CLAN CHISHOLM SOCIETY
UK BRANCH

An Cirean
Cean Cinnidh



NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 81

AUGUST 2025

Welcome to Issue No 81 - UK Branch Newsletter

Dear UK Branch members.

I have a had a busy few weeks in July - Strathglass Heritage Association holds various lectures and events across the year and I attend as many of these as I can. The Association as its name suggests carries out research and archaeological investigations in Strathglass. See https://www.strathglass-heritage.co.uk

On Monday 7th July I attended a talk at Marydale, Cannich on the Strathfarrar graphite mine which operated in the early 19th century and on Sunday 13th July a group of us went to see the site in Glen Strathfarrar. A report is given later in this newsletter.

The AGM of the Association of Highland Clans and Societies (AHCS) was held at 6pm on Friday 11th July at the Ness Walk Hotel. The meeting dealt with the usual formalities of approving the minutes of the previous years AGM and the Treasurers report. It also dealt with the election of the officers of the Association. The very reverend Allan Maclean of Dochgarroch has been chairman for many years and indicated his desire to step down. There were no offers from the floor in respect of filling this role or the also vacant vice chair role recently vacated by Donald Mackintosh therefore Allan agreed to sit for a further year. He hoped in that time support from one of the clans would be forthcoming. Rossie MacRae had agreed to continue as treasurer and Ross McEwen agreed to remain as Secretary. The remaining committee members agreed to stand for another year.

Note. The AHCS produces a newsletter in Spring and Autumn and clans are urged to share this with their membership. Accordingly I have emailed the March 2025 issue to all our UK branch members who have email. The AHCS website is not active at present having been hi-jacked last year – if it gets back up and running we can provide links from our own website. Alastair our webmaster has now posted all the past ACHS newsletters onto our website.

On the following day Saturday 12th July the City of Inverness Highland Games was held. A marquee was provided for the clans to set up tables with information to share with visitors. Clans often sign up new members at the games. Unfortunately Clan Chisholm was not able to have our usual two tables at the Games this year as we did not have enough people available to man them. Anne Fraser of the Highland Archive kindly agreed to set out some of our clan Chisholm leaflets on their table. Last year as we had the International Gathering at the time of the Games there was plenty of help at hand.

By all accounts the Games day was very warm and visitor numbers excellent.

NOTE: The date for our own **UK Branch AGM is Friday 5th September 2025** at The Priory Hotel, Beauly, by Inverness IV4 7BX. Your committee has agreed to host lunch at **12:30** therefore there is no direct cost to those attending. The AGM will follow lunch. The Agenda is included in this newsletter, the minutes of last year's electronic AGM and the financial statements for our branch have been circulated to members.

Please let me know if you plan to attend the lunch and AGM so that we can let the Priory Hotel know numbers in advance. I will also share the menu ahead of the meeting which will help the hotel to plan.

My thanks to members and to Juliette Chisholm-Broomfield in particular for sending me newspaper cuttings with interesting items for inclusion in our newsletter. These tend to have a Highland or Scottish angle, but not necessarily a Chisholm connection.

Please do continue to send me items you think would be of interest to members – family news, newspaper cuttings or links to articles.

Yours in clanship
Susan



Chisholm

THE CLAN CHISHOLM SOCIETY

UK BRANCH

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 5th September 2025 14:00 BST
Priory Hotel, The Square, Beauly, Inverness-shire IV4 7BX

AGENDA

Welcome – Ben Chisholm-Broomfield

Apologies and Greetings – Susan Chisholm of Chisholm

1) Approval of the Minutes of previous AGM – held electronically on Saturday 19th October 2024.
11, Croyard Drive, Beauly, Inverness, IV4 7EE

2) Approval of the audited Financial Report – year ending 31st December 2024

3) Membership report

4) Election of Officers

The following will stand for re-election.
Chairman - Ben Chisholm-Broomfield (Beauly, Inverness-shire)
Hon. Secretary & Treasurer - Susan Chisholm (Undley, Suffolk)
Vice Chairman - Duncan Chisholm (Inverness)
Vice Chairman - Norman Chisholm (Kindeace, Ross-shire)

5. Confirmation of Appointments
Honorary Genealogist - Acting – Alastair Chisholm (Minstead, Hampshire)
Honorary Historian - Dr Jean Munro (Edinburgh)
Honorary Historian - Dr Margaret Collin (Melrose, Roxburghshire)
Honorary Auditor - Katrina Smith (Lakenheath, Suffolk)
Hon Committee Members:-
Juliette Chisholm-Broomfield, Beauly, Inverness-shire.
Mairi-Angela Foster, Edinburgh.

