

THE SCOTS CANADIAN

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Summer 2005

Keeping the Tradition Alive

In this excerpt from Douglas Gibson's "Scot of the Year" acceptance speech he reflects on his past and on the strong Scottish tradition in the literary Canadian experience

On this fine Scottish evening, with colourful tartans and kilts everywhere, I seem to be letting down the side wearing this conventional dinner jacket. In fact this is perhaps the most Scottish outfit of all those here tonight. It was given to me by my very Scottish parents as a 21st birthday present in the hope that I would.. "save money in the long run." That was forty years ago!

Durability was an important consideration to my parents when they were buying anything. Once, in middle age, they were considering the purchase of a carpet and asked if it would wear well. The young salesman looked at them appraisingly and then said... "Oh aye -- it'll see your day out!" They bought the carpet! And my mother, at 91, in Dunlop, the Ayrshire village where I grew up, continues to take the race between her and the carpet very seriously.

My mother can't be here tonight, so she has to be content with telling everyone who encounters her on the street of this great honour that has befallen her son in Canada, as if she's been waiting 91 years for precisely this event.

One of the highlights of my career was publishing *The Canadian Encyclopedia* in 2000 -- the biggest single volume in Canadian history. I think you'll enjoy the entry on Scots in Canada. It reads, in part... "the history and culture of Scots developed quite differently from that of other groups from the British Isles, and Scots have always regarded themselves as distinct from -- indeed superior to -- their English, Welsh and Irish cousins."

This presumably is the same self regard that led so many of us to consider the bestselling book title *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* as being a touch understated and perhaps overly restricted.

That account of 18th-century Scottish rationality and the belief in how education and ambition can break the bonds of tradition in search of a healthy meritocracy is made even more relevant to us tonight by a thought-provoking quote from the Canadian

playwright Kent Stetson... "The Enlightenment produced different results in different European countries; in France it produced the Revolution; in Scotland it produced Canada."

It would be fascinating to take the concept of the Canadian *Scot of the Year* back into Canadian history and award it posthumously. In 1759, the year of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham (and did you know that the Plains were named after a Scot, Abraham Martin?), the clear winner would be General James Murray, who solidified Wolfe's victory and held Québec.

But the best year to start giving the Canadian Scot of the Year award would be 1867. The winner that year without doubt, of course, would be Sir John A. Macdonald.

1868's Scot of the Year must surely be John Sandfield Macdonald, the first premier of Ontario.

1869. Step forward Donald Smith (later Baron Strathcona, the railroad builder), who that year went to Manitoba and negotiated peace with Louis Riel.

1870 is the perfect year to recognize Sir John William Dawson, the legendary principal of McGill from 1855 to 1893, who built it into a world-famous university.

1871 was the year that Sir Hugh Allan, the Montréal shipping magnate and railroad builder, was knighted, so that's easy.

1872's Scot of the Year would be Sandford Fleming, put in charge of the survey for the railroad, on his way to creating standard time.

1873 is the year Alexander Mackenzie became Canada's first Liberal prime minister.

1874 the nod goes to George Brown, father of Confederation and Publisher of *The Globe*.

1875. The winner is William Notman, the Montréal-based photographer who employed 55 people, recording an entire era.



Douglas Gibson takes to the Casa Loma dance floor with his wife Jane at the Scottish Studies Society's Annual Tartan Day Dinner. Douglas was elected Scot of the Year 2005 at the event. (More photos inside.)

And finally, rounding out the decade, 1876. James F. MacLeod -- a very good surname -- deserves to be Scot of the Year for leading the Northwest Mounted Police into southern Alberta to stamp out the whisky trade -- it was very bad whisky -- and bring law and order.

That's just the first 10 years of Canadian Scot of the Year. And my point about the Scottish impact on Canada is made, I think, by simply adding the words. "and so on."

I've been lucky to stumble into this wonderful world of books and authors, just when Canadian writers were emerging to take on the world.

Just today, incidentally, I came across a fascinating U.K. review by the distinguished literary critic Karl Miller that ran in *The Scottish Review of Books* a few weeks ago. It begins... "Two of Scotland's most gifted writers, of all time, are born and bred Canadians, Alice Munro and Alistair MacLeod."

If writing were an Olympic event our men and women would be on the podium all the time, with the rest of the world learning the words to O Canada through frequent repetition. ■

Letter from the Chair

Dear Fellow Members,

On behalf of the Board of the Scottish Studies Foundation, I would like to thank you again for all your wonderful encouragement and support. I do hope your summer is going well.

