



The Celtic Crescent

Scotland's contacts and connections with the Muslim world are older and more profound than ever thought. Here are some of the individuals and events from history that have helped shape The Celtic Crescent.



Content



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The Origins of the Scots

The story of Gaidel Glas (latinised as Gaythelos) and Scotra was recorded in the earliest history of Scotland – before the 15th Century.



(Scota (left) with Gaidel Glas voyaging from Egypt, as depicted in a 15th-century manuscript of the Scotichronicon of Walter Bower

Gaidel Glas was a great warrior prince with Greek or Scythian origins. He travelled to Egypt during the time of Moses. There he became close to Pharaoh, who gave him the hand of his daughter, Princess Scotra, in marriage.

After the Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the Red Sea, Gaidel Glas, Scotra and their entourage left Egypt. Eventually they settled in north-west Spain, where their language was standardised by Gaidel Glas to what

we now call Gaelic – named after their leader. After some time, the community, known both as Gaels and Scots, migrated again, reaching Ireland. Some reached Scotland, named for the tribe of



Stone Circle marking the Grave of Princess Scotra

Scots, who in turn were named after Princess Scotra of Egypt.

The Declaration of Arbroath cites the origins of the Scots as being from Greater Scythia. Interestingly many Scots have DNA links to North Africa and the Middle East.

Gaidel Glas and Princess Scotra were said to have brought a certain stone with them from Egypt. The book of Genesis calls it "The Pillow of Jacob."

Now known as 'The Stone of Destiny', it was used for centuries in the coronation of Scots kings and queens, so true Scots, have a strong link to North Africa and share their origins, history and blood with the Middle East through Gaidel Glas and Scotra. Perhaps we are not as different as we thought!



King Offa

One of the earliest indications of the Islamic influence in Britain was the coin of King Offa of Mercia (757-796). Offa was one of the most powerful Anglo-Saxon kings and controlled the territory south of the River Humber, taking in most of England.

He built the great Offa's dyke dividing Wales from Mercia and he also minted the first gold coin in Britain, now on display in the British Museum. On one side of the coin is an Arabic inscription of the declaration of the Islamic faith: 'There is no god but Allah'. And on the other side is the Latin inscription: 'Offa Rex'. The coin seems to be an imitation of the gold dinar of the Muslim Abbasid Empire and was probably used for diplomacy and trade.

ARAB COINS found in Scotland

The earliest direct connections between Scotland and the Muslim world would have most likely have been based on mutual trading. The discovery, over the last one hundred years of coins dating back to the ninth century Arab empires have emphasised that connection.

In 1912 a hoard of coins were discovered in Talnotrie, Kirkcudbrightshire, perhaps belonging to traders or even Viking raiders. Amongst this find were some silver coins from Abbasid Empire. The coins bore the name of Abbasid Caliph al Muttawakkil ala Allah who ruled from 847-62. The coins are possibly the first known direct connection between Scotland and the Muslim world.

A similar discovery was made at Storr Rock in Orkney, which uncovered around two dozen coins also originating from the Arab Abbasid Empire. These dirhams were minted at Tashkent and Samarqand between 899 and 943. A further coin was found in Ardeer in Ayrshire, which has not been fully identified other than being an Arab dirham of the 10th century.

The Ballycotton Cross



Amongst the most fascinating of artefacts to be discovered emphasising the Celtic connection to the Muslim world was the discovery of the Ballycotton cross. Described as a 9th Century Christian brooch, it was discovered in the town of Ballycotton in Co. Cork. The brooch was found in a bog and came into the possession of Philip T Gardner an Antiquarian who donated it to the

British Museum.

A most unusual artefact, which perhaps best symbolises the synthesis of two of the world's great religions. Designed as a Celtic cross with Kufic script, enclosed in glass, bearing the inscription of the Bismillah (In the name of God) at its centre.



The Ring o' Brodgar, Orkney

The Wizard of Melrose

Michael Scot, known as the Wizard of Melrose was the son of a Knight in the time of King Alexander II. He was born and brought up in Balwearie, near Kirkcaldy in Fife. In a time when few travelled more than a few miles from their homes, Michael Scot travelled far in pursuit of knowledge and became a very famous philosopher, mathematician, translator and astrologer. In his youth, he travelled to Oxford and then Paris, before travelling to Toledo in Spain to study the depths of knowledge held by Muslim scholars. In Toledo, Scot quickly became proficient in Arabic and translated many important texts from Arabic into Latin.

Even after his departure from Toledo, Michael Scot continued to dress in Muslim robes and kept a Muslim style cropped beard. He was held as the leading intellectual of his age by many notable contemporaries including Pope Honorius, who is reputed to have urged Scot to accept an offer of a position as a Bishop – a post which Scot declined.

