

The Scottish Diaspora Tapestries

A project involving 25 countries around the world in the celebration of Scottish heritage and culture.

Scottish Diaspora Tapestries Project. The article, written by Adelaide's Rosemary McKay, explains it well, and the proud heritage given to us by "our" Scots, is perhaps typical of the profound impact Scots have had in the world. It is an interesting and worthy selection from SA.

Background

Whisky, haggis, the poetry of Robert Burns: Scotland's cultural exports are well known, but Scotland has long exported people too. They went not only to the likes of the United States, Canada and New Zealand but to all corners of the globe, from Sweden to Argentina, China and the Netherlands, and to South Australia, etc.

From peddlers, to merchants, mercenaries, industrialists, farmers and labourers, Scots have migrated all over the world and have often had a profound impact on the areas where they settled. This Tapestries Project will see 25 such communities documenting their Scottish connections on a series of embroidered cloth, rather than a woven tapestry. Their combined stories will pay homage to the incredible determination and courage of Scots over the centuries. Some of those communities have already been hard at work stitching panels which will go to make up the Tapestry. Thousands of hours' work, millions of stitches by hundreds of volunteer hands, are now coming together to form the major exhibition that will tour Scotland later this year.

Taking its inspiration from the famous 11th century Bayeux Tapestry in France, the organisation behind the Project, supported by this year's Homecoming Scotland, is the Prestoungrange Arts Festival based in Prestonpans, not far from Edinburgh. (They are the team behind another massive tapestry, namely, the 104 metres long "*The Battle of Prestonpans Tapestry 1745*" which deals with the events before, during and after the Battle of Prestonpans on 21 September 1745 where Bonnie Prince Charlie triumphed over the Hanoverian Army led by Sir John Cope. This Tapestry was completed in 2010 by over 200 volunteer stitchers around Scotland.

The idea now is for diaspora communities across the globe to tell their stories. "This is a global community project. It is about participating and being proud of your story. By the time all the work and all the love has gone into a piece, it "comes alive", explains Ms Yvonne Murphy, one of the organisers of the Project.

Lasting Legacy

The Tapestry will be premiered in Prestonpans at the end of May, 2014, during *The Three Harbours Arts Festival*, and panels are already arriving from all over the world for assembling.

The Tapestry, measuring at least 90 metres in length, will continue to be displayed long after **The Homecoming 2014**, both in Scotland and abroad. Because it is designed in sections, it will also be flexible, and can be separated for display in different locations simultaneously.

Eventually, the aim is for *The Tapestry* to join *The Battle of Prestonpans Tapestry* at a purpose-built venue in Prestonpans, but until then it will tour the UK and the countries which helped in its creation, thus continuing to educate and promote Scottish heritage for many years to come.

There will be a warm welcome to all stitchers' families and friends who travel to Prestonpans in 2014.

Where South Australia Comes In

South Australia was lucky enough to have been selected to participate in this prestigious project. I met with Ms Yvonne Murphy when she came to South Australia last year and agreed to be the Coordinator for South Australia.

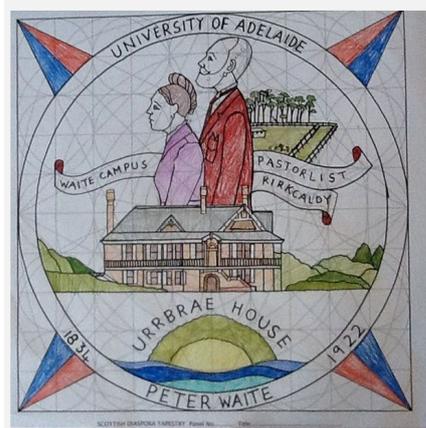
I have selected the following to represent the Scottish connections from our State and advised the organisers of the reasons for the selections.

Catherine Helen Spence:

born 31 October, 1825, Melrose, Scotland; died 3 April, 1910, Norwood, South Australia; author, teacher, journalist, politician and leading suffragist; called the "Greatest Australian Woman" by Miles Franklin; given the nomenclature of "Grand Old Woman of Australia" on her eightieth birthday; commemorated on the Australian five dollar note issued for the Centenary of Federation of Australia.

