidebooks, both of them packed with fascinating new facts.

The *Linlithgow Palace Guidebook* incorporates recent research and illustrations charting the architectural flourishes added by the Stewart dynasty.

Turn the pages of the new *Huntly Castle Guidebook* – featuring a recreation of the palace entrance – to follow the castle's origin story right up to the present day.

- Buy copies at stor.scot, and don't forget your 20% members' discount



ALL IN ONE PLACE

Our new Members' Portal is launching later this year. In the meantime, find your member benefits and digital copies of your Members' Guide and *Historic Scotland* magazine at hes.scot/member.

If you haven't heard from us about this change, email members@hes.scot to add your email address to your record.

INSPIRING TOMORROW'S HERITAGE AMBASSADORS

TIP TOP
TOUR GUIDES

Our Junior Tour Guide programme is sparking young people's passion for history

We've been connecting young people with Scotland's heritage for several years through our Junior Tour Guide projects at various sites, including the Bishop's and Earl's Palaces in Kirkwall, Huntly Castle, Linlithgow Palace, Craigmillar Castle and Doune Castle.

Through targeted teacher training and community partnerships, we've also now established lasting connections at historic sites such as Kinneil House in Bo'ness and Dirleton Castle in East Lothian.

A different approach proved successful at Dunstaffnage Castle in Argyll, with a class teacher at Dunbeg Primary School leading the project. Pupils went on to deliver their

first tours for visiting schools in the summer term. At Stirling Castle we partnered with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Museum, helping pupils from Allan's Primary School use different media to explore what life was like at the castle and in the surrounding area during the Second World War.

Supported by our Making Sense of Scotland framework, these opportunities provide valuable learning, skills development and community engagement for the next generation.

● Watch our video to see how the project has connected young people with Kinneil House's history at hes.scot/junior-guides



Junior volunteers at Doune Castle

HONE YOUR HERITAGE SKILLS



Together we're defending Scotland's heritage

This Heritage Careers Week, find out about opportunities in the historic environment sector

We've plenty of exciting events planned for Heritage Careers Week 2026. There's everything from workshops, skills demonstrations and talks with apprentices to careers

fairs and sessions exploring conservation, craft skills and creative and digital skills, and more.

Running 5-9 October, this annual event, as part of our Skills

Investment Plan, introduces people to heritage careers while addressing sector skills gaps.

Whether you're a school leaver exploring your options after studying, or fancy a new professional challenge, take part in our in-person and online events to discover the opportunities waiting out there for you.

● Discover Heritage Careers Week 2026 events near you at hes.scot/heritage-careers-week



Arabella Weir

The actor, author, comedian, writer and presenter reveals why Melrose Abbey will always have her heart



My granny, my mum's mum, lived so close to Melrose Abbey that you could see it from her house. She was born and bred in Melrose, and I stayed with her often because there was a lot of stuff going on in my family. Incredibly tolerant and kind, Granny always gave me unconditional love.

My parents hadn't brought us up to be religious. Granny was an elder at St Cuthbert Church behind her house and it was my first experience of how religion, at its best, is about community, goodness, kindness and tolerance.

I adored her. She was fiercer than the rest of us and very much my safe place.

When I lived with her, we'd walk by Melrose Abbey nearly every day –

whether it was picking up her messages or treating ourselves to ice cream from the shop across from it.

Every time we'd go into town, Granny would proudly tell me that this Cistercian monastery, founded by David I, is the final resting place of the heart of Robert I (the Bruce), who died in 1329.

I can't remember very much from school – partly because I was either always chatting or being incredibly naughty – but I've always remembered this historical fact.

I later discovered that the rest of Bruce's body was interred at Dunfermline Abbey. Coincidentally enough, my dad was from Dunfermline, so I have this sort of tangential connection to this former ruler.

Despite being born in San Francisco and travelling widely as a child, Arabella says she is "culturally Scottish"

And, thanks to Granny, Melrose will have my heart forever too.

I absolutely draw on Granny when playing Beth in *Two Doors Down*. They both share an almost limitless level of tolerance and patience with the nonsense that Kathy, Christine and the rest of them bring to her doorstep. If it was me putting up with this chaotic cast of characters, they'd all be told to sling their hooks – including Eric!

For me, autumn's crisp and sunny days make it an ideal season to see Melrose Abbey. My dream day here involves a splash at a spot on the River Tweed, where we used to swim as kids, before having a picnic at the abbey – from where I can enjoy views over Granny's old house.

The abbey has retained its unique identity. It's so integral to people's fondest memories, like my own, and represents vital chapters in Scotland's cultural and historical heritage. Knowing that HES is working to safeguard it and similar properties is incredibly comforting.

● *Two Doors Down: Live* is playing at the OVO Hydro on 25-27 September and 9-11 October. Get tickets at ovohydro.com



ARABELLA'S MUST-DO

Spend plenty of time admiring Melrose Abbey's rose-coloured stone and architectural flourishes. These picturesque ruins provide a real sense of what life would have been like here.

RUTH CRAFER/SHUTTERSTOCK

The compass and set of ranging pins used by Curle, right, to record ancient sites across Scotland



Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, founded in 1908, Curle used these tools along with other specialist surveying equipment, such as an alidade or theodolite, to create detailed drawings of archaeological sites and monuments.

Between these, other objects and the extensive collection of drawings, notes and photographs Curle produced, we have a very clear understanding of archaeological practice during this period. As national survey programmes responded to threats posed by enemy action during the First and Second World Wars, archaeology continued to develop into a more rigorous and scientific discipline.

These objects also provide a sense of the physicality of survey work during the early 20th century. It's easy to imagine Curle cycling between ancient monuments and historic sites, ranging pins slung across his back, stopping to take notes and measurements for the many drawings now preserved in our archives.

ARCHIVE HIGHLIGHTS

AN ARCHAEOLOGIST'S TOOLKIT

The Archives Team share the story of a set of instruments that have mapped our past

Experts from across HES, and those who came before us, have been surveying Scotland's historic environment for more than a century – our architecture and archaeology as well as our industrial and maritime sites.

As technology has developed, so too have recording techniques. Our archival collections reflect the changing nature of

our work, holding everything from early glass-plate negatives to laser-scanned 3D models.

This compass and set of ranging pins, once owned by Alexander Ormiston Curle, are a perfect example of the eclectic objects we care for. As first Secretary of the Royal



● See treasures like these in person at our Search Room & Library. Book an appointment at hes.scot/visit-archives. You can also view them at trove.scot

CROWNING GLORY

Crown of Scotland used for Scottish Parliament's Seventh Session ceremony

King Charles III opened the Scottish Parliament's Seventh Session at a special ceremony on 27 June where the Crown of Scotland took centre stage.

Created by James IV, possibly reusing an earlier crown, the Crown was first used ceremonially for Marie de Guise's coronation in 1540.

Along with the Sceptre and the Sword of State, the Crown is part of the Honours of Scotland, the oldest crown jewels in the UK. It is still used today for openings of Scottish Parliament. We've carefully conserved and redisplayed the sparkling Honours in Edinburgh Castle's refurbished Crown Room.

Conservator
Reed Hudson
with the
Crown



● Learn how we conserved the Honours of Scotland at hes.scot/honours

EPIC OBJECTS

MORTSAFE

Mark the supernatural season with one of our more macabre objects

Have you ever wandered through a churchyard and noticed strange looking iron cages over some graves? These devices – known as mortsafes – were put in place to ensure the dead stayed buried.

The early modern period saw an increased interest in scientific and medical knowledge, including anatomy and dissection. While some medical schools were allowed to make use of executed criminals for study, demand quickly outstripped supply. This resulted in a rather gruesome body-snatching black market.



Mortsafes were invented to prevent the exhumation and sale of the recently deceased for anatomical research.

The heavy cage could be secured over a grave for a few weeks until the body was too

The remnants of a mortsafe from St Mary's Church in Grandtully (shown right) would have formed part of a cage used to deter grave robbers

decomposed to be at risk. You can see part of a mortsafe inside St Mary's Church, Grandtully.

● View more horrifying historical items held in our collections at trove.scot



VOLUNTEER WITH US

Develop skills and meet new people while lending a helping hand

We've an ever-growing list of volunteering opportunities to get involved in.

Our Visitor Connectors ensure visitors have memorable experiences at our heritage sites. We've opened up roles again at Dryburgh Abbey, Jedburgh Abbey and the Blackhouse, Arnol – and, for the first time, there are roles at Meikle Museum. Aberdour Castle's Volunteer Gardeners are helping to care for its beautiful walled garden and orchard, while Volunteer Musicians at sites such as Huntingtower Castle are enhancing the atmosphere for visitors.

Flexible, remote volunteering options are often available too, such as our new Skills Research Volunteers.

● Find out about current volunteering opportunities at hes.scot/volunteer



Merry Christmas from Edinburgh Castle

MAKE MERRY WITH US

Upcoming Christmas events at Edinburgh Castle

Get into the yuletide spirit with friends and family by indulging in seasonal treats and mulled wine at Edinburgh Castle's festive afternoon teas throughout November and December.

Throughout the season, Edinburgh Castle will be aglow with thousands of

twinkling lights and colourful decorations.

So make sure not to miss a trip to the Defender of the Nation during the most wonderful time of the year.

● Plan Christmas days out at edinburghcastle.scot/whats-on

Turn to page 52 for more about our seasonal days out



THE WILD SIDE

with Ranger Gordon Smith

Amazing mushrooms

Ranger Gordon Smith shares stories about some fabulous fungi to be found at our sites

With cooler temperatures and wetter weather, autumn provides the ideal conditions for some of our most unusual species. At this time of year, fungi start decorating the woodlands and grasslands of our properties, including Inchmahome Priory, Doune Castle and Caerlaverock Castle, with a massive variety of shapes and colours.

There's no scientific difference between a mushroom or toadstool. However, both terms are generally used to refer to the fruiting body of a fungus that we see above ground. This fleshly part contains the spores, which are dispersed like seeds for reproduction. Most of the fungus is hidden underground in a complex root network called the mycelium.

Despite having this incredible root structure, fungi are not plants.



In fact, they're more closely related to animals. Fungi are grouped in their own kingdom, recognising their unique design and lifeform.

While many fungi are edible, great care and caution must be taken if foraging. A famous quote attributed to many people, including Terry Pratchett, is: "All fungi are edible. Some fungi are only edible once". Heed this warning the next time you find yourself

FAST FACT

The UK is home to more than 15,000 species of fungi, which can make identification tricky!

foraging, and don't touch or eat any fungus you cannot confidently identify.

There are many poisonous mushrooms and some are deadly, with evocative names such as deathcap or funeral bell. Historically, toadstools were considered poisonous, alongside the toads that might sit on top of them.

One fungus commonly seen in the autumn months is fly agaric. Often found near birch trees, this famous fungus is instantly recognisable thanks to its bright red cap and white spots. Animals such as red squirrels, reindeer and slugs will eat it, but it is toxic to humans.

Fly agaric's name comes from its historical use as a natural insecticide. People would break the cap into milk, which would then attract and kill flies.

It appears in various cultural references too, such as Renaissance paintings, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and even Super Mario games. It was common on Victorian Christmas cards because it was thought to be a symbol of good luck. Fly agaric's bright colours are even thought to have been the inspiration for Santa Claus's red and white suit.

ANIMAL MAGIC

Where to watch out for wildlife this season



CAERLAVEROCK CASTLE

Look and listen out for noisy barnacle geese arriving along the Solway Coast.



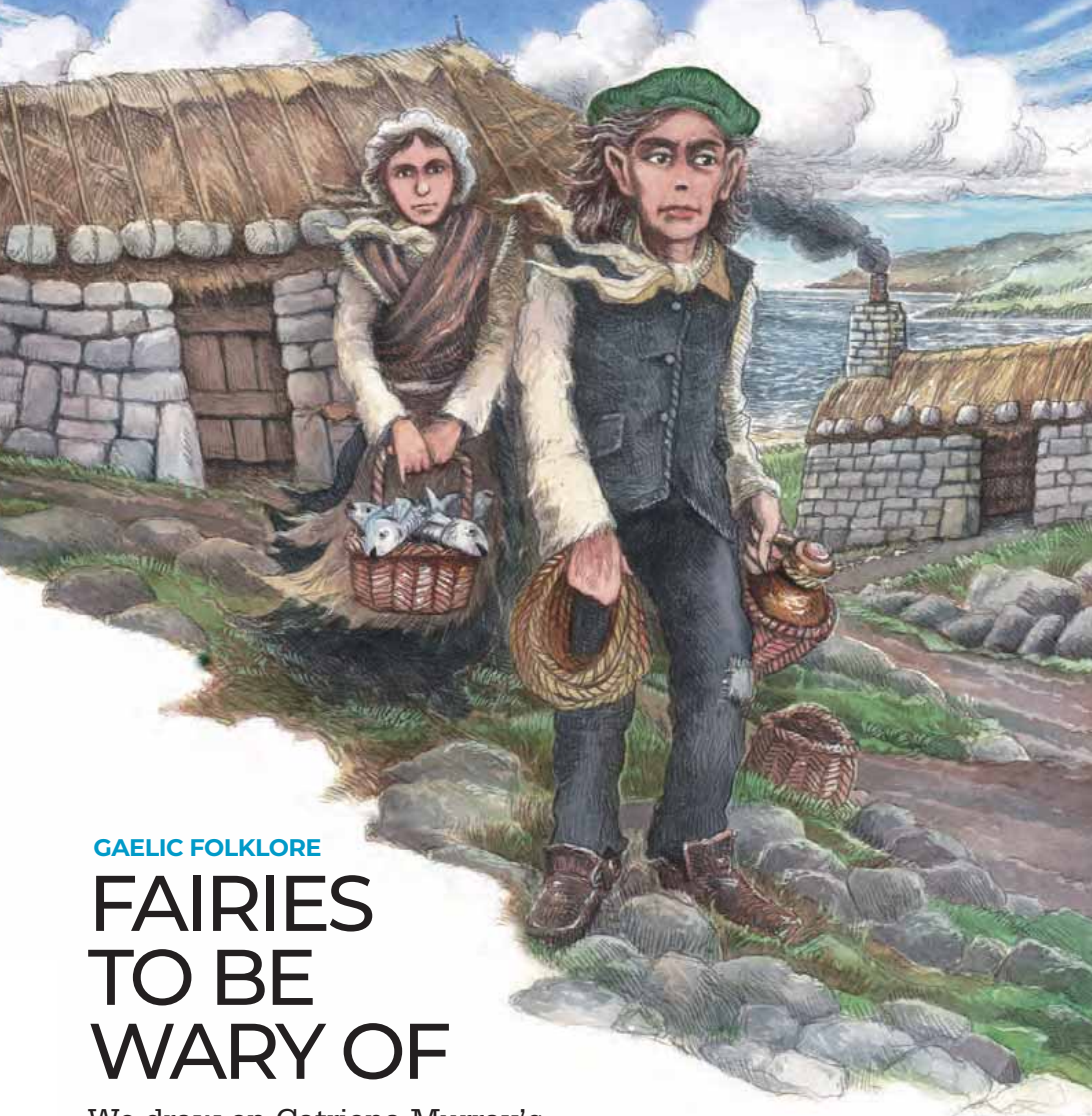
INCHCOLM ABBEY

The boat to the abbey is a great spot to see fluffy grey seal pups that will be born in the autumn months.