6. Any Other Business

6a) Membership subscription levels.
6b) Photographic Archive (Artefacts) – International Project

41ST HIGHLAND CROSS - 22ND JUNE 2025



Above - the trek through Kintail.

This annual duathlon raises money for many causes. Participants start in Morvich on the West Coast with a climb up into the hills they then travel 20 miles on foot, running and walking through Kintail and then ancient Chisholm country into Glen Affric. This is followed by a cycle of 30 miles to Beauly at the end of the Moray Firth and the East Coast. This year the weather was very hot and the volunteers posted at stages to deliver refreshments to the athletes were kept busy. 751 set off and 736 finished the course.

The men's winner this year arrived at the finishing line in just under 3 hrs and 36 minutes, the course record is 3hrs, 13 minutes and 31 seconds. The ladies winner finished in just over 4hrs and 5 minutes.

Amazing achievements from all participants. Teams of 3 pledge £500 and last year £368,295 was raised for charity.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A reminder that Annual Subscriptions are due on 1st January each year. Note that subscription rates have not been raised since 2013.

Annual membership - £12.00

Annual over 60 - £9.00

10 year membership - £65.00

10 year Family membership - £74.00

Payment by cheque (or PO) to:- 'Clan Chisholm Society - UK Branch' and sent to Hon Secretary/Treasurer, Susan Chisholm. Or a bank transfer may be made to our bank - Natwest, Bury St Edmunds –

sort code 60-04-16, a/c 30250633. (IBAN GB55 NWBK 6004 1630 2506 33)

If you elect to pay by bank transfer please let me (Susan) know.

For **Life Members** who wish to continue to receive the Annual Clan Chisholm Journal - a payment of **£5.00** per annum is requested to help cover the cost of publication and postage. NB. Life membership ceased to be offered after 1996. *There is no charge for branch newsletters which are produced 3 - 4 times a year.*

NOTE:

A motion will be put forward at the UK Branch AGM to consider increasing the membership subscription. The current fees have not been changed since 2013, and a modest increase is to be discussed. A review of other clan Societies, Associations and Highland Associations has been carried out to compare subscription levels for similar organisations. The benefits of membership were also looked at and, in most cases, we offer far more than other organisations.

STRATHGLASS HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

The Association was set up in 2001 and many Chisholm's have become members. The membership subscription is a very modest £5.00 per annum or £8.00 for family membership. As with our own society all officers are volunteers and the membership fees just cover basic running costs. A £1.00 donation to cover tea, coffee and biscuits is usually expected at meetings and lectures. We have been involved with the SHA for many years and most recently supporting the 2023/2024 Clearances exhibitions. See www.strathglass-heritage.co.uk for more information on activities.

On Monday 7th July a talk was given by Roland Spencer-Jones of NOSAS, North of Scotland Archaeological Society, see https://www.nosas.co.uk. The subject which he and colleagues had spent time researching was the Graphite mine in Glen Strathfarrar, one of only three historic graphite mines in the UK.

Maps of this area show many lead mines and one Ordnance Survey map shows the Tom a Mhein as a lead mine. Graphite is a form of carbon which has a number of special properties, such as high electrical conductivity, a high melting point, resistance to corrosion and lubricity. Consequently, it has varied industrial applications, including electronics, lubrication, metallurgy and steel production.

Graphite is formed when sedimentary rocks (for example the gneiss and schist at Strathfarrar) containing organic matter like coal are subjected to intense heat and pressure.

Historic uses were – moulds for making cannon balls, stove polish, lubricants, paints, crucibles, foundry facings and pencils. The Seathwaite mine in Cumberland was once the world's leading supplier of 'black lead' or graphite, also known as plumbago. The Keswick pencil factory is now an important tourist attraction.

The Strathfarrar mine was only in use for a very few years which co-incided with the end of the Napoleonic wars so perhaps the graphite was used for the making of cannon balls. Using graphite or plumbago resulted in a smoother cannon ball which would be more effective.