Since our last mailing, our Annual Tartan Day Dinner has taken place and was a great success. Once again, Bill Somerville and his team did a magnificent job of organizing the event and the Casa Loma venue made for a splendid setting.

We were delighted to have publisher Douglas Gibson receive our annual Scot of the Year Award during the dinner. Many icons from the Canadian literary community were at the event (Alice Munro, Alistair MacLeod, Roy MacGregor and Michael Enright to name a few) all of whom confirmed that Douglas' contribution to the Canadian publishing industry marked him as an ideal candidate. After all, the award is designed to recognize Canadians of Scottish heritage who have achieved distinction through their contribution to Canadian society and/or the international community at large.

For the second year in a row, the Rev. Malcolm Sinclair was our Master of



Dr. Cicely Watson

Dr. Watson is one of Scottish Studies greatest supporters. The Frank Watson Prize in Scottish History was established in 1993 as an 80th birthday present for her late husband and will be presented at the Fall Colloquium

Ceremonies for the evening. Malcolm has got to be the most irreverent reverend in captivity (Douglas Gibson's words) and kept things moving along in his usual extremely hilarious way.

Once again, on September 4, we will be holding our 14th annual Tall Ship Cruise to commemorate the pioneers who made it across the Atlantic on the old ship Hector. As in the past, Canada's largest sailing ship, the Empire Sandy, will be standing in for the Hector. For those of you who are able to come along, we extend a very warm welcome.

I am also delighted to report that the team working on the *Edward Stewart Graduate Scholarship in Scottish Studies* project has successfully raised its target of \$100,000. This is a wonderful achievement and speaks to the high esteem in which Dr. Stewart was held. As many of you know, Ed, as Dr. Stewart preferred to be called, was our President for many years and his talent, modesty and integrity constantly inspired those of us on the Board of Directors. It is fitting indeed that this scholarship will help perpetuate his name.

The first *Edward Stewart Graduate Scholarship in Scottish Studies* will be awarded at the 2005 Fall Colloquium on October 1st and from then on the award will be presented on an annual basis. The scholarship will ensure that the University of Guelph will be able to attract the brightest students from across Canada to continue Dr. Stewart's research interests in Scots-Canadian culture and heritage.

I would like to thank everyone involved in making this a reality and to all our members from Canada and abroad who continue to inspire us with their donations, enthusiasm and inspiration.

Sincerely,
David Hunter

Fall Colloquium 2005 all set for October 1st

Registration to the sound of the pipes from 9 a.m.
Proceedings start at 9:45 a.m.

The Scottish Studies Department at the University of Guelph and the Scottish Studies Foundation will be presenting the 2005 annual Fall Colloquium on Saturday October 1st in the University's Rosanski Hall.

Highlights this year will include a presentation of the Frank Watson Prize for the best book on Scottish History as well as a lecture entitled *The Hunt for Rob Roy: The Man & The Myths* by winner David Stevenson, Professor Emeritus of St Andrews University.

The event will also feature the inauguration and presentation of *The Edward Stewart Graduate Scholarship* as well as two new prestigious graduate awards.

A commemoration of the 700th Anniversary of the Death of William Wallace is also planned and Scottish Studies Chair Graeme Morton will be giving a talk on Jane Porter's sizzling romance *The Scottish Chiefs*.

The Halton/Peel Burns Club will be giving a performance during the event and book lovers will be pleased to learn that there will be a book sale and display from the University's Scottish Collection and local publishers.

Light refreshments will be available throughout the day and lunch will be provided. Later on, a reception with drinks etc. will take place at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre on campus.

Registration and other details are as follows:

Prior to September 1st: \$30

After September 1st:
\$35 for Foundation members
\$40 for non-members

Please make cheques payable to
The University of Guelph.

Registration/General enquiries to:
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A year to remember

Dr. Graeme Morton is celebrating his first year in Canada, prompting him to write this letter to all members of the Scottish Studies Foundation

Dear Scottish Studies Foundation Members,

As the anniversary of my appointment to The Scottish Studies Foundation Chair approaches, it is the perfect opportunity for me to thank you for your continuing support. My colleagues in the Scottish Studies Program at the University of Guelph and my fellow Directors of the Scottish Studies Foundation are so grateful for all that you have done. Your unfailing enthusiasm for the promotion of the academic study of Scotland and the celebration and spread of Scotland's culture throughout Canada is vital to us.

