

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!



Scots tales for a new generation

TWO NEW books of Scottish tales are published this month, marking Scotland's year of Homecoming - and 'The Northern Scot' this week has a copy of each to give away in another free-to-enter competition for readers.

In 'Celtic Sea Stories', author George MacPherson brings to life a stunning collection of maritime myths and legends.

From kings and fairies to mermaids and witches, every tale explores a different aspect of a forgotten way of life. Before schools and television, storytelling was the only way to entertain, impart wisdom and explain the inexplicable.

"The sea is such a vital character in the lives of the Scottish people, and its importance should be preserved through storytelling," says MacPherson. "Passing on a story is a duty and a privilege - their

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magic should not be forgotten."

George MacPherson, who lives on the Isle of Skye, began collecting stories at the age of three, following the oral traditions handed down through his family, and has become one of the best known traditional storytellers in Scotland.

The second collection of stories, 'Tales of Loch Ness', is a mixture of ancient folk stories and more recent historical anecdotes. Loch Ness may be best known for its monster, but more recently the campaign to have the area named a UNESCO World Heritage Site and its use as a film location for Bollywood have brought about new interest in the area.

Renowned storyteller Stuart

McHardy weaves the landscape of the area into the body of his tales. A writer, musician, folklorist and poet, McHardy has published several books and has held posts as diverse as director of the Scots Language Resource Centre and president of the Pictish Arts Society.

For your chance to win a copy of both books, published by Luath Press priced £5.99 each, simply name the island that is home to author George MacPherson.

Send your answer on a postcard to: 'Books Competition', 'The Northern Scot', 74-76 South Street, Elgin IV30 1JG, to arrive no later than noon next Wednesday, July 15. Don't forget to include your name, address and daytime telephone number.

Alternatively, e-mail the same information to: j.scott@northern-scot.co.uk, putting 'Books Competition' in the subject line.

Trouble brewing for ailing firms

'GERRY'S Big Decision' (Channel 4, Thursday) was like a cross between 'Dragons' Den' and 'The Secret Millionaire'. Only the millionaire in question, Gerry Robinson, isn't particularly secret, as the show is punctuated by shots of his sprawling pile and acres of rolling parkland.

And, well, he wasn't particularly dragon-like either. He had originally worshipped Mammon instead, which might have explained why he was much given to casting his eyes heavenwards in apparent supplication, giving him the air of a kindly father confessor. Not a bit like a cross between 'Dragons' Den' and 'The Secret Millionaire', after all.