After some years in the service of Emperor Frederick of Sicily, Michael Scot returned to Scotland, where he died in 1232. Scot is buried in Melrose Abbey in the Borders, where a statue was erected by his grave, depicting him dressed in his Muslim style robes. Michael Scot's legacy remained long after his death and he is considered to have made a significant contribution towards Europe's Enlightenment, through both his own works and his translations of classical Arabic works.

The First English Qur'an



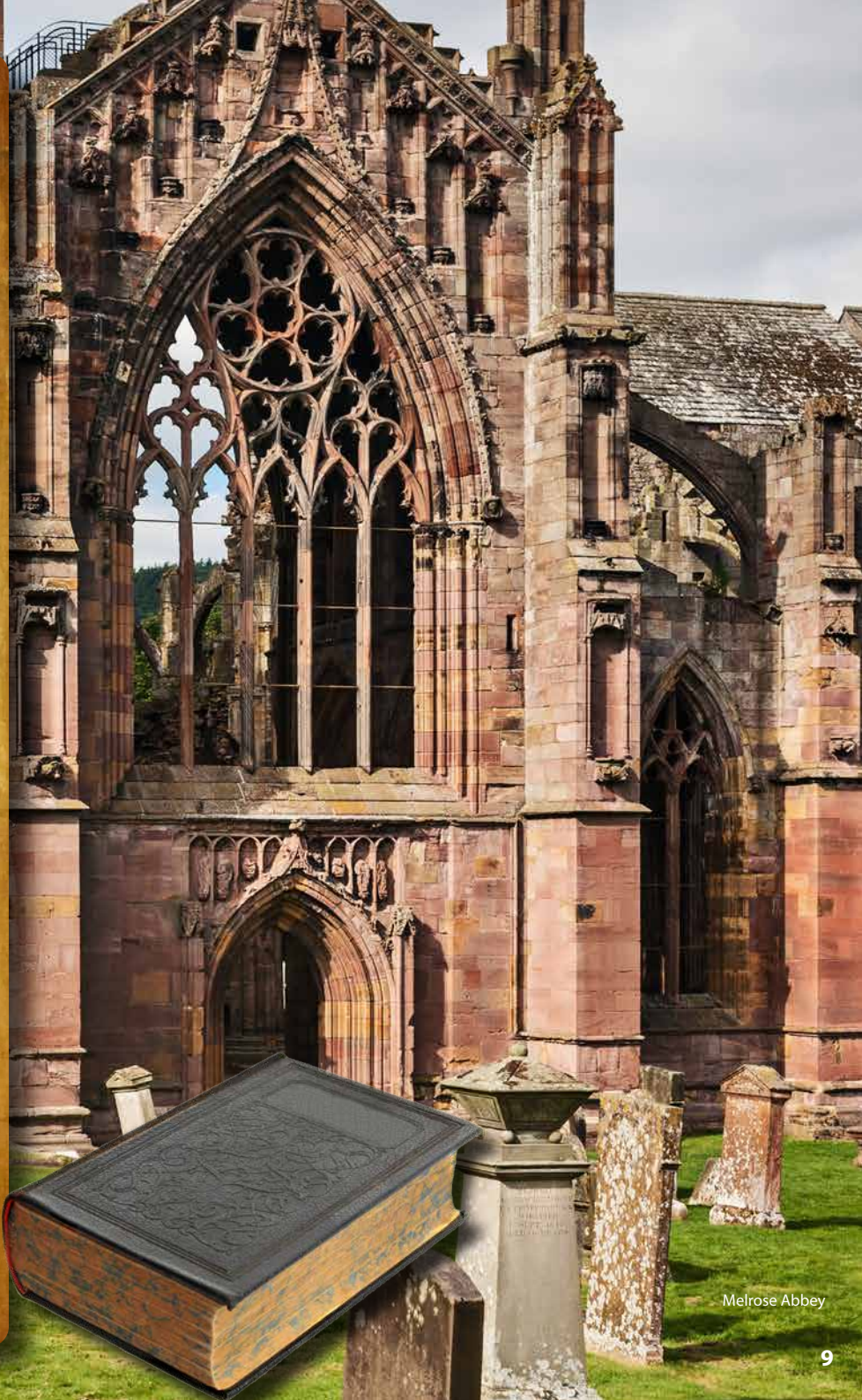
Alexander Ross has the unique distinction of writing the first English translation of the Holy Quran.

Born in Aberdeen in 1590, Ross having graduated from Kings College Aberdeen settled in Southampton from where he rose to become one of King Charles I's chaplains. From 1634 up till his death in 1654 Alexander Ross served as Vicar at St. Mary's Church, Carisbrooke in the Isle of Wight.

Since Alexander Ross knew no Arabic, his translation of the Quran was based on the French version by Du Ryer which appeared in 1657 and entitled; L'Alcoran de Mahomet, (The Koran of Muhammad). Ross also wrote other general Christian works, however he remains best known for his English rendering of the Qur'an.

Although Ross's rendering of the Quran was later superseded by other versions in English most notably George Sale's "Alcoran of Mohammed" (1734), which remained the definitive English version well into the twentieth century.

