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Canadian heroine receives Scot of the Year Award

DAVID HUNTER
Special Report

Earlier this year I spent some time in Scotland in the Highland region of Lochaber -- a rugged and wild area of stunning beauty with dramatic mountain landscapes.

It was in Lochaber that Bonnie Prince Charlie arrived in Scotland in his ill-fated attempt to claim the British throne. And it was in that region, after his defeat at Cullodan, he hid out, protected by loyal Highland supporters while awaiting a ship to carry him back to France.

Now, regardless of which side of that historic conflict one's sympathies lie, there is unanimous agreement on one point -- that the loyalty, honour and integrity of the Highlanders in their pledge to protect the Prince, at the threat to life itself -- holds a unique place in all the heroic acts in the Scottish experience.

Even so, as Government troops swarmed the region, the Prince would surely have been captured had it not been for the heroism of a young Highland girl who helped him escape. And her name was Flora MacDonald.

And in Canada, we have another Flora MacDonald who is every bit a heroine. Our Flora MacDonald has been spending time in another rugged and wild area of stunning beauty but one much more dangerous than the Scottish Highlands.

Flora has been going to Afghanistan since 2001 when the Taliban still formed the government and had control over most of that country.

Flora is both a humanitarian and a visionary and the foundation which she established, known as Future Generations Canada or FGC, is a grassroots organization dedicated to the empowerment of the Afghan people as they work towards a better standard of living for their people.

Operating in the fields of health, education, economy, environment and peaceful society, FGC provides training and guidance to help the Afghan people help themselves with long-term development solutions.

Since 2003, thanks to Flora and her foundation, communities in central Afghanistan have planted 850,000 trees and provided solar-powered lighting for 400 families and clean water to more than 50 villages.

They have established local government, creating more than 100 local councils with a woman as the leader of one of them, a first for that region.

Eight new schools have been built and 13 more registered and 10 villagers have now qualified for entrance to university to be trained as teachers.

Literacy training and employment for villagers, especially for women is underway and funding for sports programs has now established about 50 soccer teams

All of this is quite remarkable for a woman in her 80's especially after a long and distinguished career in public life.

Flora MacDonald was born in North Sydney, Nova Scotia, a sixth generation Canadian whose ancestors came to Canada from the Scottish Highlands in the 1790s.

Her fascination with Afghanistan came about as a result of her reading her grandfather's account of his experiences there as a soldier round about the time of the Boer War. In his journals he had described his journey, starting in what was then India (now Pakistan) through the Khyber Pass and into Afghanistan.

Intrigued by these reports as a girl, Flora was delighted when an opportunity to retrace his footsteps presented itself while on an assignment to India.

She found that, not only was the stark Afghan landscape just as her grandfather had described it, but the condition of much of the population had not changed, and the position of women seemed more rigid than ever -- a stark contrast with Flora's life in Canada, despite the entrenchment of men in power here in the early stages of her career.

She was the first woman to be enrolled in the graduate course in International Relations



Flora MacDonald (Scot of the Year 2009) with Michael Russell, MSP, the Scottish Government's Minister for Culture, External Affairs and Constitution. Michael first met Flora in New Delhi in February 2000 when he represented the Scottish Parliament at the first Commonwealth Parliamentary Association event the new Scottish Government had been entitled to attend.

at the National Defence College and was elected to Parliament in October 1972, serving as until November 1988.

During that time, she held three cabinet posts and was the first woman in Canada to be named to the Foreign Affairs portfolio.

On leaving politics, Flora held numerous national and international posts and has been an advisor to many organizations.

She has been awarded the Pearson Peace Medal and the Churchill Society's "Award for Excellence in the Cause of Parliamentary Democracy" and was the first Canadian to receive India's highest award to civilians for distinguished service in the field of public affairs.

Flora holds honorary degrees from universities in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

And believe it or not, she is still adding to a travelogue that includes at least 100 countries in her concern for the plight and progress of women in developing countries.

Thanks to CBC's Carole MacNeil for input to this report.

THE SCOTTISH STUDIES FOUNDATION



P.O. Box 45069,
2482 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M4P 3E3

www.scottishstudies.com

Dear fellow members,

Once again, the summer is over and it's time for me to get back down to Scottish Studies business after spending some time in Scotland and in Muskoka, trying to be a pioneer by helping my son rebuild an old loggers house.

Since the last newsletter, our big event was the Scottish Studies Society's *Tartan Day/Scot of the Year Award* in April and we were delighted to have last year's recipient, Donald Stewart, present the award to Flora MacDonald. Scottish Development International and Visit Scotland sponsored the evening and the SDI team came together from all over North America for the event. I would like to acknowledge the wonderful support given to the Foundation over the years by SDI's Michael Corish, Senior VP from Toronto and Isobel Bell, Assistant VP from Chicago.