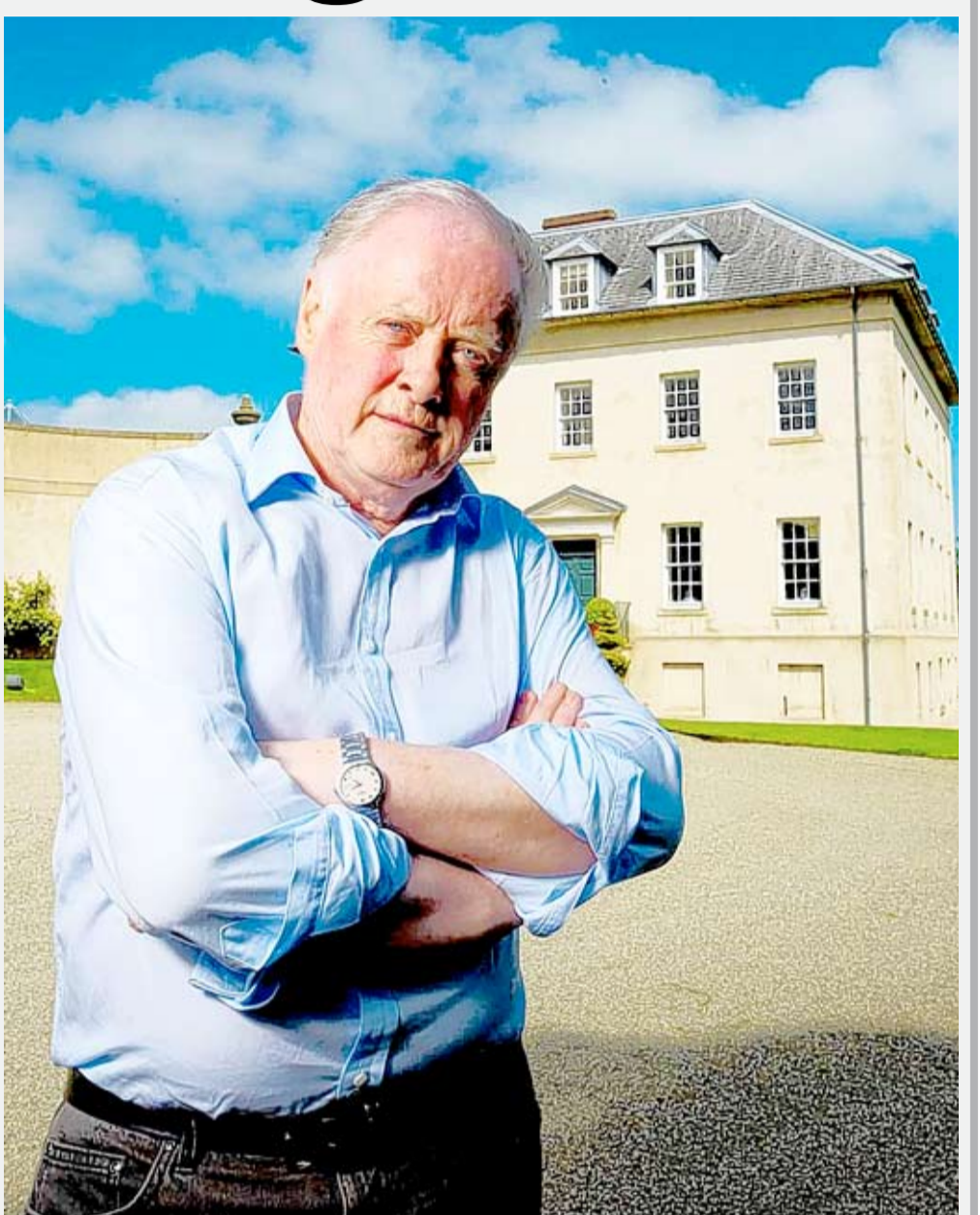
His 'flock' in the first of this new series, in which he visits ailing companies with a view to investing in those he considers might still have a future, were the owners of two independent breweries, in both cases couples. Although both had been successful in the past, the credit crunch meant that they were now no more than days or weeks away from collapse.

There was a lot of humming and ho-ing as Gerry considered the strengths and weaknesses of the two concerns, but he eventually surmised that in both cases, the men who had been in charge hitherto weren't fit to organise the proverbial, well, knees-up, shall we say, in their own breweries, and the businesses would have a better chance of survival if they were run by their better halves.

It all felt a wee bit intrusive. What we were dealing with here, after all, was real people with real livelihoods, and real employees relying on them, and all of them on the brink of going to the wall. When the women wept, there was a sense that it was out of real fear, and that it wasn't for the first time.

Providing the obligatory high drama at the end were the sequences in which Gerry returned to the breweries to deliver his verdict on whether or not he was prepared to invest. While one copped for £200,000, the other would receive "up to £150,000". Both couples seemed inordinately grateful, which was surprising when a voiceover at the end revealed that in return for these relatively paltry sums, Gerry was securing a majority stake in both businesses.

I suppose you don't get to be a squillionaire business guru for nothing. I reckon Gerry probably made the right decision when he left the seminary.



Gerry means business. Multi-millionaire business guru Gerry Robinson was parachuted in to sort out two ailing independent breweries in the first of a new series entitled 'Gerry's Big Decision'.

MORAY ON THE AIRWAVES

ELGIN RADIO

NEXT week's live programme schedule for Elgin Radio (online at www.elginradio.com) is as follows:

Friday - 6pm: Bill Stuart presents Around the Rurals, Pen and Paper at the Ready; 8pm-10pm: The Radio Banker with Douglas Couits.

