
Review of Scottish Culture 30 2025

Contents

Editorial	iii
<i>Dr Valentina Bold FSA Scot, University of Edinburgh</i>	
The European Ethnological Research Centre	vi
William George Black “Neomagus,” and Folk-Medicine (1876)	1
<i>Stephen Miller</i>	
Folklore Material in Ruaraidh Erskine’s Gaelic Magazines	6
<i>Petra Johana Poncarová</i>	
‘Buaile bheag do na laoi gh’ (a wee fold for the calves) Historical cattle management for milk production	18
<i>Gavin Parsons</i>	
Slavery, Commerce, and Art: Kelvingrove House and The City Industrial Museum	33
<i>Arun Sood</i>	
Mr Haldane’s Hermitage: Re-discovering a Late 18th Century Immersive Poetry Tableau at Airthrey Estate, Bridge of Allan, Stirling, a Case of Disguising East India Company Profits	52
<i>Murray Cook and Jennifer Strachan</i>	
The White Heather Club Reassessed	63
<i>Pat Ballantyne</i>	
Suppos þat þai be nocht bot fabill: Medieval Film and Robert the Bruce	75
<i>Duncan Sneddon</i>	
‘The Joke of Wellington’: The Duke of Wellington’s cone from folk act to brand	96
<i>Joel Conn</i>	
Daughters of the North: writing the biography of Jean Gordon and Mary, Queen of Scots	128
<i>Jennifer Morag Henderson</i>	
Stirling 900: Reviving Walking the Marches: The Captain’s Story	135
<i>Andrew McEwan: with video introduction and coda by Murray Cook</i>	
More Than a Game: Seasonal Handball in Scotland	143
<i>Neill Martin</i>	
Contributors’ Biographies	160
Call for Submissions 2026	163

Editorial

Dr Valentina Bold FSA Scot, University of Edinburgh

Welcome to the 2025 issue of *Review of Scottish Culture*. This is the second time *Review of Scottish Culture* has appeared in a solely digital form, free to download whilst still maintaining the highest standards of peer-reviewed scholarship. We were delighted by the response to issue 29 and thank readers for their kind comments and responses, in particular to our willingness to include audio and video materials in submissions – something we will continue to welcome in this new format.

Like previous volumes – digital and print – the 2025 issue contains a wide range of ethnological material. It reflects Scottish experiences in different historical periods, drawing on both first and second hand accounts – some collected in print, others recorded in audio and video. Tangible and intangible culture are both represented. Essays include discussions of landscape archaeology and material cultures, to folk narratives, working lives and dance, through narrative, visual and performative acts. They range through Scotland in all its rural, coastal and urban dimensions, as it is perceived by cultural insiders, external analysts and those who combine both these points of view.

As has always been done in *Review of Scottish Culture*, contributors document and discuss traditions – well known and otherwise – that

have been sustained and developed through subsequent generations. Several pieces focus on the re-interpretation, re-imagination and re-purposing of traditions by and for contemporary audiences; traditions living through narrative, visual and performative acts.

Reflecting this plurality in Scottish ethnology, the ethnologists included here approach their topics from distinctive perspectives. Writing from across Scotland, and from Europe, they represent academic centres of excellence, as well as independent scholarship and grassroots' perspectives, as this field continually aspires to do. In future issues, I would like to encourage this plurality, and diversity: the *Review of Scottish Culture* should be, like the subject itself, open to all.

Whilst the digital format lends itself to reading articles in whatever order you prefer, in the full text version there is some attempt to organise with a sense of flow. To that end, the issue opens with a pair of essays which consider culture as it is represented in print – in magazines and in book form – both with strong connections to other ethnological genres.

Stephen Miller, in 'William George Black, "Neomagus" and Folk Medicine (1876)' sheds

new light on this young Glasgow lawyer and ‘South Scotland’ Secretary of the Folklore Society. Miller suggests Black’s work in classification, and European influence, deserves recognition, alongside that of his better-known contemporaries, like Thoms.

