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Fall 2019

Scottish Studies Fall Colloquium to explore Scotland's historic past as portrayed in Film, Text and Media

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A still from the 1964 BBC docudrama "Culloden"

On October 5, 2019, the Centre for Scottish Studies will be hosting its Fall Colloquium: "Representing the Scottish Past in Film, Text, and Media." It will be held in the Robert Whitelaw Room, McLaughlin Library, at the University of Guelph. Registration will begin at 9 am with the conference kicking off at 9:30 am.

Depictions of medieval and early modern Europe have captured the imaginations of the young and old since at least the nineteenth century. The proliferation of films, television programs and literature which revisit and reshape these historical narratives highlight the ways in which the pre-modern past continues to resonate with twenty-first century audiences.

The popularity of texts like Justin Kurzel's *Macbeth* (2015), HBO's *Game of Thrones*,

Showtime's *The Tudors*, Starz's *Outlander*, The History Channel's *Vikings*, BBC's *Wolf Hall*, and Philippa Gregory's *The White Queen*, as well as many others, draws attention to the ways in which we persistently engage with these past narratives while bringing them into dialogue with contemporary popular culture.

In doing so, these texts ask us to consider the relationship between race and national identity, as well as issues of sexuality, gender, and equality.

As the growing conservatism of national governments dominates global discourse, the perceived brutality, oppression, and general uncertainty of life in a 'less civilized' age provides a way for contemporary societies to grapple with the issues at hand.

Since "Blind Harry" first set pen to paper to tell the story (as he saw it) of William Wallace and the Scottish Wars of Independence, Scotland's historic past has proven to be fertile ground for the imaginations of storytellers and the societies in which they live and operate.

In preparing the event, proposals were solicited from individuals whose research explores representations of the past in any form. As the scope and influence of Scottish history is broad and far-reaching, we were excited to receive proposals from a wide range of scholarly disciplines on how the themes of gender, identity (both personal and national), propaganda, culture, society, accuracy, and authenticity have been represented in audio-visual and printed materials.

The Centre for Scottish Studies is invested in increasing accessibility to scholarship and in fostering an environment that supports vibrant interdisciplinary discussion. As such we are looking forward to hearing fascinating presentations from faculty, graduate students and independent scholars from a variety of research backgrounds including, but not

limited to history, literature and indigenous studies.

We've organized panels on Race and Representation, Myth and Legend and the ever popular (or infamous!) Mary Queen of Scots, with papers by Dr. Sylvia Bryce-Wunder of Wilfrid Laurier University, Dr. Marian Toledo of Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Kathryn Comper, currently pursuing her MA in Scottish History at the University of Guelph, Dr. Katie McCullough of Simon Fraser University, Dr. Dave Nelson of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Emma Flynn, currently pursuing her MA in Literature at the University of Glasgow, and Dr. Lucy Hinnie, Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Saskatchewan.

We're looking forward to thoughtful and creative presentations from these, our speakers, and spirited discussions, debates and questions from our attendees and we hope to see many Scottish Studies Foundation members there.

Finally, we are delighted to announce that our Jill Mackenzie lecture will be delivered by Professor Graeme Morton of the University of Dundee and formerly Chair of the University of Guelph's Centre for Scottish Studies. Professor Morton will be presenting on the theme of representation, tying together the day's proceedings.

We cannot wait to welcome you all to the University of Guelph this October! This year's Fall Colloquium will be one for the books!

Editor's note:

Up-to-date details of the event including registration information will be posted on our website: www.scottishstudies.com.



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Should Scotland become Canada's 11th Province?

A transcript of Bruce Simpson's talk at the "Oor Club" on April 5, 2019

My question today is whether Scotland and Canada should combine politically — a thought-provoking idea first suggested by Canadian author Ken McGoogan. After all both Scotland and Canada were the same landmass until the Atlantic opened up 60 million years ago. Now we both have water on three sides and a challenging neighbour to the south. But Canada is 127 times bigger geographically and Scotland is a long way away after all, so how could governance work? Could historical and cultural bonds, with the aid of technology, trump geography?

And is this heresy — abandoning the UK in its time of need? Or could it in fact be a win-win for both countries, and simply an extension of our historical ties? Let's explore this together. And let's start with my personal background. As an immigrant I carry the threads of many other Scots who came this way.

I am a proud Canadian, and a proud Scot, like many of you here, I moved here 19 years ago from Europe, having lived in Paris for 12 years and before that the USA, England and Switzerland. I've been around the world but I was born in Glasgow — a great city where it is said we have more fun at a funeral than people in Edinburgh have at a wedding! I grew up there in the 1960s and 70s — a hard time for Scotland with closures of the shipyards, steel mills, and coal mines which were the industrial backbone of the country.