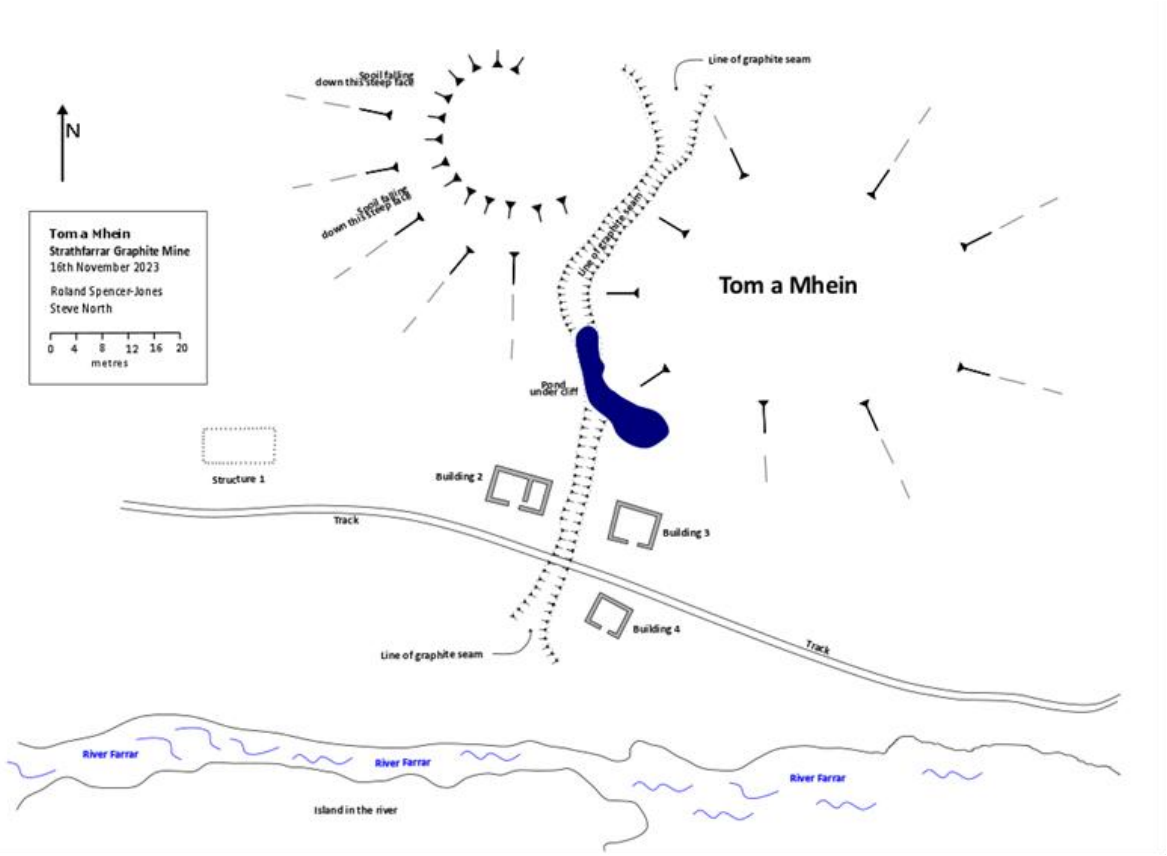
The mine was discovered by John Young of Beauly in March 1816 by accident and Lord Lovat the landowner at once determined on mining for the valuable graphite.

In summer 1817 two eminent geologists visited the mine. Robert Jameson, Regius Professor of Natural Sciences at Edinburgh University wrote – "We did not reach the Black-Lead mine until 12 o'clock, the distance being greater from Beauly than we had calculated on, it proving to be twenty or twenty-two miles. The excessive heat of the day, and the torment of the midges, was intolerable. My face, lips and eyes were speedily distorted by them, and one of my eyes fairly closed up." His companion Dr Davidson, Professor of Natural Philosophy at Aberdeen had examined the beds previously and communicated "There are three beds of compact graphite, varying in thickness from fifteen to eighteen inches …".

The Lancaster Gazette of Saturday 30th October 1819 reported that ' the valuable mine of plumbago in Glen Strathfarrar, the discovery of which was made by Mr Davidson, of Marischal College, Aberdeen continues amply to reward the labour of working in it. It now affords employment to several persons, and large quantities of the mineral are sent regularly to London for sale'.

