

Explore Stirling, and the Trossachs Tourism Newsletter

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- **Explore Stirling & Trossachs visitor guides** now can be downloaded free of charge from the Internet. (Pg2)
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Explore Stirling and Area Guide with Maps.



What have we changed from last year?

Free web download visitor guides.

First of all the guides are now available off our web site www.explore-stirling.com which is part of our www.explorescotland.net network. Visitors can download the visitor guides free of charge.

We have taken your comments from the questionnaires and addressed the issues raised on the map and in the guide. Thank you very much for your comments, they are important to us and do allow us to continue to know what you think and develop what we do to meet your guests needs.

I would also like to thank the **Stirling Tourist Association** and the **Bridge of Allan Merchants Association** for their continued support. We are keen to work with others to make the cake bigger for us all and give the visitor to the area a better deal.

You will all be aware that **Historic Scotland** have a policy of refusing to support local guides such as our own on the grounds that they produce their own in house brochures. They say advertising their properties in other guides is duplication. This policy has led to various e-mails with the Chief Executive of Historic Scotland last year and again this year. (Please read them in full in this newsletter). Surely Historic Scotland have a local responsibility, as they do not own these properties, they should be running them with the local area’s interests in mind. They do not see this.

Stirling Tourism Group – because of my communications with John Graham, the Chief Executive of Historic Scotland last year, we have set up a Stirling Tourism group. This group has met over the winter months, purely to improve the communications between the tourism businesses in the area for the benefit of everyone, businesses and visitors alike. This has led to a Whats On event list for the area, which will hopefully be posted on our web site and others in the area in the near future. Also a leaflet exchange day (see separate report with details) at the Smith Art Gallery and Museum. Please attend and meet Historic Scotland’s Fiona Docherty

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Head of Visitor Services as well as the National Trust, and many others who will be there.

Once again thank you all for your support and please let us have your comments on the questionnaires we have enclosed. They will only take a few minutes to complete and will allow us all to be better informed on your views.

Explore The Trossachs Guide with Maps.



Free web download visitor guides.

First of all the guides are now available off our web site www.explore-callander.com which is part of our www.explorescotland.net network. Visitors can download the visitor guides free of charge.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ken and Alice Dunn, for their continued support and advice. Ken made me aware of the importance of the significant remains from the last ice age in the Trossachs area. He has helped check my wording. You will see a couple of entries on this and discover where these huge glaciers ended 10,000 years ago.

We have reduced the size of the Callander map so as to get more information round it. We have checked the information on the Trossachs, Aberfoyle and Killin maps.

Please use the questionnaires to let us know what you think and help us with any new ideas. We want these guides to be a useful tool in keeping people in the area longer. Your comments and feedback are important to us.

The new Explore Scotland accommodation guides

What makes them different to what is already on offer?

Last year we asked you whether you felt there was scope for a new accommodation guide.

1 in 5 of you kindly filled in our questionnaire - Thank you!

9 out of 10 of the questionnaires said that you felt there was scope for a new accommodation guide.

So we came up with a three-part package;

Web site

More and more people are making their decisions based on information on the Internet. Booking and researching holidays. Most Internet indicators show that currently booking/shopping on line is growing at 30+% per year.

The Explore Scotland network of web sites is currently running at 300,000 unique visitors a year. This has grown from nothing a year ago. Our web sites were built from scratch this time last year and through last summer. The rate of growth is some 25% month on month. This will flatten out at some point, but we will continue to help the traffic to grow by adding more content to the site. We have added an Edinburgh web site www.explore-edinburgh.co.uk over the winter

1. You will now see accommodation entries appearing on each location of our web site, specific to that part of the country.

2. These entries are also part of our Explore Scotland *free* download guides for the people to print off at home on their own computers. This means

- Your area's *free* Explore visitor guide with maps, is now downloaded with a list of accommodation providers in the area. Research shows 1. that one member of the family/part/group will carry out the research for the holiday, reporting back to the others. 2. People like to have a hard copy in their hand, to discuss and show the others. Nothing better than our Explore guides with a list of things to do and see in the area with a choice of accommodation.

3. Explore accommodation guides.

From our dealings with businesses across Scotland, we know that there is a need for an accommodation guide not just from your survey return, but also when we speak to owners of pubs, restaurants and attractions. We are told they are often asked about accommodation and it would be useful to hand out an accommodation guide, which would save them time and effort.

We have printed 100,000 and ask if you would take a few to give to your guests when they leave, to help them plan their next night's stay.

Please will let us know what you think of our guides by filling in your comments on this year's questionnaire. We have built our business on the feedback of your comments over the last 10 years, your views are important to us.