I was inspired by work the consulting firm McKinsey & Company had done to help revitalize Glasgow in the 1980s so I started working for them and for the last 32 years I've worked as a consultant to help large industrial companies avoid the fate that ripped the heart out of my home town. I help companies build a more resilient future by adapting their cultures and performance to be able to withstand the volatility and stiff global competition of the 21st century.

I grew up in Glasgow, but my parents are arctic explorers. Much of my childhood was spent exploring Greenland and the Canadian Arctic with them, living with the Eskimos and First Nations. We travelled by kayak, camped, hunted, fished and lived off the land. I wintered in Canada's most northern community in Resolute Bay, in Nunavut in the 1960s. This built my respect for Canada's north, and love for the people who live there. With my own family now, I continue to travel north most summers, camping,

kayaking and escaping the hubbub of Toronto.

Canada owes a great debt to Scottish explorers from prior generations so perhaps it's time to return the favour. Scots mapped the north, built the Hudson's Bay Company and developed early trade routes linking Canada's north and west.

Alexander Mackenzie was a Scottish explorer known for accomplishing the first east-to-west crossing of North America north of Mexico, preceding the more famous 1793 Lewis and Clark Expedition by 12 years.

I'm in the Fraser clan, and many past Frasers were also explorers, like my parents; Simon Fraser for example. In the early 1800s this pioneering fur trader charted BC and built the first European settlement there. He explored the Fraser River, which is named after him, as is Simon Fraser University.

My parents named me after one of these explorers: William Speirs Bruce who, in the 19th century, pioneered scientific exploration of the Arctic as well as protection of its wildlife and habitat.

John Rae, another Scots explorer in Canada, was the one who discovered the crucial final link of the Northwest Passage. He also discovered what really happened to John Franklin and his disastrous expedition but when he brought the grisly story of starved corpses and cannibalism back to the UK, he was blacklisted and marginalized by Franklin's widow, so keen to prove her husband died a hero.

The first argument then for combining Scotland and Canada is that this is just an extension of these strong historical links. Let's go further with this argument. In fact, Scots were among the very first Europeans here. In 1010 AD the Viking prince Thorfinn Karlsefni took two Scottish slaves to Vinland. When his longships moored along the coast, they sent the slaves ashore. Only after these intrepid Scots survived a day without being attacked by either human or animal, the Vikings deemed it safe to land and settle.

The explorers were followed by settlers. Hundreds of thousands of Scots emigrated to Canada in the 18th and 19th centuries. Gaelic was spoken as the first language in much of "Anglophone" Canada. It became the third most commonly spoken language in Canada and is still spoken in Cape Breton.

Importantly it was the cream of Scotland who moved here, not the dregs. The famous painting by Scottish artist Thomas Faed, called "Last of the Clan," shows the aged, weak and weary last members of the clan left behind on the jetty in Scotland, as a ship of settlers leaves port.

Not only were the Scots here early, they also shaped Canada in many ways. Ken



Bruce Simpson

McGoogan categorizes them as the pioneers, the visionaries and the builders of this great country. The first two Canadian prime ministers — Sir John A. Macdonald, and Alexander Mackenzie — were born in Scotland. Of this country's 22 past prime ministers, 13 claimed at least some heritage from Scotland including Pierre Elliott Trudeau whose mother was Montreal Scots. The Elliots are a proud border clan in southern Scotland. My son is called Elliott, and he shares their feistiness.

Some Scottish settlers distinguished themselves on the battlefield, in building and protecting Canada's borders.

Back to my own clan: the Fraser clan. This clan comprised the Fraser Highlanders; the crack regiments of the British army that defeated the French in the Seven Years' War. The Fraser Highlanders fought the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759 and the capture of Montreal in 1760. Many Fraser Highlanders soldiers remained here after the wars, injecting their culture and traditions into the community.

The Scots created many of Canada's universities. James McGill's endowment of £10,000 founded McGill University in 1821. Scots created Dalhousie College in Halifax, St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, and Queens College in Kingston — created in 1841 by the Church of Scotland.

Scots built the railways across Canada — the most crucial link between provinces that united the country. Another great Canadian cause I'm proud to be building is the Trans Canada Trail. This is the third great trail across Canada after CN and CP. The TCT is now connected — part river, mostly pathway, it goes from coast to coast to coast, 24,000km long, enabling walkers, cyclists and skiers to cross Canada without going on a major road. It's the longest connected trail in the world. I was on the Board for 10 years, and the team is led by Valerie Pringle, another Scot.

Scots also built the banks and other institutions in Canada.

More important than the hardware and the institutions, Scots also built the software — the culture — that makes Canada great. Scots brought widespread literacy and a culture of open debate, freedom, and pluralism produced by the Scottish Enlightenment in the late 18th and early 19th century. Their vision of a classless society differed dramatically with England's hierarchical aristocracy. The Scottish Enlightenment Movement has been described by the Financial Times just last week as one of modern history's most remarkable intellectual and cultural movements. Scots brought that here.