And what a year it has been! Hardly had I found my bearings after Air Transat brought my family and I over the pond, than we were all aboard the tall ship, The Empire Sandy, for a splendid trip around Lake Ontario. It was a marvelous day, with much singing and dancing, kilts and scotch pies. When I board that ship again this year on Sunday September 4th, for the 14th Annual Scottish Sailing Cruise, it will bring back happy memories of my first meeting with the Scottish Studies family,

Since then, I have met countless Canadian-Scots and friends of the Program at the events I have had the privilege of being invited to. My first St. Andrew's dinner and talk took place in Petrolia at the invitation of Ralph Ferguson. The generosity of his hospitality - and the loan of a kilt when mine was still in Edinburgh - was more than any man could expect! St. Andrews took me to Ayrshire and the Bums Suppers which really are such magnificent setpiece occasions in our calendar. I was fortunate enough to be invited to give the immortal memory to the Bard at Fergus, and the Granite Club and Hart House in Toronto. What fun each event was with great piping and dramatic addresses to the haggis and its honest sonsie face. Casa Loma was the sumptuous setting for the annual Scot of the Year dinner in April and I was honoured to join in the congratulations to Douglas Gibson as a most deserving recipient. The summer is dominated by the Gathering of the Clans throughout Ontario. The Dryden family gathering saw me with the "graveyard slot", following on after hockey-legend-turned-politician Ken

Dryden, and immediately prior to the family baseball game in the beautiful sunshine. Historians know their place when faced with such competition - even my daughter was inviting me from the front row "to hurry up"!

The Fergus Highland Games, Clan MacMillan, and Clan Fergusson are to come, with the Scottish Studies Program represented at a number of other Clan Gatherings by our graduate students. The Oor Club at the Bow and Arrow pub and the Sir Walter Scott Society, both in Toronto, also invited me to talk about my research in what were wonderfully relaxed and welcoming venues. The Halton Region Burns Society and the St Andrew's Society of Toronto have both extended an invitation to address their groups in October.

The academic side of my activities started, of course, with the Fall Colloquium when the President of the University, Alastair Summerlee, officially "opened" the Chair and thanked the Scottish Studies Foundation for its magnificent donation. My inaugural lecture that day was a very proud moment. It was then, and is today, such an honour to be the first holder of the The Scottish Studies Foundation Chair. Our academic activities this year continued into the spring with our Family History Day at Knox College in Toronto. This annual event is a great occasion, bringing historians and new researchers together with family historians and those fascinated by all aspects of genealogy.

Our next Fall Colloquium takes place at Rozanski Hall at the University of Guelph on Saturday October 1st 2005. It will be a special day with the winner of the Frank Watson Prize for the best book in Scottish History and the announcement of important new scholarships. We will also mark the 700th anniversary of the death of Scotland's greatest patriot, Sir William Wallace. Wallace was the subject of my plenary address at the Scottish Medieval and Renaissance Language and Literature Conference at Brock University in July and I will be joining in the commemorative events on Wallace at the site of his most famous victory in Stirling in September.



Dr. Graeme Morton

As befits my role as Professor, I have also managed to fit some teaching into my calendar. In all my courses, it is pleasing to report that I have been deeply impressed with the quality of students enrolled in the Scottish Studies Program at the University of Guelph. They benefit from the travel grants we have been able to establish from your donations and from the extensive library and archival collections we have built up, and continue to build up, again from your donations. It was greatly encouraging to see our two most recent PhD graduates, Dr. Janay Nugent and Dr. Rob Falconer, go straight into academic teaching positions, and so help spread knowledge of Scottish History to the next generation of students in Canada. I am continuing to research my latest textbook on nineteenth-century Scotland, due out with Edinburgh University Press late next year, as well as conducting research into Miss Jane Porter's best selling romance on William Wallace, entitled *The Scottish Chiefs*, which was first published in 1810. To my delight, both these projects require me to make frequent return visits to Scotland!

It has, then, been a remarkable year. I look forward to seeing you again at our various events throughout the year. Please do come, we always have fun. And you know that we value your contribution - it makes a real difference. Thank you once again for your support.

Yours aye,

Tartan Day Dinner 2005



Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Hon. James K. Bartleman with SSF Governor John McMillan



Alistair MacLeod and his wife, Anita
(We hope up to No Great Mischief!)



The "Head Table" is piped in



Casa Loma's "Library" makes for a very elegant dining room



Alice Munro -- Canada's best-loved writer of short stories



SSF Vice-President Nola Crewe reads the Grace



Our resident tenor -- SSF Governor David Campbell



A round of applause for Douglas Gibson as Alice Munro leads him to the podium



David Hunter presents Douglas Gibson with the Scot of the Year 2005 Award in the form of a huge Scots Quaich - donated by the Scottish Company



Time now for the raffle and Alice Munro hands the lucky winner's ticket to our MC - the Rev. Malcolm Sinclair



And the happy winner is ...John Hutchinson.. with two tickets to Scotland courtesy of Zoom Air



Dancing to "The Gay Gordons"



SSF Governor David Campbell can dance and sing!