Representing the Government of Scotland was Michael Russell, MSP, Minister for Culture, External Affairs and Constitution and we were delighted to give him a \$1,000 cheque to present to Simon Fraser University's Centre for Scottish Studies as that was the next stop on his itinerary.

Next, it was time for our Annual Meeting, which took place at the Spring Colloquium at Knox College in Toronto. We were honoured to have Professor Robert Crawford from the University of St Andrews give a talk at the event on the occasion of the Canadian launch of *The Bard*, his new biography of Robert Burns. Also at the event were Dr Michael Vance (St Mary's University), Professor Andrew Blaikie (University of Aberdeen), Dr Sarah Tolmie (University of Waterloo), and Jeremy Bellsmith of Knox College in Toronto.

Shortly after, I was delighted to attend the 29th Annual Dinner of the Robert Burns Association of North America -- a wonderful evening with the best recitation of *Tam o' Shanter* I have heard. Very generously, the

organizers of the event donated the proceeds of their raffle to the Foundation and it was with great pleasure that I accepted a cheque from RBANA's Ron Ballantyne.

On Sunday, September 6, we celebrated our 18th Annual Tall Ship Cruise aboard Canada's largest sailing ship, the *Empire Sandy*. Once again, we were blessed with glorious weather and a record attendance with

people of all ages participating. Thanks again to our Vice President, Maggie McEwan for championing this event.

After a rather long hiatus, caused in part by the demise of the Bow & Arrow pub, the "Oor Club" got underway again at noon on Friday September 18 at the Duke Of York pub in Toronto when Scottish Studies Director and renowned Canadian publisher, Douglas Gibson gave a talk entitled *Three Great Scottish-Canadian Authors --- Hugh MacLennan, Alistair MacLeod, and Alice Munro*.

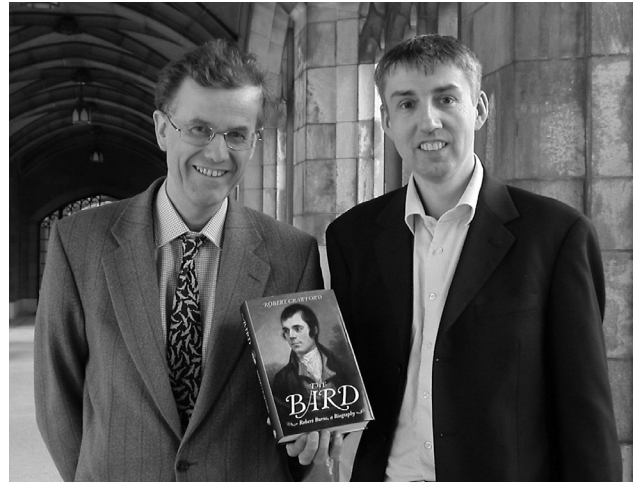
On Saturday, September 26, the Scottish Studies Fall Colloquium took place with the 2009 Frank Watson Prize for the best Scottish History book going to Professor John McGavin for *Theatricality and Narrative in Medieval and Early-Modern Scotland*.

Dr. Jenny Wormald, Honorary Fellow of the University of Edinburgh, delivered the Third Annual Jill McKenzie Memorial Lecture. Her talk was entitled *Godly Scotland: myth or reality?*

Also from Scotland was Dr. Jeremy Crang, Assistant Director of the Centre for the Study of the Two World Wars at Edinburgh University who presented a talk on Scotland and the Second World War, with special emphasis on the 51st Scottish Highlanders.

And, of course, from Canada, we had Dr. Mairi Cowan from the University of Toronto who spoke on *Kindred spirits: kinship, identity and religious responsibility in Scottish towns, 1350-1560*, and Dr Gillian Leitch from the Université de Montréal who presented her research on Commemorating Burns in 19th century Montreal.

Hot off the press at the event was the new publication, *Ties of Blood, Kin and Country: Scottish Associational Culture in the Diaspora*. Its editors, Graeme Morton and Andrew Hinson from the University of Guelph waited eagerly for the arrival of the books, hand delivered by myself, and



Professor Robert Crawford from the University of St Andrews and Professor Graeme Morton, Chair of Scottish Studies, University of Guelph

Andrew Hinson gave a wonderfully persuasive talk outlining the many reasons you should buy the book!

