

Evacuation of St. Kilda, 29 August 1930 (photo courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland)

Scottish Heritage USA

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RETROSPECTIVE: THE EVACUATION OF ST. KILDA

Under the care of the National Trust for Scotland, St. Kilda is an isolated archipelago situated 40 miles west-northwest of North Uist in the North Atlantic Ocean. It contains the westernmost islands of the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. The largest island is Hirta, whose sea cliffs are the highest in the United Kingdom. Three other islands (Dùn, Soay and Boreray) were also used for grazing and seabird hunting. The world's largest colony of gannets nests on Boreray and the sea stacks.

There are numerous theories proposed for the origin of the name *Kilda*, first recorded in the late 16th century, since there are no known saints by this name. The full name *St Kilda* (first appeared on a Dutch 1666 nautical map) might be derived from the Norse words *sunt kelda* (meaning "sweet wellwater"), or from a mistaken Dutch assumption that the spring *Tobar Childa* was dedicated to a saint (*Tobar Childa* consisting of the Scottish Gaelic and Norse words for well, i.e., "well well"). Scottish writer Martin Martin, who visited the archipelago in 1697, believed the name Kilda was "taken from one Kilder", who lived there. Whatever the theory, rest assured there are probably many more.

The islands' human heritage includes numerous unique architectural features from the historic and prehistoric periods, although the earliest written records of island life date from the Late Middle Ages. Permanent habitation on the islands possibly extends back two millennia, the population probably never exceeding 180 (and certainly no more than 100 after 1851). The medieval village on Hirta was rebuilt in the

19th century, but illnesses brought by increased tourism, reliance on imports as a source of supplies and the upheaval of the First World War contributed to the island's decline. Feelings of isolation intensified as those most capable of the physically demanding work of living on the island departed to seek employment on the mainland and emigrated to Australia. Ultimately the remaining population petitioned the government for resettlement on the mainland and the last 36 residents were evacuated from Hirta, the only inhabited island, on 29 August 1930. The last of the native St Kildans, Rachel Johnson, evacuated at age 8, died in April 2016 at the age of 93.

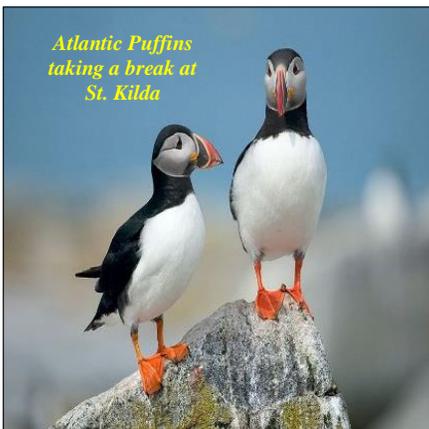
The islands house a unique form of stone structure known as *cleitean*. A *cleit* is a stone storage hut or bothy; while many still exist, they are slowly falling into disrepair. There are known to be 1,260 *cleitean* on Hirta and a further 170 on the other group islands. Currently, the only year-round residents are military personnel; a variety of conservation workers including the National Trust personnel. Volunteers and scientists spend time there in the summer months.



The last 36 residents of Hirta waiting to be evacuated.



The streets of Hirta 1886— note the stone huts



Atlantic Puffins taking a break at St. Kilda

Article and Pictures compliments of The National Trust for Scotland USA and Wikipedia



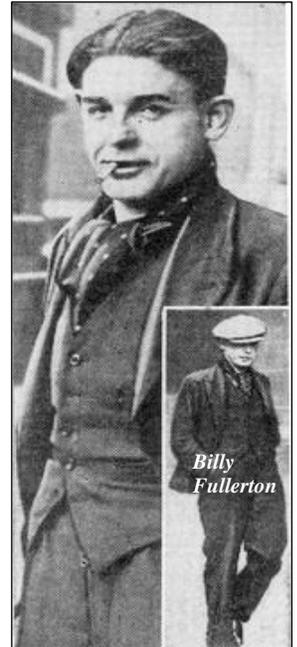
THE BRIGTON BILLY BOYS – A MATCH FOR THE PEAKY BLINDERS?