Meanwhile the guests look on!

Duncan Pryde

Last of the fur traders

Duncan Pryde, an 18-year-old orphan, ex-merchant-seaman, and disgruntled factory worker left Glasgow for Canada to try his hand at fur trading. He became so absorbed in this new life that his next ten years were spent living with Eskimos. He immersed himself in their society, even in its most intimate aspects: hunting, shamanism, wife-exchange and blood feuds. His record of these years is not only a great adventure-story, but an unrivalled record of a way-of-life which, along with the igloo, has now entirely disappeared.

Tourists visiting the town of Cowes on England's Isle of Wight may have come across a shop boasting the name of The Pryde of Cowes. At first glance, there is nothing unusual about it. It has the look of a typical British shop selling newspapers, magazines and novelty items plus a neat range of fishing tackle and other odds and sods of interest to anglers. However, until a few years ago it belonged to one of the most interesting characters to arrive in Canada from Scotland in the 1950s - a fellow by the name of Duncan Pryde. Nowadays, Duncan's name is no longer familiar to many Canadians - or Scots for that matter -- but if Glasgow filmmaker Arabella Croft has anything to do with it, that could all change. Ms Croft is in fact Duncan's niece and is hoping to make a documentary about the life and times of her late uncle.

Duncan was born in Scotland but when his parents died when he was very young, he was separated from his brothers and sisters and raised in various orphanages including the famous Aberlour orphanage near the River Spey.

By 1952 at the age of 15, Duncan was out on his own and his initial plan was for a career at sea. He signed up with the British merchant navy and no doubt would have remained there had it not been for an eye injury that three years later rendered him



*Aberlour Orphanage
Duncan Pryde's childhood home shown here
during a 1950's visit from H.R.H. Princess Margaret*

unfit for service.

Out of work but with a hankering for the adventurous life, he spotted a newspaper ad placed by the Hudson's Bay Company: "Fur traders wanted for the far north." The ad specifically asked for single, ambitious, self-reliant young men, with a sense of adventure and the ability to withstand a life of isolation and hardship. The reward for all of this was \$135 Canadian a month.

Duncan jumped at the offer and was quickly accepted. His first three years were spent in the northern regions of Ontario and Manitoba, during which time he was able to put his natural gift for linguistics to good use by very quickly mastering the subtleties of the Cree language.

It was the call of Canada's Arctic that had inspired Duncan to move from Scotland but it was not until 1958 that he was successful in obtaining a post there. His first job was at Baker Lake and from there he progressed to more and more isolated locations - first Spence Bay, then Perry Island in 1961, and finally Bathurst Inlet in 1965.

Once in the Arctic, Duncan immersed himself in the language of the Inuit. His grasp of Inuit dialects was phenomenal, and his life's ambition was to compile the definitive dictionary of the Inuit language as spoken in the Central Arctic.

Not content to remain at his isolated posts, Duncan mastered the art of dogteam travel, and travelled extensively throughout the region.

In 1966, Duncan was elected to the Territorial Council, as the

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories was known at the time.



*The cover of a 1976 Hungarian edition of
Duncan Pryde's controversial book
"Nunaga: My Land, My Country"*

This was the first time that representatives were elected from the Inuit area of the Northwest Territories that we now know as Nunavut. In 1967 he was re-elected for a three-year term.

The council met twice a year in those days. And Duncan devoted his attention to issues such as hunting and game laws that were most important to the Inuit whom he represented. He was the first to propose the sports hunting of polar bears as a way of bringing extra dollars into Inuit communities.

In 1969, Duncan married Gina Blondin in Yellowknife. They had one daughter, Fiona. Two years later, Duncan's fame transcended the north when he published *Nunaga: My Land, My Country* - an account of his life in the Arctic in which he tells of his discovery of a remote and primitive way of life to which, astonishingly, he found that he easily adapted.

One of his first posts was isolated Perry Island, then a refuge of fugitives from the law, where most of the male Eskimos were caught up in blood feuds. Pryde describes how, after a night-long fight, almost to the death, with the community bully, he won the respect and affection of these tough people, and came to share their life completely - all their concerns, joys and tribulations. He earned a degree of acceptance by the Eskimos that is granted to few white men.