LINLITHGOW PALACE

Bats can be seen in the evening building up their fat levels before going into hibernation.



GAELIC FOLKLORE

FAIRIES TO BE WARY OF

We draw on Catriona Murray's wealth of knowledge to explore some of Scotland's surprisingly scary fairy tales

A walk to *Chnoc Freiceadain* (Gaelic for 'guard hill') Long Cairns, near Thurso, is a great way to spend a crisp autumn morning, but keep an eye out for its fairy inhabitants...

Otherwise known as *Na Tri Sithean* (the three fairy mounds), these neolithic burial cairns are one of many fairy-related placenames in Scotland. However, their supposed inhabitants were very different to the pint-sized, friendly, elusive and, most importantly, harmless fairies we think of today.

In Gaelic folklore, *na daoine sìthe* (the peaceful people) dressed like their human contemporaries, were slightly smaller than the average human and would sometimes only have one nostril.

In Highland fairy belief, fairies lived in family groups within wider communities. They had occupations and experienced the full range of human emotions – including having a mischievous side.

People often accused the fairies of stealing possessions and even children, leaving a *tàcharan* (fairy changeling) in their place.

Milk snatching was another common complaint. Fairies were thought to sometimes take the best for themselves, leaving a watery, nutritionally poor liquid behind. This led to accusations of taking *toradh às a' bhainne* (the goodness from the milk).

The supernatural world was once a way for people

to interpret local landscapes and monuments long after they were originally built. Our ancestors turned to fairy beliefs to try and explain what they couldn't otherwise comprehend.

So, in folklore, fairies were often blamed for problems, including missing objects or ailing animals – even death – with tales warning about these troublesome tricksters being passed down through the generations. Does your family have a fairy tale to tell?

● Catriona Murray is a Gaelic speaker and lecturer at the University of the Highlands and Islands North, West and Hebrides. Read her blog about Gaelic folklore at hes.scot/folklore

TOP PLACES TO... FOLLOW A TREE TRAIL

Enjoy autumn colour and wildlife at these three heritage hotspots



DOUNE CASTLE

Follow our sensory trail to find different species of trees, or try your hand at identifying wildlife on our autumn trail.



DRYBURGH ABBEY

Much of this trail's leafy canopy was planted by David Erskine in the 18th century to create its romantic landscape. Find the remarkable Dryburgh Yew, which is thought to be nearly 900 years old.



TOLQUHON CASTLE

Embark on a nature quest at this 16th-century stronghold to identify its many trees and discover the animals that call the castle home.

● Ask our site staff for printed trail leaflets to take on your walk.

THE GARDEN GATE

with Gardener
Stella Jardine



FROM HERITAGE TO NEW HABITAT

Looking to the past has helped us to revitalise Aberdour Castle's orchard

One of the oldest gardens in the country, with terraces dating to 1548, Aberdour Castle's landscape continues to evolve. Beneath terraces reconstructed in the 1980s, a quiet transformation is taking place as the first quarter of an ambitious spring bulb meadow has been planted in the orchard, linking its historic roots with a more biodiverse future.

The orchard is the only clearly documented historic feature of the designed landscape here. Records from 1687 show James Sutherland supplying seeds and plants from the Physic Garden (now the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh), including plums, cherries, tamarisks, figs, gooseberries, raspberries, jasmine and almonds. In the 1690s, gardener Charles Liddel created an orchard by planting three dozen fruit trees, though their exact location is now uncertain.

The present orchard at the base of the terraces is a late 20th-century interpretation. Created as a Millennium orchard, it's planted in a formal grid with heritage apple varieties. Unfortunately, nearly half of its 75 trees were lost over time. Recent work has revitalised the space, replanting

gaps with a broader mix of fruit trees to improve resilience and diversity.

Building on this revival, more than 30,000 bulbs were planted last year, marking the next phase in the orchard's evolution: a spring bulb meadow. The planting process combined careful turf lifting with natural scattering. Native snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*) and purple crocus (*Crocus tommasinianus*, 'Barr's Purple') emerge first, followed by blue grape hyacinth (*Muscari armeniacum*) and late-flowering white daffodils (*Narcissus poeticus* 'Actaea') – creating a continuous seasonal display that complements the orchard blossom. Beyond its visual appeal, the bulb meadow adds ecological value by supporting pollinators, including resident honeybees, while the longer grass that follows provides shelter for insects and wildlife.

This is only the beginning. Future phases will diversify and expand the bulb meadow and introduce summer wildflowers, using yellow rattle to weaken vigorous grasses and allow a richer flora to establish.

Over time, Aberdour Castle's orchard will stand as both a reflection of its past and a resilient landscape for the future.



Aberdour Castle's orchard in bloom



BULB BONANZA

Reap springtime rewards with these autumn gardening tips

BRAID FADING FOLIAGE

This will help tidy up your displays and allow energy to return to the bulbs.



DO SOME DEADHEADING

Remove spent flowers to prevent seed production and improve next year's blooms.



SELECT SHOW-STOPPERS

Plant *Muscari*, bluebells and snowdrops that naturalise into colourful carpets supporting biodiversity.



**More than 30,000 bulbs
were planted last year**

FORT GEORGE

Explore a masterpiece of military engineering on the southern shore of the Moray Firth

Fort George, an artillery fortress, was one of the biggest construction projects ever completed in the Highlands. It took around 1,000 workers 21 years to build, with many of the materials brought in by sea.

Named after King George II, the fort was built in the aftermath of the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Its aim was to quell any further Jacobite Risings and impose greater government control over the Highland population.

The newly appointed military engineer for Scotland, Lieutenant-General William Skinner, chose a commanding position on the Moray Firth and awarded the building contract to a Scottish

dynasty of architects, the Adam family. Their task included building a rampart more than one kilometre in length and a garrison that could house the equivalent of a small town.

By the time the fort was complete, the Jacobite threat had waned and it instead became an army recruiting and training base. This included a role in training troops for the 1944 D-Day landings, with the south coast of the Moray Firth standing in for the Normandy beaches.

Today, Fort George continues to be an active army base while welcoming visitors and hosting events, such as our living history extravaganza, Celebration of the Centuries.



One of the fort's iconic 'pepperpot' watchtowers

PHILIP BIRD LRPS CPAGB, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



FORT GEORGE

1 ORDNANCE STORES
Two huge warehouses stored weapons as well as provisions for the entire fort. In 1782, the stores were repurposed as a military hospital.

2 RAVELIN
This triangular stronghold set pointing inland, away from the promontory, provided lines of sight over a large ditch, which could be flooded if required.

TIMELINE

1769

Construction of Fort George, begun in the aftermath of the 1745 Jacobite Rising, is finished. With the Jacobite threat having receded, the fort becomes a training base for Highland regiments.

1796

Travel writer Sarah Murray visits the fort and records that "the lieutenant-governor, with the utmost politeness, sent an officer to conduct me over every part of the fortification".

1798

The fort serves as a prison for leaders of the failed Wexford Rising, a rebellion against British rule in Ireland.



HULTON GETTY

1881

The Seaforth Highlanders, formed this year by the joining of the 72nd and 78th Highlanders, take up residence at Fort George. It will serve as their base until 1964.

3 GARRISON BUILDINGS

Akin to Georgian townhouses, these blocks could house 2,000 soldiers. The open ground in front was for ceremonial parades and for use by the families of staff officers.

4 THE CHAPEL

Thought to have been designed by Robert Adam, the chapel was adapted in the 1930s to provide a garrison school.

5 POINT BATTERY

This artillery emplacement has four gun ports, which were added in the mid-1800s to defend against a possible French attack from the sea.

6 PRINCE OF WALES BASTION

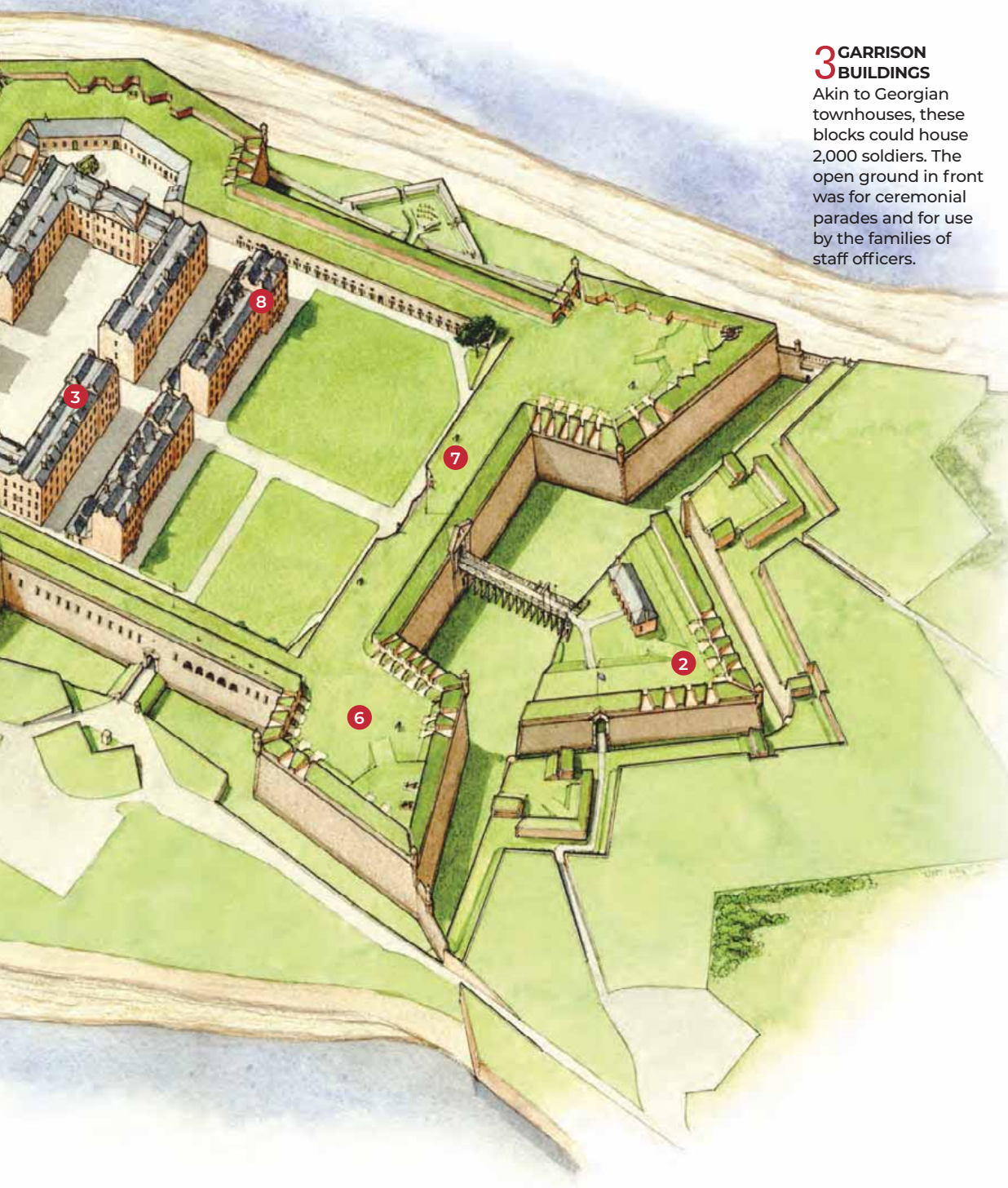
Named in honour of the future George III, this primary defence against expected land-based attacks in the 1750s was the most critical of the fort's four bastions at that time.

7 THE 'BLACK HOLE'

The fort's prisoners would have been held here, just beyond two guardrooms. In the 1800s, it was replaced by new cells added to the provision stores.

8 HIGHLANDERS' MUSEUM

With the largest collection of military artefacts outside London, the museum is a permanent memorial to soldiers who have served in Highland regiments.



1906

Violet Douglas Campbell, the wife of an officer, establishes a maternity hospital to provide care for soldiers' families living on site.

1914

During the First World War, soldiers receive basic training at Fort George before leaving for the front lines. During the course of the conflict, German prisoners of war will be held here.

1944

As part of the training for the D-Day landings in Normandy, soldiers use the fort and the surrounding area as practice grounds.



1964

The site opens to visitors as an Ancient Monument, yet the fort remains an active military base. Major refurbishments in the 1980s make it suitable for a modern army.

Our friends in the south

In the first of a two-part series inspired by our new History Hunt rare cards, we head south to a land of magnificent abbeys, fairytale castles and formidable towers