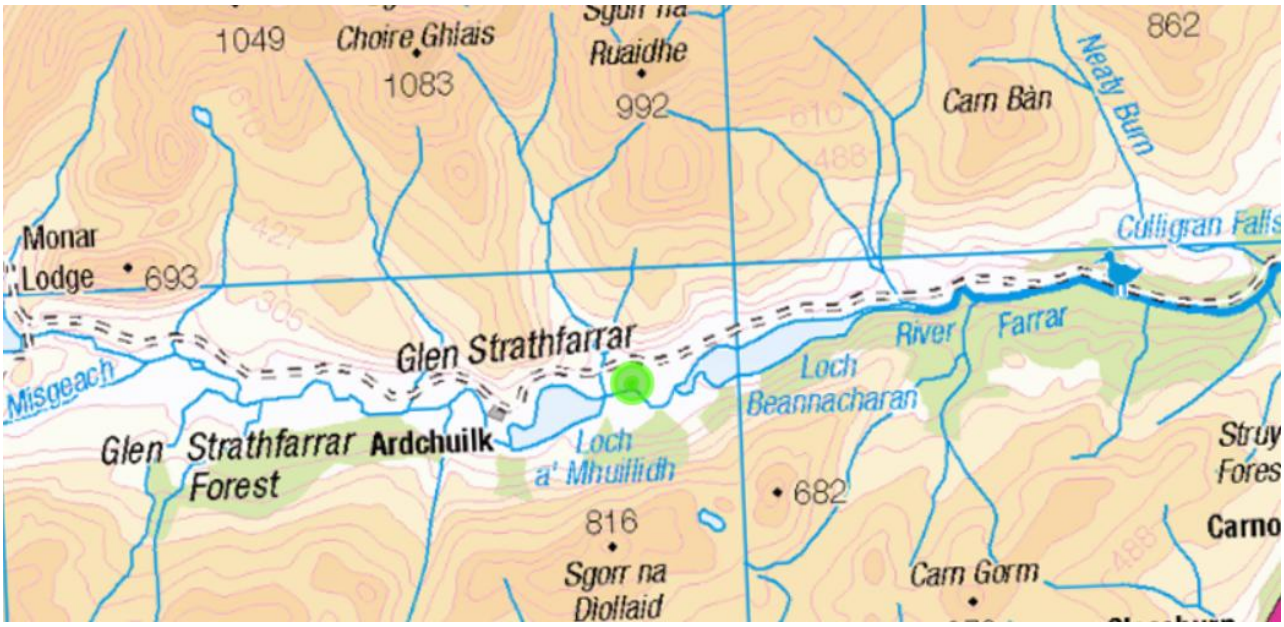
Between the years 1817 and 1822 when the mine was closed there were three different managers. Casks of graphite were shipped out from September/October 1818 and in 1820 a smithy and barracks were constructed. Customs were paid at Beauly and at least 665 x 1 cwt casks were shipped from Beauly wharf in the five years of production. Wages for the workers in that period came to a total of £896 (£51.5k today) and the costs of the mining came to £1,631 15shillings and 10 ¼ pence (£93k today). A profit was made for the Lovat estate as the price for graphite was £93 per hundredweight (£1,860 per ton). Records for the Borrowdale mine show prices as high as £3,900 per ton. There are no records showing why the mine fell into disuse but it may be that with the end of war there was no further demand for graphite, also with the end of the Napoleonic wars other trading markets would have opened up again.

The map below shows the location of the graphite mine in Glen Strathfarrar just between the hill named Tom a Mhein and the river Farrar. The map also shows the old road which mor closely followed the river. The road through the glen is now to the north of the mine. The three buildings are ruins but clearly visible at the site, structure one is an unidentified platform area, the use of which is not known.





Tom a Mhein hill – the graphite mine is behind this



Ordnance survey map with the mine position marked by a green spot.

On Sunday 13th July a number of cars turned off the main road at Struy and parked at the gate into Glen Strathfarrar. The twenty or so visitors collaborated on lifts to the distant parking area down the glen to minimise the number of vehicles entering Glen Strathfarrar. This parking area is mostly used by hill walkers as there are four Munro's above the glen and several other good walks for those less energetic.

