



# **The Chanter**

## **Newsletter**



**Loch Lochy**

**September 2025**



**The Nottingham Scottish Association**

[www.nottinghamscottish.org](http://www.nottinghamscottish.org)

## Coulter's Candy

Ally bally, ally bally bee,  
Sittin' on yer mammy's knee,  
Greetin' for a wee bawbee,  
Tae buy some Coulter's candy.

Poor wee Jeanie's gettin' awfy thin,  
A rickle o' banes covered ower wi' skin,  
Noo she's gettin' a wee double chin,  
Wi' sookin' Coulter's Candy.

Mammy gie's ma thrifty doon,  
Here's auld Coulter comin' roon',  
Wi' a basket on his croon,  
Selling Coulter's Candy.

When you grow old, a man to be,  
you'll work hard and you'll sail the seas,  
an' bring hame pennies for your faither and me,  
Tae buy mair Coulter's Candy.

Coulter he's a affa funny man,  
He maks his candy in a pan,  
Awa an greet to yer ma,  
Tae buy some Coulter's candy.

Little Annie's greetin' tae,  
Sae whit can puir wee Mammy dae,  
But gie them a penny atween them twa,  
Tae buy mair Coulter's Candy

## From the President



What an amazing summer we have had. My usual expectation is that August will be cooler and wetter than June and July but, although that was true, it wasn't bad. It seems we have had the hottest summer on record. As September begins, the UK transitions into meteorological autumn. While this month can sometimes deliver spells of warm and sunny weather, the first week is being dominated by a distinctly autumnal pattern, with rainfall and blustery conditions taking centre stage.

All this sets the stage for the next chapter in our Nottingham Scottish calendar with dancing commencing on the 11<sup>th</sup> September and a number of activities to tempt us all. Our September walk will have taken place by the time you read this but there will be more to come. October 18<sup>th</sup> is the date for our Peak Rail trip and we would love at least one more person to join us in order to take advantage of the discount that comes with a group of 20. A reminder to those who are already booked on that we will very soon need to pay the outstanding amount. I'll email about that.

This summer Deryck and I finally took our trip that had been planned for 2020 but which, of course, had to be cancelled. We flew in to Toronto and then travelled to Niagara Falls and New York, spending days in each before taking the liner Queen Mary 2 back to Southampton. This was a fabulous trip and there are so many memories made but suffice it to say, I always look for connections with Scotland in the places we visit:

Scots have a strong historic connection to the Niagara region, with many settling there and contributing to its development. Key figures include Laura Secord, a war hero of Scottish descent who warned British forces before the Battle of Beaver Dams, and figures involved in the region's early commerce and industry, such as the Finlay brothers who founded the Kinleith Paper Company. Scottish culture remains prominent, evidenced by events like the Fergus

Scottish Festival and a lasting presence in place names and architecture.

An exhibition at the Royal Museum in Edinburgh in 2004, highlighted the role Scots played in the development of Canada and 400 years of emigration across the Atlantic Ocean. A fascinating life story featured was that of Isabel Gunn, an Orcadian woman who adopted the disguise of a man so she could work for the Hudson's Bay Company established in 1670. We saw the original Hudson's Bay Company building in Toronto and I took a picture of the sign.

There's even some foreign soil to be found in the shadow of Edinburgh Castle - on the esplanade, look out for a small plaque. It's to commemorate a decision by James VI to create baronets of Nova Scotia to generate extra revenue. However, the baronets didn't want to make the long and treacherous journey to Canada. To save them the inconvenience, James VI simply declared a small amount of land outside the castle to be Canadian soil, so that the baronets could receive their honours here without ever leaving the country.

In New York we took the ferry to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Ellis Island was the main processing station for immigrants entering the United States, primarily for third-class passengers who were required to undergo medical and legal inspections. The museum is very poignant and I could have spent a day there going through the details. There is a photograph of a family of 13 from Scotland who later settled in Alabama. It is estimated that over half a million Scots immigrated between 1892 and 1954.