WORDS: SUSAN SWARBRICK

GALLOWAY
FOREST PARK

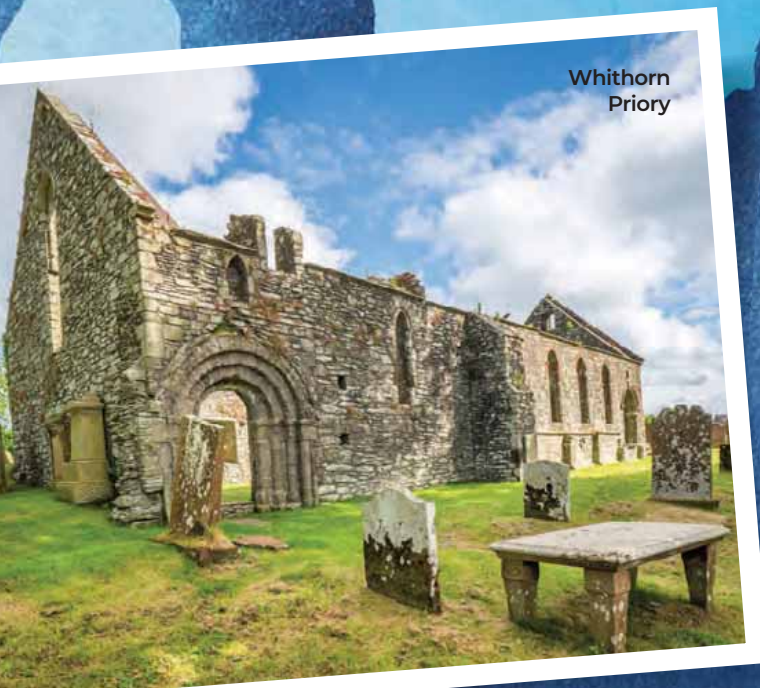
NEW ABBEY
CORN MILL

Newton Stewart

Stranraer

WHITHORN
PRIORY
AND MUSEUM

SOLWAY FIRTH



Whithorn
Priory

Smailholm
Tower



Edinburgh

Peebles

SMAILHOLM TOWER DRYBURGH ABBEY

Kelso

Newtown St Boswells

Hawick

JEDBURGH ABBEY

Moffat

HERMITAGE CASTLE

Dumfries

Lockerbie

CAERLAVEROCK CASTLE

Gretna

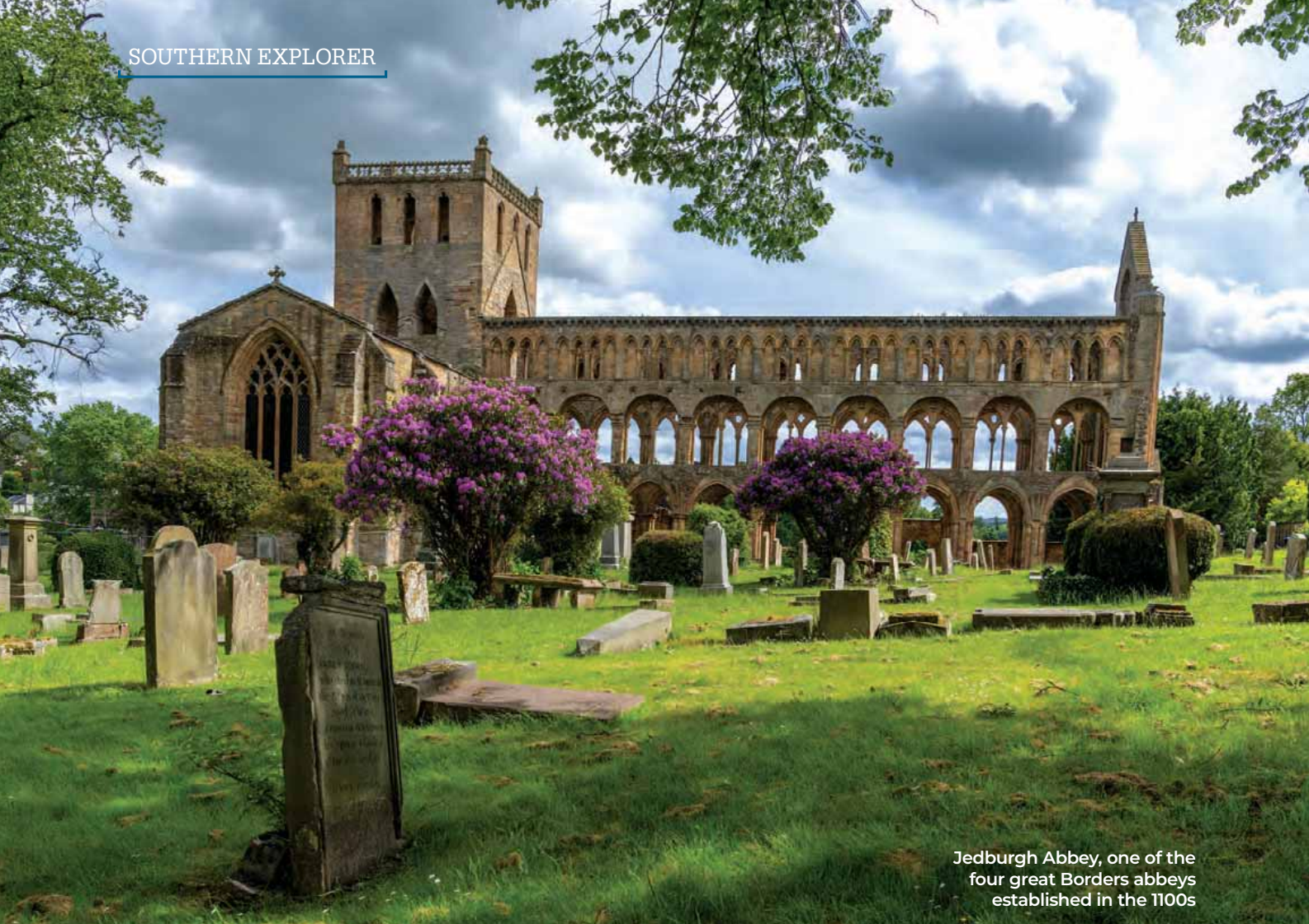
If you're looking for history-packed and fun days out this autumn, our 'Southern Explorer' guide has plenty to capture the imagination.

Focusing on the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway, we highlight some fascinating sites to be found across the south of Scotland. Discover events that shaped Scotland's political and physical landscape. Follow in the footsteps of royalty, pilgrims and a literary great. Hear the stories of those who harnessed the might of nature. Wander among gardens that put on a dazzling display of seasonal colour.

The Southern Explorer sites are part of the History Hunt trail, an exciting collectible game where members can claim a themed card when they visit. There are seven main categories: Formidable Fortress, Sacred Site, Halls of History, Tall Tower, Icons of Industry, Social Settlement and Spellbound Stones. You need one of each to complete the full set and earn a badge.

Challenge friends and family to a showdown and find out who scores highest to be crowned the ultimate History Hunter.

As an extra bonus, rare cards tied to special events and anniversary celebrations are available. This includes a dedicated Southern Explorer card available at key sites over the coming months. How many can you bag this autumn?



Jedburgh Abbey, one of the four great Borders abbeys established in the 1100s

JEDBURGH ABBEY

History Hunt cards: Sacred Site, Southern Explorer and Wise Women.

Car-free travel: Take a train to Tweedbank. Catch bus 68 from Tweedbank to Jedburgh (44 minutes). Or you can cycle 1 hour and 50 minutes to Jedburgh following National Cycle Route 1.

Practical points: Bicycle rack, shop, picnic area, toilets including disabled. Site open year-round.

The return of the Jedburgh comb makes this a must-visit for autumn. Believed to be about 900 years old, it was unearthed during archaeological excavations at Jedburgh Abbey in 1984. The comb was last displayed here in 2022.

Cut from a single piece of walrus ivory, it is an example of highly skilled medieval craftwork. The comb is carved with depictions of mythical

creatures; one side shows a griffin and the other a dragon locked in battle with a knight. Among other objects back on show are a seal pendant carved from ivory; a buckle thought to be made of bone; a small whetstone for sharpening blades; and a ceramic oil lamp used within the abbey.

Sherds of local white gritty ware – a type of pottery – have been reassembled to form a straight-sided storage jar. The shape and size make it likely that it was used for storing provisions in a larder or kitchen.



PROTECTING THE PAST WITH A LIGHT TOUCH

When viewing this collection at Jedburgh Abbey, you will notice the display case has been covered with special vinyl graphics. There is a reason for this. We need light to see the objects. However, too much



The Jedburgh comb, part of a new display. By kind permission of National Museums Scotland

light and fluctuations in temperature and humidity can damage them – particularly organic materials such as bone, ivory, wood and leather.

Adding this extra layer of protection allows us to exhibit these important artefacts for today's visitors to the abbey while carefully preserving them for future generations.

SMAILHOLM TOWER

History Hunt cards: Tall Tower and Southern Explorer.

Armchair odyssey: Listen to the Historic Scotland Podcast episode 'Ballads, Borders and the tower that inspired Scott' at hes.scot/members-podcast

Car-free travel: You can cycle 1 hour and 16 minutes from Tweedbank (the Borders Railway terminus) to Smailholm Tower following National Cycle Route 1.

Practical points: Bicycle rack. Strong footwear recommended. Site closed from 1 October to 31 March.

Sir Walter Scott is a name that you will hear several times as you tick off the Southern Explorer sites. Smailholm Tower, a fortified home dating from the 1400s, has strong ties

to this Scots literary great. His grandparents lived at Sandyknowe Farm, only a stone's throw from Smailholm Tower. Scott arrived here from Edinburgh

as a "wee, sick laddie" in 1773. Suffering from polio, it was hoped the fresh air would aid his recuperation.

The novelist and poet later recalled how the stories and landscapes of the Borders coupled with striking vistas of Smailholm Tower – which he referred to as "standing stark and upright like a warden" – stoked his imagination.

These formative childhood experiences inspired Scott to collect Border ballads and write his own epic works.



Smailholm Tower, which inspired Scott; left, an Anne Carrick doll

FAIRIES AND REIVERS

To learn more about the site's wider history, wrap your ears around the Historic Scotland Podcast episode on Smailholm Tower.

Scottish actor, storyteller and podcast host Sarah MacGillivray describes it as a "magical and otherworldly" place. Among the intriguing strands is a tour of the unusual doll collection displayed at Smailholm Tower. Created by artist Anne Carrick in 1971 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Scott's birth, the dolls depict figures featured in the author's works, including the lawless border reivers and a malevolent fairy queen.

SHUTTERSTOCK



The power of water at New Abbey Cornmill

NEW ABBEY CORNMILL

History Hunt cards: Icons of Industry and Southern Explorer.

Car-free travel: Take a train to Dumfries then catch bus 372 to New Abbey Cornmill (14 minutes). Or cycle 50 minutes from Dumfries to the mill following National Cycle Route 7.

Practical points: Bicycle rack, shop, guided tours available. Site open year-round.

In a fast-paced world, it is easy to forget that modern convenience food has been around for only a short chapter of human history.

Grains and pulses (or barley and beans) once formed a large part of people's diet in Scotland. Prior to the advent of small country mills like New Abbey, they had to be ground into meal by hand using a quern stone.

By the 1700s and early 1800s, mills had significantly sped up the process for their local populations. There has been a mill here at New Abbey for more

than 700 years. The first was built for the Cistercian monks at Sweetheart Abbey and the current stone building, constructed by the Stewarts of Shambellie, is from the 1790s.

The mill closed for business in 1948. Visitors can view the miller's house, grain-drying kiln, restored waterwheel and mill pond.

THE DAILY GRIND

So what about the people who have lived and worked here throughout the mill's history?

"There has always been this slightly idyllic image of a ruddy-faced country miller," says Mary Stones, Senior Interpretation Manager. "What we are trying to do is create a much more truthful and engaging narrative.

"This was a tough job. The threat of accidents hung heavy. They were operating dangerous machinery. It was a risky business to be working in."



WHITHORN PRIORY AND MUSEUM

History Hunt cards: Sacred Site, Southern Explorer and Wise Women.

Car-free travel: From Newton Stewart hop on a 50-minute bus to Whithorn.

Practical points: Shop, toilets including disabled facilities. Site closed from 1 November to 31 March.

Traditionally linked with St Ninian's fourth and fifth-century church, Whithorn became known as the "Cradle of Christianity". It is a sacred place that has welcomed pilgrims and royalty for more than a thousand years.

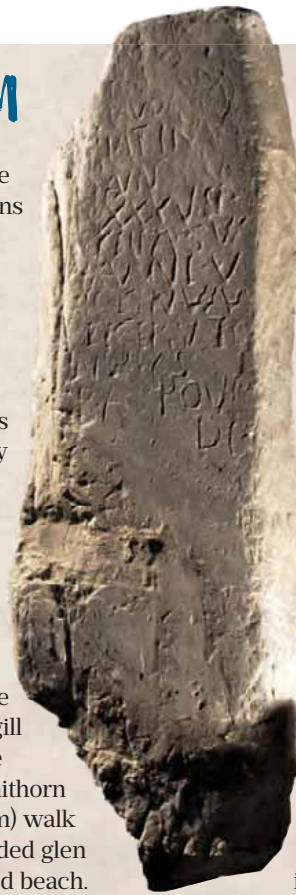
James IV made regular pilgrimages during the late 1400s and early 1500s. Other royal visitors include Robert I (the Bruce) in 1329 and his son David II in 1357, then Mary Queen of Scots in 1563.



Today, the site contains the ruins of a medieval cathedral and nave, alongside a newer parish church built in 1822. The museum houses the fifth-century Latinus stone – Scotland's earliest-known Christian monument.

A HIDDEN GLEN

Autumn is a perfect time to explore nearby Physgill Glen, only a five-minute journey by car from Whithorn Priory. A 1.5-mile (2.4km) walk through a tranquil, wooded glen opens out onto a pebbled beach.



See the Latinus stone, an early Christian relic, on display in the museum

Nestled in the cliffs is St Ninian's Cave, where carved stone crosses were found in the 1880s and 1950. These are now displayed in the museum at Whithorn Priory.

"It is lovely to wander through the woodland glen and see the stunning sea colours from the shoreline," says Debbie McClymont, Monument Manager for Whithorn Priory and Museum.

"The glen is home to badgers, brown hares and foxes. The area is known for its migratory birds, including oystercatchers and curlews. From the beach, you can often see otters splashing playfully in the water."



The impactful Hermitage Castle from the air

In 1566, Mary Queen of Scots made a mercy dash to see James Hepburn, the fourth Earl of Bothwell, at Hermitage Castle after he was badly wounded in a skirmish with cattle thieves, known as border reivers.

While often portrayed as an illicit lovers' tryst, the reality is that Mary made the trip on political business. She was accompanied by an entourage and stayed only two hours.

Her journey wasn't without peril. On the return leg, Mary fell from her horse in a bog. Soon afterwards, she collapsed in a bout of illness which brought her close to death.



HERMITAGE CASTLE

History Hunt cards: Formidable Fortress, Southern Explorer and Wise Women.

Car-free travel: Catch bus 128 from Hawick to Hermitage (30 minutes). Walk to Hermitage Castle (25 minutes).

Practical points: Picnic area, toilets. Strong footwear recommended. Site closed from 1 October to 31 March

At first glance, the arched entrance of Hermitage Castle looks like a gaping mouth frozen in shock or awe and, if it could talk, it would tell tales of murder and treason. The 14th-century fortress earned a reputation as "the guardhouse of the bloodiest valley in Britain" – its proximity to the border making it a weighty bargaining chip for the powerful families who controlled it.

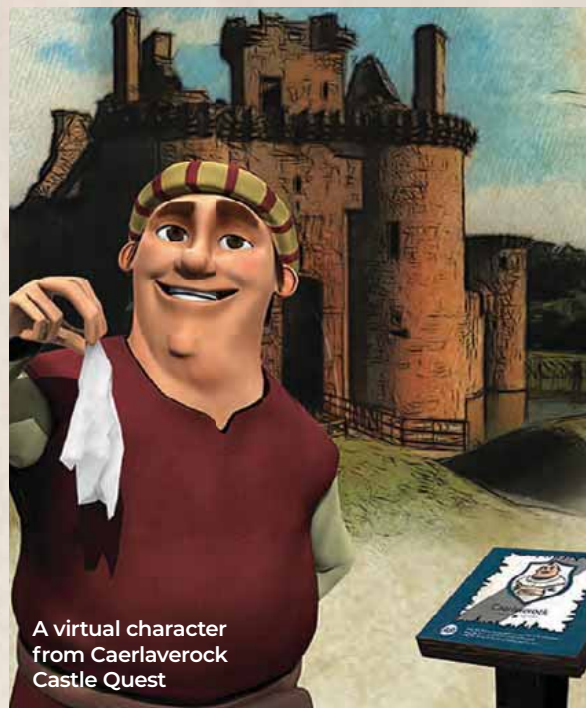
BASK IN FOLKLORE

As the nights lengthen, Scotland's tradition of storytelling is awakened. Hermitage Castle has its share of legends and lore.

Among them are whispers of "wicked" Lord Soulis and the "giant baron" Cout of Kielder – stories immortalised by Sir Walter Scott in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, published in 1802.



One of the castle's daunting towers



A virtual character from Caerlaverock Castle Quest

to replace an earlier stronghold nearby. Owned by the Maxwell family, a strategic position on the Solway Firth made it a crucial defensive site.