Peter Waite

born 9 May, 1834, Kirkcaldy, Kingdom of Fife, Scotland; died 4 April, 1922, Victor Harbor, South Australia; pastoralist, businessman, company director and public benefactor.



Sir Thomas Elder:

born 5 August, 1818, Kirkcaldy, Kingdom of Fife, Scotland; died 6 March, 1897, Mount Lofty, South Australia; pastoralist, highly successful businessman, philanthropist, politician, race-horse owner and breeder and public figure; done more than any other individual to advance the progress and culture of South Australia.

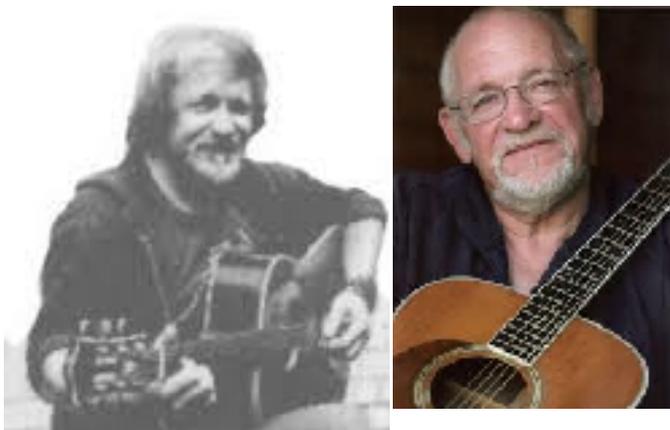
John McDouall Stuart

Born 7 September, 1815, Dysart, Kingdom of Fife, Scotland; died 5 June, 1866, London, England; Australia's Greatest Inland Explorer.

DR.Charles Duguid OBE

Born Saltcoats, Scotland, 6 April, 1884; died Adelaide, South Australia, 5 December, 1986; aboriginal rights campaigner; helped found The Ernabella Mission in the Musgrave Ranges of South Australia.

Eric Bogle AM



Eric prompted his adopted country to come to terms with the ANZAC legends through his powerful songs *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* and *No Man's Land*.

born Peebles, Scotland 23 September, 1944, international Folk singer-songwriter; resides Adelaide, South Australia; received a Peace Medal from the United Nations for his efforts, through music, to promote peace and racial harmony, and the Order of Australia Medal for services to the entertainment industry.

The Splendid Clipper Ship 'City of Adelaide'

one of the world's only two surviving 1887, she played an important role composite clippers; (the other is the famous but younger 'Cutty Sark'); was purpose built to serve South Australia and was specifically a passenger ship; from 1864 to 1887 in the development of the South Australian colony and made 23 voyages to South Australia; 240,000 descendants of her passengers live in Australia today. Between 1923 and 1989 as the 'Carrick', she was an iconic landmark on the River Clyde in Glasgow; provides the opportunity to build on historical links between Scotland and Australia and opens up the potential for both nations to recognise partnerships and shared heritage on an international scale; returned February 2014 from Irvine, Scotland, to Port Adelaide, South Australia, where she will be displayed as part of a heritage, sense of place, sense of time, experiential and not-for-profit Seaport Village.

The organisers have approved our designs and supplied the seven panels and the threads to be used for the embroidery. Work has already begun and we look forward to the mission being accomplished with a great deal of enthusiasm.

Note:

This is all part of our shared heritage link between Scotland and South Australia as foreshadowed by Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, when she named The Clipper Ship, City of Adelaide, Limited (the topic of one of the panels), as the preferred bidder to move the oldest clipper ship in the world, the internationally important City of Adelaide/Carrick from Scotland to South Australia.

“We can now have a link between Scotland and Australia which allows both nations to share the vessel’s historical, cultural and social significance through tourism, interpretation and education.

By Rosemary McKay