Ross's English translation of the Quran came about during a heightened interest in Arabic texts in Britain, during which numerous works appeared of Arabic origins. Amongst these was Duncan McConacher's 1598 Gaelic translation of Kitab al Tibb (The Canon of Medicine). The original Arabic work was written by Ibn Sina in 1256, it remained an influential source of medical knowledge until the 19th century when the last English translation was published.



Melrose Abbey

The Mahometan Berry

Coffee is the most popular drink in the world, however the origins of the drink are often overlooked in the convenience of instant drinks from a jar or in the environs of contemporary trendy coffee houses.

The first credible evidence of coffee drinking is from the Sufi Muslim institutions in the Mocha area of Yemen, in the 15th Century. The Sufi devotees used the drink, known as Qawha, to sustain their night-time litanies and devotions and it was therefore seen as an aid to the worshipper. From Yemen, coffee soon spread across the Muslim world, soon being found in Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad before making it's way to Istanbul, the capital of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, where the first coffee house opened in the year 1554.

By the mid 17th Century, Western Europeans had begun to appreciate the aromatic flavour of Coffee and the vigour and energy which it promoted. Coffee soon made it's way to Great Britain and the first coffee house in the UK was opened in 1652 in London. The first coffee houses in Scotland opened in 1673 when Colonel Walter Whiteford opened the first café in Glasgow, followed by another establishment in Edinburgh in the following year.

In these times of religious conservatism, many feared that the growing popularity of 'The Mahometan Berry' would lead to mass conversions to Islam. This was perhaps due to the looming presence of the Ottoman Empire on the fringe of Europe, but also in part to the trend for the owners of coffee houses to dress in traditional Turkish garb, complete with robes and turbans.

The Scottish Mughals



General Sir James Abbott



James Achilles Kirkpatrick



Princess Khair un Nisa

During the era of the British Raj a great many of the officers and statesmen linked to East India Company were of Scots/ Irish origin. Most notable of these were Field Marshall Colin Campbell, General Sir James Abbott and Sir Robert Montgomery, all three had towns named in their honour, in what is now Pakistan; Campbellpur, Montgomery and Abbotabad.

Surprisingly, some amongst the East India Company, in their willingness to emulate the "natives" went as far as entering into interracial marriage and donning the local customs and mannerisms. Most "controversial" of them was Scotsman James Achilles Kirkpatrick b1764, the details of whose life was explored by writer William Dalrymple . Kirkpatrick was a diplomat based in the Muslim princely state of Hyderabad Deccan.

According to Dalrymple in 1801 a "major scandal" broke out which focussed on the behaviour of Kirkpatrick. The chroniclers have recorded that he had stopped wearing British clothes and had taken a preference for what was described as "a Musselman's (Muslim) dress of the finest texture". However what was most alarming was the inter-racial marriage between Kirkpatrick and a young Muslim Princess. Having fallen in love with Khair un Nisa, the granddaughter of the prime minister of Hyderabad, which led to the conversion of Kirkpatrick to Islam, followed by the marriage to the young lady.

The story of James Achilles Kirkpatrick and Khair un Nisa is the main subject of "The White Mughals" by William Dalrymple.



Indian Government buildings, built during British colonial rule, Raj Path, New Delhi, India

The Red Haired Empress of Morocco

Helen Gloag was born in the village of Wester Pett, near Muthill in Perthshire in the year 1750. Her father, Andrew Gloag was a blacksmith, however her mother died when she was still a child and her father remarried. Helen and her step-mother did not get on well and matters came to a head in 1769 due to Helen's friendship with a farmer in the area.

Many Scots were taking the opportunity to travel to the Americas to start a new life in a new land at this time and Helen saved some money before setting off with some friends for Greenock, to sail to North Carolina. Disaster struck however, when the ship that Helen and her friends were travelling aboard was attacked by Salle Pirates off the coast of Spain with all on board being taken captive.

Helen and the other women on board were taken to Rabat in Morocco, where the pirates would make their living by selling captives into slavery. In the slave market, Helen caused considerable interest from would-be purchasers as she was young and strikingly beautiful with red hair and green eyes. An astute businessman saw an opportunity and bought Helen, before gifting her to the Emperor of Morocco, Sidi Muhammad ibn Abdullah – a deeply religious man, well known for his wisdom and diplomacy. Sidi Muhammad very quickly fell in love with the young Scottish lady and married her, also giving her the title of Empress of Morocco. During the years of their marriage, Helen bore Sidi Muhammad 2 sons.



Sultan Sidi
Muhammad

Helen is credited with having influence which secured the release of many British seafarers from the pirates' grasp. She was also able to send letters and gifts back to her family in Perthshire and her brother Robert visited her in Morocco on a number of occasions. Empress Helen's husband, Sidi Muhammad was a skilled diplomat and was the first head of state in the world to recognise the United States of America after the war of independence from the United Kingdom and also the first leader to sign treaties with the U.S.

guaranteeing their ships safe passage through sovereign waters.