Ken McGoogan identifies five foundational Scottish values which now make up Canada's culture: independence, pluralism, democracy, audacity, and perseverance. Scots feel at home in Canada. Scots and Canadians have not been brought up with the serf culture of the English. Scots still adhere to the Clan system — a family culture of kith and kin, subservient to no-one.

Traditionally, the rural Scot was a crofter. He had no boss. He fended for himself and farmed a piece of land that was HIS. He was the original "Entrepreneur." And he brought these values to Canada.

My great uncle Sir James Young Simpson was one of the leaders of the Enlightenment movement, and an early pioneer in the use of anesthetics. He never moved to Canada, but a lesser medic in my family did: Murray O'Brian, a cousin of my mother's, born in 1848. He was a renowned "saddlebag surgeon" in Saskatchewan. Having failed his final medical exams in the UK, he emigrated and travelled throughout the prairies on horseback to carry out surgeries on kitchen tables using coal oil lamps for light, and J.Y. Simpson's anesthetics for pain. There is an island on Nistowiak Lake in Saskatchewan's north named after him!

The Enlightenment movement advanced the cause for women in Canada. I'm a founding board member of Catalyst in Canada, a non-profit dedicated to advancing women, and diversity, in business. In the struggle for women's rights Scottish Canadians stepped up a lot in the past. Nellie McClung and Agnes McPhail to name a couple.

In literature we needn't look further than Farley Mowat, Lucy Maud Montgomery, Margaret Atwood, Alistair MacLeod, Doug Gibson and Alice Munro (last three are past Scots of the Year). Alice also won the Nobel Prize for literature.

A credit to our Scottish literary roots can be shown by the fact that the historical figure with the most statues in Canada is Robert Burns — the celebrated Scottish poet. And this was true even before we started tearing down statues of Sir John A. Macdonald and other politicians from the past.

Scots played a crucial role building this country and millions of them are here already. Combining the nations could be seen as a logical extension.

There are more Scots in Canada than Scotland. A 2011 census counted Scots descent for 15 percent of Canada's total population, or 5.4 million, a wee bit more than the population of Scotland. Prince Edward Island has the highest population of Scottish descendants at 41%. Other sources suggest that up to 9 million Canadians claim Scottish or Irish heritage.

If Scotland and Canada combined, how would Scotland be governed? In 1982 Pierre Trudeau gave Canada a constitution recognizing both individual rights and multiculturalism. Trudeau, a Scottish Canadian, finished the job begun in 1867 by Scottish immigrant Sir John A. Macdonald. Constitutionally, Canada emerged as the world's first postmodern nation, a pluralist entity designed politically for a highly devolved government. "Maximum Devolution" is exactly what the majority of Scots want too — so Scotland can easily be governed from here. Furthermore, the Canadian constitution can easily fit Scotland in.

Canada's constitution is a subtle balance of power between the federal government in Ottawa and 10 mostly incompatible provinces which are given a high level of control over regional issues. One could argue Scotland is not more different to any province than, for example, Quebec to Saskatchewan, or the relationship between any province and Nunavut. Furthermore, Scotland already has its own parliament and lives in a highly devolved structure in the UK. And its legal and educational systems, as well as universal healthcare, are all similar to that of Canada.

Hawaii is part of the USA and it is 650km further from California than Scotland is from Newfoundland; and technology, history and shared values trump geographic separation.

What would Canada get? Scotland would be Canada's 11th province and its third largest one and bring a strong culture of innovation to the table. American author Arthur Herman argues in his book *How the Scots invented the Modern World* that it's hard to imagine an ordinary day without using a Scottish invention. From Macintosh raincoats, tarmac roads, trains, telephones, postage stamps, anesthetics or whisky.

Canada needs a stronger European entry point. The current Canada EU trade deal is a very poor alternative to direct access to the EU single market. Europe is messy, but it is still the largest market in the world. Canada is too heavily dependent on the US with 75 percent of our exports going there. Anything Canada can do to enhance its links to Europe is beneficial. Look at what happened with

NAFTA. The US is making trade a bilateral issue and then acts as a bully in a two-way deal. Canada needs to be part of a bigger ensemble in order to win in today's vitriolic trade wars.

Perhaps the merger is already happening, quietly? A thousand Canadian students are studying at Scotland's universities. 100,000 Canadians visit Scotland every year and 115,000 Scots visit Canada. Canadian visitors inject around £100m into the Scottish economy every year. Furthermore, 6,000 jobs are provided by 50 Canadian companies in Scotland. And Canada is a top 20 export partner for Scotland with exports totaling £580m in 2017.

Scotland's exports to Canada feature whisky and haggis strongly. In 2017 Macsweens of Edinburgh reconfigured its haggis recipe to meet Canadian food standards. Since then, the company has exported more than 8 tons of haggis to Canada, shifting 25,000 lbs in January alone to meet the demand from Burns suppers. If any proof was needed for the strong link between our nations it is the fact that these are Scotland's primary exports to Canada!