Harry "Baby-faced Harry" Fowles a well-known Peaky Blinder (circa 1904)

The Brighton Billy Boys were the biggest and most powerful gang in Glasgow during the 1920s and 1930s. They took their name from the Dutch Protestant monarch William of Orange ('King Billy'), whose victory at the battle of the Boyne in 1690 had secured Protestant rule in England and Scotland, as well as Ireland. The 'Billies' recruited Protestant youths from across Bridgeton ('*Brigton*') and surrounding districts in Glasgow's East End. Most joined in their late teens. Many stayed active in the gang into their twenties and thirties. At their peak in the late 1920s the Billy Boys numbered 800, making them the largest gang in Britain by far. They were divided into sections 40-strong, each with its own leader. They in turn took their orders from Billy Fullerton, the gang's 'chief'. Billy was a street fighting

man. On leaving school, he found work in a shipyard. However, in common with many young men of his generation, he experienced repeated bouts of unemployment in his teens. He gained a following and became adept at marshalling the Billy Boys in activities such as church parades and religious processions, using them as an opportunity to march his gang through what were identified as Catholic thoroughfares. In court, members of the Billy Boys claimed that the gang had been formed to protect those marching in the annual parades of the Orange Order ('Orange Walks'), held each July. The processionists' noisy return to their home districts took them past the gathering places of Catholic gangs like the Kent Star, who viewed the arrival of the Billy Boys at the head of the marchers as an affront. The clashes that followed were the stuff of legend. On one occasion, Ross Prete, 'leader-off' of the Kent Star, was reputedly thrown head-first through a plate-glass window. Fullerton also played to the newspapers and was fond of giving interviews that portrayed himself as a local celebrity, someone who had left behind the world of the gangs and '*gone straight*'. As well as marshalling parades, Billy Fullerton also acted as the gang's 'secretary' – a full-time job, as he explained in 1932: "I had to make plans for fights, look after the funds, and attend to a hundred and one other matters connected to the gang and its members."



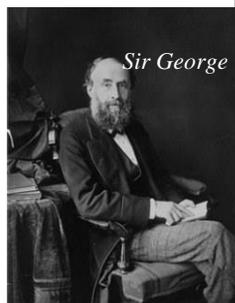
Billy Fullerton

Peaky Blinders, now a hit television program, may be a fictional story of the Birmingham underworld but it is based on the very real existence of a gang by the same name based in the Midlands in the late nineteenth century. As a group, the Peaky Blinders entered the sphere of popular culture not only through their criminal dealings but also through their notable dress sense and style. The members of the group adopted a signature style which included a peaked flat cap (*largely believed to be the origins of their name*), leather boots, waistcoats, tailored jackets and silk scarves. The criminal gang had acquired a uniform as well as a hierarchy.

The Billy Boys made their debut in series 5 of Peaky Blinders and we are likely to see more of them in the upcoming season!



HAPPY BIRTHDAY SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS – YMCA FOUNDER

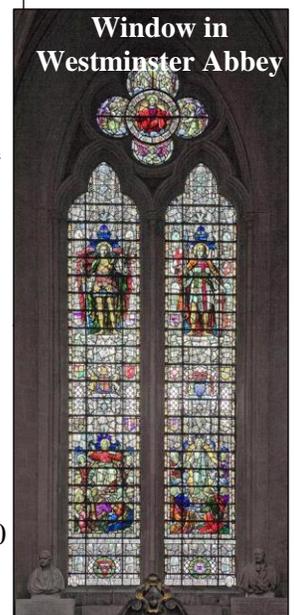


Sir George

Williams was born on a farm in Dulverton, Somerset, England on 11 October 1841. He went to London and worked as an apprentice at Hitchcock & Rogers, a draper's shop and converted to a member of the Kings Weigh House Congregational Church. He eventually became the sole owner of the firm and began a life of philanthropy. He was appalled by the terrible conditions in London for young working men, so

on 6 June 1844, Williams gathered a group of 11 friends to create a place that would not tempt young men into sin, thus establishing the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). In 1873, the YMCA in Montreal, (*the first YMCA in North America*) inaugurated evening courses in vocational and general education. This system was known as the YMCA's Educational Program, later the Montreal YMCA Schools eventually becoming the George Williams University. In 1974 the university merged with Loyola College to form Concordia University which kept the George Williams Campus.

Sir George died on 6 November 1905. His funeral and burial took place at St. Paul's Cathedral with 2,600 people in attendance. He was commemorated by a stained-glass window in the south isle of the nave of Westminster Abbey "In memory of the services rendered through the YMCA during the great war 1914-1918 and its founder Sir George Williams".



Window in Westminster Abbey

GAELIC SCHOOLS, THE RESURGENCE OF LANGUAGE?

The number of children learning through the Celtic language is rising as parents look at the schools' academic results.

With celebrations of Scotland's Gaelic culture in full swing, a resurgence of interest in the Celtic language is seeing growing numbers of parents enrolling their children in schools that teach in Gaelic, even though many families have no ties to the culture.

Scottish Heritage is bringing our area up to speed by sponsoring Scottish Gaelic at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and working toward establishing a department of Scottish Gaelic Studies at UNC-CH!



ST. KILDA LETTER-BOAT

LETTERS POSTED IN A SMALL HANDCRAFTED MAILBOAT TO MARK 80 YEARS SINCE THE EVACUATION OF THE REMOTE ISLANDS OF ST KILDA HAVE BEEN FOUND 10 YEARS LATER BY CHILDREN IN NORWAY!

