



# TARTAN Herald

The Newsletter of the Scottish Tartans Authority

No. 43 June 2013

## Director Honoured with MBE



"The appointment of Brian Wilton, Director of The Scottish Tartans Authority as an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List has been widely welcomed across the tartan industry and beyond. Informally known as Scotland's 'Tartan Ambassador' Brian Wilton has, for over a decade, been a passionate advocate, not just of tartan but of its surrounding heritage and the huge global symbolism of what he calls 'the Fabric of a Nation'.

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"For services to the  
tartan industry in  
Scotland"

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His stewardship of the Tartans Authority has been combined with acclaimed presentations on the subject as far afield as Moscow, Norway, New York and Japan and his unique tartan designs for international organisations and companies have frequently generated extensive publicity and orders for Scottish businesses. His book for the National Trust for Scotland 'Tartans' has been termed 'the best for decades' and he is a frequent participant in radio and

television productions on the subject.

Bannockburn-born Brian said: "The unsung promotional work of the Scottish Tartans Authority spills over from the weaving industry into many other sectors that hugely benefit Scotland's economy. I'm very honoured to have been recognised in this way and sincerely hope that it will further assist our discussions with the Scottish Government as we work together on attracting adequate core funding for the Authority's nationally important work."

The Scottish Tartans Authority Chairman John McLeish said: "We are obviously delighted for Brian that all his years of hard work and inspirational input to the world of tartan have been appreciated and



recognised in such a way. The Board of Governors is about to launch a new strategic plan for the future and we are convinced that this award will highlight the part that tartan plays in the international promotion of Scotland and so many of its industries."

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## Scottish Australia

So much of the promotional work of the Tartans Authority encompasses not just tartan the 'fabric' but tartan the 'symbol' . . . the global symbol, not just of clanship and 'belonging' but of Scottish achievements . . . climbing Everest . . . landing on the moon, going forth into the old world and contributing to so many different societies in so many different ways. Historically, Scotland has always punched way above its weight and probably Winston Churchill put it most aptly:

**'Of all the small nations on earth,  
perhaps only the ancient Greeks  
surpass the Scots in their contribution  
to mankind.'**

To back up that boastful intro, here's what's planned in Australia for 2014:

"A proposed exhibition of painting, sculpture, decorative arts and photography will reveal the breadth of Scottish ingenuity and industry, which shaped the Australian nation from First Fleet to Federation and infiltrated every aspect of nineteenth-century life.

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# Bunad Bonanza

What has proved to be a very slim news month - apart from Brian's MBE - has pointed us in the direction of some of our archives where one of the most interesting topics that has been begging to be researched for many years is that of Norway's national costume - known as Bunads - and its frequent use of tartan.

We believe a report was commissioned many years ago by the defunct *Scottish Tartans Society*, but despite their bequeathing all their records and artefacts to the *Tartans Authority*, the bulk of the paper records are still being withheld by a third party.

Norway is only 500 miles (805 km) across the North Sea from Scotland so the close links between the two countries is hardly surprising.

Brian Wilton tells us of the two-way trade that existed during his flying days in the Royal Air Force where ammunition bays in the wings of Javelin fighter aircraft visiting Norway would be filled with whisky to be replaced - on the return journey - by Norwegian salmon. That was in the days before farmed salmon had been 'invented'.

The STA's links with Norway also go back a few years - see the 2004 press release on the right.



So . . . if anyone out there with Norwegian connections would like to undertake some research on our behalf - we would be delighted. What we're looking for are not just samples of tartans used in Bunads but the origins of that use in each case. It may be that many Bunad tartans are designs originating in Norway or they may be or may be based on, historic tartans from Scotland. However they came about - we'd love to know and will add the information to our website - AND credit the researcher(s).



## Press Release from 2004

### **Tartans to the Arctic**

Travelling 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle to talk for 40 minutes on tartans seems a little excessive but that's just what Crieff-based Brian Wilton of the Scottish Tartans Authority did very recently.

It took one car, three coaches and two aircraft to reach the northern town of Harstad on the country's largest island just off the north-west coast of Norway.

"The *Northern Norwegian Artists Centre* organise an annual seminar" explained Brian, "and this year decided to hold a Scottish evening during which they could learn more of the history of Scotland through that of tartan. There is a great cultural affinity between Norway and Scotland - their isolated fjords tend to equate to our remote Highland glens and they speak of Viking Chieftains just as we talk of Clan Chieftains. During the 16th and 17th centuries there was also much trade between Caithness and Norway.

Friendly relations seemed to break down in 1612 however when a Scottish mercenary expedition of some 300 men landed in southern Norway en route to fight for the king of Sweden. They were ambushed by about 400 Norwegian farmers and at the end of the slaughter that marked the Battle of Kringen, only about 15 Scots remained. One of them was apparently a weaver and is said to have taught the art and the craft of tartan to the local inhabitants which has resulted in many tartans and tartan-like designs being incorporated into many of Norway's *bunads* - regional costumes.

# Go West young van!

(Ouch!)