I look forward to meeting you all in the coming months and hope you will feel able to support the many and varied get togethers being put on.

**Rosie Allen**

## Sad News

We are sad to report the death in Fort William of our friend and member, Alasdair Baxter. Alasdair grew up in Glencoe as a native speaker of Gaelic – a language he loved and promoted all his life. After a varied career, he settled in Nottingham with his wife, Christine, where they joined the Association. In spite of his failing health, they were regular attenders at Association events. He also thoroughly enjoyed passing on his love for Gaelic to a group of his fellow members. Our condolences go to Christine.

Mar sin leat, Alasdair. Suaimhneas sìorraidh gun robh aig a anam.

## Dates for Your Diary

Saturday 10th September:	Walk and Lunch.
Saturday 18th October	Peak Rail Outing
Saturday 29th November	St. Andrew's Night Dinner and Ceilidh Dance
Wednesday 10th December	Christmas Walk and Lunch
Saturday 24th January:	Burns' Night Dinner and Ceilidh Dance

**Details of these events will be emailed to members and will be posted on the website ([www.nottinghamscottish.org](http://www.nottinghamscottish.org)) closer to the dates.**

## From the Editor

Thanks to all for their contributions to this edition of the Chanter. Please, if you have not contributed a piece before, please think about doing so!

You can send them to me at [chanter@nottinghamscottish.org](mailto:chanter@nottinghamscottish.org)

**Andrew Morrison**

## **Trent Riverside Walk**

### **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> June.**



Gunthorpe provided the ideal location for both a leisurely stroll along the riverside and an extended walk round adjoining fields. As it happened, we all felt comfortable opting for the 4-mile circuit and were blessed with dry, well-defined footpaths throughout (with cows happily chewing at a safe distance!).

Starting at the Unicorn Pub/Hotel, we walked along the wharf by the moored boats to Gunthorpe Lock. Then we continued past the surging weir pool and enjoyed the view of the fast-flowing Trent, sometimes waving to the bargees as they propelled their narrow boats upstream (we exchanged greetings; there was, of course, no 'argy-bargy' involved in that!)



A mile further on, we turned away from the embankment and followed a footpath along the field edges until we came to Caythorpe. A bench with a scenic view for our mid-way break was soon spotted there, and we enjoyed a short rest, while quenching our thirst with Piña Colada (mocktails)!



Our walk continued alongside fields of thriving crops, with views of the hills beyond the river, until we joined a lane that led into Gunthorpe village. Half a mile further on and back at the Trent waterfront we re-visited The Unicorn, where the eight of us were able to enjoy a leisurely meal together, with lots of chatting and laughter.

With thanks to Dave and Jan Chapman.

## Derbyshire Walk: Osmaston

### Wednesday 30th July



Osmaston is a pretty village of thatched cottages close to Ashbourne and just south of the Peak District National Park. Six of us gathered at the Shoulder of Mutton on a warm July day ready for our walk.

The path went past Osmaston Hall, now an events venue and not accessible to walkers. As we passed the Village Cricket Field – an almost stereotypical picture of rural England – we saw the start of what looked as if it would be a festival. There were many tents - and, bizarrely, an invitation to try caving in a ‘surface simulator’! We didn’t accept the invitation.

Carrying on, we descended to a series of man-made lakes, one of which acted as a millpond for an old sawmill – still in good repair. After stopping to admire it, we continued on our way. Since we had walked down to the Mill our way was then, of course, up!



Fortunately, we were a fit and energetic bunch, so we made short work of the climb and headed on to the equally pretty village of Shirley. There we posed for a group photo in front of a fascinatingly hollow tree.



The way back from Shirley took us across a long – and very shoogly boardwalk and a rather overgrown path through an attractive patch of woodland. This lead back to the lakes we had passed earlier and, after a short refreshment break we headed back to the Shoulder of Mutton for a well-earned lunch.



