



The Chanter

Newsletter



Loch Shiel from Glenfinnan

June 2023



The Nottingham Scottish Association

www.nottinghamscottish.org

Outwith

by **Katie Ailes**

You can read this poem at

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/outwith/>

From the President



Greetings! I feel honoured to be NSA President at this time when, thanks in large part to Sue, the Association has emerged from the pandemic years and resumed with vigour its programme of social activities. Sue deserves our wholehearted gratitude, from the Council and the members, for her constant effort and dedication.

My purpose here is to give you an insight into my own Scottish heritage and connections. I lost my Glaswegian mother when I was aged only 6 but her mum immediately moved down south to Sussex to help raise me and my sister. Our many visits to Glasgow and the compassion and generosity shown towards us there were of lasting value and instilled in me a love of the Scots and Scottish culture. Expressions such as 'Yu'r fair drookit, laddy!' and 'Haud yer wheesht!' entered my vocabulary, thanks to ma braw wee grannie.

Childhood holidays spent with close relatives often took me to RAF Leuchars, Wemyss Bay and the Isle of Arran. Jan and I honeymooned on the northernmost Shetland isle of Unst and we used most summer holidays in the 1970s/80s to explore the Hebrides and Orkney. Our hitchhiking down through Lewis and Harris and camping en route was especially memorable for, e.g. lifts taken with a Gaelic-speaking Indian tradesman and a Harris Tweed weaver who told us his life story.

My education and working life have made me a convinced internationalist. Germany and Russia are especially dear to me as a result of friendships and many stays there over the past 55 years. International students have been my chief focal point throughout a career of English teaching and worldwide business travel.

Jan and I look forward to sharing our love of Scottish songs and music through our group activities. Scottish Country Dancing, walks and lunches, park games and quizzes will continue to bring us together regularly and it will be a privilege for me to help coordinate the arrangements for the St. Andrews and Burns Night dinner dances.

It will be a pleasure for me if we can meet at such events,

David Chapman

From the Editor

Thanks to those who have contributed with words, photos and ideas. It is your Chanter, so please do support it by continuing to contribute.

You can email them to me at chanter@nottinghamscottish.org.

Andrew

Dates for Your Diary

Thursday 29th June: Walk. Netherfield Lagoons and River Trent.

Thursday 20th July: Garden Dance. Details to follow.

Sunday 13th August: President's Garden Party. 3.00pm. Details to follow.

Saturday 19th August: Walk. Details to follow.

Saturday 25th November: St. Andrew's Night Dinner and Dance.

Saturday 27th January: Burns Night Dinner and Dance.

See www.nottinghamscottish.org for an up-to-date list of upcoming Nottingham Scottish Events!

Scottish Music in Nottingham

If you are a lover of Scottish Music, then living in Nottingham offers a good selection of Scottish Bands. Here are just a few seen here recently by some of our members!



Fara

faramusic.co.uk



Blazin' Fiddles

www.blazinfiddles.com



Breabach

www.breabach.com

These are just some of the Scottish Bands who regularly play at the Lakeside. Why not keep an eye on the Lakeside programme and join your fellow lovers of Scottish Music?

Cropwell Bishop Walk Wednesday 22nd March



Our March walk took us on a route from Cropwell Bishop to Colston Basset by way of the Grantham Canal, Colston Basset Hall and St Mary's Church.



We met on a crisp sunny morning before setting off along a section of the disused Grantham Canal. Originally, this ran from Grantham to West Bridgford and carried coal and agricultural produce.

It slowly went out of use and was closed in 1936. Some sections have since been re-opened for leisure use by the Grantham Canal Society, although our section was still in a state of disrepair.

Leaving the canal, we turned toward Colston Basset, where our path took us through the grounds of the Hall – a handsome building dating from the early 18th Century.



After admiring the Hall, we headed back to Cropwell Bishop past the remains of St Mary's Church. There has been a church on the site since 1135, but the present ruins date from the 14th century. Population decline in the area led to its neglect in the 18th Century and it was subsequently abandoned.

We finished with a convivial meal in the Wheatsheaf Inn.

Thanks to Andrew and Sue for the walk.

Bennerley Viaduct Walk Wednesday 12th April



The forecast for Wednesday 12th April was not good – but nothing daunts our band of walkers, so we duly met in the car park of Armstrong’s Mill in Ilkeston. It wasn’t actually raining when we set off so that was a bonus!

Dieter had planned a route that took us along the Erewash canal to start with, then past Cossall to the main point of interest – the wrought iron Bennerly Viaduct.



This remarkable piece of engineering was built in 1877 to carry an extension of the Great Northern Railway across the Erewash Valley. The boggy ground and underground mine workings presented significant challenges and the weight of the viaduct had to be kept as light as possible.

