

# DESTINATIONS

ISSUE 43

THE EXPATRIATE FAMILY MAGAZINE



## Focus on Scotland

- Experiencing the old and the new
- Get out your dancing shoes
- Aberdeen - city of opportunities
- World Heritage Sites

## DESTINATIONS

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#### Highland Games

photo:  
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## Letter from the Editor

I am told that in Scotland you go to work, you leave work and you enjoy life, which sounds like a great attitude to me, and is probably why the recent Shell People Survey showed that expats in Aberdeen were more likely to report a favourable work life balance than expats in other locations. Reading the stories in this issue, it's not hard to see why - whether it is the rugged and beautiful scenery, as described in Kirsty John's story 'The Glories of Lochnager' on page ten; or the range of opportunities available to partners and spouses as described by Nicole van Voorst Vader in her article 'Aberdeen - city of opportunities' on page eight - Scotland seems to be universally loved as an expat destination.

As a "non-Brit" in Europe, it has been interesting for me to observe how strong the Scottish sense of nationhood is. Whether they ever become fully independent or not (and current polls suggest a majority of Scots are against full independence) there is no doubt that Scotland is as culturally distinct from England as Portugal is from Spain.

Scotland, like many other countries, has its traditional icons, which seem to define it (think bagpipes, haggis, whisky, and kilts). But of course, as with Holland's tulips, clogs and windmills, there is so much more to Scotland than the touristic clichés, as I hope our stories in this issue will show...although there are a few articles on the traditional icons as well!

Finally, in the general section, there are also some interesting and informative pieces. Laura Westbury profiles another notable previous Shell expat, world famous management guru Charles Handy. Handy started out as an expat in South East Asia, where not long after arriving he presented his own, unsolicited, reorganisation plan for his part of Shell!

We have some environmental tips from Gianna Minton in 'Responsible guests - the green way', and we also welcome another contribution from former Destinations editor Sharon Montgomery. This time on life post Shell - in this piece, she candidly discusses what it is like to have your husband at home full time - an article some of us may want to cut out and keep for future reference in years to come.

In the next issue we focus on Moscow, the good, the bad and the traffic jams. Send us in your tales.

### Important follow-up: 'Oman to Holland by car'

In the last edition we published an article from Mark Koper who returned overland to The Netherlands from Oman, travelling through Saudi Arabia. What was not included in the article was a description of the extensive preparations that Mark made for the trip, including the evaluation of safety & security aspects and the mitigating actions taken to reduce the risks to an acceptable level. We would like to remind readers that crossing Saudi Arabia can be hazardous as the recent shooting of French tourists near Medina demonstrated. Shell strongly advises against taking that risk. However, individuals are referred to the travel advice provided by their respective Embassies in Saudi Arabia when considering travelling to the country on a private basis.

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# Experiencing the old and the new

By Marie Linklater

Living and working in the Aberdeen area gives you an opportunity to experience the new and the old. It is a place that has some of the most technologically advanced industries in the world, but which still demonstrates traditional values and behaviours. In Aberdeen the pace of life can be fast or slow.

Established in 1179 by 'William the Lion' the town has grown into the capital city of North East Scotland, quoted recently as "the UK's most competitive city after London and amongst the top three cities in terms of knowledge-based businesses".

You may struggle when you first arrive to understand the local English dialect called 'Doric', where boys and girls are called "loons and quines" and where the traditional greeting when meeting someone is "fit lyke?" (how are you?). But it's amazing how many expatriates I meet, who have stayed in Aberdeen, that still recognise and understand what my husband and I are saying when we converse in our 'mother tongue'. [See Lisa Smith's story on page 5 to find out more about the Doric dialect].

For those who like outdoor pursuits the area offers many possibilities. You don't have to go to the Alps to ski, just take an easy two-hour drive and you can be on the slopes. Skiing all day and still getting home for dinner is quite possible. In summer, when the snow has melted, you can visit those same mountains and go hill-walking or climbing.