## Garden Dance

### Thursday 17th July

After last year's washout we hoped for good weather – after all, it has been one of the driest summers on record! So, it was disappointing to see the forecast, suggesting that we might be in for a wet day.

As the day dawned, the rain arrived. Oh dear!

However, Sue and I are now old hands at this, so we kept a very close eye on the Met Office rainfall map. It suggested a dry afternoon with further rain expected around 7.45pm. We have very sandy soil so any moisture would rapidly soak in, leaving the lawn dry – with luck we 'd be able to dance for a little over an hour before the rain returned.

And that is exactly how it turned out!



As usual, we were joined by our friends from the Beeston U3A dance group and three sets of dancers took the 'floor' promptly at 6.30. The programme included a number of old favourites including Granville Market and Miss Gibson's Strathspey.

Steps are difficult on grass, but any lack of technique and elegance was more than compensated by much laughter.

The rain duly arrived on schedule and we beat a hurried retreat indoors where a member-provided feast waited for us.

After an hour or two of socialising, our guests gradually departed, leaving all of us looking forward to next year's event!

**Andrew and Sue**



## Lawn Bowls Afternoon

### Friday 15th August

The inaugural NSA lawn bowls event was scheduled at Attenborough Bowls Club on a blazing hot afternoon. I wish I could say that our bowls was equally hot!



Nevertheless, with a helping hand from the 'professionals' of the Bowls Club, we gave it a good go. After a bit of practice, we mastered the art of placing the jack at an appropriate distance and worked out which way the bowls would turn with the bias. How hard could it be?

Speaking for me, rather more difficult than you would expect!



We split our intrepid players into teams of two + a professional for a game of several 'ends'. These eventually produced two winning teams and two losing teams – as to who they were, I couldn't possibly reveal – except I wasn't among the winners!

Maybe this wasn't high class bowls, but the important thing was that we all enjoyed it enormously.

With thanks to Sue for organising it and, especially, to the Attenborough bowlers who generously gave their time to help us.

**Andrew Morrison**

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## **Hiking across Knoydart in May 2025 under Clear Blue Skies**

When my friend Paul first invited me two years ago to spend a week camping with him on the Knoydart peninsula in the north-west Highlands, his plan attracted me strongly. On several trips to the Isles of Skye I had seen it in the distance – once even (also with Paul) from high up on the Cuillin ridge – and I recalled my love of Gavin Maxwell's book 'Ring of Bright Water' which is set in Sandaig, Knoydart next to the Sound of Sleat. Gavin kept a wild otter there that he had brought to his Scottish 'writer's retreat', where it thrived, from the marshes of Iraq!

As things turned out I was unable to join Paul for that walk in June 2023 and I felt saddened when he told me later that torrential rain and flooded rivers on Knoydart had forced him to turn back early on; local people had warned him that much of his route was impassable. When we chatted together about May 2025 as the month in which we might, instead, hike there safely and successfully, we didn't dare to imagine how wonderful the experience would actually be. I'll enjoy sharing our story with you here.

Wielding a heavy (18 kg) and bulky rucksack by bus and train to Glasgow was quite a challenge for me on the first day. Fortunately, there were no serious delays, despite my clumsiness, although I was embarrassingly responsible for an un-timetabled stop on the train to Crewe after I'd mistakenly pressed the red emergency button in an on-board toilet. The train guard laughed about it with me and said don't worry, he'd once done the same thing himself!

By spending that night in central Glasgow, near Buchanan Street, I was able to experience the utmost contrast, full of noise, fun and vitality, to what awaited us in isolated Knoydart: crowded streets, bars and restaurants, live music from the buskers and a beautiful city-scape. To save some money for my hotel bill, I'd reserved a bed in one of the dormitories situated above a nightclub in a guesthouse on Virginia Street, close to George Square. Ear plugs were provided in case the noise from the disco downstairs should keep the hotel's guests awake but I didn't need them (it was in fact a disco-less night) and nobody in the adjacent bunks was drunk, or blithering, or snoring (apart from me?).