The Scottish parliament is developing policies that mirror Canada's. Scottish immigration policy towards refugees borrows directly from the Canadian concepts of "New Canadians" rooted in our immigration policy. This contrasts sharply with the rhetoric in England. Scotland took in more than a third of all UK's Syrian refugees. Furthermore, like Ontario, Scotland is experimenting with the progressive policy on universal basic income. Last year the Scottish government hosted the Arctic Circle forum and opened an office in Ottawa, increasing links to Canada.

Scots and Canadians travel well. Are we the people most proud to wear our national flags on our backpacks? Perhaps by joining up we have more chance to change the world?

Perhaps the world needs this combined nation also — as a role model of how people of multiple cultures can live together and actually get along? Combined we form a bridge across Asia, North America and Europe — most of the world. And the international standing of both means that like every great merger, one plus one can make three!

Furthermore, we would have the Olympic curling medals completely sewn up through the combination. We already have Nova Scotia so why not now add the original Scotia?

Bruce Simpson was the recipient of the Scottish Studies Society's 2017 Scot of the Year Award. Originally from Scotland, Bruce is a Senior Partner of McKinsey & Company, the leading consulting firm, where he has worked for more than 30 years.

The Rise and Fall of Lord Gordon Gordon

*Adapted from various sources
by David Hunter*

Earlier this year, one of the stories to make the headlines was that of the Russian-German “fake heiress” who was found guilty by a jury in New York of swindling hotels, banks, restaurants and wealthy friends out of over \$200,000. Anna Sorokin, a 28-year-old magazine intern, managed to convince New York’s elite into lending her money and supporting her lifestyle. Clad in Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent, she moved from one boutique hotel to the next, befriending the concierges and handing out \$100 tips. She chartered private planes and treated friends to expensive meals, all on credit cards that she had secured through fraud. In reality, Sorokin had hardly any money — her father was a former truck driver from Russia and now runs a heating and cooling business in Germany, and had supported her for years. She is now in prison having been sentenced to up to 12 years last May.

In learning about this, it brought to mind the case of the notorious fraudster from Scotland who ended his days in Manitoba in the late 1800s. Going by the name of Hubert Hamilton, he first surfaced as a gentleman in his mid-20s when in the summer of 1868, he took up residence at a deer stalking lodge in Glenisla at the edge of the Grampian Mountains in Scotland. While there he befriended a highly respected and well connected clergyman, the Rev. J. W. Simpson, who described his first impression of him saying, “No one knew anything of him, and there was much surmising as to who he was, but as he paid his bills punctually, lived quietly and had the manners of a gentleman, no one could find anything against his character or conduct.”

However, all along Hamilton had been hatching a plan to assume the persona of a member of the aristocracy and to this end took advantage of the fact that title of the Earl of Glencairn had lain dormant since 1796. This gave him the opportunity to research the Scottish peerage system and become intimately familiar with everything to do with the Glencairn family.

When he returned to Glenisla the following year as “Lord Glencairn,” Rev. Simpson explained that, “His own account of his title was plausible — that his grandfather had left money in chancery — an immense sum, to him, on condition that he should take up the title of Glencairn when he reached the age of 27; that he was now of age and must take it up; that his agents in London had nearly completed the process, and he would in a few months be served heir to his

grandfather and to the earldom of Glencairn. He did not speak to me of his Scotch estates, but often hinted of his property in Northampton and at the immense sums in chancery. There were things about him I could not well understand, but as he continued to behave in a gentlemanly way and had friends from England with him who were men of standing and respectability, and especially as he was certified to be a man of rank and wealth by his lawyers, a well-known firm in Lincoln's Inn, I was willing to think the best of him.”

Through Rev. Simpson, he was able to gain the trust of a wider network of wealthy people, as well as to establish credit with jewelers in both Edinburgh and London. Accounts with these firms were then opened and he commenced buying small items for which payment was promptly made. Once trust had been established more expensive items would be ordered but never paid for and around 1870 “Lord Glencairn” disappeared leaving behind debts of around \$100,000, although the exact amount is unknown.

In 1871, he resurfaced in Minneapolis, Minnesota having shed the identity of Lord Glencairn. Shortly after registering at his hotel as G. Gordon, a letter to him arrived addressed to “Lord Gordon Gordon” and word of this soon got around, arousing immediate interest especially after he made a deposit of \$20,000 in English pounds in the National Exchange Bank.

A lord in Minneapolis in 1871 with great resources was something of a rarity, and he was courted, dined and entertained in the best of style at private and civic functions. It is reported that he spent rather freely and through his casual remarks, rumour had it that he was the heir of the great Earls of Gordon, cousin of the Campbells, collateral relative of Lord Byron, descendant of the bold Lochinvar and the ancient kings of the Highlanders, and that he had an income of over a million dollars a year.