In 1790 however, Sidi Muhammad died and his son by another lady, Mawlay Yazeed (also known as Mad Yazeed) seized the throne. Yazeed's first priority was to dispose of any potential rivals to the throne, and his attention quickly fell upon Helen's two sons. It is said that Helen sent a plea for help to the British Navy, who dispatched a gunboat to Rabat, however help arrived too late and Helen's sons were already dead, murdered by Yazeed's forces. After this time, nothing is recorded of Helen although there are varying tales of her suffering the same fate as her sons, or a return to Britain, or a different narration of a monument having been erected in Rabat in memory of a Scottish Empress, implying that she survived the chaos of the time. The name Gloag is still a common name in Perthshire giving a living link to these events from the past.



Kasbah Ait Benhaddou, Morocco



The Scottish Governor of Madinah

Thomas Keith, a native of Edinburgh, was born in the late 18th Century. He joined the regiment of the 78th Highlanders in 1804. Thomas fought in Sicily, in the battle of Maida in 1806. Known as a formidable soldier and armourer, he was given an appointment and dispatched to Alexandria in Egypt, to fight against the Ottoman Empire.

During the ensuing conflict, the British expedition was routed and Thomas was captured by the Turkish Army along with another Scot, William Thompson, also from the same regiment. Both men were taken to Cairo and sold as slaves to Ahmad Aga. Fortunately Ahmad Aga became friends with the two young Scots, who both soon after became Muslim. Thomas became known as Ibrahim Aga, whilst William became Osman.

After a short period of time, Thomas was forced into exile after killing a Sicilian Muslim in a duel. He then joined the

service of Tusoun Pasha, son of the Turkish Viceroy who admired him for his courage and gave him a respected rank in his army. Ibrahim (Thomas) was then sent to counter an insurgency and to retake the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah – the two holiest cities in Islam. Ibrahim fought well and displayed amazing bravery.

In 1815, Ibrahim was promoted to the post of Governor of Madinah – the second holiest city in Islam and the resting place of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Madinah had been the capital of the first Islamic state – now governed by a young Muslim convert from Edinburgh. Ibrahim was sadly killed in battle in 1816 at Makka whilst bravely defending Tusoun Pasha himself.

Osman, formerly the drummer William, lived long and well after these events and despite his acceptance of Islam and it's traditions, was still very firmly Scottish in his identity.

The Gaelic Speaking Turkish General

Archibald Campbell – aka Ingiliz Mustafa - In the year 1800, during the Napoleonic war, the British sent an army under General Abercrombie to expel the French from Egypt. The 92nd Highlanders were stationed at Marmaris, waiting on reinforcements from the Turkish Army. When the Turkish troops arrived, their General – a very dignified, turbaned Turkish officer with a long flowing beard - approached the Scottish troops. To their absolute astonishment, the Turkish General greeted the Scots in Gaelic and conversed fluently with them in their native tongue.

This was 'Ingiliz Mustafa' (English Mustafa) originally Archibald Campbell, hailing from Kintyre in Argyll, Scotland. In his youth, he had quarrelled and fought with a friend whom he killed in a fit of anger near Fort William. This tragedy so affected him that he left Scotland, ultimately reaching Turkey

and joining the Ottoman army and eventually, reaching the rank of General of Artillery under the Ruler Sultan Selim.

Upon meeting fellow countrymen, dressed proudly in their National Military dress and upon hearing the stirring sound of the bagpipes, General Mustafa Campbell began to weep profusely from the remembrance of his homeland. The General ensured that plenty of food was given to the group of Gordon Highlanders. Meanwhile a Colonel from amongst their ranks agreed, on returning to Scotland, to contact General Mustafa's surviving relatives. According to the Colonel's memoirs, the family in Cambeltown began corresponding with General Mustafa, although it is not known if he ever again visited his homeland of Scotland or if he died in Turkish lands. Imagine, a Gaelic-speaking Scot who had risen to the higher echelons of the Ottoman Sultan's army.

Queen Victoria's Munshi



Many young British men went to India as employees of the East India Company in search of wealth. They returned to Britain as a new class of rich men, the 'Nawabs', and brought their Indian servants with them. One of the most famous was Queen Victoria's Muslim servant, the 'Munshi' Abdul Karim, who came in 1887. He became the Queen's teacher and was then promoted to her 'Indian Secretary' and she awarded him the honour of the Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire.

But his influence with the Queen generated hostility among her courtiers and officials, who became determined to pull him down. The Queen declared that the scheming against him was based on 'race prejudice', but after her death, he was sent back to India.

Scotland's First Muslim Doctors

By the time of mid-19th Century Muslims from colonised lands began travelling to Britain in search of economic opportunities as well as for learning. Most preferred to throng to the cities of London, Manchester and Liverpool. However some were more adventurous and braved the colder climate to travel north to Scotland.