Looking to the future, we are looking forward to our participation in the International Festival of Authors event, Writing Scotland, which will take place from October 21 to November 3 at Harbourfront Centre in Toronto. Taking place in partnership with the Edinburgh International Book Festival and timed to coincide with Scotland's Year of Homecoming, the event will celebrate Scottish authors and Canadian writers of Scottish descent.

Next year, we will be sponsoring the East Side Players' production of *Mary Stuart* by Friedrich Schiller (translation by Peter Oswald). This production dramatizes the personal struggle between the devoutly Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, and her Protestant cousin Queen Elizabeth of England and focuses principally on the strong emotional conflict between the two queens, and on the vicious, life-and-death intrigues at the English court. You are invited to a special preview of this event on February 17, 2010 (details on our website).

But before then, our own Burns aficionado, Gordon Hepburn, has again booked the Granite Club in Toronto on January 22 for another wonderful evening celebrating the 251st anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns. Gordon emphasizes that this event always sells out fast, so please call him at 905-881-5780.

And so, until next time thank you all for your generous support. It is truly appreciated.

Sincerely,

David Hunter,
President, Scottish Studies Foundation
davidhunter@scottishstudies.com

The Wanderings of Prince Charlie

by the Rev. A.E. Robertson, B.D.

A brief itinerary of the wanderings of Prince Charlie in the Highlands after Culloden.

The Battle of Culloden was fought on the 16th of April 1746. It began at one o'clock, and in half an hour the Jacobite forces were routed and the Prince forced to fly to the Western Highlands for France and safety.

Crossing the River Nairn at the ford of Faillie, accompanied by a small band of half a dozen horsemen, he took the road up Strath Nairn by Tordarroch to Aberarder, and then over into Strath Errick and on to Gorthlick (Gortleg), a house on the west side of what is now called Loch Mhòr. Here old Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat, was awaiting news of the battle; and the arrival of the Prince in full flight must have disconcerted that crafty old gentleman not a little. Riding on through the night by the then existing Wade road up Strath Errick, the Prince reached Fort Augustus and then on to Invergarry Castle, where he arrived in the early hours of the morning of 17th April.

Resting here till the afternoon, the Prince with three faithful followers again set out, and taking the old bridle track on the west side of Loch Lochy, he made for the far end of Loch Arkaig by Clunes, the Dark Mile, and Murlaggan, eventually finding shelter for the night at the home of Donald Cameron in Glen Pean. The evening of the next day saw the Prince on the road again. He was now on foot, as the Braes of Morar were too rough for horses. It must have been heavy going then, as it is today, up Glen Pean by the boggy, squelching track over the bealach, and down to Oban at the east end of Loch Morar. On the night of the 20th he walked to Borrodale, on the north shore of Loch nan Uamh, via Glen Beasdale, from whence he set sail, on the 26th, for Benbecula in the

Outer Hebrides. Then followed for the Prince many weeks of sore privations and hairbreadth escapes in Benbecula, Scalpay, and Loch Boisdale.

Eventually, near Ormaclett, on the west coast of South Uist, he met Flora MacDonald, and had it not been for the clever resource of that brave lady undoubtedly he would have been captured, hemmed in as he now was by Government troops and the ever-vigilant Government ships. Securing a pass for herself and her maid, she dressed the Prince up in female attire as Betty Burke, and in this disguise she managed to smuggle him across the Minch in a boat, landing at Kilbride in Trotternish, Isle of Skye, on the 29th of June. She then took him to Kingsburgh House and the next day, at Portree, he said farewell to his brave rescuer. After a day in the Island of Raasay with two or three followers and guides, he got back to near Portree and, skirting past the head of Lich Sligachan, eventually reached Elgol, on the east shore of Loch Scavaig, where he took boat for the Mainland.

On 5th July the Prince landed at Mallaigvaig (Mallaig Beag), where he found shelter at Cross, a mile south of the bridge over the Morar River. Thence to a cave in the shore below Borrodale House. On the 13th July he shifted to Macleod's Cove upon a high precipice in the woods of Borrodale, and, on the 17th, to MacEachine's Refuge, high up in the corrie about a mile north of the west end of Loch Eilt.

Endeavouring to escape through the line of camps and sentries that had now been established from the head of Loch Eil to the head of Loch Hourn, the Prince's route was briefly as follows:

Sgùrr a' Mhuidhe, east end of Loch Eilt; Fraoichbheinn; Coire Odhar; Mam na Sgùrr Choileam (O.S. Sgùrr Thuilm); upper Glen Dessarry; Coire nan Gall; and then on to a "fast place" at the head of Loch Quoich, which was reached in the early hours of 20th July.