This sought-after location meant many people wanted to get their hands on it over the centuries. In 1300, Caerlaverock Castle was besieged by Edward I and his army. It remained in English hands until 1312.

Delve into this time through the eyes and voices of the castle household.

Caerlaverock Castle Quest is a free augmented reality app that can be downloaded to mobile devices. Meet virtual characters and unlock interactive clues as you explore.



A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

The castle grounds sit adjacent to Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve – renowned as a wildlife habitat, particularly for migrating birds.

A 40,000-strong population of barnacle geese from the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard typically begin arriving

at the mudflats and salt marshes here in September and October. Other autumn visitors that you may be lucky to spot include whooper swans and pink-footed geese.

CAERLAVEROCK CASTLE

History Hunt cards: Formidable Fortress and Southern Explorer.

Get connected: Download our 'Caerlaverock Castle Quest' at hes.scot/app

Armchair odyssey: Listen to the Historic Scotland Podcast episode 'Caerlaverock Castle: Where West Meets East' by visiting hes.scot/members-podcast

Car-free travel: Take a train to Dumfries then catch bus 6A to Caerlaverock (30 minutes) and walk

five minutes to the castle. You can cycle 50 minutes from Dumfries to Caerlaverock Castle following the National Cycle Route 7.

Practical points: Bicycle rack, shop, picnic area, toilets including disabled. Site open year-round.

Instantly recognisable by its distinctive triangular shape, Caerlaverock Castle was built in the late 13th century



Dryburgh Abbey,
set in idyllic
surroundings



The spectacular
Dryburgh Yew

DRYBURGH ABBEY

History Hunt cards: Sacred Site and Southern Explorer.

Car-free travel: Take a train to Tweedbank, then bus 67 or 68 to Newtown St Boswells (20 minutes). From there, walk to Dryburgh Abbey (25 minutes). Or cycle 1 hour and 15 minutes from Tweedbank to the abbey on National Cycle Route 1.

Practical points: Bicycle rack, shop, self-service tea/coffee, picnic area, toilets. Site open year-round.

The medieval Dryburgh Abbey – famously the burial place of novelist Sir Walter Scott – occupies a scenic location close to the River Tweed. Founded in the mid-1100s, it was the first Premonstratensian abbey in Scotland. In the 1700s, the ivy-clad building and surrounding grounds

caught the attention of David Stuart Erskine, the 11th Earl of Buchan. Across 40 years, he reimagined the abbey as a romantic garden. Specimen trees were planted and classical follies built. At its heart, the preserved abbey ruins became the most magnificent of ornaments within this horticultural haven.

TRAVERSE THE TREE TRAIL

Autumn is a glorious time for a visit. Trees here include many that date from the 1700s. There is also the 900-year-old Dryburgh Yew (*Taxus baccata*), which is considered one of the most important trees in Scotland.

Dryburgh Abbey has beautiful Tibetan cherry (*Prunus serrula*)

and black mulberry (*Morus nigra*) – varieties whose leaves turn a vibrant yellow as the seasons change.

Head Gardener Mark Gillie also highlights the oak (*Quercus robur*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) trees, which together produce a spectacular assortment of red, orange, brown and golden hues.

Other eye-catching species include evergreen conifers, such as the Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*) which is native to the mountains of North Africa. Dryburgh Abbey's tallest tree is a giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), originating from California.



SAVING THE STONEMWORK THROUGH LEGACY

Experts have been engaged in a vital project to conserve and protect the last remaining nave column capital of Dryburgh Abbey's church. Without intervention, intricate carved detail dating back centuries faced irretrievable loss due to weathering and climate change.

The Borders Abbeys are an important part of the region's heritage and a major draw for local tourism along the famous Borders Abbey Way.

The project will protect a vital piece of the puzzle that helps us understand the abbey's past.

This vital work has been generously funded by a restricted legacy gift from the late Helen Campbell, held by the Historic Scotland Foundation, for the conservation of Scottish Border Abbeys and Castles.

● If you want to find out more about making a gift in your will, email legacies@hes.scot



Work in
progress at
Dryburgh
Abbey



Protecting the
stonework from
the ravages
of time



The magnificent Linlithgow Palace fountain features original carvings and replicas crafted with care to replace those eroded by time



The king's fountain

When our time traveller visits the year 1633, Linlithgow Palace awaits the arrival of a very important person – but all eyes are on an astonishing centrepiece that's been given a new lease of life.

WORDS: ANDREW BURNET, INTERPRETATION MANAGER,
BASED ON RESEARCH BY DR SALLY RUSH

The sheer size of Linlithgow Palace takes the breath away. The royal castles at Edinburgh and Stirling are mightier, each perched on its rock like a noble lion, but this palace rises from a gentle slope and looms above the landscape, broad, tall and imperious.

To our right, as we approach from the east: the tranquil loch, disturbed only by patient fishermen and placid waterfowl. To the left: the soaring elegance of St Michael's Church and, beyond it, the hurly-burly of the royal burgh. And in the centre, the yawning entranceway, topped by a carving of the crown and royal coat of arms held aloft by angels, flanked by huge stone statues of the saints, defended by a triple-towered barbican bristling with cannon and approached via a well-guarded drawbridge. This imposing entry point masks the frenetic activity beyond.

It's late June 1633, and I see that Linlithgow Palace is bustling with preparations for the most significant royal event in half a generation.

Sixteen years ago, King James VI returned to his homeland for the first time since becoming James I of England in 1603. He found Linlithgow Palace in poor repair, the north quarter having collapsed entirely. He ordered its reconstruction but never returned to admire the new structure with its multiple windows, each decorated with carved emblems: his cipher 'IR6' (James Rex VI), crowns, thistles, roses and other symbols glorifying his reign of Great Britain, France and Ireland.

Now, his son and successor, Charles I, has arrived on a long-awaited visit for his Scottish coronation. He is the first king of Great Britain to be crowned in Scotland and is taking the opportunity to visit Linlithgow Palace,



SHUTTERSTOCK

birthplace of his grandmother Mary Queen of Scots and his great-grandfather James V.

Masons in demand

I've arrived at the palace with Ralph Rawlinson, stonemason-carver, who's brought me here to show off the palace's most impressive and elaborate feature: the fountain at the middle of the courtyard. Ralph is one of four supremely skilled mason-carvers summoned to Linlithgow to repair and upgrade this magnificent centrepiece. He's advanced in years and, to my surprise, an Englishman.

"Yes, I've worked up here quite a lot," he nods, rubbing his iron-grey beard. "I was sent to Edinburgh by King James in 1617 to help refurbish the castle for his homecoming visit. What an extravaganza that turned out to be! I had to produce life-size figures of St George and his dragon for a big pageant, with fireworks and drummers and the like.

"I've got other Scottish clients too," he adds. "When the summons came to work on the fountain, I was up north, doing a job for the Marquess of Huntly. He wasn't happy to see me go but, when the King's Privy Council sends a deed of impressment, well... who's going to argue? It pays well too. I got 20 shillings a day to work on this fountain."

Burly guards nod grudgingly as we cross the drawbridge to enter the palace. It's nearing midday and



When the King's Privy Council sends a deed of impressment, who's going to argue?

the sun has elbowed its way into most of courtyard, illuminating rickety timber scaffolding across the splendid façade of the new north quarter. The wooden boards are creaking under the weight of half a dozen painters and gilders who are busily sprucing up the coloured stone mouldings. People criss-cross the courtyard, carrying beds, baskets of bedding, benches, chairs, wall-hangings, carpets, paintings, chests, boxes, pails of water, mops, brushes and ladders.

But Ralph ignores all of this. His focus is on the four-tiered fountain where two plumbers are hard at work, peering into the pipes,

inspecting valves and poking long brushes into the water channels.

A century-old marvel

Despite the hubbub and the splendour of the palace façades, it's the fountain that attracts and holds the attention. Standing about five metres tall, surmounted by a giant gilded crown and festooned at every level with elaborate, colourful decoration, carvings of human figures and exotic beasts, it is truly spectacular.

There's a shout, then a loud gurgle. A moment later, water begins gushing from below the crown at the top. The plumbers cheer and everyone stops where they are to gaze at the sparkling display.

Water tumbles over the rim of the top basin onto the lower levels and, as the pressure builds, one spout after another erupts with a sudden spurt of clear liquid. Reflected sunlight dances in the cascade and we hear the rapid patter of water on stone, the splash-splash of water on water.

"A hundred years ago, this fountain was the most amazing thing in Scotland," says Ralph, once the water has settled into a gentle, regular pulse. "People had never seen anything like it.

"They say James V – the present king's great-grandfather – got the idea in France. When he married poor little Madeleine, the French king's daughter, she fell sick before they even left France. So, James was stuck in Rouen

SPOT THE CARVING



The royal lion

Ralph Rawlinson is believed to have remodelled this figure in 1633. A replica replaced it in 2005.

Courtier

A survival from the original 1530s fountain, the figure (below, left) may have been an identifiable personality at James V's court.



The Sun

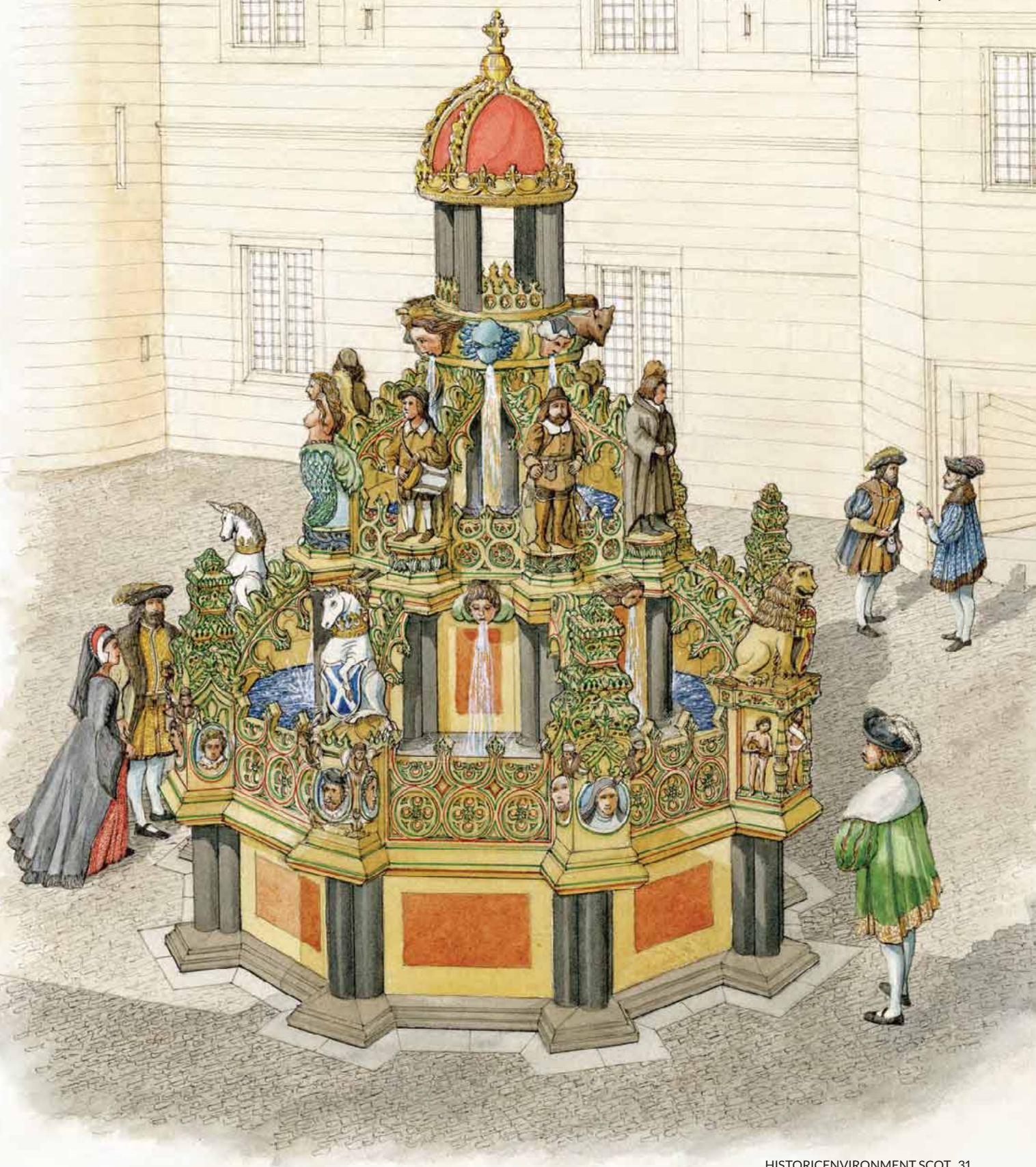
On the underside of the crown, left, the sun has human features and a water spout in its mouth.

English rose

The Stuart monarchs of Scotland and England promoted the union of nations, represented by their national flowers. Only the rose, right, survives.



An artist's
impression of
the fountain
as it may
have looked
when complete



for three months while she recovered her health. It just so happens that Rouen has this marvellous water engineering system; nearly 80 fountains and public waterspouts, fed by a network of water channels running all over the city.

“What we’ve got here is more modest, but it’s the same idea.”

To dicht and dress

We stroll around the fountain, taking in some of the details. Amid the flamboyant ornamentation are many figures – among them courtiers, angels, unicorns, a mermaid and a winged stag – as well as carved portraits in roundels. All are overseen by the crown at the top.

“It’s all about royal symbolism,” says Ralph. “The whole fountain takes the form of an octagon, the same shape as a lot of baptismal fonts. It represents the Eighth Day, the day of Resurrection, and hence the king, who brings rebirth and renewal. The great crown at the top contains the water cistern, so all blessings flow from the king. It all gushes through that gilded sun underneath the crown, linking the king with Sol himself, the ruler of the heavens.”

When he invited me here, Ralph mentioned that he and the three other mason-carvers had been employed specially to “dicht and dress” the fountain. He himself spent 15 days on the job. So what work was involved?

“Well,” says Ralph, “when I got here, the fountain was in a poor state.

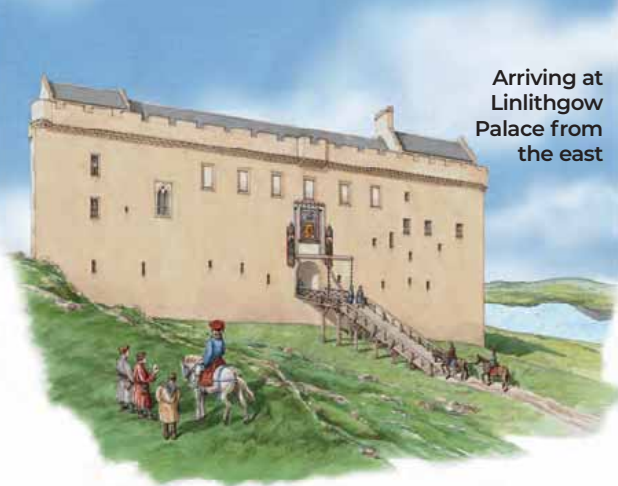
The great crown at the top contains the water cistern, so all blessings flow from the king

Running water takes its toll on stone. We had our work cut out. The fountain represents the king, and the king won’t like it if he gets here and his fountain’s looking shabby. So, we had to clean it up, do a bit of rebuilding, fill some gaps and replace a few figures altogether.