Gordon soon made the acquaintance of Colonel John S. Loomis, Land Commissioner of the Northern Pacific Railroad, to whom he let it be known that he was interested in buying hundreds of thousands of acres of land in Minnesota, explaining that he planned to resettle tenants from his overcrowded Scottish estates onto this land. He embellished it as the wish of a beautiful and kind sister desirous of doing some beneficial deed for his tenants.



Lord Gordon Gordon

At the time, the Northern Pacific Railroad was hoping to expand westward, for which it needed to raise significant amounts of capital. So the prospect of a wealthy Scot buying up huge amounts of land came as a blessing at just the right time. As a result, the railroad spared no expense in wooing Gordon in the hope of selling him railroad-owned land.

Colonel Loomis personally took charge of wining and dining Gordon and sent him on an all-expense-paid tour of the railroad lands throughout Minnesota and the Dakotas, accompanied by state officials and officers of the railway.

As he travelled across the state in first-class comfort, Gordon periodically selected sites where he pretended he would build future towns. During this tour, the railroad provided him with a personal secretary and valet, as well as money for daily expenses. The bill for all of this was over \$45,000.

In January 1872, Gordon finally took his leave of Minnesota, telling his hosts that he needed to travel east to arrange the transfer of money for his land purchases and to organize the transportation of his Scottish tenants. His eager hosts provided him with letters of introduction to the elite of New York society.

Gordon arrived in New York at the height of a speculative boom and at the peak of the commercial and political corruption which followed the Civil War. Once there, he rented a large suite at the Astor Hotel, where he received visitors such as Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune. Through

conversation with Greeley, Gordon quickly identified a lucrative target for a new swindle — the Erie Railroad Company whose management was engaged in a bitter battle for control of the company — and he set his plan in motion.

Gordon discreetly revealed to Greeley that he secretly owned some 60,000 shares of Erie Railroad stock and also represented certain European partners whose combined stock gave him a controlling interest in the company. He disclosed that he and his partners planned to replace the company's board of directors with men more favorable to their own interests.

Word of this imminent management shakeup quickly spread throughout New York's business community and, as a result, on March 2, 1872 Gordon received a visit from the notorious American railroad developer and speculator Jay Gould, one of the ruthless robber barons of the age. Hated and reviled, his success at business made him one of the richest men of his era.

Gould had himself been plotting to solidify his control over Erie Railroad, but feared that this new European consortium could thwart his plans.

Gould suggested that a deal could be struck favorable to both parties — allowing Gordon and his partners to choose new directors but letting Gould keep control of the company. Gordon feigned reluctance. Why, he argued, should he trust Gould? But finally he agreed to the deal, on one condition. He insisted that Gould give him half-a-million dollars in cash and securities, as a sign of good faith. Gordon promised that the funds would be held in trust to be returned once their plan had been seen through to completion. In desperation, Gould agreed to this and transferred \$500,000 into Gordon's control — \$160,000 in cash and the remainder in shares of various companies. At this point, Gordon could well have absconded with the cash, fled to some distant part of the world, and lived the rest of his life in comfort. But mysteriously, he did not. Instead, he remained in New York and proceeded to sell off some of the shares.

This gave rise to a sudden increase in trading activity on the exchange and quickly Gould realized that Gordon was starting to unload the shares. Suspicions aroused, he immediately informed brokers not to accept the trades, and then, using Greeley as an intermediary, informed Gordon that their deal was off and demanded his cash and securities back.

Gordon returned all the cash but only some of the shares (those he hadn't already sold). As Gould figured there was around \$150,000 in shares missing he was now sure that Gordon was swindling him and immediately sued Gordon for fraud and had him arrested on April 9, 1872.

To Gould's surprise, several wealthy New Yorkers (A.F. Roberts and Horace F. Clark) paid Gordon's bail set at \$40,000, allowing him to remain free during the subsequent trial.

Court proceedings soon began and on the first day of the trial, Gordon adopted the air of a totally innocent man. Historian Dr. William A. Croffut writes: "During three hours of vigorous examination he sat with his legs crossed and his thumbs thrust carelessly into his waistcoat pockets, as unconcerned and untruffled as if conversing in a drawing-room."

Gordon told the court of his Scottish ancestry and also gave the names of various English nobility who, he claimed, were his friends and partners. His willingness to supply this information seemed convincing to many of the people in the court.

That night Gould cabled the various people in England and Scotland whom Gordon had mentioned in court and all of them replied that they had never heard of him. Gould prepared to present this information in court the next day but Gordon, sensing that the game was up, had already fled on the night train to Montreal.

Gould then offered a reward of \$25,000 for Gordon's arrest and sent detectives to Britain to investigate his past. Photos of Gordon were distributed and his alias as Lord Glencairn was soon uncovered when the proprietors of the Edinburgh and London jewelers that Gordon swindled recognized him from these photos.