Here in Scotland's Castle and Whisky Country you will find some of Europe's best coastline, visually stunning, and with clean air and clear seawater. Tiny villages, picturesque harbours and 150 miles (250 km) of unspoilt beaches line much of the coast. Sea air and the company of the area's wildlife - from dolphins to seals and seabirds - make the Grampian coastline an invigorating and uplifting destination.



National Nature Reserves include St Cyrus, and north of Aberdeen the Sands of Forvie - home to Britain's highest population of breeding Eider ducks! The UK's largest resident population of blue-nosed dolphins can put on a show anywhere between Fraserburgh and Findhorn, and there are Ospreys fishing the mouth of the River Spey, plus lots of seabird colonies in the many places from Stonehaven in the south right round to Macduff on the Moray Firth Coast. One of the best ways to discover the delights of this unique coastline is to explore the miles of spectacular cliffs and sandy beaches by taking to the sign posted footpaths or by hiring a bike.

Some people say that the best part of the Coastal Trail is experiencing the local seafood. This harvest of the sea represents a thriving international industry, with much of the produce ending up in restaurants across the UK and mainland Europe, but with enough top-grade fish and shellfish staying locally to provide inspiration for Scotland's own chefs.

There's strong visitor opinion that the Coastal Trail is worth taking for the food alone. If you visit, do not miss the excellent fish-and-chip shops for seafood at its simplest, and for a gourmet meal on a budget, check out the little shops attached to the many processors and smoke-houses along the coast, especially Macduff and Buckie. These places represent excellent value for monkfish, lemon sole, scallops, lobster and scampi. They say you haven't lived until you've seen and smelled traditional fish smoking.

While everyone and anyone might refer to Aberdeen as the Granite City, those in the know prefer the more poetic title, Silver City by the Golden Sands. For Aberdeen is a city that sparkles. Who could possibly mind the rain when it causes those very granite creations which some would deride as gloomy to actually glitter magically in the sunlight? And daylight is something you'll find plenty of in summer - up to 18 hours of glorious light, staving off Seasonal Affective Disorder and keeping vitamin D stores high. In winter some might say the city becomes darker than the devil's armpit, but then there's the Northern Lights - the real thing that is, not the song!

Aberdonians can appear rather worthy, reticent and cautious on first meeting in a 21st century which demands instant gratification. But scratch the granite surface and there's a heart of carefully accumulated gold and an attractive self-mocking irony. Aberdonians know who they are, they're canny, not mean, and they can fully understand why so many expats love their posting here and why some never leave!



# Fou's yer dous?

By Lisa Smith

**Lisa is a Kiwi who has had postings to Holland, Dubai, Scotland, and Malaysia; has been repatriated twice; and has now popped up back in Aberdeen... for the second time. She was editor of Destinations in the 90s, and now works for Outpost Aberdeen. When not in the Outpost office, Lisa can be found in the school library or out in her garden, where her dream of having a prolific vegetable patch is starting to take shape.**



The official languages of Scotland are English and Gaelic, and yet here in Aberdeen there is another language – Doric. Doric is the North Eastern dialect of old Scots. Scots shares a Germanic background with its sister language English, but it also has smatterings of Gaelic, French, Dutch and Old Norse to liven it up. As a dialect, Doric doesn't yet have official language status, but an estimated 30,000 people use it, and it is very much alive in the ordinary world of today's Aberdeen. So "slip on yer baffies, quines and loons", and we'll give you a quick tour (for the uninitiated out there, that means "put your slippers on ladies and gents") ...

The first phrase you might hear when you arrive at the airport is "Fit like?" (How are you?). The correct response would be "nae bad" (not bad). You might also be asked "fou's yer dous?" (how are your pigeons?). This is also an enquiry to see how you are, and your responses could be "nae bad", or "chavin' awa" (working away).

Greetings now successfully over, you're in the taxi. You might hear "the wean's a bonny wee tyke, gin we git thare the bairn'll be sleepin'" (you child is a good one, but by the time that we get there the small one will be asleep). Just smile politely and say "I dinnae ken..." (I don't know ...). You might

be asked "far aboots ye fae?" (where are you from?), "fit ye deen in Aiberdeen?" (what are you doing in Aberdeen?), and hopefully you'll not hear "A cannae mind where ye gan, gan ye doon i toon?" (I can't remember where you're going, is it into the town centre?). The best responses are to divert attention by introducing the favourite topic of conversation here in Aberdeen, the weather. "It's gey fonzie wither" (it's a really grey murky day), or "it's poorin doon a rain" (it's really raining hard) are probably your best options.