Petra Johana Poncarová, writing on early twentieth century ‘Folklore Material in Ruaraidh Erskine’s Gaelic Magazines’, demonstrates that – contrary to pre-conceptions of elitist and ‘modern’ content – these equally reflect contemporary interest in Gaelic traditions, poetry and song, including the Fenian cycle. Contact with Celtic traditions across Europe is also reflected, alongside knowledge of Gaelic scholarship and folk narratives.

Moving from narrative to working lives – again with Gaelic traditions at their heart – Gavin Parsons’ ‘Buaille bheag do na laoigh (a wee fold for the calves)’. Parson demonstrates that historical practices of cattle management, to encourage milk production, deserves far more attention than it is usually given from ethnological perspectives. He goes beyond the documentation of milking songs, and charms, to consider cows as the ‘centre of the domestic economy’ – an aspect that can be read into material culture as well as interpreted using archaeological evidence.

Linked to this built heritage record, Arun Sood’s ‘Slavery, Commerce, and Art: Kelvingrove House and The City Industrial Museum’ follows. This engages directly with the foundation processes and individuals involved, the history of buildings and development, of what would become an iconic Glasgow collection. As Sood

says, its story raises ‘further questions about how Glasgow’s civic institutions might approach the recovery and representation of their own historical links – direct or indirect – with slavery and colonial commerce’ – one that we hope to pursue in future issues.

Built heritage and colonialism are also at the core of Murray Cook and Jennifer Strachan’s essay, ‘Mr Haldane’s Hermitage: Re-discovering a Late 18th Century Immersive Poetry Tableau at Airthrey Estate, Bridge of Allan, Stirling, a Case of Disguising East India Company Profits’. This treats the construction of a previously unrecorded 18th century grotto in Stirling – linked to Oliver Goldsmith’s ‘The Hermit’ and trends in garden design.

Pat Ballantyne’s ‘The White Heather Club Reassessed’ moves the issue into a slightly different direction – albeit one that, like the Hermitage, is anchored in a creative imagination. Memories of the television programme might still be contentious, amongst scholars of Scottish identity. However Ballantyne, drawing on her own recordings with performers on the show, argues that it is ripe for reassessment, as ‘an important and influential part of Scotland’s rich cultural heritage’.

The following piece, by Duncan Sneddon, also engages with visual representations of iconic Scottish figures: ‘Suppos þat þai be nocht bot fabill: Medieval Film and Robert the Bruce’. Making reference to a range of cinematic examples, including *Robert the Bruce* and *Outlaw King*, Sneddon presents alternative readings to the ‘restrictive’ approach of measurements by

‘historical accuracy’ to allow their evaluation as creative works – an imaginative category in its own ethnological right.

Joel Conn continues the theme of popular culture in, ‘The Joke of Wellington: The Duke of Wellington’s cone from folk act to brand’, examining a familiar piece of folk art and its role in ‘popular culture, commerce and folklore’. Its adaptability to occasional use on special occasions, and for advertising purposes, are shown by Conn to be subject to ‘creative development’ in an intriguing, and ongoing, process.

The penultimate essays in this issue are auto-ethnography, documenting personal experiences of responding to the past – through engaging with historical figures, and through the recreation of traditional customs.

Jennifer Morag Henderson’s ‘Daughters of the North: writing the biography of Jean Gordon and Mary, Queen of Scots’ explores her narrative choices from her own perspective – highlighting the importance of a ‘good story’. Andrew McEwan’s, ‘Reviving Walking the Marches, Stirling 900. The Captain’s Story’, is a fascinating first-hand account of bringing a lapsed tradition back to life, and giving it new vigour in a civic context. His piece is introduced, in video, by Murray Cook, Stirling’s city archaeologist. The issue ends with a consideration of another custom: seasonal handball. Neill Martin considers current practices, and the history, of a tradition which once ranged across Scotland, and continues in the Borders and in Orkney.

In short, there is variety in the topics and the approaches within this issue. It offers, I believe,

a representative range of models for ethnological research, present and future. This is an exciting, dynamic and growing field of research, allowing multiple approaches to the rich and varied culture of Scotland, whether the physical nation or its creative counterparts. I hope that you will enjoy reading, and downloading, this issue of *Review of Scottish Culture*. We also encourage new submissions for 2026.

Valentina Bold, Stirling