Saturday - 1pm-4pm: Live from the Shed with Lee Nicholls; 4pm: The Panasonic Show, presented by Pan Cruden; 6pm: Percy Vear presents the Golden Oldies Show; 8pm-10pm: Dance and Relax and Romance, presented by Bill Stuart.

Sunday - 4pm: The Shamrock and Heather Show, presented by Bill Stuart; 6pm: Four Hours of Country, with Ray Peters.

Monday - 2pm-4pm: Adam Chilsom, the Welsh Dragon presents Allsorts; 6pm: The Sixties Music Show, presented by Bill Stuart; 8pm-10pm: The Boogie Box Show with Lee Nicholls.

Tuesday - 4pm: Eddie Rose and Sandy Lindsay, introduced by Bill Stuart; 6pm: Special K presents live interview and song with Tom Harrison; 8pm-10pm: Percy Vear presents the Punk Music Show.

Wednesday - 2pm-4pm: A Bit of a Boorach with Neil McCabe; 6pm: The Classy Tramp Rock Show, with Syd; 8pm-10pm: Percy Vear presents Music of the 70s.

Thursday - 6pm: The Elgin Gap Show with Special K; 8pm-10pm: Lee Nicholls presents The Boogie Box Show.

Elgin Radio is available online 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all year round. Pre-recorded shows every night from 10pm.

KEITH RADIO

PROGRAMMES to be broadcast next week on Keith Community Radio (102.8MHz FM) are:

Friday - 7pm: John Seiwright presents Mainly Scottish; 8pm: KM's Top Trax with Kathryn Morrison; 9pm: Peter Lain presents Show Time; 10pm: Echo Mixture presented by Dave; 11am: Either side of Midnight; 1am: Closedown.

Monday - 7pm: Revving up on Monday with the Rev Jim Cowie, Deacon, Keith North, Newmill, Boharm and Rothiemay; 7.45pm: Community Corner; 8pm: KCR Country and Irish Hour, with Kathryn Morrison; 9pm: Club Class with Paul Boyfield; 10pm: Monty's Mixture, with Monty Esslemont; 11pm: Closedown.

Tuesday - 7pm: Granny's Kist; 8pm: Eddie Stuart presents Musical Box; 9pm: Happy Harry's Half Hour; 9.30pm: My Walk for Logan, with Cameron Mackintosh; 10pm: Cameron Mackintosh presents 57 Degrees North; 11pm: Closedown.

Wednesday - 7pm: Rockin' with Ross, presented by Ross Esslemont; 8pm: Klassic Rock with David Shanks; 9pm: George Smith presents Dod's Clubbie Book; 10pm: Let The Music Play, with Graham Lappin; Midnight: Closedown.

Thursday - 7pm: Louise Fearns presents an Hour of Organised Chaos; 8pm: Country Half-Hour, with Kathryn Morrison; 8.30pm: John's Jaunt, presented by John Calder; 9pm: Julie Ettles presents With a Difference; 10pm: Magical Mystery Tour, with Jill Green; 10.30pm: The Graveyard Shift, presented by Gordon Cruickshank; Midnight: Closedown.

Ooh baby baby...

A DOCUMENTARY entitled 'Britney Spears Saved My Life' (BBC3, Sunday) focused not on the pop diva's hitherto unsuspected skills as a paramedic or a life guard, but on a handful of the fans to whom the troubled superstar has become something of a lifeline. It said an awful lot more about them than it did about her.

The fans featured were all taking part in a workshop recreating Spears' breakthrough pop video, 'Hit Me Baby (One More Time)', and served to provide an interesting snapshot of the star's demographic. While there were a couple of women who were definitely old enough to know better and the odd man who was old enough to shave, the majority appeared to be pubescent and adolescent girls and young gay men. It was like navigating a stormy sea of acne and hormones.