The most westerly point in Great Britain is Ardnamurchan Point and it's here that one of our members Polly Cook photographed this campervan for us. Some of you may remember Polly when she was Polly Wittering at Perth-based weavers House of Edgar where she designed the acclaimed collection of Irish County tartans back in 1997.

To get to Ardnamurchan Point, Polly - and the campervan driver - would have driven 25 miles through some of the most amazing landscapes on a road that time forgot - a narrow single track route that is typical of many of the Scotland's rural roads over half a century ago.

A fantastic drive and well worth the effort.

<http://www.thetartancamper.com/>



at The Loomcrofters in Gagetown since 1941.

Edith wove tartans for Prince Philip and Queen Elizabeth, and was widely regarded as the last of a generation of weavers using manual looms to weave their magic.

Edith and Patricia Jenkins, the original owner of The Loomcrofters, wove the first New Brunswick tartan, which Patricia designed in 1959. She died in 1985 and Edith became The Loomcrofters' sole weaver and the business remained a Mecca for visitors from far and wide seeking authentic, hand-woven tartans.

Edith wove tartans only, and was a much loved and revered member of Gagetown's

artisan community and each spring she wove a navy blue and black tartan for Gagetown School, whose playground was adjacent to The

*Below: The Loomcrofter Studio in Gagetown. All the subjects are wearing the New Brunswick tartan initially designed by Patricia Jenkins as a personal tartan for Lord Beaverbrook and then adopted as a district tartan.*

## Loomcrofters Postscript

In the New Brunswick (Canada) Daily Gleaner of January 5th 2008 we came across what is now a very old obituary for Enid Inch, but she and her colleague Patricia Jenkins are/were such a part of the handloom weaving folklore that we thought it would be appropriate to pass this on to you all.

"Hundreds of friends, family and admirers gathered at the Mill Cove Church of God on Friday afternoon to celebrate the life of Enid Inch. The gathering was a fitting testament to the admired weaver who had made tartans





Above: Edith at her loom.  
Right: Loomcrofter's interior.



Loomcrofters and graduating students received ties in the registered school tartan, all of which she wove.

"It was always special to think of Enid watching the children growing up, then weaving those ties," said Gagetown School teacher Judy Anne Breen. "The students took great pride in wearing them for years to come."

Edith was a modest person who avoided publicity and preferred to do what she loved best, according to friends. She spent her summers weaving tartans and receiving visitors at The Loomcrofters' historic studio, then moved inside the house at Roseneath to fill outstanding orders during the winter.

## Scottish Australia

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"This groundbreaking exhibition will highlight the impact of the Scots as pioneers in Australia and will also examine the rich legacy that Scottish artists and Scottish art have contributed to this country's visual culture.

Pioneering Scots were explorers, scientists, educators, politicians, doctors, lawyers and businessmen who founded some of our most important

institutions. Pioneering Scots were also artists, craftspeople, designers, architects and patrons of the Arts. In fact, some of the earliest artists associated with the British discovery of Australia were Scots – such as Sydney Parkinson, from Cook's voyages; and Thomas Watling, the so called 'Limner of Dumfries' who was transported in 1792 for forging bank notes of the Bank of Scotland. Their reportage of the continent's exotic fauna and flora amazed and intrigued the scientific communities in Europe.

The exhibition will include fine portraits of the early settlers and officials such as Governor and Mrs. Macquarie, and others from the Scottish colonial establishment. There will be examples of work by engineers and architects who translated the aspirations of those far-sighted pioneers into buildings like Parliament House in Melbourne; and by explorers, such as Thomas Mitchell, himself a fine artist, who discovered the Western District of Victoria – the so-called Australia Felix. This region was settled by many Scottish pastoralists, whose properties were portrayed by the leading artists of the day.

The pioneering Scots' interest in the new phenomenon of photography was also evident in the work of migrants such as J.W. Beattie and Ewan Mackintosh. In addition there was the inspiration of literary figures: the poetry and writings of Walter Scott and Robert Burns cannot be underestimated for their influence on artists and on iconic Australian poets such as Adam Lindsay Gordon and

Banjo Paterson, who helped shape the identity of the Australian bushman.

The Scots brought their culture with them – their music, sport, literature and art. Many fine artists emigrated to Australia, including John Ford Paterson, John Mather and Georgiana McCrae. The fledgling public institutions collected works by Scottish artists amongst their very earliest purchase and this exhibition will also show how these depictions of landscape influenced Australian artists.

No museum or art gallery has yet drawn together the myriad threads that make up the extraordinary story of Scottish Australia. This exhibition will do so.

Opening date 11th April 2014 at Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Victoria

Curators:

**Alison Inglis**, Associate Professor, Art History, The University of Melbourne

**Patricia Tryon Macdonald**, curator *Exiles and Emigrants, epic Journeys to Australia in the Victorian era, exhibition*, National Gallery of Victoria and National Museum of Australia, 2005.

As always, we welcome news items from readers on any topics to do with tartan, Highland dress and the World of Scotland overseas.

All contributions to:  
[admin@tartansauthority.com](mailto:admin@tartansauthority.com)