Over the course of a millennia, the search for knowledge had become reversed. What began in the middle ages with seekers travelling from Britain eastwards to the Muslim lands of Spain and Sicily to gain knowledge, now found Muslims travelling west to Europe and Britain. Amongst those coming to these shores to learn was the first Muslim student Asyri Bey from Egypt in 1854, who registered as a Medical student at the University of Edinburgh. Bey was soon followed by Wuzeer Baig who is recognised as the first Indian student in Scotland. Baig, from Bombay was an aspiring student when he enrolled as a second year Medical student at the University of Edinburgh during the year 1858-9. By the close of the Nineteenth Century the number of Muslim students across the various universities in Scotland had risen to around 100.

The influx of students to universities across Britain led to the growth of organisations and institutions catering for the needs of foreign students. Amongst the most ambitious projects was the creation of the first purpose built mosque at Woking near London, originally designed to serve Muslim students.



Edinburgh Castle

From Magfair to Makkah



Lady Evelyn Cobbald was born in Edinburgh in 1867, the eldest child of Charles

Adolphus Murray, 7th Earl of Dunmore and Lady Gertrude Coke.

As a child, she spent

most of her winters with her family in North Africa.

In 1891, at the age of 24, Lady Evelyn met John Dupuis Cobbald, whom she married in Cairo. They had three children by the end of the 19th Century, however by the turn of the century Lady Evelyn began travelling without her husband, returning to North Africa in 1911.

From this point Lady Evelyn began regarding herself as Muslim and adopted the Muslim name, Zainab. She has described how her childhood gave her a great affinity with Islam:

"As a child, I spent the winter months in a Moorish villa on a hill outside Algiers.... There I learned to speak Arabic.... and unconsciously I was a little Moslem at heart.... Some years went by and I happened to be in Rome staying with some Italian friends when my host asked if I would like to visit the Pope. Of course I was thrilled.... When His Holiness suddenly addressed me, asking if I was a Catholic, I was taken aback for a moment and then replied that I was a Moslem. What possessed me I don't pretend to know, as I had not given a thought to Islam for many years. A match was lit and I then and there determined to read up and study the Faith."

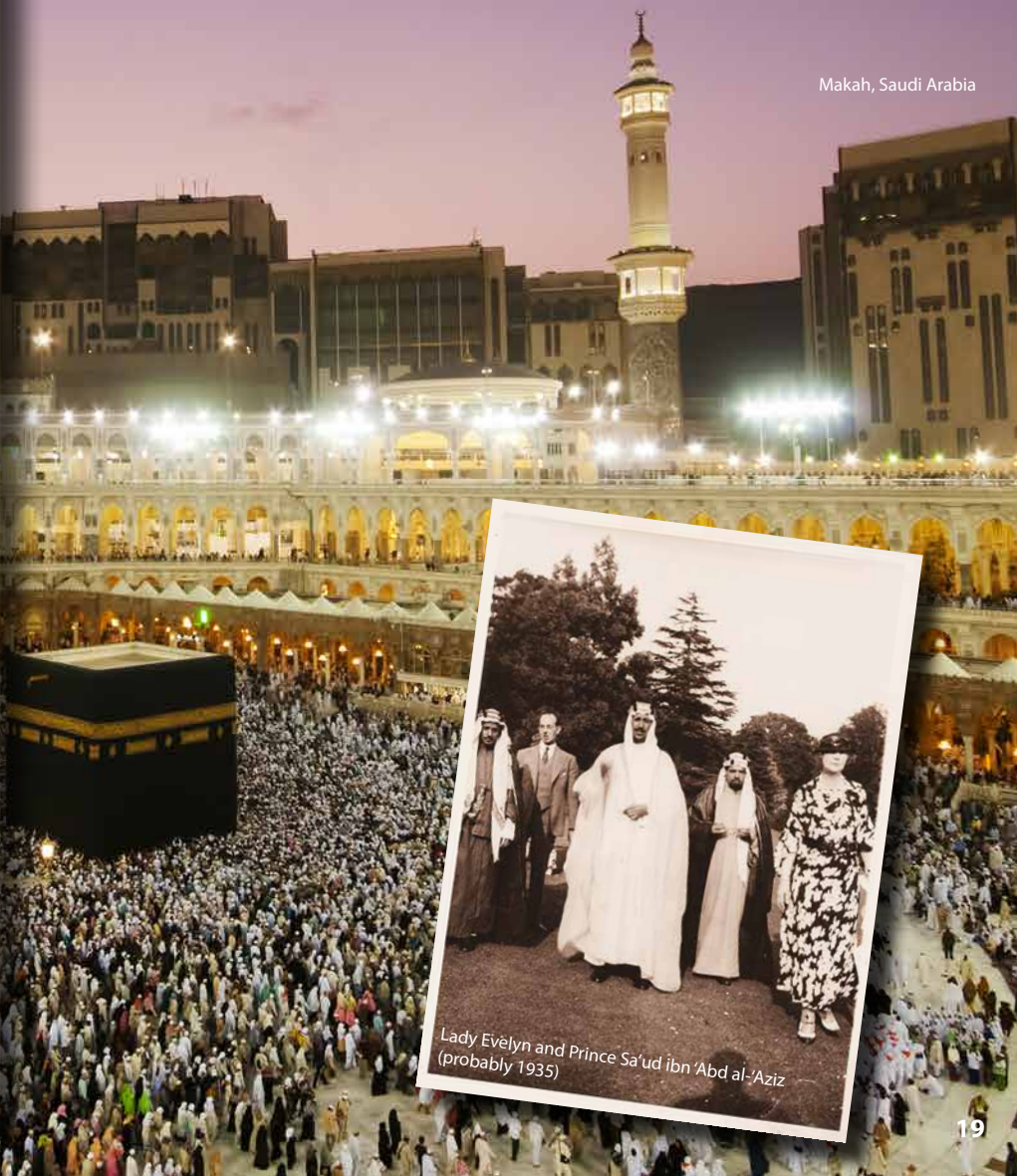
Lady Evelyn became friendly with Marmaduke Pickthall, another