Sophie (28) was unembarrassed about her extensive array of Britney merchandise, which she admitted was akin to a shrine. She had the lunchbox, the pencil case, the dolls. "This doll used to sing, but she stopped working," said Sophie, clearly unaware of the irony of art imitating life.

At 14, Matthew was typical of the compulsive-obsessive Spears fan base. He had listened to her latest song 3,016 times. "But that's just on

TV WEEK with Ian Gill

my computer. If you count my iPod, it's probably more like 6,000 times." Even that degree of fandom, however, paled into insignificance in comparison with Ben, who was seen having the lyrics of a Britney song tattooed on his back.

It seems that not even Iran, where Suzie grew up, is immune to the Spears charms, even if the singer's wanton imperialist ways weren't a big hit with the powers-that-be.

"How come you weren't stoned?" asked the narrator, but if Suzie was already taking a risk by playing Britney records, maybe she didn't want to push her luck by doing drugs as well.

In what must be one of the most exclusive clubs in the world, 10 wives of Apollo astronauts talked, during a reunion, of the extraordinary time in the 1960s when their husbands were probably the most talked-about people on the planet, of the pressures of living in the public eye, and of danger, death and divorce.

Each had their own bittersweet memories to share: the one whose husband perished on the launchpad in Apollo 1, and who didn't receive a penny in compensation from NASA; another whose husband orbited Earth in Apollo 9 but was never selected for the space programme again, and was left feeling that he was not deemed to have 'the right stuff'; a third who recalled dining with Nixon and forming the opinion that "he was not a nice man".

More than one referred to the expectation that as the wives of these all-American heroes, they would behave in an exemplary manner at all times, and to the toll that the space programme had eventually taken on their marriages. Of the 10 wives attending, seven were divorced (and the others widowed).

"Typically, the astronauts' own children were often oblivious to their fathers' celebrity. "They were more interested in 'Star Trek';" said one of the wives. Some things, it seems, never change.



More new DVDs for readers

THERE ARE more brand-new DVDs up for grabs in another free-to-enter competition this week.

Rupert Graves stars as Alan Terry, a down-and-out who finds himself embroiled in a murder plot and conspiracy that could cost him his life in 'The Innocent Sleep'.

Having left more than enough evidence at the scene to lead the murderers to him, and the police in league with the mob, Terry turns to the only person who can help, an American journalist working in London, who will help him expose the truth.

British stage and screen legend Michael Gambon also stars as a crooked policeman who will stop at nothing to tie up all his loose ends.

This gritty thriller is a shining example of British independent filmmaking at its very best.

Set in the England of the early 19th century, when the country is at war with Napoleon's France, 'The Scarlet Tunic' is a story of a forbidden love between Hussar Malthus Singer (Jean-Marc Barr) and the daughter of a West Country solicitor, Frances Groves (Emma Fielding).

Both are frustrated with their lives; he yearns for his homeland, while she is betrothed to her father's

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business partner, and illicit meetings between the two spark a passionate affair. Their romance is fraught with danger: if discovered, Frances will be branded a soldier's whore and lose her social standing, and Malthus will be disgraced.

'The Scarlet Tunic' is a touching romance filmed on the Dorset coast, with stunning photography and heartfelt performances.

Also released on DVD next week is 'Tom Grattan's War'. The complete series of the Yorkshire TV drama is available in a four-disc set priced £39.99.

In this series, broadcast between 1968 and 1970, the teenage protagonist is Tom Grattan (Michael Howe). With his father fighting at the front and his mother working in a London munitions factory, the 16-year old is sent to stay with relatives in rural Yorkshire for the duration of the First World War. He is set to work in the fields, but is also introduced to much more than unfamiliar country ways. Along with the Kirkbys' daughter, Julia, he encounters espionage, kidnapping, robbery

and sabotage, and also faces more complex dilemmas - not least when German PoWs working at the nearby quarry become the target for angry attacks by local people who have lost loved ones at the front.

While the war is fought on the remote battlefields of Europe, its consequences are all too real for Tom and his new friends.