“But here’s the thing,” he adds quietly. “A lot has changed over the past century, hasn’t it? We’ve split from the Catholic Church, and we’re now two nations united by a single monarch. King Charles wants everyone – English or Scots – to worship in the same way, and he expects his subjects to recognise him as a human manifestation of God – ‘to glisten and shine before their people’, as his daddy James VI put it.”

Ralph leads me round to the east plinth of the fountain – the part directly facing the main entrance. That part will greet King Charles as he enters the palace.

Arriving at Linlithgow Palace from the east



It’s topped by a carving of the royal lion of Scotland, with crown and shield.

Below that is a stone cabinet, with tiny neoclassical pillars at its corners, containing three figures. The two at the sides are playing musical instruments, while the central figure holds a banner that reads “God Save

the King”. (Readers in the 21st century should note that this plinth was replaced by a replica in 2005.)

“I worked on that part with a Scotsman named William Aytoun,” Ralph says. “It’s brand new and it’s there for a particular reason. See, James VI likened himself to King Solomon in the Old Testament. The holy lawgiver. The bringer-together of divided kingdoms. When Solomon was anointed king by Zadok the priest, those very words were used: ‘God save the King’.

“And King Charles liked that too. So, the same words were used at his English coronation in 1626, and again when he was crowned last week at Holyrood. And here it is, written in stone for all to see.

“So even after the king leaves, when he’s taking his ease at some fancy palace in London, he’ll rest assured that, here in Linlithgow, there’s a monument to his royal magnificence, a glorious representation of the king himself, that his subjects will gaze on with awe.

“And I must confess,” adds Ralph, “I’m rather proud of that.”

The fountain’s timeline

1537

James V returns from France and soon afterwards commissions the Linlithgow Palace fountain, the first ‘splash fountain’ in Scotland.

1607

The north quarter of Linlithgow Palace collapses, possibly damaging the fountain.



1625

Charles I inherits the throne of Scotland, England and Wales. In anticipation of his Scottish coronation, a second splash fountain is completed in 1628 at the Cross Well in Linlithgow.

1633

Ralph Rawlinson and three other expert masons are employed to ‘dicht and dress’ the palace fountain, in time for Charles I’s visit.



1641

A poem written soon after Charles’ second visit to Scotland implies that this symbol of royal power has been damaged by religious dissenters.

1746

A fire engulfs the palace after government troops deployed by the Duke of Cumberland sleep there. The fountain may be damaged again.



Conservation in action in 2025 and, right, in 2005



CARING FOR THE PALACE'S CENTREPIECE

Hundreds of years after its creation, Linlithgow Palace's fountain still receives specialist care.

Stone conservators carry out detailed inspections and undertake treatment when needed. The fountain is carved from sandstone, which is very porous. This means it absorbs water, which can lead to several problems over time.

Very cold weather can cause the absorbed water to freeze and expand, leading to cracks and breakages. Water also carries salts from the surrounding environment into the stone. When dry, these salts crystallise and appear on the surface of the stone as a white powder. This process can also occur beneath the surface, where it may cause damage.

Excess moisture may also lead to unsightly biological growth, such as algae or lichen, and this can cause permanent discolouration of the stonework as well as decay. By monitoring the condition of the fountain and undertaking conservation works as required, we hope to ensure its preservation for centuries to come.



A replica figure ready for placement; below, a conservator working on a carved detail



1830

A print depicts the fountain mostly reduced to rubble.



1930s

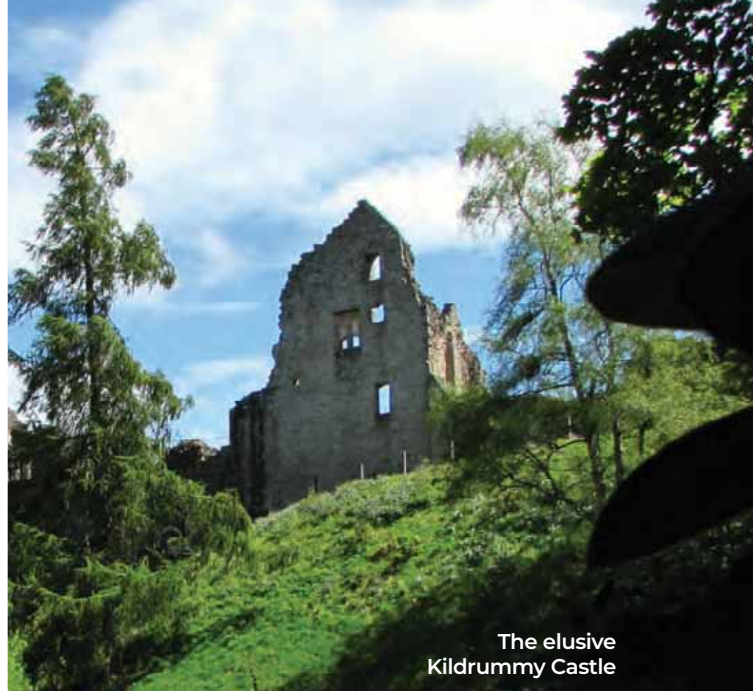
James Richardson, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland, launches a project to reassemble the fountain from fragments found on site.

2004–6

The fountain is dismantled and reconstructed. Some eroded figures are replaced with replicas.



Recording at
Caerlaverock Castle



The elusive
Kildrummy Castle

The stories we couldn't tell

Join our podcast team as host Sarah MacGillivray takes us behind the scenes of the Historic Scotland Podcast to meet the people bringing Scotland's past to life

WORDS: SARAH MACGILLIVRAY



Dirleton Castle
played a role in
the witch trials



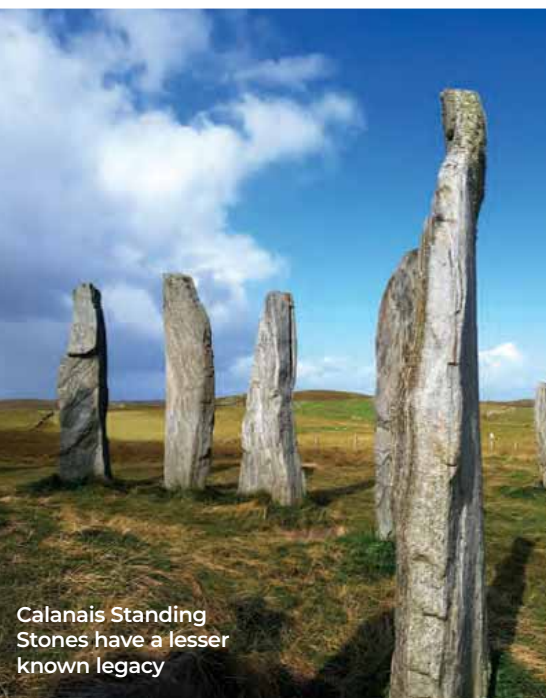
Mark Watson, left,
and Ian Shearer
share tales of
Kinneil House



Morvern French (left) with Sarah MacGillivray and Adam Stoner at Dirlerton Castle



Caerlaverock Castle and its wildlife were stars of Season 2



Calanais Standing Stones have a lesser known legacy



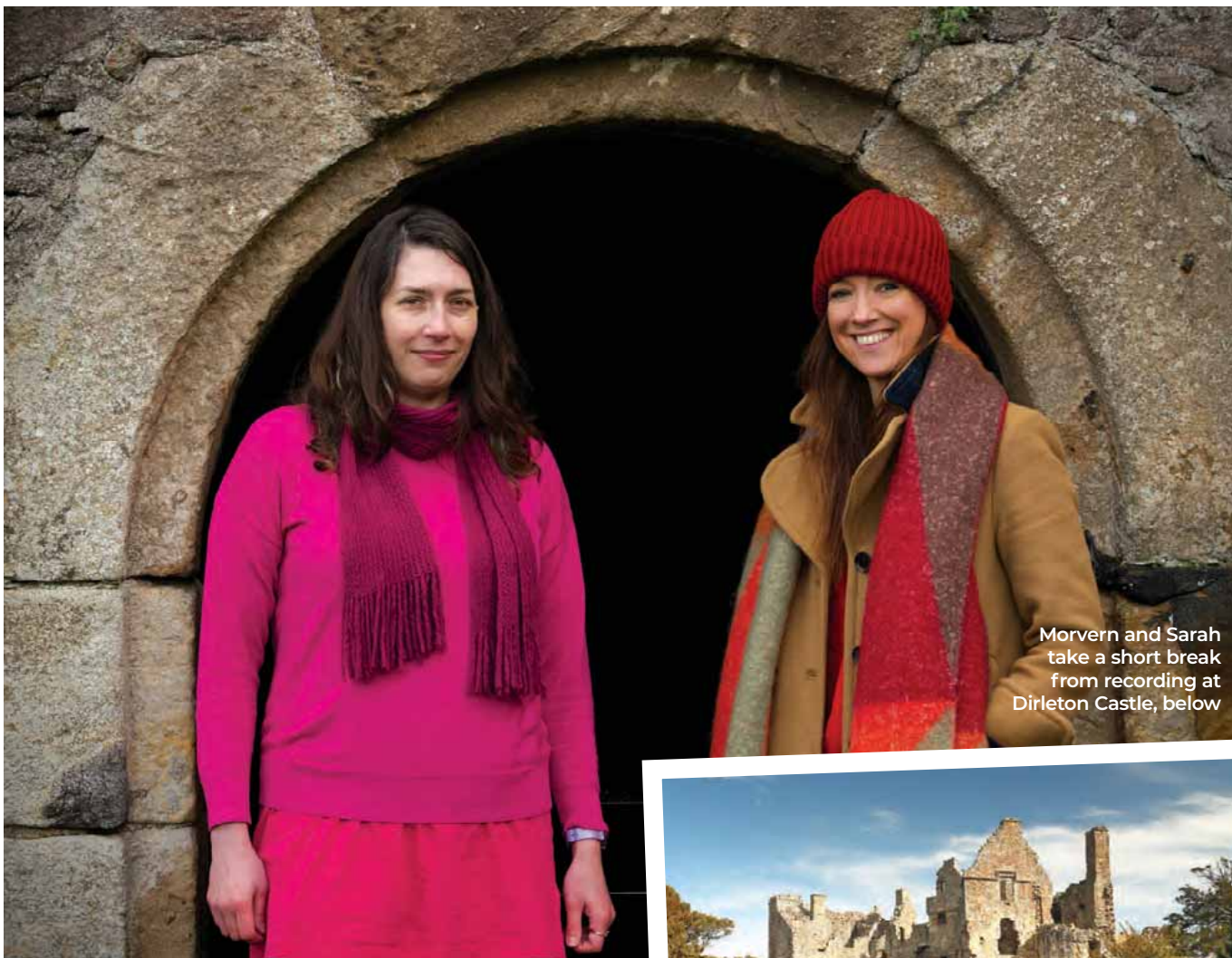
Zoe Samuels-Lyons (left) with Sarah at Caerlaverock Castle

I have always been an avid wanderer and explorer, frequently disappearing off around Scotland in my van. When the opportunity to host the Historic Scotland Podcast came up, it felt like a dream assignment. As an actor and a writer, I am drawn to stories and Scotland's history is bursting with them. Having previously written new takes on figures such as Mary Queen of Scots and Robert Burns, I was intrigued by who, or what, I might discover along the way.

For both Season 1 and Season 2 of the podcast, I was teamed up with audio wizard and producer Adam Stoner and we hit it off immediately. In one of our very first conversations, Adam pointed out that we were the listener's eyes and that, no matter how



Joshua Graham talks about Urquhart Castle from inside the visitor centre



Morvern and Sarah take a short break from recording at Dirleton Castle, below



complex the history became, we should keep an eye on the basics: where are we? Why are we here? Why does this place matter?

In fact, our first day recording Season 1 was also Adam's first time in Scotland. It felt like the ideal combination: me as an enthusiastic local with a bad case of wanderlust and Adam as an explorer encountering the sites – and Scotland – for the very first time.

Our first episode for Season 1 actually inspired the first episode of the second season too (at the time, Season 2 was the stuff of dreams). While visiting Edinburgh Castle and the One O'Clock Gun (**Season 1, The One O'Clock Gun Boom**), we stood by the Witches' Well monument discussing Scotland's witch

trials and this ultimately led us to Dirleton Castle, which had played a part.

Morvern French, Properties Historian, was a key expert for this episode

(**Season 2, Witches of Dirleton Castle**).

She was already one of our favourite interviewees, having worked with her in Season 1. We knew she would arrive armed with intricate notes and, while we were at Dirleton to focus on the witch trials, Morvern also gave us an in-depth history of the castle – all while we were being photographed and filmed for promotional materials!

What struck me in our conversation was how there were whole other worlds connected to Dirleton Castle that would have been just as fascinating to explore. You could return to this site time and time again and never run out of stories.

During our visit, we saw a new interpretive panel about the witch trials. It was quite moving to witness

You could return to this site time and time again and never run out of stories

Morvern's reaction because she'd been heavily involved in the research and development behind it.

It was a reminder of the care, research and dedication that underpin every detail of information shared with visitors.

Snow stops play

One of the greatest perils facing us while recording this podcast has been the Scottish weather. We've recorded during winter, when the sites are quieter and staff have more time to share their expertise, and the weather itself often becomes a character in the story.

Such was the case this year at Urquhart Castle on the banks of Loch Ness (**Season 2, Hunting for Nessie**). While Joshua Graham, Visitor Experience Supervisor, was expertly explaining the castle's history, we couldn't actually venture past the drawbridge for health and

SHUTTERSTOCK

safety reasons – all around us, snow was falling silently and heavily. It was quite a dramatic sight, and Joshua did an excellent job describing the castle to us from a safe distance. All the while, Adam and I were also wondering if we would make it home that evening (we did!).