aristocrat who had accepted Islam and who produced one of the most famous translations of the Holy Qur'an into English.

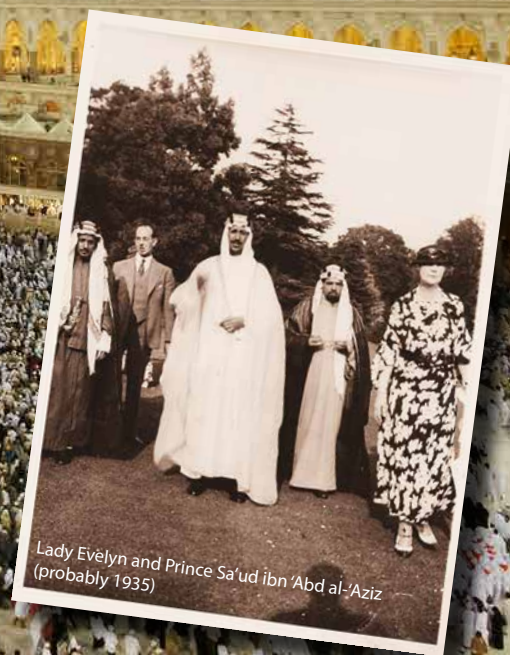
In 1933, Lady Evelyn decided to act on her long held intention to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca – the Hajj. Lady Evelyn contacted Harry St John Philby, a British Muslim residing in Jeddah, who facilitated Lady Evelyn's stay in the Kingdom.

In making the pilgrimage, Lady Evelyn became the first British Muslim woman to perform the rites of the Hajj. Her diarised writings were published in 1934 as the book 'Pilgrimage to Mecca' and serialised in many newspapers, making Lady Evelyn an instant celebrity and leading to an extensive lecturing tour.

Lady Evelyn returned to her highland estate at Strathcarron where she lived a long and active life, dying in 1963. Her wishes were to be buried as a Muslim on her Highland estate. Accordingly the Imam from Woking Mosque in London was called to Strathcarron to conduct her funeral prayer. Whilst a lone piper played 'Macrimmon's Lament' at her graveside – a ceremony completely in keeping with her duality as both a Muslim and a Scottish/British aristocratic Lady. Her grave is marked by a stone bearing an inscription from the Chapter of Light, from the Holy Qur'an: "Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth". In her passing she left behind a legacy in the fascinating story of a daughter of Scotland's journey in Islam and her groundbreaking pilgrimage to Makkah.



Makah, Saudi Arabia



Lady Evelyn and Prince Sa'ud ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz (probably 1935)



Tobermory harbour



William Henry Quilliam



William Quilliam was a solicitor who converted to Islam after a trip to Morocco and returned to found the Liverpool Muslim Institute in 1891. The Institute consisted of a mosque, a madrasah, a library and reading room, a printing-press, a museum, a college, a hostel and an office for a literary society. It was also used for weddings, funerals and to celebrate festivals. On Christmas day, for instance, they would entertain and provide meals for hundreds of poor. Interested Christians were offered morning and evening prayer services on Sundays where hymns were sung, which were adapted by Quilliam to Islamic beliefs and suitable for English speaking Muslim congregations. Quilliam also established a home for unwanted children.

They published two journals to publicise their views and activities and prompted much public debate in the local press. Unfortunately they encountered a great deal of hostility; worshippers were pelted with mud, stones and filth. Foreign policy decisions and the stands taken by the government further boosted anti-Muslim feelings but Quilliam persisted in challenging many of the British people's perceptions and assumptions, though his criticisms of government policy were often rejected by the press as 'un-British'. Nevertheless Quilliam managed to win over about 600 converts over a twenty year period, mainly from the professional middle classes. The Institute declined slowly after Quilliam's departure overseas in 1908.