We all walked along the road for a few yards before heading south across an area of flat land possibly previously cultivated. We were then able to pick up the old track nearer the river and which runs directly past the site of the graphite mine. Possibly the track John Young of Beauly had been on when he found the mine in March 1816. The day was very hot, and hats and fly repellent were used by some of us. Legs were covered to prevent anyone picking up ticks, somewhat of a hazard in this terrain. A very short walk brought us behind Tom a Mhein and we could see the mine site and the remains of what had been very well constructed buildings.

Roland Spencer-Jones led our party and described what we were seeing before we roamed at our leisure and took photographs. The visit was very interesting and it was good to meet members of the Strathglass Heritage Association as well as those of NoSAS.

My grateful thanks to Roland for allowing me to reproduce much of his presentations in our newsletter.

APPEAL FOR HISTORICAL MAPS OF CHISHOLM LANDS.

Roland Spencer-Jones as part of his archaeological work uses many old estate maps. He asked if I knew of any Chisholm estate maps still in existence or if my family had any such material. I explained the background to the sale and clearance of Erchless Castle in the early 20th century. What documents that were not in the possession of the solicitors Innis & Mackay were either distributed or taken by local persons or were got rid of. Roland has spent time examining Lovat Fraser documents that are now in the National Library of Scotland – many of these relate to Chisholm of course as neighbours to Lovat.

See below those which Roland has sent details of.

1798 - Land in dispute with Chisholm;
1836 - Sketch showing the Lines of March mutually agreed upon between Lovat, Chisholm and Ord;
1838 - Plan of the Hill Grounds of Wester and Mid Aigas showing the disputed marches between Lord Lovat and The Chisholm;
1843 - Plan of the Grazing for the Commonty of Boath, as divided between the Lord Lovat and The Chisholm;
1881 - Sketch copied from the 1838 plan signed by the Lord Lovat and The Chisholm.
I have examined these documents which are of great interest.

If you know of any such document or maps not in the public domain Roland and of course I would be very interested to hear from you. Thankfully sometimes old estate documents we had thought lost do turn up as folk have held onto them and kept them safe for many years. They often come to light when people are clearing out old cupboards or attic spaces. I would always encourage the holders of these documents to deposit them in the Inverness Archive for conservation and safe keeping. Once conserved by the team at the archive they may be used and consulted by those carrying out research.
Contact me (Susan) either by post or email if you know of any such old documents.

HIGHLAND & ISLAND BLOOD BIKES

The Society has recently received an email from the Highland & Island Blood Bikes (HIABB) a charity that provides free medical transport to take essential items such as blood, samples, medication and medical equipment across the Highlands and Islands. The charity supports the NHS with volunteers at no cost to the health service providing a vital lifeline service enabling patient care. See www.haibloodbikes.co.uk
The charity, as part of a community initiative launched a competition to name their newest motorcycle. One name stood out ‘Mairi’ in tribute to Mairi Chisholm. Mairi our Societies founder was well known to have ridden motorcycles before and during the First World War. The HIABB hope that a member of the Clan Chisholm Society (or a family member) will be able to attend the official unveiling of the newly named motorbike. When we know the date and place we hope that someone will be able to attend.



left - Mairi on motorcycle.



right - in ambulance with Mrs Knocker during WW1

CHISHOLM KILTMAKERS INVERNESS

The following is taken from several pages of the Inverness Courier of 2nd May which was given to an article featuring Ian Chisholm of Chisholm Kiltmakers, Castle Street, Inverness. This shop is of course well known to clansfolk through its founder Duncan Chisholm (senior) and his son Duncan (a past President of the Clan Chisholm Society). Thanks to Juliette for sending the clip. Juliette sent a copy of a similar shorter article from another newspaper to New Zealand which was used in the recent edition (No.2) of the Colonial Newsletter a joint enterprise with Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA.





Above left - Ian Chisholm – right – The shop in Castle Street, inverness

One of the world's leading kiltmakers has shared his most memorable moments from his decades-long career as he searches for an apprentice.

Ian Chisholm (79) started at Chisholms Highland Dress at the age of just 10 when parents Duncan and Charlotte took him on as a message boy - and went on to make kilts for Hollywood stars. The company, based in Castle Street in Inverness, is one of Scotland's - and the world's - best-known kiltmakers.

One of four sons, Ian quickly fell in love with the art of kiltmaking and began learning every aspect of the business. He says the business, which was started in 1956, started to see success in the mid -1970s and in the years since has continued to grow, eventually attracting celebrity customers like Charlton Heston and Doctor Who's Tom Baker.