George Square was packed with Celtic football fans next morning when I made my way across to Queen Street station to meet up with Paul. I'd tucked into a full Scottish breakfast with a good portion of haggis, knowing that more frugal meals lay ahead of us during our hike and that I'd need to keep my energy levels well up.

Paul's train journey from North Wales had already taken him 5 hours and our onward trip to Mallaig would take more or less the same time but we were both very excited about it. He helped me to make my rucksack less top-heavy and cumbersome, by rolling up my sleeping bag and stowing it in a compartment at its base. Similarly, throughout our walk I would be reliant on his greater expertise as a hiker, his younger man's strength and ability to foresee and avoid any risks and his food supplies and cooking skills. In return, I paid for the beers, the pub meals and some fares for our public transport, and I often made him laugh!

On arriving in Mallaig we made haste to get from the station to the port because the last ferry of the day would soon be departing for Inverie on Knoydart's south coast.



The half-hour sail across Loch Nevis brought us to the starting point of our hike and we caught our first sight of the peninsula's rolling hills under a cloudless azure sky.

A mile-long walk led us to the seaside campsite where we pitched our tents while warding off the midges. For this, Paul wore his black net facemask while I used a spray.



*Paul repelling the Midges!*

As the evening began we retraced our footsteps eagerly to the Inverie village pub, the Old Forge, which stands in the Guinness Book of Records as mainland Britain's remotest pub – it has no road access, so you either have to walk there or take the ferry or perhaps, even swim or float across, ha ha!

We supped our beers while my iPhone was recharging in the pub's foyer – any opportunity for that needed to be taken, otherwise I couldn't have taken my photos or sent WhatsApp messages to my family; the grandchildren were so looking forward to hearing about our Highland adventures.

The next day, Sunday May 18<sup>th</sup>, was the first of our six hiking days and it was perhaps the most full-on physically. Knoydart covers an area of 196 square miles and it is described as the last unspoiled true wilderness in mainland Britain, with just 157 permanent residents. It has 4 Munros (3000+-foot-high hills) and our steep rocky path took us within sight of the summits of two of them, Ladhar Bheinn and Luinne Bheinn.

The calls of cuckoos accompanied us all day and every day during our hike and we were fascinated by the glittering appearance of many of the rocks on and next to our paths. I've since read that those tiny sparkling quartz-feldspar crystals occur in volcanic rocks called mica schists, one of which is 'muscovite' (not the only attractive Muscovite that a Russian specialist like me will have met along their way, surely!). At one point I had an unforeseen close-up view of the stones: when crossing a gully I toppled sideways but came to no harm because my rucksack, having pulled me over, then cushioned me against the impact. We had a pretty lake, Loch an Dubh Lochain, beneath us at that time but I didn't roll down there; I just ate some more nuts and dried fruit to boost my energy level before we carried on walking towards our next camping place in Barrisdale.

The hillsides were covered in places with forest consisting of birchwoods and Caledonian pinewoods, a sign of the Knoydart Foundation's investment in restoring such natural woodlands to the peninsula, which forms its Estate.



*On the Track to Barisdale*

In Barrisdale on the shores of Loch Hourn we camped next to a bothy where we chatted with a young German couple who were very enthusiastic about the Highlands and Islands, having hiked and camped there extensively. It was also Scots culture and friendliness that had drawn them back so often. We would spend the following day trekking along the banks of that lengthy sea loch to Kinloch Hourn and watching more visitors from other parts of the world taking part in Day 2 of the 8-day, 250-mile long Cape Wrath Ultra.