The railway closed in the 1960s as Dr. Beeching wielded his axe. It opened as a pedestrian and cycle path in 2022.

Our outing finished in Millie’s Restaurant – just as it started to rain! After an excellent lunch and much conversation we made our various ways home.

Thanks to Dieter for an excellent and interesting walk.

Andrew Morrison

41st A.S.C.D.S. Festival

May 20th, 2023

The annual festival of Scottish Country Dancing attracted fourteen teams from East Midlands to Retford Oaks Academy. Once again kilts and white dresses with tartan sashes were the order of the day making a memorable scene.

The Festival was officially opened by Godfrey Cozens from Newark; this was a change for Godfrey as he had been M.C. for many years. Following a warm welcome, Godfrey handed over to David Page from Nottingham, our Master of Ceremonies for the day. Music was provided by the Ian Robertson Duo; they played all afternoon and again for the social dance in the evening.

Although numbers were down, those who did attend all agreed it was a great day dancing and meeting many old friends. We were treated to four 'Demonstrations' during the afternoon and it highlighted the amount of work and rehearsals required to reach the high standards on show.

This year, owing to the reduction in dancers available a joint team from Nottingham RSCDS and Nottingham Scottish Association made it possible to have teams in every set of dances. It is a tribute to Tony at RSCDS, Andrew at NSA and all our dancers for their dedication not only in learning the dances but remembering them.

Jeanne and I miss dancing in the festival but do enjoy coming each year on the 'supporters' bus.

Well done everyone.

Jeanne and Bill Dall



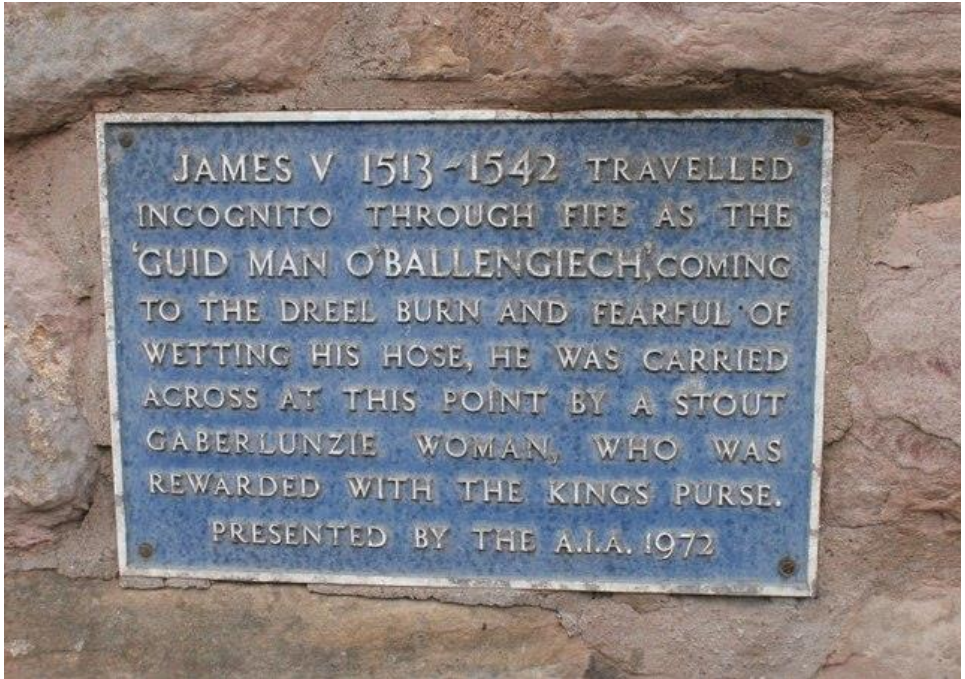
NSA team saying a big THANKS to Andrew for his patience.

...and now it is time to select and suggest dances for next year's festival!

(Andrew should have finished his bottle in plenty time to start rehearsals for 42nd Festival)

The Gudeman of Ballengeich

Sue and I were walking through the village of Anstruther on the Fife Coast last year when we happened on this Blue Plaque:



Coincidentally, I later came across a Scottish Country Dance of the same name. This roused my curiosity: who was the 'Gudeman of Ballengeich' and why was James V using the name? After some time spent on line and looking at the history of James V, things became clear(ish).

James V, King of Scots, came to the throne after the death of his father, James IV, at the battle of Flodden in 1513. He was 18 months old. A child monarch always meant trouble – and so it turned out.

Initially, he was under the control of his mother, Margaret Tudor (sister of Henry VIII) but became the object of a power struggle between various nobles. For most of his childhood he was a virtual prisoner of whichever lord was in the ascendancy.



Eventually, at the age of 16, he found himself a prisoner of the powerful Douglas Clan at Falkland Palace, with a hundred-strong guard to keep him there.