The final new release this week is culinary expert Valentine Warner's BBC TV series, 'What To Eat Now - Autumn'. Born and raised on a farm in Dorset, Warner grew up hunting, fishing, cooking and learning to love food. In this series he shares his love of the natural world and seasonal ingredients, taking the viewer on a journey of discovery of the best autumn food.

In a world where supermarkets offer everything all year round, Warner's seasonal approach is an ecological and sustainable breath of fresh air. He explains the natural rhythms of the culinary world, and cooks whatever he catches, but viewers don't need to have a fishing pole or shotgun to take part, as all

the ingredients can be found in the shops.

'What To Eat Now - Autumn', a two-disc set priced £39.99, has been released to coincide with the new series showing on BBC 2.

For your chance to win a copy of 'The Innocent Sleep', simply tell us the name of the acting legend who plays a bent copper in the film.

If you have your eye on 'The Scarlet Tunic' instead, drop us a line telling us who plays the role of Frances Groves in this romantic drama.

To enter the competition for a copy of 'Tom Grattan's War', tell us who played the title role, and if you have an appetite for a copy of 'What To Eat Now - Autumn', we want to know the name of the culinary expert who presents the series.

Send your answer on a postcard to either: 'Innocent Sleep Competition', 'Scarlet Tunic Competition', 'Tom Grattan's War Competition' or 'What To Eat Now Competition' at 'The Northern Scot', 74-76 South Street, Elgin IV30 1JG, to arrive no later than noon next Wednesday, July 15. Don't forget to include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Alternatively, e-mail the same information to: j.scott@northern-scot.co.uk, putting the name of the competition in the subject line.

CINEMA

- **ICE AGE 3 (U)** - The sub-zero heroes from the previous two blockbusters are back, on another slippery slope, in 'Dawn of the Dinosaurs'. Scrat is still trying to nab the ever-elusive nut (while maybe finding true love); Manny and Ellie await the birth of their mini-mammoth; Diego the sabre-toothed tiger wonders if he's growing too soft hanging with his pals, and Sid the sloth gets into trouble when he creates his own makeshift family by hijacking some dinosaur eggs. On a mission to rescue the hapless Sid, the gang venture into a mysterious underground world, where they have some close encounters with dinosaurs, battle flora and fauna, and meet a relentless, one-eyed, dino-hunting weasel named Buck.
- **THE HANGOVER (15)** - When Doug and his best buddies drive to Las Vegas to say goodbye to his days as a singleton, it is the start of a stag party that goes wrong... very wrong. The guys vow to

stage a night that they will never forget, but when they wake up the next morning - and with the groom nowhere to be found - no one has a clue what happened the night before. And so they begin on a journey to try to unravel how much trouble they are in, what went on in their trashed hotel room, how exactly a tiger managed to get in there, and, most importantly, where Doug is and if they have any hope of finding him before the wedding.
- **TRANSFORMERS: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN (12A)** - The battle for earth may be over, but the battle for the universe is about to begin. Shia LaBeouf reprises his role as Sam Witwicky, the young earthling caught in the raging war between the Autobots and the Decepticons. After he learns the truth about the ancient origins of the Transformers, Sam again finds himself the target of the evil Decepticons, who have returned to Earth

under the command of the formidable Starscream. Joining the Autobots' mission to protect humankind is Optimus Prime, who forms an alliance with international armies for this second, epic battle.

- **HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF BLOOD PRINCE (12A)** - Join Harry and his Hogwarts pals in the sixth and penultimate cinema adventure for the boy wizard. This move sees He Who Must Not Be Named - Lord Voldemort - tighten his grip on both the physical world and the magical world, to the point where not even Hogwarts is safe. Drako Malfoy (Tom Felton) is carrying out Voldemort's evil and dark deeds within the corridors of the wizard school, Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) knows that dangers lie within the castle, but Professor Dumbledore (Michael Gambon) is more focused on preparing him for the final battle that is now fast approaching.


A stag party goes badly wrong in 'The Hangover', showing at the Moray Playhouse in Elgin next week.