The runners were racing up- and downhill, assisted (like us) by their hiking poles, and somehow managing not to trip up despite the often hazardous drops between the stepping stones which always forced us, the oldies, to slow right down. The filming of this event later gave me a chance to learn from the Ultra's website about the contestants and to hear their impressions of Knoydart. The race leader, a Brazilian, was bowled over by the beauty of its landscape. Paul and I had got used to stepping out of the way as those athletic women and men came up the track behind us – lots of them were Scottish.

In Kinloch Hourn, an elaborate campsite awaited the runners, allowing them to rest and restore their energies before their Day 3, and we two needed to do the same while camping on an adjacent site. Early next morning we heard the patter of a couple of hundred runners' feet as they set forth, following at first the route which we'd also be taking.

The walking on this, our Day 3, was quite strenuous as we needed to climb well up into the hills before reaching our next 'wild' campsite near to an old, semi-ruined black-house croft called the Fisherman's Cottage. A long line of electricity pylons guided us in a north-westerly direction and we noticed that our path also ran parallel to the tracks created by pickup trucks that were driven by teams of either hydroelectric scheme or forestry workers. Knoydart depends for its electric power production on its own private hydro scheme, as it is not connected to the national grid. The runners will have benefited from the more even surfaces created by those trucks, as we also did, especially in that spring drought when there was no mud to contend with.

When we came to a stream we replenished our water supply and enjoyed our sightings of wildlife close to flowing rivulets, such as dragonflies and toads. Surprisingly, we hardly spotted any birds of prey, although the peninsula has a good reputation among birdwatchers, especially for its eagles.

We camped at a safe distance from the croft's dilapidated old chimney which looked as if it could be blown over by a strong wind such as the one that had deafened us the night before by Loch Hourn. At the higher altitude of our new camping place we had to cope instead with low night-time temperatures which forced me to wear my warmest clothes inside my thick winter sleeping bag.



For the next two days we were almost entirely alone, as our route led us towards Knoydart's north coast. The pylons accompanied us, which made us less dependent on our OS map for tracing the footpath, and an online guide to Knoydart that I've since found forewarns hikers of the lack of signage on any of the walking routes.

Paul was astonished by the general absence of waterfalls along the surrounding rock faces and the expanses of exposed dry land that had been submerged by river water during his previous visit. We camped on an island of marshland at the confluence of two large streams- a picturesque spot, comfortably level and not overgrown with rushes or heather.

I rested there on the morning of Day 4 while Paul took a brisk walk along Gleann Beag in the direction of Glenelg port to explore the ancient Iron Age brochs of Dun Troddan and Dun Telve (Duns were, apparently, 'settlement enclosures' rather than 'forts'). Here's a description of the latter: 'Dun Telve presents a curious 'cooling tower' profile, which is what distinguishes the structure of brochs. It rises to over 10 metres high and the stones used to build it have been carefully selected and dressed to a specific shape and size. 'Meanwhile, at our campsite I had managed to get a phone signal for the first time since Mallaig, so I could contact Jan and WhatsApp to the grandkids.

On Day 5 we ascended along a steep route to our final night's resting place on the peninsula: Suardalan bothy, which was literally and metaphorically the highpoint of our trip. After another morning's exertions on a steep and rugged mountain path we spotted in the distance a white-house croft on a hillside that was to give us (and only us!) shelter for the Thursday night. We could sleep in separate bunk rooms and enjoy using a very well maintained bathroom and cooking space. The bothy's logbook made interesting reading for me as I sat on the terrace and basked in the usual sunshine, with the daytime temperature still in the mid-twenties.

Suardalan had been built as a shepherd's/gamekeeper's cottage in the 1920s and restored by a team of volunteers before it began to be maintained regularly by the Mountain Bothies Association (that would be my 'MBA' if I ever chose to study for one!). One of their main tasks had been to replace the dilapidated roof, as recorded in some detail on several dates in the logbook, which also contained complimentary remarks in several other languages saying how well equipped and tidy Suardalan is nowadays. Two of my photos show the superb views) down the valley by which we had approached the bothy and the vista to the north in the direction of our next day's hike, with the lower forests of Glen More and Glen Shiel to the left of the gully up which we'd be tramping.