But he says one struggle is getting young people interested in joining the trade and finding apprentices, despite the willingness of the younger generations to wear Highland dress.

"I started many years ago - and the time's flown by, when we started, I would have been about 10 years old. I was a message boy, and then I worked through various stages of the business, mainly in the kiltmaking side of things."

Around 25 years ago Ian took on the role of Managing Director. His late father had retired, and Ian with brothers Duncan and Alan continued the business with Alan looking after the shop in Elgin until his death when that outlet closed.

"We were making kilts for the old Scottish entertainers - the likes of Calum Kennedy, the Alexander Brothers, and various others that we supplied kilts to.

That's certainly continued all the way through. The trade has always been in the family, and it's definitely something we want to continue," he said.





Above – archive photo of Duncan Chisholm senior with his sons.

"It has been difficult to get folk interested - they really need to have an interest in tailoring and learning the skills of needlework. Often we say it wouldn't matter the age - if someone's keen and able to learn, we would always consider anybody. At the moment, we're looking for another kiltmaker and an apprentice - but time will tell."
Chisholms ships kilts all over the world - with many orders in recent years from families in Germany, the Netherlands and the USA.
Despite concerns that the business would struggle after the economic challenges of the Covid lockdowns, Ian says there has been an unprecedented demand in recent years.
Younger customers are still happy to wear tartan, but often go for the less traditional options.
He and his 14 staff help their customers to find or create their perfect tartan - and build their kilts with longevity in mind. "I think that because folk are so casual now, they like to get dressed up for special occasions, and that's where the Highland dress comes into its own. We're very fortunate in the workshop at the moment, because the tartans are stacked to the ceilings for orders for kilts."
"There still is the strong element of folk wanting to wear their family tartan, but younger people often like to pick a tartan in shades they like," he said.
"The plainer tartans have been popular - the black, the charcoal, and also the red."

Ian, who currently works five days per week, hopes to take on some younger staff to teach them the tricks of the trade - although he has no plans to retire soon.
"The staff we've got at the moment would certainly be interested in continuing the business, and I'd be happy for them to do that," he said.
"We put the finest quality of tailoring into our kilts, use the finest quality linings and trimmings, and all of this goes into making a high-quality item."
"I'm getting on in years - fortunately I've been in good health, and as long as my health keeps up, I'll continue.
"Kiltmaking itself is a labour of love - you've really got to enjoy what you're doing."

Newspaper cuttings - Sent in by Juliette Chisholm-Broomfield.

The Ross-Shire Journal featured an article on the 80th Anniversary of VE Day.
The great granddaughter of David Kennedy who served in both world wars shared her touching family story.
David Kennedy was born in 1898 in Canisbay, Caithness not far from John o'Groats. In WW1 he served as part of a minesweeping crew and in WW2 with the Royal Army Service Corps. Sadly following WW1 his wife died of sepsis a few days after the birth of their son John. David's sister-in-law stepped in to raise the child, this family later emigrated to America. John enlisted in the US Army Air Corps and at one time David and his son John were stationed just a few miles from each other in Kent. Unfortunately they did not have time to arrange to meet and it is thought John's plane was later shot down as he was listed missing in action. The father and son never had a chance to reunite. David lived into his 80's and settled in Inverness. He married a **Flora Chisholm** and they had two sons Duncan and William.

Award Winning Author **Alastair Chisholm** visits Raigmore Primary School – Inverness Courier 9th May.
Youngsters from Raigmore Primary School played host to Alastair Chisholm, author of I Am Wolf, Orion Lost and the much-loved Dragon Storm series among other titles, along with children from Drakies, Crown and Inshes primaries.

The visit on April 25 was backed by Reading Force, the shared-reading charity for military and veteran families. P1-P4 children were treated to an interactive storytelling session with Alastair featuring his book Space Pirate Bears. P5-P7s participated in a session about amazing inventions, emphasising that stories just might be the greatest human invention of all.



Every military child received a signed book and a Reading Force scrapbook or journal to take home.
Fiona Maxwell, Reading Force ambassador in Scotland, said: "Not only was the event a wonderful way to mark April, as the Month of the Military Child, but also a celebration of books and sharing stories which involved both the military and non-military children alike".
Reading Force supports families to share books and chat about them as a way to have fun and stay connected if separated by deployments.