For almost a year Gordon's whereabouts remained unknown but in the summer of 1873, word got out that he was living in Fort Garry, Manitoba (now Winnipeg), just 50 miles north of Minnesota's border with Canada. Learning of this, a party of prominent Minneapolis citizens including Loren Fletcher, Eugene Wilson, and John Gilfillan, all three of whom later were elected to Congress, resolved to bring him to justice. Accompanied by several Minneapolis police officers, they crossed the border and apprehended Gordon as he was sitting on his front porch.

The kidnapping party threw him into the back of a wagon but their plan failed when they were stopped at the border by Canadian police and were thrown into jail. They sent Minneapolis Mayor George Brackett a desperate telegram: "We're in a hell of a fix; come at once!"

An international incident ensued. Minnesota newspapers, such as the St. Paul Pioneer, declared that a militia should be raised to cross the border and rescue the Americans. But instead, diplomatic means were used to secure their release. The negotiations eventually involved officials from the highest levels of government: Minnesota governor Horace Austin,

President Ulysses Grant, and Canadian Prime Minister Sir John Macdonald. The would-be kidnappers were finally released on September 15, 1873.

Meanwhile Gordon was still at large, and Gould's reward offer remained in effect. But now his pursuers made sure to go through the proper legal channels and eventually extradition papers were issued at Toronto to secure his capture. He was tracked down to a cottage in Headingly, Manitoba and several police officers from Toronto were sent to arrest him.

They arrived at the cottage on the morning of August 1, 1874 and found him asleep.

Once awake, Gordon acted quite nonchalant and asked if he could finish his nap. Realizing this wasn't going to happen, he got himself dressed and told the officers he wanted to get his cap, since it was somewhat cold outside. He then stepped into an adjoining room and shot himself in the head.

At the Coroner's subsequent inquest, Alexander Munro of the Toronto police provided the following testimony about his final moments: "I told Gordon that I had come to arrest him, and that I had a warrant. I showed him the warrant. He said it was all right. Just glanced over it. Don't think he read it all; and he said he was ready to go. Gave him a few minutes to put on warmer clothes. He wanted to know if I intended taking him through the States. I told him I did not. He got dressed and was all ready to go, with the exception of a Scotch cap. He called for it. He made a sort of rush into the bedroom.

Where he got the revolver I do not know. I was standing in the door, within four feet of him. The next thing I saw was his turning around with his back against the wall, with the revolver in his hand. I made a rush toward him to prevent his shooting. I expected it was meant for myself, and as I was about getting hold of him, the gun went off. He made some remark while holding the revolver in his hand, but I did not catch the meaning; he sank down against the wall just as I got hold of him; I saw the blood coming out of his left ear; that was the first I noticed; afterward saw the wound in his right temple; I believe he was dying fast and was dead immediately."

Along with his real name Gordon took many things to his grave. His early life is known only in the form of rumours, specifically that he was the illegitimate son of a clergyman and a maid. By some accounts his name was Hubert Hamilton although others contest that this is just another alias. In 2018 Jenny McElroy, a reference librarian at Minnesota Historical Society, was given a grant to research the background of Gordon but so far has been unable to shed any light on one of history's boldest con men.

A Highland Hut

From "A Summer in Skye" by
Alexander Smith (1855)

Above all places which I have seen in Skye, Skeabost has a lowland look. The hills are low and smooth; on the lower slopes corn and wheat are grown; and from a little distance the greenness of cultivation looks like a palpable smile — a strange contrast to the monotonous district through which, for an hour or so, you have driven.

As you pass the inn and drive across the bridge, you notice that there is an island in the stony stream, and that this island is covered with ruins. The Skyeman likes to bury his dead in islands, and this one in the stream at Skeabost is a crowded cemetery. I forded the stream and wandered for an hour amongst the tombs and broken stones. There are traces of an ancient chapel on the island, but tradition does not even make a guess at its builder's name or the date of its erection.

There are old slabs, lying sideways, with the figures of recumbent men with swords in their hands, and inscriptions — indecipherable now — carved on them. There is the grave of a Skye clergyman who, if his epitaph is to be trusted, was a burning and a shining light in his day — a gospel candle irradiating the Hebridean darkness. I never saw a churchyard so mounded and so evidently over-crowded.

Here laird, tacksman, and cotter elbow each other in death. Here no one will make way for a new-comer, or give the wall to his neighbour. And standing in the little ruined island of silence and the dead, with the river perfectly audible on either side, one could not help thinking what a picturesque sight a Highland funeral would be, creeping across the moors with wailing pipe-music, fording the river, and his bearers making room for the dead man amongst the older dead as best they could.

And this sight, I am told, may be seen any week in the year. To this island all the funerals of the country-side converge. Standing there, too, one could not help thinking that this space of silence, girt by river noises, would be an eerie place by moonlight. The broken chapel, the carved slabs lying sideways, as if the dead man beneath had grown restless and turned himself, and the head-stones jutting out of the mounded soil at every variety of angle, would appall in the ink of shadow and the silver of moonbeam. In such circumstances one would hear something more in the stream as it ran past than the mere breaking of water on stones.