Leaving at eight o'clock that night, the Prince and his party, six in all, climbed to the top of Meall an Spàrdain and observed the enemy's camps, close below them,



The view from the path leading to Prince Charlie's hiding place -- MacEachine's Refuge, about a mile north of the west end of Loch Eilt.

at the foot of Gleann Còsaidh. Creeping down to the glen foot, they skulked across, still above and within the line of the said camps. They now climbed up the hill immediately in front of them (Leac na Fearnna), then down into Coire Beithe and, in the early morning of the 21st, they passed between two of the sentries in Corrie Hoo (probably just to the south of Loch Coire Shùbh), thus breaking through the cordon that had hemmed them in in the Clanranald's country.

Reaching Coire Sgoir-adail, they spent the day in "a bit of hollow ground covered with long heather and branches of young birch bushes", in full view of the soldiers encamped at the very head of Loch Hourn. Setting out that night, they stumbled up Coire Sgoiradail in failing light, and over the Bealach Duibh Leac down to Glen Shiel, where they found shelter for the day behind a great boulder on the north side of the river, about a mile east of Achnangart. This boulder is well known to the local inhabitants, and it is pointed out as "Prince Charlie's Stone". Turning eastwards, they now made for Strath Glass by Glen Shiel and Strath Cluanie, spending a night near the summit of Sgùrr nan Conbhairean "wet to the skin and devoured by midges."

On 24th July they fell in with the famous eight Glen Moriston men who had fought for the Prince at Culloden and had taken refuge in a cave in Coire Mheadhoin, at the head of Coire Dho in Ceannacroc. This cave is a most interesting place, and it is well worth a visit. It resembles the Shelter Stone in the Cairngorms, being formed of several large boulders massed together which have fallen from the rocks of Tigh Mòr na Seilge.

In this cave the Prince stayed for over a week, and on the first day of August, starting at night, he, with his whole party, crossed over to Athnamulloch, at the west end of Loch Affric, thence eastwards down Glen Affric to the Braes of Strathglass, finding

NOTE:

For a full and detailed account of the wanderings of Prince Charlie after Culloden, the reader is referred to the three volumes of The Lyon in Mourning (Scottish History Society), a veritable mine of information. The companion volume to it, the late Mr. W. B. Blaikie's Itinerary of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, will be found indispensable. The above brief notes have been largely compiled from these volumes, together with a personal knowledge of the whole route traversed by the Prince on the Mainland.

A.E.R.

shelter in a "Sheally hut" in the depths of Fasnakyle woods. They then moved on into Glen Cannich, and climbed to the crest of the ridge between Meallan Odhar and An Soutar, just north of Liatrie (Leitry), in order to meet a messenger who had been sent to Poolewe for tidings of the French ship there. This is the most northerly point Prince Charlie reached.

Receiving the intelligence that the ship at Poolewe had sailed, he resolved to make his way back to Locheil's Cannich River at Muchrachd, then through by Fasnakyle, past Comar, Tomich, over the old drove road by Loch na Beinne Bàine to the Braes of Glen Moriston. Then westwards up Glen Moriston, and over to Loch Loyne by the River Loyne, and down to the Garry, near Tomdoun. Forging the Garry with difficulty, they traveled across the hills to Achnasaul, at Loch Arkaig, which they reached on 15th August. In this neighbourhood the Prince spent nearly a fortnight, hiding in sundry "fast places" – one in Gleann Cia-aig, another in the Dark Mile, another in Torr a' Mhuilt.

On 28th August the Prince set forth for Badenoch to join Locheil and Cluny Macpherson, travelling by the headwaters of the Roy, over the ridge of Creag Meaghaidh (probably through the "Window"), down Coire Arder, and so to Ardverikie, eventually finding shelter with Locheil and Cluny Macpherson in Cluny's "Cage", which had been constructed out of wood and moss in the high steep ground overlooking Loch Ericht, in the corrie a quarter of a mile north-east of Alder Bay. Here he remained for a week.

On 13th September, at one o'clock in the morning, hearing of the arrival of the French ships at Borrodale, the Prince started back again for the west. Crossing over by the Allt a' Chaoil-reidhe and Loch a' Bhealach Leamhain, he reached Moy at the west end of

Loch Laggan, then up the Moy Burn over the western ridge of Creag Meaghaidh, and down by the Uisge na Fiehead to the head of Glen Roy. On the night of the 15th they crossed the River Lochy, and so on to Achnacarry, then along, by the south side of Loch Arkaig, to Gleann Camgharaidh. Spending the night there, they traveled up on Glen Pean, reaching Loch nan Uamh on the 19th September 1746, where the Prince, with a large party of his followers, embarked on board a French ship and sailed for France. ■



The Rev. A.E. Robertson in later years down at sea level with his wife on route to the Hebrides. His intimate knowledge of the Scottish Highlands gave him an appreciation of the challenges facing Prince Charlie in his attempt to hide out and avoid capture in that wild and rugged terrain.