The snow had also interrupted our plans in Season 1; the only place we couldn't make it to in person was Kildrummy Castle in the north east of the country. Instead, we carried out our interviews online, with Morvern introducing us to the inspirational figure of Christina Bruce, the sister of Robert I (The Bruce) and, it seems, a

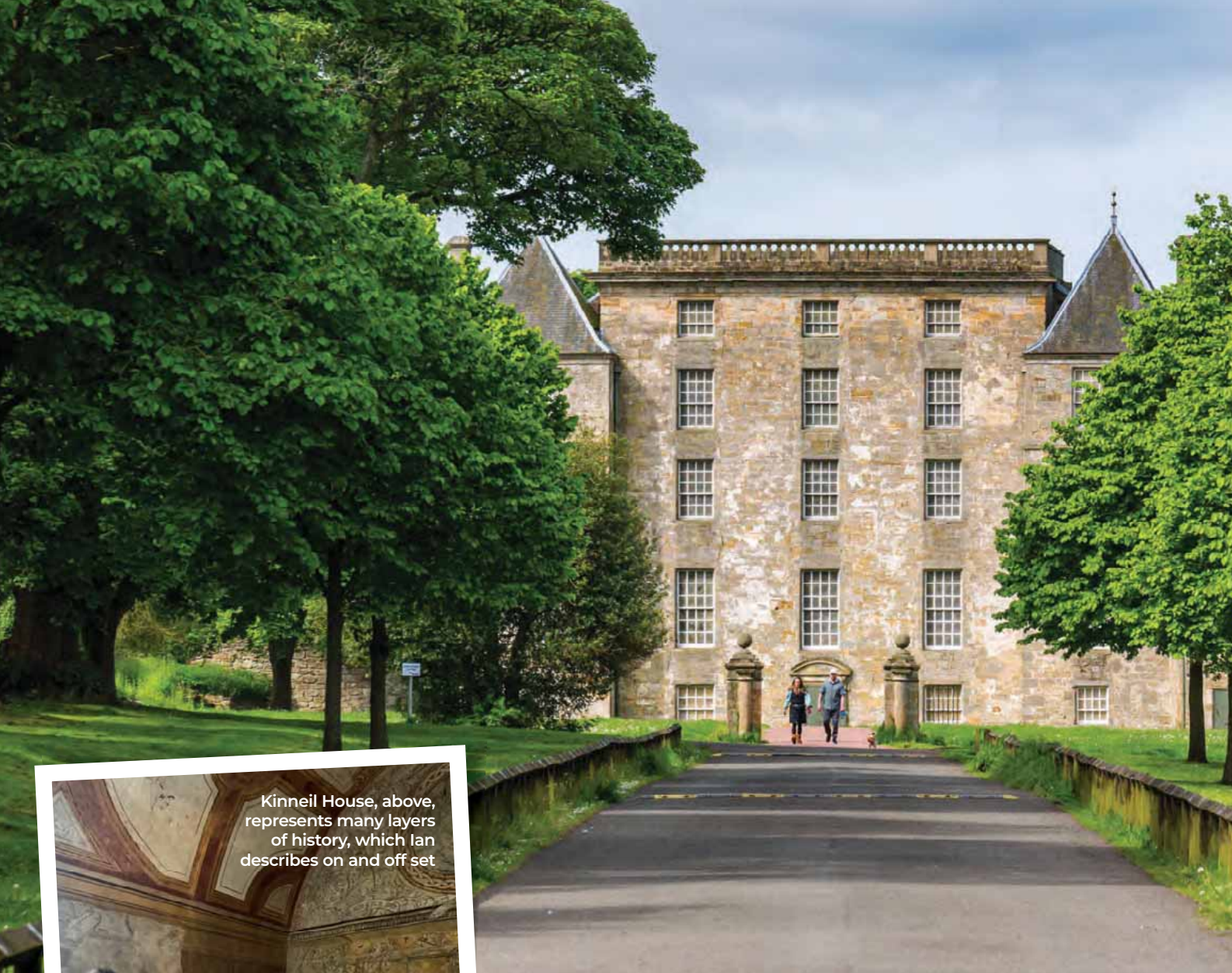


Kildrummy Castle's impressive footprint from the air

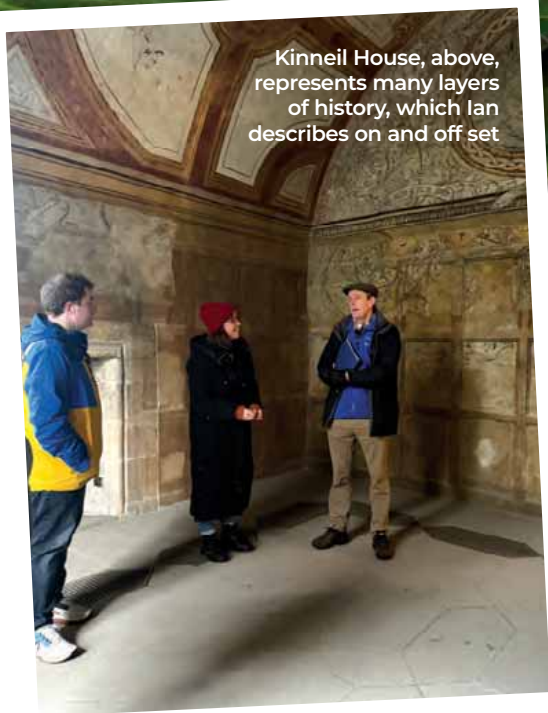
One of the greatest perils facing us while recording this podcast has been the Scottish weather

Joshua doesn't let snow get in the way of a good story at Urquhart Castle, while Sarah keeps an eye on the weather front





Kinneil House, above, represents many layers of history, which Ian describes on and off set



was how accessible she made Bruce's life; how she dismantled the myth and, all of a sudden, you were aware of the man behind the legend (**Season 1, The Heart of Scotland**) – a man who had travelled and researched warfare to become an eventual genius at it. It did make me wonder whether brother and sister had ever swapped notes...

Depth of knowledge

Another stalwart of Scottish history (who seems to have visited everywhere) is, of course, Mary Queen of Scots. We encountered Mary just briefly for Season 2 at Kinneil House while speaking with Ian Shearer, volunteer and past Chair of The Friends of Kinneil. While our focus here was the

connection with Scottish inventor and engineer James Watt (**Season 2, Inventing the Future at Kinneil House**), Ian explained how the house had been built for the Earl of Arran, Mary Queen of Scots' cousin and, at one point, heir to the Scottish throne. Ian told us how the wall paintings that date back to his time were rediscovered behind panelling during demolition work in the 1930s – which ultimately saved the house.

Ian's depth of knowledge was extraordinary, but so too was his commitment to Kinneil and the wider Bo'ness community. It was another reminder that historic places survive not only because of their past, but because of the people who continue to champion and care for them today.

Genuine care was a common theme throughout our encounters with interviewees. At Caerlaverock Castle, for example, we were fortunate to be

very talented tactician in her own right (**Season 1, The Bruce Family and the Defence of Kildrummy Castle**).

While exploring the Bruce family for Season 1, we had an enlightening conversation with writer and historian Fiona Watson at Melrose Abbey (which we did manage to visit). What really struck me then

THE LEGACY OF EMPIRE

The Archaeology and Empire exhibition will be at Summerlee Museum from 3 October to 1 November. You can download a PDF of the Empire Report at hes.scot/empire-report



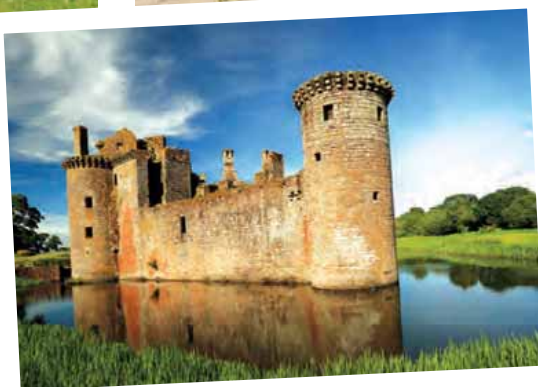
Sarah and Zoe talk about creativity at Caerlaverock Castle, left

guided by Zoe Samuels-Lyons, a Castle Steward. Zoe was at the start of a bioblitz, which involves visitors noting wildlife in the area for monitoring purposes.

What might not be obvious on the podcast (**Season 2, Caerlaverock Castle: Where West Meets East**) is that there is a constant background cacophony of birdsong.

At one point during recording, I was convinced that there were construction works going on in the area only to discover that it was, in fact, a very enthusiastic woodpecker!

Among all the history, Zoe also introduced us to the local otter, who lives in the moat, and to Gloria, a white dove who has taken up residence in the castle since being released by a wedding party.



Island crossing

One of our final destinations for the second season was the magical Isle of Lewis and Calanais Standing Stones (**Season 2, Legacy in the Landscape**). It was a real privilege to be able to visit. Adam won't mind me saying that he had envisioned himself rowing out in a dinghy in a romantic, Hemingway-esque scene. Instead, he found himself on a very comfortable flight with some shortbread and a cup of tea. Adam had been sampling local cuisine throughout our trip and I believe fudge, quite rightly, is his favourite.

Cat Dunn, Curator of the exhibition Archaeology and Empire, which has been touring our sites this summer, flew in especially to speak with us. Our aim has always been to interview on site but, while we did walk around the stones with Cat, the wind was so fierce that day that we had to retreat down the side of the hill to record the episode.

Cat's flight home wasn't until the evening, so we were lucky to spend the whole day together. We discovered the years and depth of research and planning that had gone into every aspect of the exhibition. Getting to spend time with Cat was incredibly informative and we were all quite sad when she left our little crew on Lewis.

All in all, recording the podcast has taught me two important things. Firstly, thermal socks are a must. Secondly, how lucky we are to have such incredible people taking care of

our sites. From volunteers, curators, stewards and guides to academics and storytellers, each person cares deeply and passionately about the work they do and how to make that work better each day.

I began my journey on the search for stories (and, yes, I do think Christina Bruce needs her own play), but I ended up in awe of the many people who work with these sites. So, when you are visiting, my advice is to ask the staff questions and start conversations, because they have the keys to unlock whole worlds you didn't know were there.

We've only scratched the surface. History is eternally unspooling and I cannot wait to discover more. If you need me, I will probably be in my van.



Cat Dunn, left, has new insights to share about such ancient sites as Calanais Standing Stones



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BEHIND THE VOICES

Meet some of the experts whose knowledge and passion have painted vivid pictures of Scotland's past.



JOSHUA GRAHAM Visitor Experience Supervisor

Josh started off working at Urquhart Castle part-time to support his studies, but returned to make his career there. He described looking up one time to see a boat sailing towards the castle and felt like he'd been transported back to the era of the Jacobites. Interacting with visitors reminds him to pause and appreciate the beauty of where he works every day.



IAN SHEARER Volunteer and past Chair of The Friends of Kinneil

Ian spoke passionately about the extraordinary concentration of history within a relatively small area at Kinneil House, including the workshop where James Watt developed and tested his prototype steam engine. For Ian, these interconnected layers of history all serve to make Kinneil one of Scotland's hidden treasures.



MORVERN FRENCH Properties Historian

During her research into Dirleton Castle's past, Morvern became fascinated by the story of Mary Ferguson, who was linked to the removal of sculptures from the Parthenon that would later find their way to the British Museum. Mary opened the castle grounds to the community, who held strawberry fêtes there, leading to Dirleton becoming a visitor attraction.



FIONA WATSON Writer and Historian

Fiona has published various books about Scottish history and the Wars of Independence, including *Scotland's History* and *A History of Scotland's Landscapes*. She has a real talent for making the past vibrant and bringing the humanity of historical figures to the fore. She mentioned ideas for future publications to us, so definitely keep an eye out for them.



ZOE SAMUELS-LYONS Castle Steward

Alongside being a Castle Steward, Zoe brings a wealth of creativity to Caerlaverock. As well as introducing us to the wildlife in the area, she spoke about how she uses her photography skills to capture nature in action. While visiting, you might like to meet an incredible paper-maché goose in the castle's visitor centre which was created by Zoe!



CAT DUNN Exhibition Curator

Cat was inspired to be a curator around the age of four after her grandmother took her on visits to different sites. It's a reminder of how important families can be in inspiring future generations to care about our past. Cat is also changing the way stories are told, and her work to convey findings from the academic Empire Report in an art exhibition that people can engage with is vital.

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*TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

The height of folly

To celebrate the bicentenary of Scotland's unfinished National Monument, we explore some of Scotland's most fascinating architectural follies unearthed from our Archives

WORDS: JOSEPH WATERFIELD, ARCHIVIST



Scotland's Shame'
on Calton Hill in
Edinburgh

It is two centuries since work began on the National Monument on Calton Hill in Edinburgh. Nicknamed 'Scotland's Shame' after construction ground to a halt in 1829, it was never completed.

The popular landmark still stands, albeit not as the intended monument but as an enormous folly. To honour the occasion, we've delved into our Archives to find more examples of wonderfully eccentric follies from across Scotland.

These epic structures were often inspired by medieval castles and churches, so we've included details about nearby genuine heritage sites

that are looked after by us. The follies featured here are all accessible, depending on your circumstances. When you are planning a trip to a folly, always check that the structure can be accessed and that it is safe to visit.

What is a folly?

The definition of what exactly makes a folly varies from person to person. The term itself suggests something foolish or useless. Those you'll encounter here fall into two categories: large, impressive projects which were left unfinished and were labelled follies; and elaborate structures built on country estates to

improve a view or memorialise a person or event.

Purpose-built follies were fashionable on country estates in Great Britain and Ireland in the early to mid-18th century, but their popularity began to wane from the mid-19th century onwards. While follies were often used to enhance the landscape around a grand house, they could also be used to disguise functional farm buildings.

Sometimes inspired by places that the landowners visited on a Grand Tour of Europe, the structures took a variety of styles including medieval castles, classical temples, gothic abbeys and ►

The definition of what exactly makes a folly varies from person to person



crumbling ruins. One unique Scottish folly is the Dunmore Pineapple, built in the 1760s as the elaborate centrepiece of a range of glasshouses.

Enduring landmarks

It is likely that more follies were built than survive to the present day, but those still standing continue to fascinate us. It is because these structures were built without a practical purpose and because they were constructed – in part – to deceive the viewer that they have taken on a life of their own. The human imagination rushes in to provide an explanation where none is provided. In 2026, follies are still doing what they have always done – catching the eye, improving the view and giving rise to stories.

THE NATIONAL MONUMENT

A mock Parthenon

The National Monument on Calton Hill in Edinburgh overlooks a city full of monuments and historic buildings. First proposed as a memorial to the soldiers and sailors who had fought in the Napoleonic Wars, this monument was intended to be a copy of the Parthenon, the 5th-century BC temple in Athens, although only 12 columns were constructed.

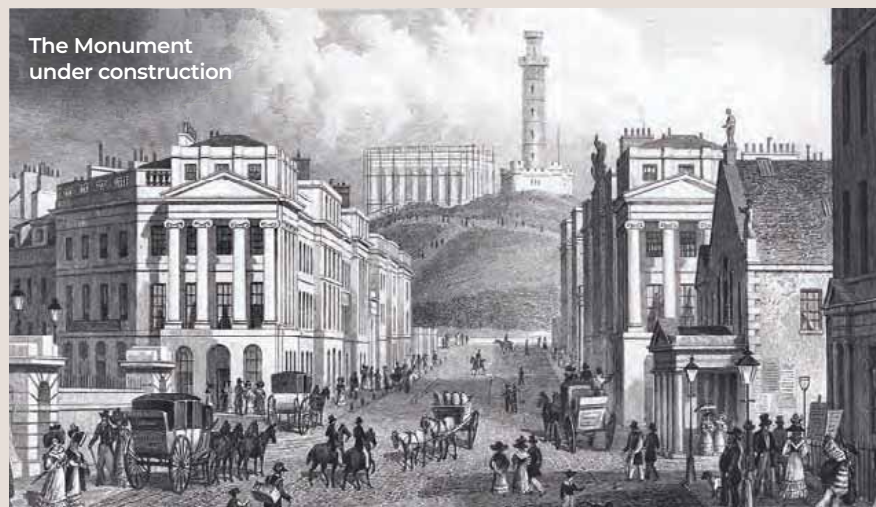
The foundation stone was laid in 1822, but work only began four years later. It then halted in 1829 due to a lack of funds. A dejected 'Modern Athenian' wrote in a letter to the *Edinburgh*

Evening Courant that year: "Does it not indeed stand a monument of Scottish ambition and poverty?"