By this time, he was understandably fed up of captivity – although he was able to hunt (under guard) and to enjoy some female company!!

By various subterfuges – perhaps by bribing the guards or making them drunk - he was able to give his guards the slip at night and escape to Stirling Castle – held by his mother.

By this stage the Douglas Clan had made enemies of various powerful nobles, and James was able to get them on his side and take power to himself. Quite an achievement at 16! Thereafter he ruled as King in reality as well as name.

As King, he was regarded with affection by the common people, but gradually alienated the nobles – but that's another story!

Now to meet the Gudeman of Ballengeich.

James had developed a taste for travelling his realm incognito and mixing with people of all stations in life.

While travelling in this way, he would introduce himself as the Gudeman (head of a household) of Ballengeich. Typically he would leave Stirling Castle by the back entrance – on the road leading to the pass of Ballengeich.

These wanderings gave him plenty of opportunity for dalliances with the ladies of the realm – he had at least 9 illegitimate sons. No one, of course, bothered to count the daughters!

There are a number of tales told about his travels – including one collected by Sir Walter Scott:

“Another adventure, which had nearly cost him his life, is said to have taken place at the village of Cramond, near Edinburgh, where he had rendered his addresses acceptable to a pretty girl of the lower rank. Four or five persons, whether relations or lovers of his mistress is uncertain, beset the disguised monarch as he returned from his rendez-vous.

Naturally gallant and an admirable master of his weapon, the king took post on the high and narrow bridge over the Almond river, and defended himself bravely with his sword. A peasant, who was threshing in a neighbouring barn, came out upon the noise, and, whether moved by compassion or natural gallantry, took the weaker side, and laid about so effectively with his flail as to disperse the assailants.

He then conducted the king into his barn, where his guest requested a basin and a towel, to remove the stains of the broil. This being procured with difficulty, James employed himself in learning what was the summit of his deliverer’s earthly wishes, and found that they were bounded by the desire of possessing, in property, the farm of Braehead on which he laboured as a bondsman.

The lands happened to belong to the Crown, and James directed him to come to the palace of Holyrood, and enquire for the Gudeman (i.e. farmer) of Ballengiech, a name by which he was known in his excursions.

He presented himself accordingly, and found, with due astonishment, that he had saved his monarch’s life, and that he was to be gratified with a crown charter of the lands of Braehead, under the service of presenting a ewer, basin and towel, for the king to wash his hands when he shall happen to pass the Bridge of Cramond.”

His roving also seem to have inspired the story and poem of the Beggar Man (or Gaberlunzie) which, in turn, inspired Byron's poem 'We'll Go No More a-Roving'

The story goes something like this:

"A beggar comes over the hills one day, and knocks on the door of a local farmer and asks for a roof for the night. Curiously, he will not accept a bed in the barn, but wishes only to sleep by the kitchen fire. Late at night, the farmer's daughter comes down to lock the kitchen door. The beggar and daughter exchange words, and fall in love.

They sleep together, and through some unmentioned premise, the daughter accuses the man of being a nobleman come dressed as a beggar to woo her. He convinces her that he is indeed only a beggar, and she kicks him out. However, it turns out he was, in fact, the King – James V."

You can hear the Corries' version of the song at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRHMjhxDRRI



James, sadly, was not to live long. He may have been loved by the common people, but he oppressed the nobility – and offended Henry VIII in a number of ways. Henry responded by sending an army to invade Scotland. The Scots nobles gave James minimal support in raising a force to resist Henry and he was defeated at the Battle of the Solway Moss in 1542.

With that, for no apparent reason, he seemed to lose the will to live and simply faded away – dying at the age of 30.

He left as his heir the infant Mary, Queen of Scots – whose son, James VI and I, subsequently unified the crowns of England and Scotland and led to our present United Kingdom!

Andrew Morrison

Katie Ailes

Katie Ailes is a researcher, performer, and producer of contemporary spoken word poetry.



She grew up in south-eastern Pennsylvania and attended Bates College in Lewiston, ME, where she studied English, Dance, and Education and graduated *summa cum laude*.

Following graduation she moved to Scotland and completed an MRes in English at the University of Strathclyde (2014-15) on a US-UK Fulbright Award, focusing on poetry written for the 2014 Scottish independence referendum.

Her poem ‘*Outwith*’ was chosen as one of the Scottish Poetry Library’s Best Scottish Poems of 2016. She has co-piloted the Scottish Poetry Library’s Ambassadors scheme since 2015 and is currently chairing their inaugural Poets Advisory Group. She released her first collection, *Homing*, in 2015, and was published in the *House of Three* anthology series in 2016.

You can see Katie Performing her own poem [here](#).

THE COUNCIL 2022/23

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