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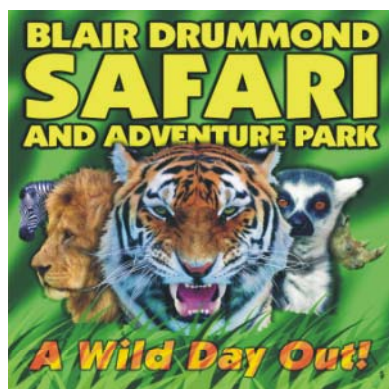
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Blair Drummond Safari and Adventure Park



Opening times 25th March to 23rd October 2006
Open daily 10am to 5.30pm. Last admission 4.30pm
Prices: Adults £9.50, children (3-14) £6, Senior Citizens £6,
Special Needs £6. Children under 3 go free.

Your Ticket will admit you to the following attractions.

- Wild Animal Reserves.
- Pet's Farm.
- Sea Lion Shows.
- Giant Astraglide.
- Adventure Play Area with Pirate Ship & Buried Treasure.
- Boat Trip to Chimp Island.
- Pedal Boats.
- Bird Of Prey Centre & Displays.
- 'Flying Fox'.
- Picnic and Barbeque

Other attractions

- Restaurant and Bar Facilities
- Souvenir and Gift Shops

- Face-Painting
- Amusement Arcade
- Bouncy Castle
- Dodgem Cars

A Safari Bus is available for visitors without transport or in a convertible, motorbikes and pickup trucks, which are not permitted in the reserves.

Exit 10 off M9 towards Doune on the A84. 45 minutes from Edinburgh and Glasgow.

For more information contact: Telephone: 01786 841 456 Fax: 01786 841 491

e-mail: enquires@blairdrummond.com website: www.blairdrummond.com

Stirling Tourism Exchange

This is the first event to be held in the Stirling/Trossachs area (I am aware of the Killin exchange). It is your chance to find out what is happening and pick up information.

You will also have the chance to meet Fiona Docherty, Head of Historic Scotland's visitor services, also the National Trust for Scotland, Wallace Monument, and many more. Speak to them face to face, let them know your views.

Tuesday 9th May 2006

What? An informal networking event — the perfect opportunity to promote your business and to make sure you are aware of everything happening in tourism in the Stirling area.

Where? The Lecture Theatre.
The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum,
Dumbarton Road, Stirling FK8 2RQ.
(Telephone - 01786 471917)

When? From 12.00 noon until 3.00pm

How? Just pop along at any time - you can pick up literature from Stirling's tourism businesses - and you can make sure they know about the services you provide. You can also reserve display space to promote your business — just call Margaret on (01786) 471917 to book your slot. (Spaces are confirmed on payment of a £10 deposit — fully refundable on 9th May).

Who? **Everyone** who is involved in tourism in Stirling is welcome.

- Light Meals, Snacks and Refreshments available from The Coffee Shop >>

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Stirling Tourism Exchange has been organised by organisations directly involved in tourism in the city — including Historic Scotland, The National Trust for Scotland, Stirling District Tourism, City Sightseeing, VisitScotland, Bridge of Allan Merchants Association, and Stirling Council.



TULLIBARDINE DISTILLERY

Tullibardine
1488

Under the name “1488”, the year King James IV celebrated his coronation and purchased beer from the brewery which was situated where the distillery is today, Tullibardine Distillery is part of one of the best out-of-town retail locations in central Scotland. Our neighbours include Baxters, Tiso and Theme Interiors antiques.

Unforgettable guided tours of the distillery take half an hour, large groups would be split into smaller groups (some foreign language handouts available) and connoisseur tours for small groups only, last two hours with the vastly experienced Distillery Manager, the centre also includes a ‘nosing and tasting’ room, restaurant (Café 1488) and retail shop, open seven days.

Café 1488 (licensed) prides itself on using the finest, freshest local produce to create their menu. Everything is freshly made on the premises by our Chefs – from homemade soups, baked potatoes, toasted Paninis and dishes of the day to home baking, chutneys, horseradish sauce, coleslaw and jam.

You may wish to consider a tour and meal package - group rates offered, please ask our Visitor Centre Team for further details.

The 1488 shop provides a range of unique gifts, books and cards as well as excellent wines, champagne, port, our own Whisky Ale and of course the complete range of Tullibardine Single Highland Malt Whisky.

Nestled at the foot of the Ochil Hills – Scotland’s most accessible distillery being close to Gleneagles and 45 minutes drive north of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

IT’S A TERRIFIC EXPERIENCE!

Tullibardine Distillery, Stirling Street, Blackford, Perthshire PH4 1QG.