To mark the 80th anniversary of the evacuation, National Trust for Scotland (NTS) archaeologist *Ian McHardy* built a small waterproof boat based on the traditional St Kilda mailboats which islanders launched into the sea in the hope they would be picked up by passing ships or reach more populated places. The boat, which contained postcards to seven people including NTS patron the Prince of Wales, and Norman John Gillies who



NTS archaeologist Ian McHardy with the letter-boat he crafted

left St Kilda aged five, was launched into the sea from St Kilda on **August 29, 2010**. Almost a decade later, for children found the boat more than 1,000 miles away at the beach on Andoya, the northernmost island in the Vesteralen archipelago off northern Norway in April.

The cards were sent to NTS in July then were sent on, with the cards finally reaching their destinations in September. The card for Mr Gillies was sent to his son John Gillies. "My dad died in 2013 but he would have been really chuffed to have received it. For me to get it all these years later, it's quite touching really. Even though he left when he was five he had very vivid memories of the island."

Mr. Gillies paternal great-uncle was the 14-year-old schoolboy, Alexander Gillies Ferguson, who launched the 1885 mailboat that is said to have started the St Kildan tradition.

Mr. McHardy made the boat out of kiln-dried pine and the postcards were placed in a plastic bag in the hold which was sealed with silicon and painted shut. He said: "I always suspected and hoped it would turn up eventually but I had no idea where and it was so long that I had kind of given up hope of it being found. "I was just really excited to find out it had travelled all the way to the north of Norway."

In his reply to his postcard, the Prince of Wales said: "I was delighted to receive your postcard and fascinated to hear about its decade-long journey to reach me, via the Arctic Circle no less. "In such a fast-moving world it is touching to know that the tradition of a simple mailboat from the remote island of St Kilda can safely travel so far. "I have never forgotten my visit to this amazing archipelago in 1971 and I so look forward to returning one day, not only to remind myself of its rugged beauty, but also its extraordinary history and breathtaking bird life. "As patron of the National Trust for Scotland, I am immensely grateful to all those who work to preserve our heritage through caring for special places like St Kilda."

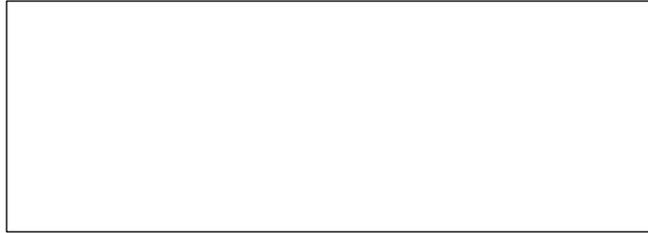
"It was nice the connection that people on a small remote island in Norway found the boat that had come from a small remote island in Scotland."



Children who found the boat with the letters



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SCOTTISH KNOWLEDGE QUIZ

1. Under which name did Sir Walter Scott originally publish?
2. What is the motto of Aberdeen?
3. Who painted the portrait of Robert Burns that hangs in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery?
4. What is celebrated on 25 January?
5. In which city do the World Pipe Band Championships take place each summer?
6. What was Shrove Tuesday once known as in Scotland?
7. Where is King Henry VIII buried? (*Hint-if you read last month's newsletter, the answer is there.*)
8. Which great Scot was sentenced to the galleys in 1547?
9. Where would you find the campsite or fort named the "Wallace House"?
10. When was J.M. Barrie born?

Bonus: Which MacDuff performed the second crowning of Robert the Bruce and where did the coronation take place?

Just in case you want to know what last month's flapjack recipe was supposed to look like, check out this picture



Flowers of the Forest

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of:

Ann Larson, October 2019, FL
Duncan MacDonald, August 2020.
MA

RARE BLACK ALPACA BORN IN SCOTLAND

The miniature calf named Tia was born at Auchingarrich Wildlife Park in Perthshire, Scotland. Tia was born 31 August and is only taking milk right now although she will start nibbling grass over the next few weeks. Tia is the first alpaca born at the park after Lola arrived just more than a year ago. Alpacas are valued



Tia and mom Lola



for their fur, with rarest being black and white. They are native to South America but have been in the UK since the 1980's. There are approximately 14,000 of them in country and they can cost from \$650 for a young male to more than \$2,500 for a female of breeding age. Tia is worth over \$5,000 because of her rarity!



BONUS: Isabella MacDuff at Scone Abbey

1. The Author of Waverley
2. 'Bon Accord'
3. Alexander Naysmith
4. Robert Burns Birthday
5. Glasgow
6. Fasern's Fen
7. The Quire at St. George's Chapel in Windsor Castle
8. John Knox
9. Dumfries & Galloway council area
10. 9 May 1860