Yahya-en-Nasr (John) Parkinson

John Parkinson was born in 1874 in Kilwinning, Ayrshire. He was raised by his grandparents after both of his parents died whilst John was in infancy and in adulthood, he supported his grandparents through his employment in the Busby Spinning Company as a wool spinner.

Around the turn of the 20th Century, John accepted Islam and adopted the name Yahya en-Nasr Parkinson. Although he was relatively isolated in Scotland, Yahya maintained regular communications with Shaykh Abdullah Quilliam's Liverpool Muslim Institute and before long he began to produce articles and poetry for some of the institute's publications. In addition to a column published in a local newspaper, under the pseudonym 'Ingomar', Yahya produced several books on Islamic philosophy and a collection of poems titled 'Lays of Love and War' (published from Ardrrossan in 1904). Yahya served as a deputy editor of a newspaper in Rangoon, Burma for two years before returning to the UK due to ill health in 1910. Yahya continued to produce literary works and articles until his death in 1918 however his works have recently enjoyed a revival of interest through contemporary scholars such as Shaykh Abdul Hakim Murad and Brent D Singleton who has republished some of his works in a book titled 'The Convert's Passion'.

The Lascars and Sepoys

During the course of the 19th century Indian sailors known as Lascars began to arrive on British shores. Some small communities of retired and absconded lascars, who sought to escape the sometimes harrowing conditions on the ships, emerged in most of the port cities around Britain, including Glasgow, Leith and Dundee.

Glasgow was recognised as the "Second City of the British Empire" during the Victorian era, and therefore functioned as a major port and trading route. The Anderston district of Glasgow became a prominent community where other lascars from across the country travelled to join. The lascar communities lived in abject poverty, scorned by racism they struggled to find employment, resulting in some resorting to begging.

Dundee was similarly an important town with its jute mills which required the import of raw jute from Bengal. Consequently Indian sailors began to congregate in the city's slums.

A commentator at the time counted Ben Lomond, Aberdeen, Dumbarton and Clydebank as towns where "disciples of the prophet of Mecca wander".

FORGOTTEN HEROES



Of the 4 million British Indian Army (BIA) soldiers of all faiths that fought in both WW1 & 2 to protect Britain, nearly 1.3 million were Muslim that fought alongside their fellow Hindu and Sikh countrymen. The BIA soldiers hailed mainly from present day India and Pakistan with an overall total of nearly 161,000 soldiers that died and 250,000 were injured from all faiths. The bodies of many of these men were never found and the names of those that died during WW1 are

listed on the Menin Gate memorial.

Scotland has a special connection with the BIA by way of a mainly Muslim contingent called Force K6 from WW2, many of whom escaped from Dunkirk and made their way through Brecon Beacons in Wales to the Scottish Highlands. Here they conducted mountain warfare training in cold conditions and 13 of them (from the Pakistan side of undivided India) were laid to rest in Scotland due to disease or accidents. The graves of 9 of these Muslim soldiers are located in Kingussie New Cemetery where they were lovingly tended to by Mrs Isobel Harling BEM for over 60 years who called them 'Her Boys'.



The first Indian recipient of the Victoria Cross in World War I, Khudadad Khan stated, "To die on the battlefield is glory," echoing the feeling amongst many Muslim soldiers that war brought the opportunity for heroism on the battlefield, and the chance to win honour. The notion

of izzat (honour) was one that was used to recruit Muslim men of the empire, and so important was the Muslim contribution in both World Wars that Churchill himself wrote, "We must not on any account break with the Muslims who represent 100 million people and the main army elements which we must rely on for the immediate fighting."

Force K6 graves,
Kingussie, Scotland



Glasgow Central Mosque

A COLOURFUL HERITAGE

By the turn of twentieth century, there was estimated to be around 100 pedlars of Indian origin operating across Scotland, a significant number of those would have been Muslim. Most of these pedlars converged on Glasgow as the main trading hub in Scotland, however as the city increasingly became saturated, some began to seek greener pastures by moving to other cities as well as more rural areas. Peddling remained the staple form of occupation and income for most Muslims in Scotland during the first half of the twentieth century

The aftermath of the Second World War had created a desperate lack of manpower to kick-start the industry and with it the economy. As a result the factories and other works began employing workers from diverse backgrounds, something which till then was almost unheard of. As a result the number of Muslims migrating to Scotland as well as the rest of the UK continued to steadily increase. Most of these new arrivals were eager to take any available work, which included hard labour and unsociable hours. Others were able to enter more respectable jobs such as public transport as bus drivers and conductors.

With the alterations in economic fortunes and lifestyle, by the 1960s those who had started off as pedlars began to abandon the profession and move into more stable forms of business. Many of them began opening corner shops in the main cities of Scotland, as a result of which, by the late 60s very few pedlars remained.

By 1970 the number of Muslims in Scotland had shot up to around 15,000, as a result of the diverse educational backgrounds of these new communities, some sought more professional roles such as within the NHS, finance and the legal profession.