Tel: +44 (0)1764 682252 www.tullibardine.com

Stirling District Tourism

A special welcome for visitors to Stirling...

Stirling District Tourism will be welcoming visitors from all across the globe again in 2006 at two of the city’s favourite visitor attractions – **The National Wallace Monument** and **Stirling Old Town Jail**.

A busy season in 2005 at The National Wallace Monument included special events commemorating the 700th anniversary of the execution of Scotland’s national hero – and due to the popularity of these live dramatic performances they are being repeated this year during **An Encounter with Wallace**,

between **18th and 28th August**. Each day during this period costumed actors will re-enact scenes from Wallace’s life – with the dramatic setting of the Monument as the backdrop. Traditional Scottish music will enhance the performances, which capture the emotion of such moments as Wallace reflecting on his life, as he stands by the grave of Marion, his wife.

In the heart of the city The **Old Town Jail** still fascinates and intrigues visitors of all ages – providing a scary reminder of how justice was dispensed back in Victorian days. Live prison tours are especially popular with visitors – and they’re available every day through the summer period. When they’re not busily searching for clues in the prison’s **Beastie Hunt**, children can enjoy a brand new **Audio Tour** with special tales and stories told by **Jinkie** the flea, and **Nipsy** the rat, two of the jail’s smallest residents!

How can we help you?

Stirling District Tourism works closely with accommodation providers in Stirling and the surrounding area. If you would like to talk about promotional opportunities which can improve the quality of the visit experience for your guests, then contact Ken Thomson at The Old Town Jail on (01786) 455069 – or (07817) 715113. Stirling District Tourism will be participating in the **Stirling Tourism Exchange** at **The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum** on **9th May** – the perfect chance to make sure you’re up to date with everything that’s happening in the city.

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Holibility Scotland Ltd

Information for Disabled and Elderly Holidaymakers

Holibility Scotland Ltd was set up to address the fact that there is not a guide for holiday accommodation which caters for the needs of disabled and elderly holidaymakers. Disabled people have different requirements, some are wheel chair bound others are not, but still need certain facilities.

HSL are able to give holidaymakers to Scotland detailed, factual information on over 100 different hotels, guest houses, bed & breakfasts and self catering accommodations.

HSL are always looking for more holiday accommodations to represent. If you feel your accommodation is suitable for disabled or elderly holidaymakers please contact us to arrange a survey visit. This visit only costs £10 to help off set some of our costs but could increase your income especially if you have spent time and money on disabled modifications.

For disabled or elderly holidaymakers specific information can be an advantage in making holidays a success. Perhaps they need special parking, a ground floor room, a wide doorway to accommodate a wheelchair, handrails in the bathroom, a roll-in shower or even a special diet or modified meal times?

Our booklets, with all this and much more information, start at the low price of £9.95 for a booklet with only category 1 accommodations, £12.95 for category 1 & 2 accommodations, £14.95 for all categories in the northern half of Scotland and £14.95 for all categories in the southern half.

- Category 1 - suitable for wheelchair dependant
- Category 2 - limited mobility required
- Category 3 – fairly easy access but mobility required

For more information about Holibility Scotland Ltd contact us at

Holibility Scotland Ltd
103 Crammond Place
PERTH. PH1 3BW
Telephone 01738 622365
Mobile 07906 305924
E-mail holibility.scotland@tesco.net
Web site www.holibility-scotland.com

JAZZ UP THE TROSSACHS

This is the official slogan that will be used to advertise and promote Callander's first major Jazz and Blues Festival which will take place later this year through-out the town on Friday 29th, Saturday 30th and Sunday 1st, October 2006.

The purpose of this Festival is to spotlight the town, create visitor interest, generate business revenue and stage something



special which will put Callander on the map and in the future can be extended to the Trossachs area as a whole.

The Festival Committee has been set up and will be taken forward as a constituted, community led, not for profit organisation which has been formed by a group of local business people and musicians.

The organisers have already approached a considerable number of Callander based business's to participate as host venues for all the musical performances, which will be the essence of the 2006 Festival.

There has been a superbly positive response to our search for suitable venues with agreed support and participation from every part of Callander and surrounding areas.

The organising committee have a huge task ahead in terms of planning, funding, promoting and staging this major Callander event not just for 2006 but for many years to come as an annual event.

We will combine all our resources and utilise the many areas of practical experience and expertise to make this festival a resounding success story for Callander and the Trossachs but we need the help and the backing of the whole community behind this exciting venture for the town.

There will be regular updates on progress and the Festival Website will shortly be up and running as will the Festival Office based at Ancaster Business Centre, Callander.

