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Country studies

Essay about my favorite English Speaking country
(Scotland)

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I. A few words about this work.

Though Scotland is a part of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland it still remains an individual country with its own traditions, customs, history and the way of life. In one word, Scotland is not England at all. It is a country with a unique culture full of ancient legends, bright contrasts and mysterious castles. Secrets and mystery always appear immediately when you open a book about Scotland.

But unfortunately you can come across such a problem as lack of literature on this topic. I was lucky to find several books that gave exhaustive information about this magic country. I was so excited by the Scottish national heroes and by this independent nation that I decided to find out more information about them.

Some people say that if you haven't been in Venice you haven't seen Italy at all. I can say that if you haven't been in Scotland you haven't seen Britain at all. As for me I was lucky to visit the capital of England London. But alas! I didn't have any opportunity to visit or just to have a glimpse of Scotland, a land of festivals, kilts and bagpipes.

It seemed to me that after visiting London I know everything about Britain. And only after reading several books about Scotland I realized how wrong I had been. Now I can just say: "I wish I were in Scotland!"

I was seized with an idea of studying more about it and that is why I decided to take this topic for my course paper. I am not sure that I will be able to tell everything that I found out about this country and its people. But I promise to depict all unforgettable events and traditions of the Scottish people that impressed me most of all.

II. Scotland – what does it look like?

1. Geographical position

Scotland, administrative division of the kingdom of Great Britain, occupying the northern third of the island of Great Britain. Scotland is

bounded on the north by the Atlantic Ocean; on the east by the North Sea; on the southeast by England; on the south by Solway Firth, which partly separates it from England, and by the Irish Sea; and on the west by North Channel, which separates it from Ireland, and by the Atlantic Ocean.

As a geopolitical entity Scotland includes 186 nearby islands, the majority of which are contained in three groups-namely, the Hebrides, also known as the Western Islands, situated off the western coast; the Orkney Islands, situated off the northeastern coast; and the Shetland Islands, situated northeast of the Orkney Islands. The largest of the other islands is the Island of Arran. The area, including the islands, is 78,772 sq km (30,414 sqmi).

Scotland has a very irregular coastline. The western coast in particular is deeply penetrated by numerous arms of the sea, most of which are narrow submerged valleys, known locally as sea lochs¹, and by a number of broad indentations, generally called firths. The principal firths are the Firth of Lorne, the Firth of Clyde, and Solway Firth.

Scotland is characterized by an abundance of streams and lakes (lochs). Notable among the lakes, which are especially numerous in the central and northern regions, are Loch Lomond (the largest), Loch Ness, Loch Tay, and Loch Katrine.

Many of the rivers of Scotland, in particular the rivers in the west, are short, torrential streams, generally of little commercial importance. The longest river of Scotland is the Tay; the Clyde, however, is the principal navigational stream, site of the port of Glasgow. Other chief rivers include the Forth, Tweed, Dee, and Spey.

¹ In Scottish "loch" means "lake".

2. Climate

Like the climate of the rest of Great Britain, that of Scotland is subject to the moderating influences of the surrounding seas. As a result of these influences, extreme seasonal variations are rare, and temperate winters and cool summers are the outstanding climatic features. Low temperatures however, are common during the winter season in the mountainous districts of the interior. In the western coastal region, which is subject to the moderating effects of the Gulf Stream, conditions are somewhat milder than in the east.

3. Plant and Animal Life

The most common species of trees indigenous to Scotland are oak and conifers—chiefly fir, pine, and larch. Large forested areas, however, are rare, and the only important woodlands are in the southern and eastern Highlands. Except in these wooded areas, vegetation in the elevated regions consists largely of heather, ferns, mosses, and grasses. Saxifrage, mountain willow, and other types of alpine and arctic flora occur at elevations above 610 m (2000 ft). Practically all of the cultivated plants of Scotland were imported from America and the European continent.

The only large indigenous mammal in Scotland is the deer. Both the red deer and the roe deer are found, but the red deer, whose habitat is the Highlands, is by far the more abundant of the two species. Other indigenous mammals are the hare, rabbit, otter, ermine, pine marten, and

wildcat. Game birds include grouse, blackcock, ptarmigan, and waterfowl. The few predatory birds include the kite, osprey, and golden eagle. Scotland is famous for the salmon and trout that abound in its streams and lakes. Many species of fish, including cod, haddock, herring, and various types of shellfish, are found in the coastal waters.