A.E. Robertson: The first "Munro Bagger"

In 1891, after much painstaking research, Sir Hugh Munro published a list of 283 mountains in Scotland over 3,000 feet high. It caused quite a stir at the time once people came to realize just how many distinct mountains over this height actually existed in Scotland and soon the term "Munro" was coined to denote them. His list soon stimulated early climbers to ascend as many as possible and the first to achieve the complete list was the Rev. Archibald Eneas Robertson (A.E. Robertson).

Robertson was born in Helensburgh, the son of a prosperous merchant and began climbing Munros in 1889, two years before Sir Hugh Munro created his list. Robertson had climbed 45 Munros by the time he joined the Scottish Mountaineering Club in 1893. He accumulated further conquests gradually through the succeeding years until, in 1898 and 1899, he undertook a determined campaign which resulted in him reaching the top of a further 147 Munros. This campaign made extensive use of both the developing rail system and his trusty bicycle, and was carefully planned to link the peaks in the most efficient manner, without

unnecessary climbing

His interest in the outdoors was first sparked on family holidays on the Isle of Arran and around 1882 he made a solo ascent of Goat Fell, the highest peak on the island.

According to Robertson's diaries, which are now in the National Library of Scotland, it was in 1890 that his conversion to the hills was finally made. That summer, while holidaying at Onich, just north of Glen Coe, he made a solo walk up Ben Nevis, enjoying tea in the Hotel which then graced the summit, next to the Observatory. Four days later he was on an ascent of Bidean nam Bian, in the company of four experienced mountaineers. As Robertson wrote... "This day first showed me the delights of scientific mountaineering the use of maps, aneroid, compass etc. and ever since that day I have steadily pursued the Quest."

Robertson took just over a decade to climb his Munros, finishing with Meall Dearg in Glen Coe, the east end of the Aonach Eagach ridge. The date was September 1901. On this he was accompanied by his wife, Kate, and his good friend Sandy Moncrieff. It is famously reported by Robertson that after toasting the event with champagne (he carried up a quart bottle provided by Moncrieff)... "Sandy made me first kiss the cairn and then my wife!"

To add to his efforts, the good Reverend often carried a heavy whole-plate camera and his outstanding photographs are still in use today. Unlike Munro, Robertson was an accomplished mountaineer, happy on rock and snow as well as the hillside. He was also an accomplished cabinetmaker, building a fine cabinet to house his photographic collection, and a sturdy table, which saw many decades of hard use in the mountaineering hut on Ben Nevis. ■



Waterfall in the Dark Mile near Gleann Cia-aig – another of Prince Charlie's hiding places

A Funny Thing Happened ... on the way to the Palace!

Maggie McEwan tells of her harrowing experience in getting to Buckingham Palace in time.

My father was born in the Vale of Leven, an area about 20 miles from Glasgow, and attended the Royal Technical College, now Strathclyde University. He always remembered that when he was growing up he and his siblings had to hide when the man from the co-op came round to collect money. He ended up working in Preston, Lancashire, in charge of the British branch of Miehle, Goss Dexter, a company that built newspaper printing presses.

In 1971 he was awarded the CBE – Commander of the British Empire – for exports at a time, I believe, when British exports were in decline and this story is about some things that happened leading up to his investiture.

Some years earlier, my parents had been invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace in recognition of my father's company having received several "Queen's Award to Industry" awards. As you can imagine this was a really big deal. My mother bought a new outfit, including a pouffy hat, especially for the occasion. My father rented tails and a grey top hat that was too big for him and had newspaper stuffed inside to keep it in place.

The photographer and reporter from the local Lancashire newspaper arrived and an article appeared in the local paper. Copies of the photos were sent to everyone they could think of.

Whilst they were in London, my parents stayed at the Dorchester Hotel on Park Lane and it was there that the limo duly arrived to take them to the palace. The big thrill for my mother was the expectation of sweeping through the front gates of Buckingham palace and being driven across the quadrangle.

On the way to the palace the car broke down. A call was made for a replacement car, which never arrived. Eventually, the driver suggested that they hail a taxi, which they did, and with strong assurances from the driver that a limo would be sent to collect them at the end of the function, they continued on their way to the palace. The taxi, of course, did not have the special window sticker allowing it into the grounds of the palace, but the cab driver knew of a side gate that would allow Mum and Dad to join the party. At least they didn't have to scale the walls.