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Please address any enquiries to this address or contact 07801 537760 for further information.

The Dalgair House Hotel



-has now undergone a full refurbishment program and we are now knocking on the door of being a 3 star establishment. We have a full entertainment program with live music every Friday and Sunday and the ever popular Herbie Hogg's World

Famous Karaoke every Saturday. Once a month we also have a theme night where dressing up can earn you a prize! All our rooms are en-suite with both bath and shower facilities including our two family rooms. Reid's Restaurant on site has gained a great reputation after being refurbished last year and has seen a large increase in both informal dining and function trade including weddings, bus parties and high teas.



The Byre Inn our sister establishment where our dinner bed and breakfast guests can also take their dinners, has gone from strength to strength. After being awarded top 1,000 restaurants in the UK in 2005 they are currently down to the last 8 in the best informal dining in the Forth Valley. Set between two lochs the Byre Inn has a full children's license and a new large decked beer garden. "A little heaven on earth" as one customer described it.

HAMILTON TOY COLLECTION



As usual, we have all been working flat-out since the door closed on the last customer in November 2005. Major works (still in progress as I write) are the revised and new, respectively, cases for 'O' gauge (the old and larger one) and 'OO' gauge (Dublo the smaller and slightly more recent one) model railways which Jo (painting), Ian (joinery) and Chris (everything else) have been sweating over.

Meanwhile, Patsy has been introducing dolls and teddies, purchased since the cases were last open to their new companions and surroundings. In addition, an influx of Action Men has enabled her to display yet more uniforms and equipment.

Turning to the larger scales, a 'new' 1950s Triang pedal Contractors' truck has been prised away from grandson Callum and squee-ee-zed into the front shop "taster" case, while a 1914 Beech horse has strayed into the Edwardian nursery. Catriona and John have pursued a policy of conservatism in the Sci-Fi room with only minor adjustments. Philip has utilised the Winter break to re-arrange a couple of

cases in order to show off the boxes of '60s and '70s plastic figures which he had for Christmas, set out a full display of Scottish regiments (in miniature!) and to complete our display of the famous Swopet Wars of the Roses knights.

All in all, we should be ready to open again on April 1st to prove, once again, that there is always something new to see at the H.T.C. Accommodation providers and fellow professionals are cordially invited to enjoy a free viewing of the Collection, on production of this "spiel" during normal opening hours. (Tuesday to Sunday 12.30 to 4.30 pm)

Killin Heritage Society



In the words of a Victorian tourist, "Killin is the most extraordinary collection of extraordinary scenery in Scotland – unlike everything else in the country – a perfect picture gallery in itself since you cannot move three yards without meeting a new landscape". Watching the tumbling waters of the Falls of Dochart, with the towering Tarmachan Ridge as the backdrop, you could not help but agree.

Killin stands in a strategic position on the southern boundary of the ancient land of Alban and man has enjoyed its situation for thousands of years. Today it is the "heritage" centre of the Breadalbane area of the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park and the Breadalbane Folklore Centre is the starting point for a tour of the village and surrounding countryside.

A new "Breadalbane" leaflet gives you an insight into this special area with Killin at the very heart of it. The Killin

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Walks leaflet has suggestions for exploring the locality, something for all abilities including a new Heritage Trail. History is around every corner - St. Fillan, Clan MacNab, the mythical Fingal, Finlarig Castle, Moirlanich Longhouse (NTS) to name but a few - and all the time you are surrounded by spectacular views of the majestic landscape.

Once you have visited Killin, nestling at the foot of the Ben Lawers mountain range noted for its unique alpine flora (NTS visitor centre), you will realise that it is a place to return to time and time again. A place to explore, take in the views, absorb the history, relax and enjoy the peace and tranquillity that can be found a few steps from the village centre.

By Mrs. Gillean M Ford, Chairman KHS, Killin

The McLaren Leisure Centre in Callander



Offers a huge range of mostly indoor activities (tennis outdoors). Opening hours, charges and other details are available on our website www.mclarenleisurecentre.co.uk or pick up a brochure at reception. We are situated half a km from Callander centre, on the A81 to Glasgow

What's new for 2006

The Dance Studio that opened in January has given the opportunity for a diverse range of exercise and dance classes as well as other activities that we were not able to accommodate previously. Exercise classes such as step aerobics and high energy circuits, and circuits for the less fit older person, dance classes for pre school children, jazz dance for older children, ballet workshops and soon to come line dancing. Also in the dance studio, Tai-Chi, Taekwando, Shoto Budo karate and yoga classes. In addition, the dance studio is being used by the Blood Transfusion Service for blood collection on certain dates throughout the year.