After passing the river and the island of graves you drive down between hedges to



The "hut" described by Alexander Smith would have looked something like this Highland croft. Known as a "black house" (Scottish Gaelic: *taigh-dubh*) it is a traditional type of house which used to be common in the Scottish Highlands.

Skeabost church, school, post-office, and manse, and thereafter you climb the steep hill towards Bernesdale and its colony of turf-huts; and when you reach the top you have a noble view of the flat blue Minch, and the Skye headlands, each precipitous, abrupt, and reminding you somehow of a horse which has been suddenly reined back to its haunches.

The flowing lines of those headlands suggest an onward motion, and then, all at once, they shrink back upon themselves, as if they feared the roar of breakers and the smell of the brine. But the grand vision is not of long duration, for the road descends rapidly towards Taynlone Inn. In my descent I beheld two bare-footed and bare-headed girls yoked to a harrow, and dragging it up and down a small plot of delved ground.

Sitting in the inn I began to remember me how frequently I had heard in the south of the destitution of the Skye people and the discomfort of the Skye hut. During my wanderings I had the opportunity of visiting several of these dwellings, and seeing how matters were transacted within.

Frankly speaking, the Highland hut is not a model edifice. It is open to wind, and almost always pervious to rain. An old bottomless herring-firkin stuck in the roof usually serves for chimney, but the blue peat-reek disdains that aperture, and steams willfully through the door and the crannies in the walls and roof.

The interior is seldom well-lighted; what light there is proceeding rather from the orange glow of the peat-fire, on which a large pot is simmering, than from the narrow pane with its great bottle green bull's-eye.

The rafters which support the roof are black and glossy with soot, as you can notice

by sudden flashes of firelight. The sleeping accommodation is limited, and the beds are composed of heather or ferns.

The floor is the beaten earth, the furniture is scanty; there is hardly ever a chair-stool and stones, worn smooth by the usage of several generations, have to do instead.

One portion of the hut is not infrequently a byre, and the breath of the cow is mixed with the odour of peat-reek, and the baa of the calf mingles with the wranglings and swift ejaculations of the infant Highlanders.

In such a hut as this there are sometimes three generations. The mother stands knitting outside, the children are scrambling on the floor with the terrier and the poultry, and a ray of cloudy sunshine from the narrow pane smites the silver hairs of the grandfather near the fire, who is mending fishing-nets against the return of his son in-law from the south.

Am I inclined to lift my hands in horror at witnessing such a dwelling? Certainly not. I have only given one side of the picture.

The hut I speak of nestles beneath a rock, on the top of which dances the ash-tree and the birch. The emerald mosses on its roof are softer and richer than the velvets of kings. Twenty yards down that path you will find a well that needs no ice in the dog-days. At a little distance, from rocky shelf to shelf, trips a mountain burn, with abundance of trout in the brown pools. At the distance of a mile is the sea, which is not allowed to ebb and flow in vain; for in the smoke there is a row of fishes drying; and on the floor a curly-headed urchin of three years or thereby is pummeling the terrier with the scarlet claw of a lobster.

Methought, too, when I entered I saw beside the door a heap of oyster shells. Within the hut there is good food, if a little

scant at times; without there is air that will call colour back to the cheek of an invalid; and pure water, play, exercise and work. That the people are healthy, you may see from their strong frames, brown faces, and the age to which many attain; that they are happy and light-hearted, the shouts of laughter that ring round the peat-fire of an evening may be taken as sufficient evidence.

I protest I cannot become pathetic over the Highland hut. I have sat in these turfen dwellings, amid the surgings of blue smoke, and received hospitable welcome, and found amongst the inmates good sense, industry, family affection, contentment, piety, happiness.

And when I have heard philanthropists, with more zeal than discretion, maintain that these dwellings are a disgrace to the country in which they are found, I have thought of districts of great cities which I have seen,—within the sound of the rich man's chariot wheels, within hearing of multitudinous Sabbath bells—of evil scents and sights and sounds; of windows stuffed with rags; of female faces that look out on you as out of a sadder Inferno than that of Dante's; of faces of men containing the débris of the entire Decalogue, faces which hurt you more than a blow would: of infants poisoned with gin, of children bred for the prison and the hulks.

Depend upon it there are worse odours than peat smoke, worse next-door neighbours than a cow or a brood of poultry; and although a couple of girls dragging a harrow be hardly in accordance with our modern notions, yet we need not forget that there are worse employment for girls than even that.