Scotland's First Mosque



Laying the foundation stone for Glasgow Central Mosque

As the Muslim community became more established within Scotland, so grew with it the need to create institutions to serve the new community. With Glasgow quickly becoming the hub of the community, consequently it was here where the community was at its most pro-active. One of the immediate requirements felt by the community was the need to establish somewhere to serve their religious needs.

Accordingly a house in Hospital Street, Gorbals came to be used for the purposes of regular prayers. As the numbers increased, the need for larger premises grew, firstly to Gorbals Street, in 1940 where a hall was hired, then to the purchase of a converted pool hall in Oxford Street, also in Gorbals in 1943, which became the first permanent Mosque in Scotland.

With new affluence came the desire to establish a purpose built mosque, comparable in status to the Regents Park Mosque in London. Consequently a vacant piece of land was purchased in Gorbals in 1976. The new Glasgow Central Mosque was opened in 1984, becoming Scotland's first purpose built mosque, with the size to accommodate up to 2500 worshippers.





'Colourful Heritage' is the largest community heritage focused charitable initiative in Scotland aiming to preserve and celebrate the contributions of the early South Asian and Muslim migrants to Scotland.

It started as an informal conversation amongst a group of friends in 2010 who were concerned that many elders were passing away and their stories would not be remembered. Since its inception it has collated over 125 oral video stories to create an online [video archive](#) of short films providing first-hand accounts of the personal journeys and emotions of the earliest generation of these pioneering migrants.

Our aims are to **capture** history via stories, **celebrate** the community's achievements, and to **inspire** present and future South Asian, Muslim and Scottish generations. We have been actively documenting a collection of inspirational stories and personal accounts, uniquely told by the protagonists themselves in English, Punjabi and Urdu by both men and women, describing at first hand their stories and adventures. They share stories from the time of partition itself to resettling in Pakistan, and arriving in Scotland and making home here. Their stories highlight the many challenges and inspiring lessons that can be learnt from them.

Using the video archive, a number of resources have been created which are available on our website including a [digital timeline](#), a [digital schools resource pack](#) for teachers, [Heritage trails](#) featuring an interactive map of Scotland and information about the [British Indian Army](#) including posters and booklets.

A dedicated physical 'Bashir Maan Archive' is housed at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow. It consists of photographs and documents belonging to Bashir Maan CBE, the first publicly elected Muslim Councillor in the UK and a leading Scottish Pakistani Muslim politician, judge, author and a community activist.

A complete list of our resources can be found in the 'Preserving Scotland's South Asian and Muslim Heritage' article featured in the resource section of our website. These resources have been preserved for present and future generations of the Scottish community and anyone else who has an interest in the evolution of the Scottish South Asian and Muslim community.

Website: www.colourfulheritage.com
Email: info@colourfulheritage.com



Al-Furqan Mosque

Masjid Al Furqan is part of the UK Islamic Mission (Glasgow branch). It is located in the Woodlands area of Glasgow, in Carrington Street, at St. Georges Cross. It is very close to the major universities and colleges of Glasgow. The congregation of the Masjid is very diverse with people from all corners of the world. The Masjid is very inclusive and non-sectarian: welcoming everyone irrespective of their cultural or religious backgrounds. The main language spoken in the Masjid is English, while smaller groups do communicate with each other in various other languages.

Contact Us

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Al-Furqan Study Circles

A major duty of the Masjid is to explain and expound the teachings of Islam. To this end the Masjid organises various Study Circles to cater for all sections of the Community.

Monday Study Circle (English)

This Study Circle for brothers takes place every Monday at 7.30pm. There is an explanation of one of the shorter Surahs of the Qur'an and a lesson from Hadith. There is ample opportunity to ask questions and discuss the items under consideration. All welcome.

Weekly Urdu Dars-E-Qur'an

This is a longstanding activity of the Masjid. A lesson is delivered from some verse of the Qur'an, followed by a Q&A session. There is also a session on everyday Fiqh. All brothers welcome to attend, every **Friday at 7.30pm**.

Ladies Friday Group (English)

A group of ladies meets regularly in the Masjid on **Friday evenings from 7pm to 9pm**. They study various topics on Islam in English. There is a lively discussion session. All ladies are most welcome.

Ladies Sunday Group (Urdu)

A group of ladies meet every **Sunday at 2pm** to study Qur'an and discuss topical subjects in Urdu. All ladies are most welcome to join this group on Sunday afternoons.

Da'wah Stall in Glasgow City Centre

The Masjid has a regular outreach activity in the City Centre of Glasgow. We put up a stall in Buchanan Street every **Saturday from 11:30am to 2:30pm**. We propagate the message of Islam amongst the public on the street; give out Islamic literature including free copies of the Qur'an. We answer any questions and explain the message of Islam. A number of people have reverted to Islam through this activity. You are all welcome to join this activity on Saturday mornings.



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