4.Natural Resources

Scotland, like the rest of the island of Great Britain, has significant reserves of coal. It also possesses large deposits of zinc, chiefly in the south. The soil is generally rocky and infertile, except for that of the Central Lowlands. Northern Scotland has great hydroelectric power potential and contains Great Britain's largest hydroelectric generating stations. Beginning in the late 1970s, offshore oil deposits in the North Sea became an important part of the Scottish economy. The most important city here is Aberdeen which is the oil centre of the country. Ships and helicopters travel from Aberdeen to the North Sea oil rigs. Therefore, Scotland is rather rich in natural resources and sometimes can even condition to England.

5.Population

The people of Scotland, like those of Great Britain in general, are descendants of various racial stocks, including the Picts, Celts, Scandinavians, and Romans. Scotland is a mixed rural-industrial society. Scots divide themselves into Highlanders, who consider themselves of purer Celtic blood and retain a stronger feeling of the clan, and Lowlanders, who are largely of Teutonic blood.

6.Scotland's government.

Government in Scotland is in four tiers. A new Scottish Parliament was elected in 1999, following devolution of powers from the United Kingdom Parliament in London. This is the first time Scotland has had its own parliament in 300 years. The Scottish Parliament, which sits in Edinburgh, is responsible for most aspects of Scottish life. The national parliament in Westminster (London) retains responsibility for areas such as defense, foreign affairs and taxation. The European Parliament in Brussels (Belgium) exercises certain powers vested in the European Union.

The Scottish Parliament is supported by the Scottish Executive also based in Edinburgh. The Scottish Government is led by a First Minister. A Secretary of State for Scotland remains part of the UK Cabinet, and is supported by the Scotland Office (previously the Scottish Office) based in Glasgow, with offices in Edinburgh and London.

Local government is divided into 29 unitary authorities and three island authorities, having been subject to a major reorganization in 1995.

Scotland has its own legal system, judiciary and an education system which, at all levels, differs from that found "south of the border" in England and Wales.

Scotland also has its own banking system and its own banknotes. Edinburgh is the second financial centre of the UK and one of the major financial centres of the world.

The main part.

Early peoples of Scotland and their relations.

(see Appendices, page 23)

Most historians agree that the first man appeared in Scotland as long ago as 6,000 BC. Bone and antler fishing spears and other rudimentary implements found along the western part of the country serve as evidence to support this theory. The Beaker civilization² arrived three thousand years later, and is notable for its henges (of which Stonehenge is one of the most famous). The Beaker people eventually spread as far north as Orkney.

As a result of its geography, Scotland has two different societies. In the center of Scotland mountains stretch to the far north and across to the west, beyond which lie many islands. To the east and to the south the lowland hills are gentler, and much of the countryside is like England, rich, welcoming and easy to farm. North of the "Highland Line"³ people stayed tied to their own family groups. South and east of this line society was more easily influenced by the changes taking place in England.

² Beaker civilization – prehistoric people thought to have been of Iberian origin, who spread out over Europe from the 3rd millennium BC. They were skilled in metalworking, and are identified by their use of distinctive earthenware drinking vessels with various design.

³ "Highland Line" – the division between highland and lowland

Scotland was populated by four separate groups of people. The main group, the Picts, lived mostly in the north and northeast. They spoke Celtic as well as another, probably older, language completely unconnected with any known language today, and they seem to have been the earliest inhabitants of the land.

The non-Pictish inhabitants were mainly Scots. The Scots were Celtic settlers who started to move into the western Highlands from Ireland in the fourth century.

In 843 the Pictish and Scottish kingdoms were united under a Scottish king, who could also probably claim the Picts throne through his mother, in this way obeying both Scottish and Pictish rules of kingship.

The third inhabitants were the Britons, who inhabited the Lowlands, and had been part of the Romano-British world. They had probably given up their old tribal way of life by the sixth century.

Finally, there were Angles from Northumbria who had pushed northwards into the Scottish Lowlands.

Unity between Picts, Scots and Britons was achieved for several reasons. They shared a common Celtic culture, language and background. Their economy mainly depended on keeping animals. These animals were owned by the tribe as a whole, and for this reason land was also held by tribes, not by individual people. The common economic system increased their feeling of belonging to the same kind of society and the difference from the agricultural Lowlands. The sense of common culture may have been increased by marriage alliances between tribes. This idea of common landholding remained strong until the tribes of Scotland, called "clans"⁴, collapsed in the eighteenth century.

The spread of Celtic Christianity also helped to unite the people. The first Christian mission to Scotland had come to southwest Scotland in about AD 400. Later, in 563, Columba, known as the "Dove of the Church", came from Ireland. Through his work both Highland Scots and Picts were brought to Christianity. He even, so it is said, defeated a monster in Loch Ness, the first mention of this famous creature. By the time of the

⁴ Everybody in the clan had the same family name, like MacDonald or MacGregor (mac means "son of"). The clan had its own territory and was ruled by a chieftain.