They found the party and all was well until it started to rain. Everyone flocked to the area where the limos were to collect the guests. As each car pulled up to the area the driver gave the attending butler the names of the guests that he was to collect. The names were announced and the corresponding guests were driven away, protected from the rain.

You've guessed it.... No car for the McEwans! When it became clear that there would be no car and the butler was getting edgy, they set off, walking across the quadrangle and out through the palace gates.

Not a taxi was to be found so they traveled by underground to Hyde Park Corner station and walked up Park Lane to the Dorchester.

By this time my mother's new sandals were squelching water at every step, and the newspaper in my father's too-big top hat was sodden and the hat was down around his ears.

My father always walked quickly when embarrassed and when he was somewhat ahead of my mother, she shouted to him, "Alex, we look damned silly walking up here but we look even sillier with you walking six feet ahead of me." So after that they walked arm in arm up Park Lane and into the Dorchester Hotel.

It took my mother a couple of years before she could tell people that story.

Fast-forward to 1971 and the CBE investiture. Dad was allowed to invite one spouse and one child. Having only one of each the decision was easy. By this time I was living over here, working at U of T, married and three months pregnant, in that order.

I had a new dress and jacket made, that I could still just fit into, and an enormous hat. In those days, the only way to get a cheap ticket across the Atlantic was to be a member of a club that was chartering a plane. I still have my membership card in the CN Employees Recreation Club. We flew from Niagara Falls, NY to Stanstead Airport, which in those days was a god-forsaken hole. I made my way, north, to Southport.

The day before the investiture, Mum and I traveled by train to London from Liverpool, arriving at the same time as my Dad's train from Preston. We were met by people from "the London office," who fussed around us.

They were going to make sure that nothing amiss was going to happen to THIS visit to Buckingham Palace.

The three of us were driven to our hotel, enjoyed a pleasant dinner in a little French



Maggie, shown here on the right, with her father and mother outside Buckingham Palace gates

restaurant and retired to our adjoining rooms for an early night. I was in bed reading when there was a tap on the adjoining door. It had just been announced on the TV news that the Queen had chicken pox and had cancelled all official functions.

So much for our early night and all the best laid plans of "the London office." All I could think of was how to persuade my boss that I needed another week off and how I could fit into my outfit if everything were postponed for a couple of months.

My father's first thought, "Phone Doris," his long-suffering secretary. No answer. Doris had taken the opportunity of her boss' absence to enjoy her bridge club. It was 10.30pm after all. Much pacing back and forth with mutterings about people who play bridge when they are needed for more important matters. What the poor woman was going to do from Lytham St Annes that we couldn't do from London I never did figure out. Anyway, we eventually contacted some official and were told that the Queen Mother was assuming all of her daughter's functions. Phew!

The next morning arrived, expected last minute panics about lost gloves etc. ensued, and we were told that our cars had arrived. It turned out that "the London office" had arranged for two cars, each with special window sticker, to show up.... Just in case!

This time everything went smoothly and my mother got her wish of sweeping through the gates and across the quadrangle to the palace.

Some things I remember from the experience....

The guard wearing the Busby at the gate, was, of course absolutely still as we passed,

but his eyes followed our car to see if we were important.

When we got out of the car at the entrance, helped by the butler, onto the red carpet. Dad was taken to the room with the other investees and Mum and I walked up a very wide staircase. I thought it interesting that there were statues at the edges of alternate steps. Then I realized that they were real people – members of the household cavalry, I think!

We walked along a corridor lined with display cases holding examples of Ming Dynasty artifacts and into a large room with a stage and a balcony where the Band of the Grenadier Guards was playing. A gentleman came on stage to teach us how to behave, when to stand, when to sit, no photographs....

The ceremony lasted for about two hours and that little lady, the Queen Mother, wearing high heeled shoes and standing for the entire time – we were allowed to sit – spoke to every single person who was receiving an award, MBEs, OBEs, CBEs, Knights and Dames. She was wonderful.

After the ceremony we all walked across the quadrangle in the lovely fall weather and through the gates to where “the London office” had arranged for photographers and reporters from several London newspapers to photograph and interview us.

The “London office” heaved a communal sigh of relief as they lived to work another day! ■

Ed: Maggie McEwan is Vice-President of the Scottish Studies Foundation.

Raise a glass for Sir John, eh?

Father of Confederation's birthday should be etched in our memory, Brockville historian says

Ask an American what famous American's birthday is on February 22 and just about anyone will answer: George Washington, first president and the Father of our Country.