Next stop – supermarket. Now, dinnae fash yersel (don't worry), here is a brief list of the major words you'll need:

tatties	potatoes
neeps	turnips
sybies	spring onions
kail	cabbage
gigot	lamb chops
cebbok	cheese
tea pokies	tea bags
stoorsooker pokes	vacuum cleaner bags

And this one would be good for the next office Christmas party:

## Santa's comin doon the Lum

by: Sheena Blackhall

Tune: Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush

*Santa's climmin doon the lum x3 (Santa's coming down the chimney)*

*On a caal an frosty mornin (on a cold and frosty morning)*

*Sna is birlin roon an roon x3 (Snow is whirling round and round)*

*Dunt her feet tae warm yer taes x3 (Stamp your feet to warm your toes)*

*Clap yer hans tae keep them hett x3 (Clap your hands to keep them hot)*

*Shakk the snaaflakes frae yer heid x3 (Shake the snowflakes from your head)*

As the American poet, Sabine Ulibarri stated in 1972, "The language, the Word, carries within it the history, the culture, the traditions, the very life of a people, the flesh. Language is people. We cannot conceive of a people without a language, or a language without a people. The two are one and the same. To know one is to know the other."

# Get out your dancing shoes

Sally Cooper

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If you are moving to Scotland, get out your dancing shoes, and get ready to meet your neighbors at a local Ceilidh (KAY-lee). Or go a step further and learn Scottish Country Dancing, and Reeling.

A Ceilidh can be different things to different people. The word comes from the Gaelic, meaning a 'visit' and originally meant just that. It can also mean a 'house party', a 'concert' or more usually an evening of 'informal traditional Scottish dancing to informal music', and can include singing and even story telling. For many, a local Ceilidh is the highlight of the family calendar.



## Do you own a kilt?

You can rent a kilt wherever you are in the world, but why not have one made? There are over 2800 tartans to choose from. There is a special tartan for the English, and the influx of Poles has led to the creation of a Polish tartan based on the Polish flag. And what about under your kilt? British Army regulations stipulate that underclothes be worn when dancing and at any time ladies are in the Mess, at other times it is discretionary. But while underwear is optional, an outfit is not complete without shoes: lace-up ghillie brogues. Although now worn for dancing and social events only, ghillie brogues originated as a shoe that would drain water, due to punctured holes in the leather upper. They are believed to be the origin of what we now know as the classic 'brogue' shoe.

Sally and her family lived in Aberdeen Scotland for 11 years. Her husband, Graham, worked for Shell and Sally owned and managed a children's nursery (an unplanned but much loved opportunity). Sally is now Hague based with her husband and three children, Emma (18), Sam (16) and Catherine (12), and is manager for Outpost The Hague.

Sally says Scottish country dancing is a must for all those looking for a social foothold into local Scottish society, and that there is no better way to meet your neighbours than at a local Ceilidh.

Sometimes it is a celebration or a local fundraiser, a wedding or even a Burns supper. A good Ceilidh allows people of all ages to enjoy great dancing in a memorable party atmosphere. The Family Ceilidh is a favorite, often organised by the local school or church. Participants and onlookers are delighted when parents are whirled around the floor by their children! You can dance, chat, and if you so wish ... take a wee break at the bar and watch the others step the night away.

When we lived in Scotland there were weekly lessons in the Town Hall and at the local sports club, and they were great fun. My main tip would be to take your first dancing steps with someone who knows the ropes. By the end of the evening you will be hooked!

Scottish Country Dancing can be quite different to an informal Ceilidh. The dances are performed by sets of three, four or five couples arranged in either lines or in a square. Partners change, and the dance sequence is repeated enough times to bring everyone back to their starting positions. At its highest level it can be extremely athletic and provides a good alternative to a trip to the gym. Scottish Country Dancing is a key skill to have in your suitcase, as it is popular and uniform around the world. On most expatriate assignments you will find a contingent of Scottish people organising a St Andrews Society or a Burns supper.