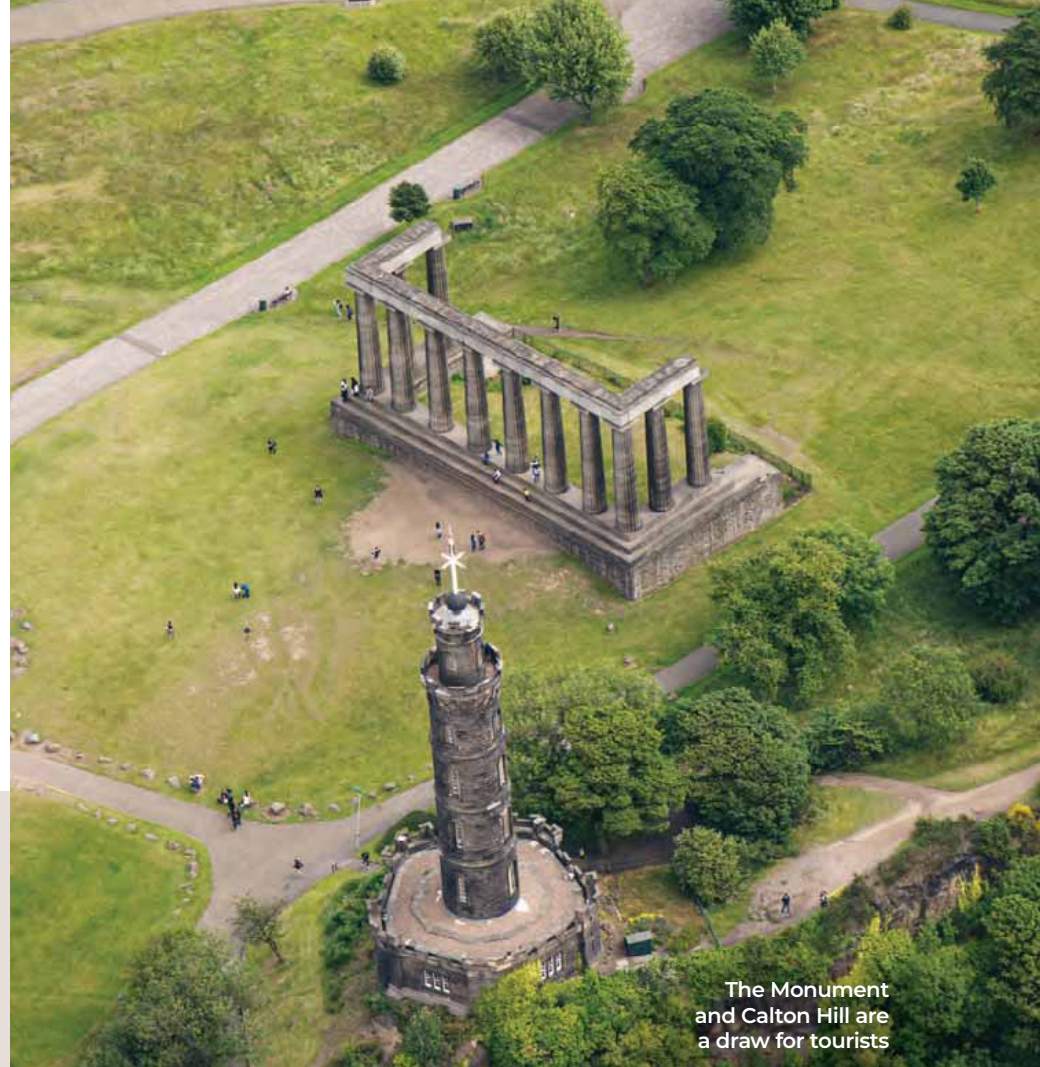
The monument was not without use, however. By 1832, the site had apparently become "decidedly a fashionable resort" and, during the 1830s and 1840s, it played host to a series of exhibitions of statues, some of them of "colossal dimensions".

Throughout the National Monument's history, various attempts were made to raise funds to complete it. At different times it was suggested that it could become an art gallery, or home to "monumental busts and statues of distinguished men of all nations". None of these uses were pursued and it was never completed, surviving as an epic folly on the capital's skyline.

The National Monument is free to visit. Note that there is a steep walk up Calton Hill to reach it.



The Monument under construction



The Monument and Calton Hill are a draw for tourists

HISTORIC SCOTLAND SITES TO VISIT NEARBY

● Edinburgh Castle

Around 15 minutes by bike or 20 minutes walking or using public transport

● Holyrood Park

Around 15 minutes by car or bike, or 20 minutes walking or using public transport

● Craigmillar Castle

Around 15 minutes by car, 25 minutes by bike

HUME CASTLE

A 'sham castle'... and a real one

A castle existed on the site of Hume Castle in the Scottish Borders from at least the 13th century, but it was mostly destroyed by Oliver Cromwell's forces in 1651. What little remained was enclosed within a folly, or 'sham castle', erected in the 1790s for the 3rd Earl of Marchmont.

You can see part of the old castle wall in the middle of the folly in the aerial photograph below. The crenellations on the folly's battlements are larger than they would have been on a fortress, which was built to be defended. This was a purely aesthetic touch, designed to be a picturesque feature that could be seen from the earl's grand seat of Marchmont House around seven miles away.

Hume Castle is now cared for by the Hume Castle Preservation Trust and can be visited for free. There is a small car park near the castle.

HISTORIC SCOTLAND SITES TO VISIT NEARBY

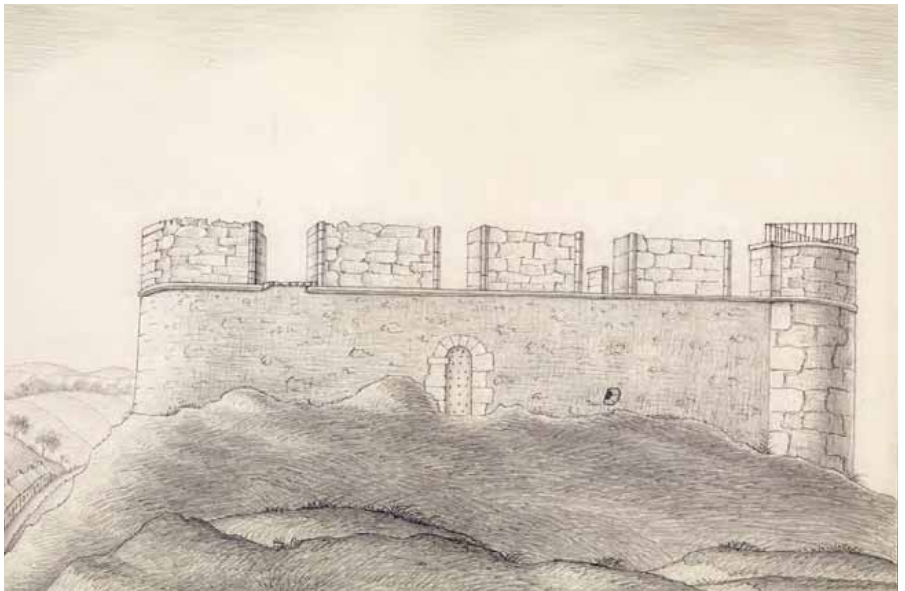
● Dryburgh Abbey

Around 20 minutes by car

● Smailholm Tower

(closed October to March)

Around 20 minutes by car



Artistic renditions of Hume Castle from 1839



Spot remnants of the original castle within the folly

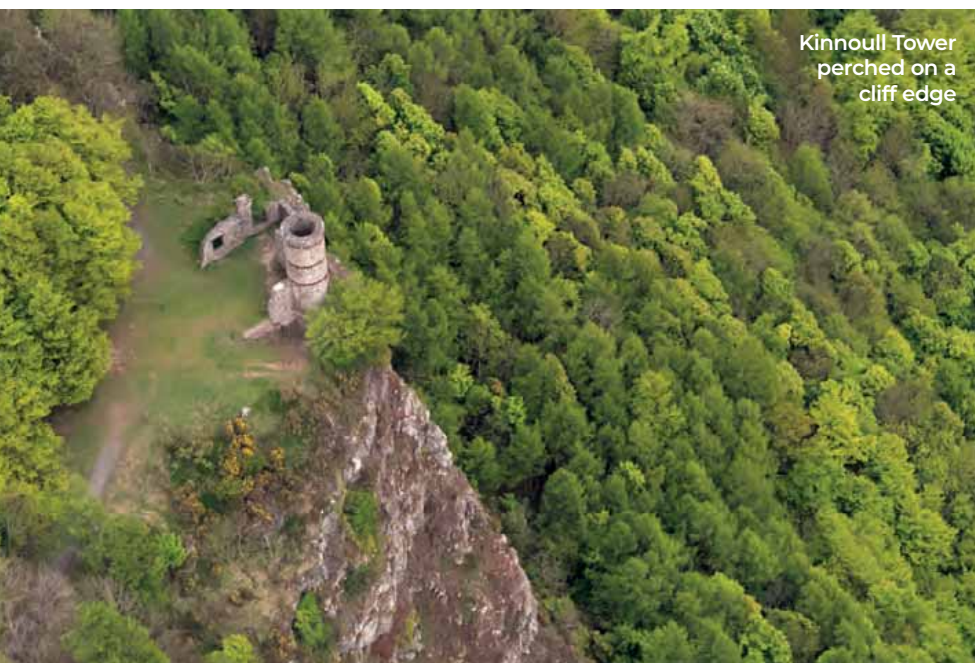
PAPERS OF ALEXANDER ARCHER

CLICK AND CALL

If we've piqued your curiosity, you'll find more about follies on our trove.scot website. Trove.scot is a free online resource full of images and archive material relating to Scotland's buildings and archaeological history.

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You can also visit our Archives and Library in person at John Sinclair House in Edinburgh. You'll find a host of books and journals about follies, gardens and many more subjects relating to Scotland's history, architecture and archaeology. Book an appointment via trove.scot



Kinnoull Tower
perched on a
cliff edge

KINNOULL TOWER

Pride, prejudice and Perth

The ruins of a medieval castle stand prominently on Kinnoull Hill, overlooking the River Tay as it defines a stretch of the Tay Valley from Perth towards Dundee, but it isn't medieval at all. Instead, it is a convincing artificial ruin dating to the 18th century.

Kinnoull Tower was built for the 9th Earl of Kinnoull, who was inspired by his experiences during his Grand Tour which took him to Germany's Rhine Valley. The valley was famous for its brooding Gothic castles over sheer green valleys, and the earl must have seen a similarity with the Tay Valley.

An illustration of Kinnoull Tower features in an 1892 publication in our Archives titled *Souvenir of Scotland: Its Cities, Lakes and Mountains*. Other sites pictured in this book include Urquhart Castle and Iona Abbey, showing us that, by the end of the 19th century, this 18th-century folly was ranked highly alongside much older historic sites. Indeed, from the image on the page, the reader would be hard-pressed to tell the folly apart from the older castles it was mimicking.

Although she never visited Scotland, news of Kinnoull Tower found its way to a young Jane Austen, who described a version of the folly –

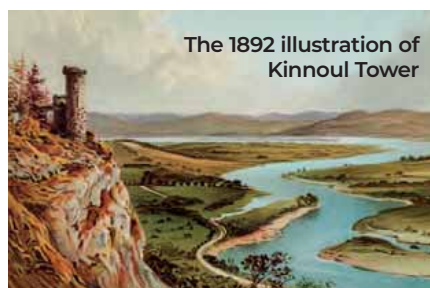
which she renamed Lesley Castle – in an epistolary novel (also called *Lesley Castle*) she wrote when she was 16. In it, she describes 'Lesley Castle' as an "old and Mouldering Castle, which is situated two miles from Perth on a bold projecting Rock".

Austen had reinvented the folly of Kinnoull Tower as an ancient residence, and that folly had taken on a life of its own.

Kinnoull Tower sits within Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park, which is managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. There are walking trails and you can visit the tower itself to enjoy the view.

HISTORIC SCOTLAND SITES TO VISIT NEARBY

- **Elcho Castle**
(closed October to March)
Around 20 minutes by car
- **Huntingtower Castle**
Around 20 minutes by car



The 1892 illustration of
Kinnoull Tower



A bird's eye view
of Oban's folly

McCaig's Tower
looms over the town





McCAIG'S TOWER

A well-intentioned ornament

McCaig's Tower in Oban on Scotland's west coast was built partly for philanthropic reasons: to provide employment for local stonemasons during wintertime, when work was scarce.

John Stuart McCaig, a banker, was the impetus behind this epic folly. Originally intended to feature a tower and statues of McCaig's family, it was a variation on the Colosseum in the heart of ancient Rome, albeit with pointed Gothic windows instead of Roman arches. Work on the tower began in 1895, but it was left unfinished five years later.

Other follies also derived from creating work during hard times, particularly in Ireland during the Great Famine of the 1840s.

The Fyrish Monument on the Novar Estate in Easter Ross is said to have been built as a form of relief work during famine. Both McCaig's Tower and the Fyrish Monument have some

key folly ingredients: they were expensive works of hubris serving no practical purpose other than to look at or walk to; they imitate older styles of architecture; and they certainly draw the eye. Fyrish holds an ace over all the other follies featured here because it was used for one of the missions in Series 4 of *The Traitors UK*.

McCaig's Tower is free to visit, but there is a steep walk to reach it from Oban Bay. You can walk to the Fyrish Monument from the Novar Estate car park, on a two-mile uphill trek.

HISTORIC SCOTLAND SITES TO VISIT NEARBY

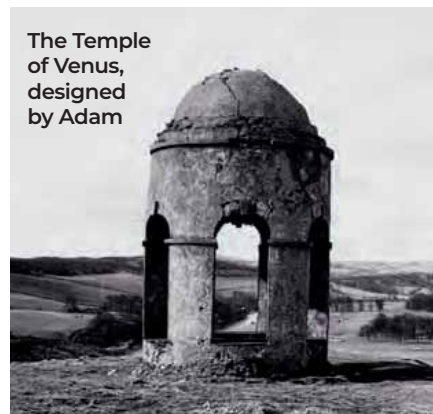
● Dunstaffnage Castle

Around 10 minutes from Oban by car

● Bonawe Iron Works (closed October to March)

Around 20 minutes from Oban by car

The Temple of Venus, designed by Adam



TEMPLE OF VENUS, DUFF HOUSE

Seeing the sights



'Mercury' in situ at Duff House in 1976

The Temple of Venus near Banff is a classical rotunda on a hill, intended to improve the view from the grounds of Duff House in the north east of Scotland, and to give visitors a sheltered space from where they can admire the view.