See the website for details of these activities and further activities that will be announced as they develop.

In and around the pool

As well as recreational swimming, there swimming lesson classes at all levels and weekend fun sessions for children, the sauna and steam room in the pool area are a great way to relax

Other facilities

Workout in the fitness suite with a range of cardiovascular and resistance equipment, book a tennis court outside or a badminton court indoors, play indoor bowls in the 4 rink bowling hall. Try climbing on the indoor climbing wall, you can book an instructor to keep you safe while you climb.

Other services include birthday parties with an activity such as climbing, football, bouncy castle or swimming, and you bring your own party food, music CD's etc, and we provide a party room.

Summer camps where we look after your children from morning till late afternoon, each day the children will be able to participate in a wide variety of organised activities.

Whatever the weather we offer a great time, in wet weather we believe that we offer a fantastic opportunity for activity indoors.

Nature's Corner

PETS...(and all healthy people) WELCOMEwhere else other than at NATURE'S CORNER !!



Now in its 5th year, Nature's Corner for Healthy People and Pet Care, now has a new range of products and services, including a newly extended range of Pet Products.

In addition, we now also give you the opportunity to PURCHASE ON-LINE some of our main stock items from our HEALTHCARE department and also introducing a trial period for some of our smaller pet health items.

Firstly, in the Pet Product department, in case you have forgotten to pack any important items for your special pet or your 4 legged friend when you took them on holiday with you, or should you wish to reward them with a special holiday present should you have not, then come and see some of our exciting fashion accessories, toys and gifts in addition to our range of food for those on special diets ..not forgetting the more conventional foodstuffs.

In addition, should you wish to consult Simon and his ever helpful staff about any of your own personal health care issues whilst you are away from home, and which may still be unresolved using traditional medicine, feel free to drop in and ask for advice.

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We are open 7 days a week for that personal attention and individual choice. Should you have some special dietary requirement which a supermarket cannot fulfill, come see for yourself our extensive supply of organic foods, diabetic or gluten-free foods. If at all possible, we may be able to make a special order in smaller quantities from the supplier...just for you. This often cannot be achieved at the major supermarkets. GOOD NEWS FOR SPRING 2006 - see us and shop on-line www.natures-corner.com

After leaving Callander for home, or at any time in the future, don't forget you can now shop on-line at Nature's Corner for those items you may have difficulty finding elsewhere. Also enjoy the added convenience of shopping from home. Although in its early stages our on-line shopping may be limited to some 30-40 items, feel free to e-mail or telephone us if the item(s) you wish is not on-line we will be happy to despatch them to your home...or indeed to a friend should you wish to treat them to a gift. How special that would make them feel !!

So do look us up for a healthier choice and way of life on www.natures-corner.com

Alternatively, e-mail us on health@natures-corner.com or simply telephone us on 01877 330200.....or just pop in at the 7 day week shop at 2a Cross Street, Callander. Simon, Linda, Mary or Shirley will be delighted to see you.

In addition, visit Gavin or Iain at our neighbouring shop HONEY ETCETERA, also at 2 Cross Street, www.getyourhoneyhere.com (Tel 01877 339033) and marvel at Gavin's amazing supply of local, Scottish and International Honeys and with some other tempting new ideas and treats in the pipeline. Do try some of our newly available and absolutely delicious Honey Ice Cream, and also our excellent good choice of good quality Manuka Honey. Soon to come...perhaps even a dish or two from our unusual choice of ready made meals should you be in Callander on a self catering holiday...or just to be enjoyed at any time!! Put simply, why not try something special and quite different at our shops ...and with the personal touches which matter so much these days.

After all...you are on holiday. Go on...treat yourself. Enjoy!!

Nature's Corner
2a Cross Street
Callander
Tel/Fax 01877 330200
e-mail : health@natures-corner.com
www.natures-corner.com

Poppies Hotel



John and Susan martin have now just entered their third year at poppies hotel and restaurant, after having nearly completed all the bedroom and bathroom refurbishment of their nine bedrooms.

Poppies restaurant has gone from strength to strength, and is now one of the most established quality eating-houses in the Trossachs area.

Special theme events are now a regular part of the calendar, and include Italian, French, Spanish, south American/ salsa, jazz, murder mystery, ladies lunches and gourmet nights. You can see current special events by visiting www.poppieshotel.com

Chef Eddie McAnally has been with poppies from day 1, as has almost all the staff of the hotel, this helps ensure the consistency of quality of service and recognises the repeat clients and their specific needs instantly.