Reeling is probably the closest to how Scottish dances were performed 150 years ago. It is popular amongst the aristocracy and in the military, and especially in Aberdeenshire. The dancing is more rolling and less ballet-like than Scottish Country dancing. You will find a Strathspey and Reel Society in most cities and at many universities. Reeling can be very formal, but one 16 year old I know still likes to dance in his kilt and rugby shirt and provide us with a display of press-ups in the middle of a reel!

Ceilidhs, Scottish Country Dancing, and Reeling all involve good company, fun times, great music, and having a laugh while you swing and jig with friends on the dance floor. So take your life in your hands and have a go!

# You play the bagpipes? But you're not Scottish?



**Stuart is Scottish, born in Aberdeen a few weeks after his family returned from a Shell posting in Brunei (1984-89). He has been in The Hague for five years and is now in Year 13 at the British School of the Netherlands. Stuart plans to study International Relations at St Andrews University from September this year, and as well as piping he is interested in current affairs, ancient history and military history and he collects Warmhammer figures.**



If you're wandering around The Hague and happen to come across a small group of musicians called The Hague Highland Pipe Band in the middle of a performance, you'd be forgiven for assuming they were a gang of die-hard ex-patriot Scots stubbornly enforcing their proud musical heritage upon the bewildered locals. So you'd be surprised to learn that, except for the young man with the beard, they're all Dutch.

Having been a member of the band for five years, I've discovered that many Dutch people decided to take up this very un-Dutch instrument (and also the drums) because they heard a piper or pipe band in Scotland somewhere, and liked it so much they decided to have a go themselves. That they are able to do this is a tribute to the extent of the Scottish diaspora, for wherever Scots have travelled, they have left their much loved (or, equally, much-hated) national instrument behind. The highland bagpipes are played in almost every country in the world, useful for a Shell employee who either already plays or wishes to learn. This is best demonstrated by the great spectacle of the World Pipe Band Championships held in Glasgow every August, the most important piping event of the year. The names of some of the best bands say it all: Alberta Caledonia, Los Angeles Scottish Society, Western Australia Police. If you're lucky you'll spot some of the more exotic finds: the Tokyo Pipe Band, or the more conspicuously dressed bands of the Pakistani and Omani armies.

## *Stuart Milne*

A brief overview for those not familiar with Scottish music: the highland bagpipe (the most famous kind, of which there are many types) is played either unaccompanied, or with other traditional (or, nowadays, modern) instruments, or as part of a pipe band. A pipe band normally consists of 6-25 pipers, 3-10 side (snare) drummers, 1-6 tenors (like mini-bass) drummers and one bass drummer. The music for the highland bagpipe largely comes from the Scottish repertoire, but is also influenced by other piping traditions from around the world, such as from Ireland, Brittany and Eastern Europe.

The piping scene tends to keep to itself, but despite its low-key nature the pipes have recently made inroads into the wider public mindset. The Simon Fraser University Pipe Band from Canada became the first band to play in New York's Carnegie Hall (1998) and at the Sydney Opera House (2001). Pop fans may know that Madonna has her own personal piper, Edinburgh lawyer Lorne Cousins, who featured in her Re-Invention tour in 2004.

The Hague Highland Pipe Band celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. We no longer compete, but can be seen at public events, weddings, parties and parades. The band is now under the capable leadership of Pipe Major, Marcel Adriaanse, and long-time Leading Drummer, Gert van der Zwan. We are able to offer lessons to aspiring learners, and would especially welcome any experienced players (we could use some drummers right now) who already live in Holland or are coming in the near future. If The Hague is too far away from you, there are plenty of other bands in Holland.

In general, if you want to learn the pipes or drums, or if you play already and would like to join a band, just do some basic research; there could well be a pipe band in your area. For myself, being part of the band has not only provided a musical outlet but I have also been to places I would never have been otherwise and have had the opportunity to be part of the Dutch community - an experience I have valued greatly.

So the next time you see a piper or pipe band somewhere in the world, ask them where they're from. You might be surprised.