Ask a Canadian what famous Canadian's birthday is on January 11 and just about everyone will offer only a blank look.

The answer? Sir John A. Macdonald, first prime minister and a Father of Confederation.

Until March 2002, when Parliament adopted the Sir John A. Macdonald Day (January 11) and the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Day (November 20) Act, Canadians didn't even officially observe the birthdate of the man

whose vision led to Confederation in 1867 and the building of the transcontinental railway, completed in the 1890s. The only person whose birthday Canadians celebrated was Queen Victoria.

In 2001, Rudyard Griffiths, of the Dominion Institute (dedicated to championing Canadian history in schools and society at large;

www.dominion.ca), said that there should be a day, ideally a national holiday, to honour Canada's historic figures.

And in Brockville, Ontario lives a man who most certainly agreed with Griffiths.

Brian Porter, a retired school teacher, has always been interested in history. In 1998, when the Brockville Infantry Company (1862) re-enactors held an encampment at the Brockville Museum, Porter, an infantryman, was asked if he would play the role of Sir John A. Macdonald, coming to review the troops. He borrowed a tailcoat and did his best in the part.

In no time he was hooked on Sir John A. He began reading everything he could find about the man. He still studies photographs to get a better idea what clothes Macdonald wore, so he can be more authentic in his impersonation. He has even grown his hair long and has it cut in Macdonald's style. He collects Macdonald memorabilia, and his wife, Renee, quilted a wall hanging depicting a patriotic John A. Macdonald.

He has visited countless classrooms, playing the role and staying in character as the children ask him questions. To them it is as if the 19th century politician had come to life, showing them his top hat, talking about his wife and child, telling them about his dreams for the new country.

Porter not only gathers Macdonald material but also constantly synthesizes it into an evolving living portrait of this powerful if imperfect Canadian personality.

“I want to be accurate. My serious intent is to promote the history of this country. Some of our early leaders were intellectual, very knowledgeable and skilled politically. Certainly Macdonald was. I like to play on his humour, his quick wit. He did not take himself seriously.”



Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald and Lady Agnes (a.k.a. Brian and Renee Porter) pictured here at the Scotland Week/Tartan Day event on April 7, 2009

He could talk with anybody at any level of society. “This man was able to go to Great Britain and talk with kings and nobility, or come back home, stand on a wagon in a field and laugh and connect with farmers. He could catch a ‘loose fish’ and reel him in to his side of a political question.”

Porter is glad the Canadian government has finally created a Sir John A. Macdonald Day, but since it is not a statutory holiday and is barely four years old, it tends to pass without much notice.

“I'm concerned the man is being forgotten. There may be a day of recognition, but what good is it if nothing's done? The government should send out a press release and say: Everyone have a toast to Sir John A. Macdonald!”

So Porter does what he can to make Macdonald and his times accessible to our 21st century mentality. He knows not only what Macdonald did, but why he did it. He has studied the external influences (from Great Britain and the United States) and the internal conditions that helped shape Canadian history.

Press a button and Brian Porter can talk happily for hours about the Scottish immigrant (born 1815 in Glasgow) who became a Kingston lawyer and was already wanting to quit politics in 1864 after 20 years in office, never dreaming the most significant years of his political career were only just beginning.

Macdonald, then a member of the legislature of the Province of Canada (now Ontario and Quebec), was blessed with the ability to see the big picture. He saw the United States in the throes of civil war in the early 1860s and knew Canada, with its roots in French and British culture, could fall into civil war too if its different regions were not brought together under a strong central

government. He wrote some 50 of the 72 resolutions in the British North America Act, which became the constitution of the new Dominion of Canada, established on July 1, 1867.

He also saw the big picture after Confederation and knew something was needed to pull together this vast country with its tiny population strung mainly along the St. Lawrence River.

The 19th century was a time of rapid developments in communication and transportation. Macdonald could see that a transcontinental railway would give the new nation the ability to grow and prosper. He set tariffs to protect Canadian producers, who then could begin shipping their products west as the Canadian Pacific Railway crossed the country.

Settlers went west, too, on the trains and became a market for eastern goods.

A third example of his ability to see the big picture was his decision to acquire the Northwest Territory.

Initially he had been happy to leave it along for the next 50 years, but he had to move much faster when he saw the United States buying Alaska and eyeing the Northwest Territory. He purchased the land from the Hudson's Bay Company and brought in the North West Mounted Police to establish law and order in the west so settlers could come in.

Several times in the second half of the century, Macdonald thought of retiring from politics. But he was too committed to the idea of Canada to leave the job half done.