After an evening meal of boiled chicken pasta, Paul and I stretched out on our spacious bunks to rest, but we missed the mattress effect that the heather had given us in our tents while we lay on the bunkbeds' rigid hardboard!

The final day's hike began with some shady woodland pathways that took us into the last, Glen Shiel stage of our journey. While negotiating the rocks along another fairly steep ascent, we bore in mind the constant need to keep our backpacks and upper bodies stable, because an accidental tumble down the slope to the right of us could have been fatal – it led to the precipice above a deep ravine (it might at least have resulted in a cliff-hanger!). The calm, blue lochan by the hilltop was a peaceful place for us to have a snack and rest before making our way down to our destination, Shiel Bridge.



We could now see some more impressive Munro summits to the east, notably the Five Sisters of Kintail above Glen Shiel, and we occasionally spotted some deer roaming on the hills around us. Our descent towards the shores of Loch Duich took a long time due mainly to the distance involved – the slope became gentler and the track was more even now. As we approached the village of Shiel Bridge we met and chatted pleasantly with a family who were out walking their dog, a sign to us that we were now re-entering the world of human habitation safe and sound! The main road we then reached was surprisingly busy, but the weekend was beginning and this was, after all, the A87 to Inverness, the Kyle of Lochalsh and Skye, plus (for us) Fort William. We refreshed ourselves with a beer in the Kintail Lodge Hotel before heading for our bus stop.



*Haggis, Neeps and Tatties!*

Arriving by coach in Fort William at about 7pm we made our way directly to a High Street pub/restaurant called The Tavern. On seeing our bulky rucksacks, a friendly group of elderly local men at a nearby table asked us where we'd been walking and they gave us a round of applause when Paul told them of my nearly 80-year-old's ability to cope with the ups and downs of our 40-mile route across Knoydart. In celebratory mood, we dined on haggis, neeps and tatties, as we'd promised ourselves that we would from the start!

Throughout that night there was a heavy downpour of rain – a reminder of how fortunate we'd been to have such glorious weather conditions during our hike. We hastily pitched out tents on the wet Glen Nevis campsite, recalling our conversation with the taxi driver who had brought us there. He'd told us that farming communities in the Highlands were very anxious about the persistent drought and that a hosepipe ban was probably in the offing. We sympathised, of course, but still felt that the memorable vision we'd been granted of Knoydart's lochs, hills and valleys had come to us like a gift from above.

**Dave Chapman**

## **‘Ally Bally Bee’ and Robert Coltart**



***Robert Coltart with his Candy***

‘Ally Bally Bee’ or ‘Coulter’s Candy’ is (was?) a well-known Children’s Song in Scotland and is probably familiar to at least some of our members. Indeed, those who danced in this year’s ASCDS Dance Festival may remember the tune from its use as an accompaniment to ‘The Belle of Bon Accord’ even if they were not familiar with its origin!

This song dates to the mid to late-19th century by a former Galashiels weaver, Robert Coltart. Coltart made aniseed-flavoured sweets in Melrose and sold them around the markets of the Border towns. While the song refers to the type of confectionery used, the recipe was lost after Coltart’s death in the late 19th Century. Sadly, he died of a brain tumour, penniless, and was buried in an unmarked pauper’s grave in Galashiels.

In 2019, the Scottish Borders Council erected a statue in honour of Coulter’s Candy in Galashiels, as part of a town centre regeneration project. Created by Angela Hunter, the statue became part of a new town trail. On 2 April 2024, a headstone was unveiled on the 144th anniversary of Coltart’s death; the headstone was a fundraising effort – a fitting memorial to a Borders Legend.

There are many versions of the song available to view – [this](#) links to a performance by Fiona Reid.

## THE COUNCIL 2025/26

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