Poppies a la carte and speciality dishes are changing frequently to reflect the freshest and seasonality of our wonderful Scottish larder. The very popular "early evening" menu, 6-7pm will continue this year due to the great success in 2005. The price remains too.....from £12.50!! must be the best value for miles.

The garden will also be a haven for lunch goers, basking in the hot Callander sun, sipping at a cool glass of chardonnay and watching the day go by.

Rogersons, The Clearing Shop, Main Street Callander, established since April 1997 is set in this small village surrounded by the beautiful Trossachs.

The Clearing Shop has the reputation of stocking over 4000 pairs of high quality branded footwear for ladies and gents including, Ecco, Rieker, Vandal, Gabor and many more reputable names.

The shop sells branded lines that have been in stock in their famous Ro; reduced price of up to 50 e with lots of stock bo especially for Clearan on offers on selected brands with fantastic reductions.



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Rogersons pride themselves on offering a unique high quality one to one customer service along with a friendly atmosphere led by the shop manager Christine Edmiston and her team.

You can be sure your visit here will be a memorable one for all of your Imelda Marcus's out there, you will not leave this shop empty handed and you certainly will look forward to your return visit.

Look out for our other Clearing Shops;
Galashiels; 38-40 High Street
Largs; 13 Main Street
Oban; 66-68 George Street.



'Characters Sketches of Old Callander'

This popular book was first published in 1910, it was reprinted in 1938 and has been out of print for a number of years.

There are twenty five essays and sketches, fourteen of these dealing with local characters, the rest with topics important to a Scottish rural community in the mid to late Victorian era before the advent of the motor car.

In the present day this book is well worth a read, to remind us of the diversity of Scottish characters of the past - a welcome antidote to the tendency towards standardisation in the late 20th century.

The book is now being reprinted with anticipated launch date for mid summer.

'A terminal moraine'

I can hear you all saying what is that? Well this area of Scotland has some of the best evidence in Europe of the last ice age 10,000 years ago. Students from London and Western Europe make trips here when they are studying Geomorphology (study of the earth) to see the glacial



evidence.

On the road to Doune and Stirling, just outside Callander, about 100 yards beyond the Gart Caravan site's entrance the road passes through some raised ground. If you stop at the first lay-by in the road on the left before you get to the Kelty Cravan park turning, you will find a gate and a public foot path. A short walk, which is suitable for those with wheel chairs too, you will come to the terminal moraine.

A terminal moraine is the deposits of material, stones and other debris left by one of those huge glaciers we see on TV. These deposits are left at the very end of the glacier, the glacier's snout, where the glacier comes to an end and melts away.

Eskers or Kames - Just along the road back in to Callander you will come to a public foot path, beside the Roman Camp Hotel that says Roman Camp Walk. Here again you will find more evidence left by these massive glaciers 10,000 years ago. They are Eskers or Kames (winding ridges) a feature of the melting edge of ice sheets, left by streams that run under the glacier, such as found in northern Sweden and Finland today. As the ice melts under the glacier, a deposit of material is left forming these ridges. Mistakenly in the past they were thought to be a Roman camp, hence today's names. (Callander Walks & Fort Trails leaflet has a walk through this area and is well worth purchasing.)

Historic Scotland

a year later, how are they doing?

"Historic Scotland is the largest provider of visitor attractions in Scotland."

Some of you may recall my letter last year, to John Graham, Historic Scotland's Chief Executive, encouraging Historic Scotland to become a team player in the tourism industry. I thought I would record where we are now.

To cut a long story short, as they say. I will summarise;

John Graham was true to his word and did respond to my comments, the conclusion was for me to have a meeting with Fiona Docherty, Head of Historic Scotland Visitor Services and Business Development. I asked that other businesses in the Stirling area participate. I am pleased to report that we now have an informal group for the Stirling area, which includes Historic Scotland, The National Trust for Scotland, the other key attractions plus the Stirling Tourist Association and Bridge of Allan Merchants etc.

This is only for the Stirling area – but what about the other areas of Scotland I hear some of you saying. I am not aware of any particular action on the part of Historic Scotland in other areas of Scotland, but this does not mean nothing has happened. May be I am just not aware of them.

I still believe Historic Scotland is not a team player as far as Tourism is concerned. It proudly boasts in its Corporate Plan 2005/2008 that *"Historic Scotland is the largest provider*

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of visitor attractions in Scotland.” I believe they have still to learn how to market these with others and not in isolation, which is their current strategy. Here I give a few examples why I say this;

I attended a local area tourism meeting where one of the topics raised was an on line web camera for their area’s web site. Surprise, surprise, Historic Scotland were refusing to let them site the web cam on to and from one of the properties it manages. Surely Historic Scotland should be running the attractions with local people/businesses in mind, as well as its own short-term internal goals.