"He said he had to wait until the gristle (the newly laid foundations of the country) hardens into bones," quotes Porter.

Macdonald won a fourth consecutive electoral victory in March 1891 but died three months later in office as prime minister.

Macdonald's biography on the Library and Archives Canada website (www.collectionscanada.ca/primeministers) describes Canadians' reaction to his death as follows: "Grieving Canadians turned out in the thousands to pay their respects while he lay in state in Parliament and they lined the tracks to watch the train that returned his body to Kingston."

Every year, on June 6, at 1:30 p.m., a ceremony is held at his gravesite in the Catarqui Cemetery, sponsored by the Kingston Historical Society.

Young people interested in learning more about Macdonald will find an entertaining account in *Sir John A. Macdonald, The Rascal Who Built Canada: The "warts and all" story of Canada's 1st prime minister*, by Jacqueline A. Brown, published by JackFruit Press Ltd., Toronto (2005), ISBN 0-9736406-0-X.

Adults might enjoy Donald Creighton's highly readable classic 1955 two-volume

biographical study, *John A. Macdonald: Young Politician and John A. Macdonald: Old Chieftain*. The Toronto Star's Richard Gwyn is writing a major biography of Macdonald, *The Mythmaker: Sir John A. Macdonald, His Life and Times*, published by Random House Canada.

Now, why not bake a cake and bring it to class or work on Wednesday to celebrate the life and achievements of Sir John A. Macdonald, the great Canadian you see every time you take a \$10 bill out of your wallet?

As Porter says, "When you honour men such as Macdonald and Laurier, you honour some of the beginnings of your nation."

"History can be divisive, but that is our roots – where our nation came from. You can't understand Canada unless you know how it came about."

Adapted from an article in The Recorder & Times (Brockville) by Chris Stesky

Lady Agnes the Daredevil

The adventurous life of Sir John A.'s wife

Lady Agnes Macdonald had a taste for thrills, unusual in Victorian times.

The second wife of Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, strapped herself onto the cowcatcher of a Canadian Pacific Railway train in 1886 and rode that way for about 1,000 kilometres across the Rocky Mountains to the West Coast.

As the train ascended the Great Divide, Agnes cooed: "This is lovely," according to a new book, *Private Demons: The Tragic Personal Life of John A. Macdonald* by Patricia Phenix. Then, racing downwards from Kicking Horse Pass, Agnes was said to have exclaimed: "It is all so delightful."

Sir John thought his wife was rather "ridiculous."

Luckily for Agnes, John insisted on stopping frequently in British Columbia so he could shake hands, chase votes and replenish his brandy. The stops allowed Agnes to pick the squashed bugs from her dishevelled hair and sooty face.

Away from trains, Agnes was a prim and proper Victorian lady. Well, except when confronted with Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Louise. Canada was simply not big enough for two such ladies.

Louise was only one of Agnes's critics. John Thompson, Macdonald's successor as prime minister, once called Agnes a "mole-catcher of a wife," the Phenix book tells us. Agnes retaliated by trying, but failing, to keep Thompson from becoming prime minister.

Louise was the wife of the Marquess of Lorne, who served as governor general from



Lady Agnes Macdonald

1878-83. Louise was glamorous; Agnes fancied large crucifixes upon her bosom. Louise was a talented artist; Agnes also painted, but badly.

The rivalry between the two powerful women dates to an incident in 1867 at the Grand Opera House in London long before the princess ever set foot in Ottawa. From the royal box, Louise rose to acknowledge applause from the audience. To the princess's horror, the visiting prime minister's wife rose too, thinking the applause was for her. A war began.

Years later in Ottawa, a somewhat intoxicated Sir John A. almost had to be tossed from Rideau Hall for taking "liberties" with the dazzling Louise, by now the governor general's wife. We can but guess what those "liberties" were, but, most assuredly, the incident did little to make Agnes and Louise soul sisters.

As for Agnes, she lived to a ripe old 84 and in one respect, she got the last laugh on Princess Louise because of her various train excursions out west. There is a Mount Lady Macdonald near Canmore, Alta., to honour the woman on the cowcatcher. There is also a Lake Agnes.

Everyone has heard of Lake Louise, one of Canada's major tourist attractions in the Rockies. But did you know there is a trailhead at the lake for hikers to visit Lake Agnes, which is 3.5 kilometres away?

Lake Agnes is 390 metres higher than Lake Louise. Agnes can, in perpetuity, look down upon Louise.

These and many other anecdotes are related in great, gossipy detail in Ms. Phenix's book from McClelland and Stewart publishers.

Adapted from an article in the Ottawa Citizen by Paul Gessell.

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