The folly was designed by the renowned Scottish architect William Adam for William Duff, Lord Braco, who had hired Adam to design the grand mansion of Duff House.

Although this folly is now unoccupied, it is believed that it once housed a lead statue of Venus, the ancient Roman goddess of love. Similar statues to other Roman gods were placed on the exterior of Duff House – such as the statue of Mercury, pictured above. These were replaced by fibreglass copies, but you can still see the original statues of Mars and Minerva inside Duff House.

HISTORIC SCOTLAND SITES TO VISIT NEARBY

● Duff House

Around five minutes by car or 20 minutes walking

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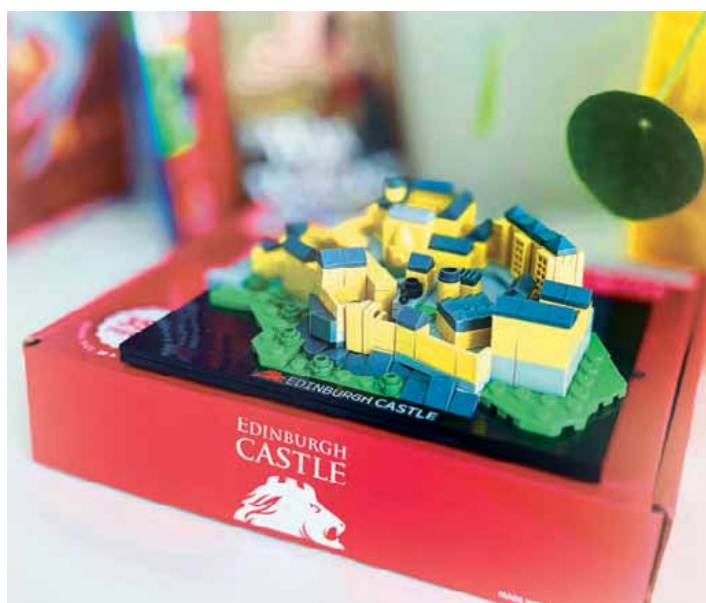
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Paperback £14.99

FOR HALLOWEEN LOVERS



Bloody Scotland

**Various authors,
including Chris
Brookmyre,
Val McDermid,
Louise Welsh**

Amp up the

Halloween vibe with this collection of short stories from 12 of the nation's best crime writers.

Featuring some of your favourite properties, its murder-filled tales guarantee great thrills!

Paperback £8.99

Autumnal treasures

Neil Gregory, Head of Outreach, shares a quartet of titles to fall for this season

If there's one season where it's equally magnificent to be both outside and inside, it's autumn. Watching leafy greens fade and turn to stunning reds and ochres is a must. And yet, to coorie in with a good book, such as these four, is also a winner.

FOR HERITAGE HEROES



**A History of
Scotland's
Landscapes**

**Fiona Watson
with Piers Dixon**

Packed with stunning imagery and lively text, this page-turner provides a fascinating account of how Scotland's evocative landscapes are laden with rich historic information of bygone days.

The book's four chapters – which focus on leisure and industry, settlements, farming and infrastructure – show how our ancestors lived off the land and the ways technology has shaped the environments of our recent past and present.

The authors spotlight how Scotland's harbours, canals, bridges and roads all hold stories of the highways and byways our predecessors created to navigate the nation.

A fascinating set of maps detailing evidence of Roman, medieval and post-medieval Scotland allow you to see crofting, mining and quarrying locations.

Perfect for poring over as the nights draw in.

**Hardback £30
Paperback £20**

Dress up for Halloween
hijinks and shenanigans
at our spooktacular sites

WHAT'S ON



HAVE A BALL THIS AUTUMN

Expect treats galore and plenty more throughout the season

Maritime Leith's Black History

TRINITY HOUSE

Join us on a tour of Trinity House this Black History Month to discover the stories of our collections and maritime Leith, and their links with the wider world. Suitable for ages 12+.

● Fri 2, Fri 9, Fri 16 and Fri 23 Oct, 11am-12pm and 1pm-2pm.

Big Living History Week

VARIOUS SITES

Make your October break special and meet historical characters at sites across Scotland. Our characters will be on hand to answer your

questions and share stories about their life from the past. They'll also be happy to pose for a photo or two!

● Sat 10-Sun 18 Oct, during site opening hours.

Wild Magic! An Autumn Family Trail

VARIOUS SITES

This October and for Halloween, join us at sites across Scotland to explore the wild magic that grows around us.

● Sat 10 Oct-Sun 1 Nov, during site opening hours.

Whispers of the Past: Dark History of Edinburgh Castle

EDINBURGH CASTLE



Chat with some truly living history!

The Scottish capital is a place where mysteries and anomalies are everywhere – and Edinburgh Castle is no exception. Join us for a haunting guided tour in the grounds of this ancient site. Recommended for ages 18+ due to content.

● Various dates from Fri 16 Oct-Sun 1 Nov, 11am-12.30pm and 2pm-3.30pm.

The King's Call – Cthulhu in Medieval Scotland

STIRLING CASTLE

Join the 'A Viking in the Sun' project as they bring a cast of pro gamers to the Great Hall! There, using the Call of Cthulhu roleplaying game, they'll try to solve in real

time a medieval mystery set in Stirling Castle.

● 17 Oct, 7.30pm, doors at 7pm.

Halloween Tales

TRINITY HOUSE

Discover the darker side of Trinity House's maritime history as our resident

storyteller shares tales of hauntings, superstition and mystery. This unique experience includes a twilight tour of the house and 16th-century vaults.

● *Suitable for ages 5+:*

*Mon 26-Tue 27 Oct,
4.30pm-6pm.*

● *Suitable for ages 12+:*

*Mon 26-Tue 27 Oct,
7pm-8.30pm.*

Whispers After Dark

EDINBURGH CASTLE

Experience Edinburgh Castle in a whole new light... or lack of it. As night falls, our expert guide takes you on a chilling journey through the castle's shadowed spaces.

● *Thu 29-Sat 31 Oct,
6pm and 6.30pm.*

Halloween Hijinks at Stirling Castle

STIRLING CASTLE

Step into a frightfully fun celebration of Scotland's Halloween traditions!

Enjoy hands-on activities for all ages. Dress in your Halloween best and impress Scotland's royals. Discover ancient myths, folklore, gruesome tales and Halloween customs as history comes alive.

● *Sat 31 Oct, 11am-4pm.*

Halloween Shenanigans

EDINBURGH CASTLE, CRAIGMILLAR CASTLE, URQUHART CASTLE

Dive into a weekend of Halloween-themed activities at our legendary castles. Don your best guising costume and take your pick from Edin-boo! Castle, Craig-thriller Castle and Urrrr-quhart Castle for all manner of activities, traditions and storytelling!

● *Sat 31 Oct, at various times.*

FESTIVE FUN TIMES



Enjoy a delightful afternoon tea in style

Stirling Castle Christmas Shopping Fair

STIRLING CASTLE

Our ever-popular fair returns. Stock up for the festive season in the Great Hall, Palace Apartments and Chapel Royal with stalls showcasing the best of local Scottish brands, crafts, fine foods and drink.

A brass band will provide music while you enjoy seasonal treats, including mince pies and mulled wine.

● *Tue 1 Dec, 6pm-9pm.*

Christmas Afternoon Tea

EDINBURGH CASTLE, STIRLING CASTLE

Make Christmas 2026 special with afternoon tea in The Tearooms at Edinburgh Castle or Stirling Castle's Great Hall. Enjoy a dining experience fit for royalty. This package includes afternoon tea for one person and entrance to Edinburgh Castle. Available with an add-on glass of Champagne. Pre-booking is required.

● *Edinburgh Castle*

Afternoon Teas:

*Various dates from
Tue 1 Dec-Sun 3 Jan
2027, during site
opening hours.*

● *Stirling Castle*

Afternoon Teas:

*Sat 5 Dec, Sun 6 Dec,
Sat 12 Dec and
Sun 13 Dec, 1pm.*

Traditional Christmas at Trinity House

TRINITY HOUSE

Step back in time as we celebrate Christmas at Trinity House! Take part in festive activities suitable for all ages including drop-in crafts and the chance to handle real and replica objects.

● *Fri 11 Dec, 12pm-4pm.*

A Christmas Carol

STIRLING CASTLE

A festive treat for all the family, Charles Dickens' beloved tale is brought to Stirling Castle's Great Hall in a joyful adaptation from Operation Moonlight.

● *Fri 18-Mon 21 Dec,
7pm-9.30pm.*

TO SEE OUR FULL EVENTS PROGRAMME AND BOOK YOUR SPACE, VISIT [HES.SCOT/EVENTS](https://hes.scot/events)

EXHIBITIONS AND TALKS

Housing for the People: How the Tenement Built Urban Scotland

JOHN SINCLAIR HOUSE

Using photographs and architectural drawings from our archives, in this talk, Michael Allan, Acquisitions and Loans Officer, will explore the history and evolution of Scotland's tenements since the Middle Ages. Email archives@hes.scot to book your space.

● Mon 28 Sep, 2pm-3.30pm.

Work in Focus – Sweetest Eyes Were Ever Seen by Sir John Everett Millais

DUFF HOUSE

Don't miss this year's work of art on loan from the National Galleries of Scotland to be displayed at Duff House – Sweetest Eyes Were Ever Seen by Pre-Raphaelite artist



Talk a walk down memory lane with the Housing for the People exhibition

Sir John Everett Millais.

● Every Fri, Sat and Sun from 2 Oct to 26 Sep 2027, during site opening hours.

Marking Time

BLACKNESS CASTLE

Explore the history of mark making in Scotland, beginning with some of the oldest markings found in the country and up to

the present day. Featuring images from across Scotland's historic environment, this exhibition highlights stories of love, wars, artists and everyday events that have inspired people to create lasting messages.

● Wed 11 Nov-Sun 7 Mar 2027, during site opening hours.

Drawn from the Archives

ABERDOUR CASTLE

This exhibition highlights and celebrates some of the wonderful drawings held within our archives and the role they play in preserving and understanding the past.

● Sat 28 Nov-Mon 5 Apr 2027, during site opening hours.

CONSERVATION WORKSHOPS AND OPEN DAYS



Find out more about approaches to conservation

Doors Open Days Weekend

ENGINE SHED

Exploring the theme of Heritage at Risk, we'll raise awareness of threats to our built heritage and celebrate 30 years of our Craft Fellowship programme.

● Sat 26 Sep, 11am-4pm;
Sun 27 Sep, 11am-3pm.

History of Building Conservation

ENGINE SHED

Explore the philosophies

governing architectural conservation in Scotland and find out how international standards can help offset the impact of climate change.

● Tue 13 Oct, 9.30am-4pm.

Heritage Science at the Engine Shed

ENGINE SHED

Join us for an introduction to the applied use of material science in heritage conservation in Scotland.

● Wed 11 Nov, 9.30am-4pm.

These are a just a few of the upcoming activities at the Engine Shed. Full listing at engine shed.scot/whats-on

MEMBERS' EXCLUSIVE EVENTS

Behind the Aerial Image

NCAP OFFICE, EDINBURGH

Back by popular demand, we warmly invite you on a behind-the-scenes tour of the National Collection of Aerial Photography. Opened in 2021, Seven Hills was specifically designed for the innovative management, preservation and digitisation of these unique collections.

● *Thu 15 and Thu 22 Oct, 2.30pm-4pm.*

Stories on Headstones

ELGIN CATHEDRAL

Uncover stories carved in stone on our exclusive tour of Elgin Cathedral graveyard. Our expert guide will delve deeper into the history, art and meaning of the gravestones in the grounds



Tour Elgin Cathedral's stories in stone

DON'T FORGET... Members' Exclusive Events have limited capacity and must be booked online in advance. Head to hes.scot/member-events to book.

of the Lantern of the North. Take a closer look at the symbolism adorning tombs, the mechanics of a wall tomb and the graves of some local celebrities. Our exploration will unveil the influence of geology on the headstones themselves

and how these weathered stones provide a unique habitat for a surprising array of flora and fauna.

● *Sat 17 and Sat 24 Oct, 11am-12.30pm.*

Marking Time: A Member's Exclusive Exhibition Launch

BLACKNESS CASTLE

We are delighted to invite you to join co-curators Sace and Dr Alex Hale for the launch of this exhibition at Fort George.

The exhibition will take you on a journey from the present day to some of the oldest markings to be found in Scotland. Come along and explore the fascinating history of hidden marks and messages, from urban contemporary street art to prehistoric rock art, and discover how they can help us understand the world around us today.

● *Wed 11 Nov, 11.15am-12.45pm and 2pm-3.30pm.*

GET OUTDOORS

Ranger Walks

From bat-spotting at Linlithgow Palace to family-friendly activities in Holyrood Park, our Ranger-led walks and activities are the perfect way to discover more about the amazing wildlife and history of our outdoor places. We've events for different ages and abilities, but pre-booking is advised for some activities.

● *Full details at hes.scot/ranger-service*

Orkney Rangers

Explore Orkney's ancient landscape and discover five millennia of history and prehistory with Rangers from the Orkney Rangers Service. Join them on fascinating and free guided walks at the Ring of Brodgar, the Stones of Stenness and the Barnhouse Settlement.

● *No booking required for Orkney Rangers Service walks.*

FULL DETAILS AT [HES.SCOT/RANGER-SERVICE](https://hes.scot/ranger-service)

FIND MORE
IMAGES
from Scotland's
manufacturing
past at
trove.scot



A Hillman Imp Deluxe, built at Linwood in Renfrewshire



An Albion Venturer half-cab double-decker bus from the Glasgow Corporation Transport fleet



An Albion lorry in the livery of Alexanders Stores Limited



A Galloway 12, built at Heathall in Dumfries

AUTUMN

ON THE ROAD

During the early 20th century, Scotland's motor car industry was at full throttle and Scottish carmakers were among Britain's leading manufacturers. They took over from early pioneers like the Madelvic Works in Edinburgh, which produced an electric car designed in 1898 by Edinburgh's city astronomer, William Peck.

Before 1914, there were nearly 50 independent companies producing bespoke vehicles, with firms like Albion, Argyll and Arrol-Johnston blazing a trail. These small-scale car manufacturers were a far cry from the large, automated

factories that came later. Their vehicles were hand-built by small teams of highly skilled craftsmen and craftswomen.

The Albion Motor Car Company in Glasgow survived the lean years after the First World War, when other factories were closing, by focusing on commercial vehicles such as buses and trucks.

The Galloway Motor Company in Kirkcudbright, meanwhile, had a mainly female workforce led by Dorothea Pullinger, who was Britain's only woman manager of a car factory at that time. In 1921, the magazine *Light Car and Cyclecar* reported: "The Galloway car

may be described as a car made by ladies for those of their own sex."

By the early 1960s, the Rootes Group was manufacturing and exporting the Hillman Imp – a small saloon car – from its factory at Linwood near Paisley.

Scotland's car industry eventually moved to mass-market manufacturing, but faced multiple challenges. It reached the end of the line when the Linwood factory closed in 1981. But the legacy of those early carmakers endures through Scotland's specialised engineering and the skills being used to restore historic vehicles that have survived.