I turned up to a leaflet exchange day in one of the tourist areas organised by VisitScotland, in March 2006 to hear that Historic Scotland had refused a small business to display an ‘A’ frame promoting their historic walking tours. These tours are around two of Historic Scotland managed paying properties in an old area of one of our cities. The reason given by Historic Scotland was, *“It didn’t benefit their attraction.”*

I was talking to the head of one of VisitScotland’s area hubs and expressing my disappointment with Historic Scotland to find that VisitScotland had similar views and frustrations.

We received an e-mail from an organisation in the Stirling area which said

“.....we are concerned that the (Explore Stirling) guide in its current form loses much credibility because of the lack of entries on key historic attractions such as Cambuskenneth Abbey, Castle Campbell, Doune Castle and especially Stirling Castle. I understand that these omissions relate to your previous differences with Historic Scotland and their infuriating disinclination to support valuable promotional efforts at local level. Nonetheless, it is ultimately a disservice to our visitors to overlook such important local attractions and we would very much wish to see this matter addressed appropriately.”

Jenny Hess, Historic Scotland Head of Marketing and Policy in her letter to me dated 9th January says; *“We have increased the investment in our own print work and its distribution in recent years and so must continue to avoid duplication.”* and *“Our main concern is the effective use of our budget and we have had to make some fairly tough decisions in the area of print. The demand for our own print has risen considerably this year”*

Jenny Hess’s letter of the 6th February reiterated the point, that print outwith their own, is seen as duplication *“... buying into a range of additional print work represents a duplication effort and expense”*

No matter what Historic Scotland has to say, it comes down to a matter of priorities and obviously Historic Scotland do not see it as important to have their managed properties in local area guides along side the other area’s attractions. As one Forest Enterprise official lamented to me, *“If only we had a*

fraction of Historic Scotland’s marketing budget” and added *“they spend a large proportion of it on TV advertising.”* I do not know how true this is, but it gives us a perspective on how Historic Scotland is viewed by others.

I am open to any ideas that any of you may have on how best to encourage Historic Scotland to see themselves as others see them and hopefully make changes so they are a team player. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require to discuss or clarify any of these issues.

Finally I note that one of Historic Scotland’s performance monitoring criteria is *“Percentage of positive press coverage for Properties in Care”* This reinforces the perception of people outside Government run bodies that the only way to be listened to is to hit the press. I think this is a poor indictment of our public services.

James Rattray – Explore Scotland Ltd, 01796 473335 e-mail james@explorescotland.net

Mr Graham’s response is as follows:-

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your observations on our performance. You raise two issues:- how far we work with others in marketing the historic environment and which publications we use for our advertising. I do not think that on either issue your observations give a balanced picture.

On the first issue, I am in no doubt that that the most powerful contribution we can make to tourism in Scotland is by maintaining and enhancing the standards experienced by visitors at our properties, and by maximising the number of visitors we attract to them. That must be our primary objective. Many of our properties are major attractions, which bring substantial benefits to their local area, and the local economy would suffer if the quality of what we offer declined or we failed to market it properly.

Our corporate plan does however also commit us to collaborating closely with others in marketing the wider historic environment. We do this at national level through regular contact with, in particular, the National Trust for Scotland, the Historic Houses Association and Scottish Natural Heritage. We have a concordat with SNH, we are finalising one with the NTS and we have established a regular cycle of meetings with the HHA. We are developing closer links with the Forestry Commission. All these bodies welcome the input we make, and share our view that all our properties can benefit from this kind of collaboration.

We are also very active at local level. As I am sure you are aware, we have a strong regional network. Our Visitor Services Team is broken down into three regions: North, Central and South. Each region is then further divided into three districts, each with a local District Visitor Services

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Manager. Part of their responsibilities is to play an active role within at least one tourism group locally.

I have attached as an appendix a list of each of our Regional and District Visitor Services Managers, along with their contact details and the groups on which we are currently represented. I do hope that this will be of interest to your members. I have also included other organisations in which we play a part, many of which are designed to attract visitors from overseas to Scotland for the benefit of Scottish tourism as a whole. This list does not include the many informal partnerships that also exist throughout the country, with organisations such as local Tourist Information Centres, local guiding associations, community councils, heritage trusts and chambers of commerce.

I acknowledge that there may be areas where we are not represented at present. If you or your members feel that you would welcome Historic Scotland representation on a local tourism group, please contact Fiona Docherty, our Head of Visitor Services & Business Development in the first instance. Fiona can be contacted on 0131 668 8614 or fiona.docherty@scotland.gsi.gov.uk. I am sure that she will encourage her team to attend where practicable.

