

SCOTLAND ON TV

Foxtel viewers In recent times have enjoyed some fine documentaries featuring Scotland. Programmes in the last 18 months have been:-

The Beachcomber: Series, a marine biologist re-establishes a crofters cottage on the west coast near Applecross, looking across to Raasay & Skye. He spends several months imitating Robinson Crusoe and David Attenborough. Hard life, great scenery miserable weather.

The Highland Clans: Series, each episode features a great Clan, with an abridged history, and a focus on peculiar events or characteristics. It highlights their poignant legacy, and looks for contemporary relevance. Noble, raw and shameful tales bravely told. Better with a scotch.

Islands of Britain

What we expect; a land full of loveable eccentrics, colourful traditions and spectacular scenery. A theme "Is life different on the islands?" is almost immediately answered "yes", and little further pretence at intelligence disappeared, and was all about how nice Martin Clunes is. Typical Sunday night fare of corduroy and tartan.

The Sea Kingdoms: Episodic series; seemingly disparate stories, fragments of history and myth are woven together together to portray a race defined by non literate culture and language, and whose ritual and perspective is around the axis of the sea. Plodding, yet insightful. Healthy supplement to the Anglo Saxon diet of who we are.

Great British Journeys :- Thomas Pennant's tour in Scotland and voyage to the Hebrides.

Nick Crane gets about on all terrain and all weather rediscovering the explorations of Britain, and on the way collects trivial ingredients of human life to show us what makes Brits tick. Scenic value, and nostalgia if you've ben there. Confirmation of crappy weather.

Coast: 13 part series, featuring several science disciplines, especially Geography, 12,000km, thousands of years, too ambitious to provide anything more than a spectaclar moosaic. Great set up for subsequent documentaries by the same presenters (eg Nick Crane and Neil Oliver). Excellent by all reports, probably choice weather.

The History of Scotland, (told by Scot Neil Oliver).

Series; and deadly serious. The walking and mostly humourless presenter was as grim as the castle settings for his complex unravelling of Scotland's history. Pay attention, eventually it makes some sense. Unavoidably selective, its sentiment errs in favour of Scots, the Stuarts, and independence; but the resulting truths and reality, are a bitter pill for Scots to swallow. Perhaps that's why he seemed so sour. Excellent revelation of a tangled web of political intrigue and a divided nation.

- Alex