Although extremely controversial, the book was an instant bestseller and was later translated into a number of languages. Nunaga was his only book but the publicity associated with it resulted in him being the only person from the Canadian north to ever have his picture on the cover of Time magazine.

Duncan's and Gina's marriage ended a few years after the book was published, and Duncan left for Alaska where he taught Eskimo languages at the fledgling Inupiat University in Point Barrow, an institution set up with Alaskan land claims money.

One person who knew Duncan well during his years up north is Nunavut resident Kenn Harper, a teacher, development officer, historian, linguist, and businessman who has lived in the Arctic for over thirty years in Inuit communities in the Baffin Region and in Qaanaaq, Greenland.

Writing in the Nunatsiaq News in 1997 Harper recalled that ... "Those of us non-Inuit who have studied the Inuktitut language and achieved some level of competence in it had long recognized Duncan for the linguistic genius that he was. (In addition to many dialects of the Inuit languages, Cree, and some Slavey and Dogrib, Duncan spoke Scots Gaelic, Italian, German, Hindi and a smattering of a number of other languages.) It was astounding that this man with an elementary school education had taught himself the principles of scientific linguistics."

Indeed, Duncan's love of language research was so intense that when he ran afoul of the university administration and was fired from his teaching post, he stayed on as janitor in order not to leave the academic environment.



Duncan Pryde's shop in Cowes, Isle of Wight – a far cry from the Arctic!

For a number of years Duncan had many false starts at his life-long ambition, the writing of an Inuktitut dictionary, but diversions and the need make a living always got in the way. So much so that "Duncan's A's" became a buzz word in Canadian Inuktitut studies, for despite many attempts, he had never managed to get past the letter "A."

A few years later, however, Duncan left Alaska and for many years nobody in Canada seemed to know what had become of him, many assuming him dead.

It was John MacDonald of Igloolik, who had first met Duncan in Baker Lake in 1959 who eventually tracked him down. It turned out he was living in the town of Cowes, on England's Isle of Wight, had a skipper's ticket as a yachtsman, and had remarried.

The man who had billed himself as "the Pryde of the Arctic" now ran a little shop called "Pryde of Cowes" and by coincidence lived at number 6 Arctic Road!

In conjunction with Kenn Harper, MacDonald also tracked down a trunk full of Duncan's memorabilia and language notes, which everyone, including Duncan, assumed had been sent to the dump after the breakup of his earlier marriage.

The trunk was found in his old friend Bill Carpenter's garage in Yellowknife. MacDonald made copies of all the language material sending the originals to Duncan, and copies to the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre to be held as an invaluable resource for future students of Central Arctic dialects.

In the early 1990s, Duncan was stricken with cancer and for a while, chemotherapy put it into remission, but Duncan was no longer as robust as before.

John MacDonald convinced him to buy a computer, and begin the achievement of his dream, the Inuit dictionary. On Duncan's behalf, Kenn Harper negotiated a grant with Arctic College for financial support for the first volume the letter "A" which was completed in 1997. A multi-dialectal comparison with examples of usage, it ran in excess of 280 pages.

That same year Duncan received a letter from Michael Fortescue at the Institute for Eskimologi, University of Copenhagen, perhaps the foremost linguist specializing in Eskimo languages today. Michael, a rigorous critic who knew Duncan only



Igloos near Baker Lake in the 1950's

through reputation, wrote to congratulate him on the excellent work in the first volume of his dictionary. Like many who lack a formal education, Duncan appreciated this recognition of his accomplishments, especially from such an authority in the field of Eskimo linguistics.

Kenn Harper recalls visiting Duncan and his wife, Dawn at their home on Arctic Road. With John MacDonald, they sat up late, drinking rum as they had done in the past, talking about the old days. Over and over again the conversation returned to Duncan's passion - the Inuit language.

Duncan was hard at work on the second volume of his dictionary when his cancer returned and he suffered a stroke. Irreverent and feisty to the end, Duncan complained to his doctors that he needed four more years for his dictionary. But that was not to be.

Sadly, there will probably never be another linguist to match Duncan Pryde in the Canadian Arctic. John Sperry, the former Bishop of the Arctic and an accomplished linguist himself once remarked... "We will not see his like again. I always felt humbled by his knowledge."

Many thanks to Kenn Harper for the preparation of this article - Ed.

"There will never be a job such as the one which enticed me as a dreamy-eyed young man all the way from Scotland with romantic notions in my otherwise empty head. There will never be another fur trader in the old tradition, just as there will never again be an Eskimo in the old image."

Duncan Pryde

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