Turning to the second issue you raise, our decisions on how and where we advertise are, as you would expect, guided by our careful assessment of impact and value for money. This year our plans include a modest TV campaign (the first for five years) along with leaflet and poster distribution. Naturally this means that we do not advertise in every tourism publication, and that we have to disappoint some publishers, including your own organisation. We are content that we have made the right choices in promoting our properties for the coming year.

Thank you once again for your continued interest in Historic Scotland. I wish all your members success over the coming summer season.

John Graham, Chief Executive, 30 March 2006

In response back to Mr Graham,

Thank you for your response. I did not expect you to say that you agreed with my observations or comments. They are given to try and encourage you as Historic Scotland to see yourselves as others do on the outside.

A big organisation such as yours must bump in to all kinds of organisations just in the process of existing and carrying out your day to day activities. Your response while listing many of these organisations fails to take on the points I am trying to present to you.

To imply that everything is OK with Historic Scotland, just does not ring true to the many comments and observations I hear. I give you an example, in paragraph 3 you say “*We do*

this at national level through regular contact with, in particular, the National Trust for Scotland,” A National Trust for Scotland area manager in November told me that he was keen to try to work more closely with Historic Scotland and was finding it hard to do so, or words to that effect. So to imply everything is fine, just does not add up. Unless it has all been rectified since November.

Many of the attractions Historic Scotland have the privilege to operate on behalf of the nation, are attractions in their own right, whether or not marketed by Historic Scotland, people would still flock to them.

What was the phrase they used to describe the Metropolitan Police “Institutional racism”, I am sorry but Historic Scotland is “Institutionally blinkered” It operates in a world of its own.

Yes my comments can be dismissed as being made by some one with a commercial interest. We do produce over half a million-visitor guides each year across Scotland. As a result I meet many many tourist businesses each year, more than most other people I suspect operating in the tourism industry. My comments are passed to you with out malice but to try and encourage you to see how you are seen on the outside.

Why don't you rise to the challenge and find a way of harnessing constructive criticisms to improve Historic Scotland, rather than defending it?

Raising the Standard.

This is from Historic Scotland's own web site, we thought you might be interested.

Historic Scotland is committed to providing services of the highest quality to our customers and actively seeks their views. If you have a suggestion or complaint, please speak to any member of our staff. Raising The Standard sets out what our customers can expect from Historic Scotland, it also gives details of how to make a complaint or suggestion.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002, which came into effect on 23 October 2002, provides a simple and effective means for the public to make complaints about maladministration and service delivery arising from the activities of public authorities in Scotland.

A complaint may be made by an aggrieved person (or their representative including an MSP or local councillor) within 12 months of the day after the aggrieved person had notice of the matter complained of [The Ombudsman](#) can be contacted at the following address:

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
23 Walker Street, Edinburgh EH3 7HX
T: 0870 011 5378 F: 0870 011 5379

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Visit Scotland.com

*What are the facts behind
VisitScotland.com?*

Company Structure

visitscotland.com is a private limited company whose major shareholder is global IT solutions company, Atos Origin. VisitScotland is also a shareholder.

Company Values

Dedication – We care about meeting the expectations of customers, partners and colleagues

Learning – We view ourselves as a learning organisation

Passion – We are enthusiastic ambassadors for Scotland

Entrepreneurial – An innovative organisation that proactively identifies opportunities

Trust – We seek to be honest, reliable and open in all that we do

Team Work – We believe in a one-team approach

Marco Truffelli, Chief Executive

Marco joined visitscotland.com in July 2004 with a driving ambition to grow and develop visitscotland.com. A former advisor to the Scottish Tourist Board, Marco has a long career in hotels and was formerly General Manager of Edinburgh's Channings hotel before progressing to Managing Director of the Town House Company a collection of luxury hotels with an annual turnover in excess of £5m. Tel: 01506 832

Key Statistics

Over 1 million calls since launch

190,000 bookings secured since launch

Generated £25 million worth of bookings

17,000 tourism suppliers registered

6,000 calls received per week

3,000 emails received per week

200,000 web users each month

London Visitor Centre set up with direct access to booking engine

Over 100 Tourist Information Centres with direct access to visitscotland.com booking engine

Funding

VisitScotland is funded by the Education Department at the Scottish Executive. The two other main public agencies involved in Scottish tourism, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise, are funded through the Scottish Executive's Department of Enterprise and Lifelong Learning.

19th December 2005

If you have any ideas or articles you would like to see included in our annual Explore newsletter, please let us know. We welcome ideas on how to improve what we are doing in our small way.