L – R. Reading Force ambassador in Scotland Fiona Maxwell, Author Alastair Chisholm and Reading Force office manager Camille Campbell-Wild.

Primary school youngsters from four Inverness schools enjoyed author Alastair Chisholm's visit.
Feedback from military families shows they find the initiative a great way to soothe children and young people during upheaval, school and home moves, and separations.
Alastair said: "As a children's author, I love how shared stories can bring us together and keep us connected even when we're apart. "This is Reading Force's mission, and I think it's a brilliant one"

The Ross-shire Journal 23rd May – Dingwall & District Accordion & Fiddle Club

The last meeting of the season was well attended by an enthusiastic audience who were treated to a full programme of Scottish music. Local choristers sang along to the Gaelic waltzes and other local musicians played toe tapping accordion and fiddle. The InverRoss Band were the final players of the evening with two accordions, fiddle, keyboard and **Mike Chisholm** on drums.
A spokeswoman for the club said: "The committee sincerely thank all players and audience who turn out regularly to make our club the success it continues to be. We also thank the staff of the Legion for all their welcome support." The annual general meeting will be held on 20th August and the first meeting of the 2025-2026 season is on September 3rd with the Calum MacColl Trio scheduled to perform.

New Tartan – Historic Environment Scotland is launching a new tartan range dedicated to Urquhart Castle.

The design has been created by Prickly Thistle and woven by Lochcarron of Scotland. Marketed as a luxury fashion and lifestyle range, the collection aims to celebrate the history of the castle, taking inspiration from the castle's magnificent location on the shores of Loch Ness.
Speaking about the Urquhart Castle commission, Clare Campbell, founder of Prickly Thistle, said: "We have loved working with the team at Historic Environment Scotland, who commissioned us to design this new tartan for an iconic building that belongs to a region we call home.
"We started working on this design a few years ago, and during the process, we learned so much more about the history of Urquhart Castle. "Designing tartans for historic buildings is truly an honour, given that historically tartans were largely created as forms of identity for places opposed to specific people, known as district tartans."
Prickly Thistle, which began on the Black Isle and has a small mill in Evanton in Easter Ross, is the only weaving mill on the Highland mainland.



And its owner, Clare Campbell (seen above), is spearheading the campaign to secure some form of legal protection Highland tartan, in the hope it could fuel the creation of other micro mills elsewhere in the region - in much the same way that the Harris Tweed Act helped that industry to thrive.
As part of the new campaign lovers of Highland tartan are being urged to buy an "Angel of Reparation" patch which would be available to add to existing tartan products retrospectively. The Angel has been embroidered onto tartan woven in the Highland region.
Clare said: "Many people all over the world wear tartan but won't know that the only the tiniest amount of 'Highland Dress' is actually made here, in the Highlands. We want our 'Angel' to help redress the balance and give us our recognised place to be a larger part of this global industry.
"Over the last six months many conversations have been held to respectfully understand how others who may be affected feel about it and with those who will need to be involved feel about the idea.
"We want to ensure we add to the future story not just for the Highlands but for all of Scotland.
"It has been a rollercoaster of tartan journey over the last six years at our mill [since it opened] but what a privilege to be part of a campaign like this, and we hope anyone who is Scottish or just loves Tartan will want to get on board."
The first "poster girl" for the Angel campaign is none other than Dolly the Sheep. Fibres from the famous cloned Scottish ewe have been sewn into the first patch and presented to Karen Walker, Dolly's 'dad' who is one of the leading scientists behind the stem cell breakthrough, that was a world first.
Karen Walker said, "I am thrilled and very proud to be able to provide a little piece of Dolly wool to support the future Highland tartan industry. I hope Dolly's iconic status helps spread the word and makes this exciting project another piece of important Scottish history."
The patch depicts an Angel playing tartan-clad bagpipes and has been created by Highland pop surreal artist Michael Forbes.

Our last Newsletter in May reported the death of honorary member Bob Chisholm who did so much for the Clan Chisholm Society. Juliette and Ben as friends of longstanding remain in touch with Muriel, Bob's widow. Many members will have met Bob and Muriel at clan meetings.
Muriel sent Juliette the picture below which shows Bob's parents and this has been passed me for the newsletter.



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