I do not stand up for the Highland hut; but in one of these smoky cabins I would a thousand-fold rather spend my days than in the Cowgate of Edinburgh, or in one of the streets that radiate from London's Seven Dials.*

But soon I fear that the day is nigh when many of these huts will lie abandoned or be destroyed and their occupants dispatched for life anew across a thousand leagues of dim heartbreaking sea. For emigration is painful to the Highlander—and in wandering up and down Skye you come into contact with this either fresh or in reminiscence, not infrequently. Although the member of his family be years removed, the Skyeman lives in him imaginatively—just as the man who has endured an operation is forever conscious of the removed limb. And this horror of emigration—common to the entire Highlands—has been increased by the fact that it has not infrequently been a forceful matter, that potent landlords have torn down houses and turned out the inhabitants, have authorized evictions, have deported the dwellers of entire glens. That the landlords so acting have not been without grounds of justification may in all probability be true.

The deported villagers may have been cumberers of the ground, they may have been unable to pay rent, they may have been slowly but surely sinking into pauperism, their prospect of securing a comfortable subsistence in the colonies may be considerable, while in their own glens it may be nil—all this may be true; but to have your house unroofed before your eyes, and made to go on board a ship bound for Canada, even although the passage-money be paid for you, is not pleasant. An obscure sense of wrong is kindled in heart and brain. It is just possible that what is for the landlord's interest may be for yours also in the long run; but you feel that the landlord has looked after his own interest in the first place. He wished you away, and he has got you away; whether you will succeed in Canada is matter of dubiety. The human gorge rises at this kind of forceful banishment—more particularly the gorge of the banished!

When Thursday came, the Landlord drove us over to Skeabost, at which place, at noon, the emigrants were to assemble. He told me on the way that some of the more sterile portions of his property were over-populated, and that the people there could no more prosper than trees that have been too closely planted. He was consequently a great advocate of emigration. He maintained that force should never be used, but advice and persuasion only; that when consent was obtained, there should be held out a helping hand. It was his idea that if a man went all the way to Canada to oblige you, it was but fair that you should make his journey as pleasant as possible, and provide him employment, or, at all events, put him in the way of obtaining it when he got there. In Canada, consequently, he purchased lands, made these lands over to a resident relative, and to the charge of that relative, who had erected houses, and who had trees to fell, and fields to plough, and cattle to look after, he consigned his emigrants

He took care that they were safely placed on shipboard at Glasgow or Liverpool, and his relative was in waiting when they arrived. When the friendly face died on this side of the Atlantic, a new friendly face dawned on them on the other.

With only one class of tenant was he inclined to be peremptory. He had no wish to disturb in their turf-hut the old man and woman who had brought up a family; but when the grown-up son brought home a wife to the same hut, he was down upon them, like a severing knife, at once. The young people could not remain there; they might go where they pleased; he would rather they would go to Canada than anywhere, but out of the old dwelling they must march. And the young people frequently jumped at the Landlord's offer—labour and good wages

calling sweetly to them from across the sea. The Landlord had already sent out a troop of emigrants, of whose condition and prospects he had the most encouraging accounts, both from themselves and others, and the second troop were that day to meet him at Skeabost.

When we got to Skeabost there were the emigrants, to the number perhaps of fifty or sixty, seated on the lawn. They were dressed as was their wont on Sundays, when prepared for church. The men wore suits of blue or kelt-gray; the women were wrapped for the most part in tartan plaids. They were decent, orderly, intelligent, and on the faces of most was a certain resolved look, as if they had carefully considered the matter, and had made up their minds to go through with it.

They were of every variety of age too; the greater proportion young men who had long years of vigorous work in them, who would fell many a tree, and reap many a field before their joints stiffened: women, fresh, comely, and strong, not yet mothers, but who would be grandmothers before their term of activity was past. In the party, too, was a sprinkling of middle-aged people, with whom the world had gone hardily, and who were hoping that Canada would prove kinder than Skye.

They all rose and saluted the Landlord respectfully as we drove down toward the house. The porch was immediately made a hall of audience. The Landlord sat in a chair, Pen took his seat at the table, and opened a large scroll-book in which the names of the emigrants were inscribed. One by one the people came from the lawn to the porch and made known their requirements a man had not yet made up his passage-money, and required an advance; a woman desired a pair of blankets; an old man wished the Landlord to buy his cow, which was about to calve, and warranted an excellent milker.

With each of these the Landlord talked sometimes in Gaelic, more frequently in English; entered into the circumstances of each, and commended, rebuked, expostulated, as occasion required. When an emigrant had finished his story, and made his bargain with the Landlord, Pen wrote the conditions thereof against his or her name in the large scroll-book. The giving of audience began about noon, and it was evening before it was concluded. By that time every emigrant had been seen, talked with, and disposed of.

For each the way to Canada was smoothed, and the terms set down by Pen in his scroll-book; and each, as he went away, was instructed to hold himself in readiness on the 15th of the following month, for on that day they were to depart.

**The Seven Dials refers to the layout of seven cobbled streets in Covent Garden which radiate out from a central sundial.*

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