Synod of Whitby in 663, the Picts, Scots and Britons had all been brought closer together by Christianity.

The Angles were very different from the Celts. They had arrived in Britain in family groups, but they soon began to accept the authority from people outside their own family. This was partly due to their way of life. Although they kept some animals, they spent more time growing crops. This meant that land was held by individual people, each man working in his own field. Land was distributed for farming by the local lord. This system encouraged the Angles of Scotland to develop a non-tribal system of control, as the people of England further south were doing. This increased their feeling of difference from the Celtic tribal Highlanders further north.

Finally, as in Ireland and in Wales, foreign invaders increased the speed of political change. Vikings attacked the coastal areas of Scotland, and they settled on many of the islands, Shetland, the Orkneys, the Hebrides, and the Isle of Man southwest of Scotland. In order to resist them, Picts and Scots fought together against the enemy raiders and settlers. When they couldn't push them out of the islands and coastal areas, they had to deal with them politically. At first the Vikings, or "Norsemen", still served the King of Norway. But communications with Norway were difficult. Slowly the earls of Orkney and other areas found it easier to accept the king of Scots as their overlord, rather than the more distant king of Norway.

However, as the Welsh had also discovered, the English were a greater danger than the Vikings. In 934 the Scots were seriously defeated by a Wessex army pushing northwards. The Scots decided to seek the friendship of the English, because of the likely losses from war. England was obviously stronger than Scotland but, luckily for the Scots, both the north of England and Scotland were difficult to control from London. The Scots hoped that if they were reasonably peaceful the Sassenachs⁵ would leave them along.

Scotland remained a difficult country to rule even from its capital, Edinburgh. Anyone looking at a map of Scotland can see that control of the Highlands and islands was

⁵ so they called the Saxons (and still call the English)

a great problem. Travel was often impossible in winter, and slow and difficult in summer.
It was easy for a clan chief or noble to throw off the rule of the king.

II. "...we will never consent to subject ourselves to the dominion of the English."

England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland were once known as the British Isles. Nowadays this term is normally used only in Geography. In fact, the people of these isles have seldom been politically or culturally united. English kings started wars to unite the British Isles from the 12th century. These wars were wars of conquest and only the Welsh war was a success.

At that time England was ruled by several ambitious kings, who wanted to conquer more countries for themselves and to add more titles to their names. They had, as a rule, absolutely no interest in the people of the countries that they wished to conquer. It did not concern them that these wars brought misery to the people in whose land they fought. The result was generally to create a strong, national, patriotic feeling in the invaded country, and a great hatred of the invader.

I don't have much space here to speak about the history of Scotland in details that is why I'd like to mention one historical episode which shows the Scottish attitude towards freedom and independence. (For the chronology of the events in the history of Scotland see Appendices,

page 24).

Although Scottish kings had sometimes accepted the English king as their "overlord", they were much stronger than the many Welsh kings had been. Scotland owes its clan system partly to an Englishwoman, Margaret, the Saxon Queen of Malcolm III. After their marriage in 1069, she introduced new fashions and new ideas to the Scottish court – and among the new ideas was the feudal system of land tenure. Until that time, most of the country had been divided into seven semi-independent tribal provinces. Under the feudal system, all land belonged to the king, who distributed it among his followers in exchange for allegiance and service. But a Highland chieftain could easily ignore a far-off Lowland king and, as time went by, the clan chiefs became minor kings themselves. They made alliances with other clans, had the power of life and death over their followers.

By the 11th century there was only one king of Scots, and he ruled over all the south and east of Scotland. In Ireland and Wales Norman knights were strong enough to fight local chiefs on their own. But only the English king with a large army could hope to defeat the Scots. Most English kings did not even try, but Edward I was different.

The Scottish kings were closely connected with England. Since Saxon times marriages had frequently taken place between the Scottish and English royal families. At the same time the Scottish kings wanted to establish strong government and so they offered land to Norman knights from England in return for their loyalty.

In 1290 a crisis took place over the succession to the Scottish throne. On a stormy night in 1286 King Alexander of Scotland was riding home along a path by the sea in the dark. His horse took a false step, and the king was thrown from the top of a cliff.

Disputes arose at once among all those who had any claim at all to the Scottish throne. Finally two of the claimants, John de Balliol and Robert Bruce, were left. Scottish nobles wanted to avoid civil war and invited Edward I to settle the matter. Edward had already shown interest in joining Scotland to his kingdom. He wanted his son to marry Margaret, the heir to the Scottish throne, but she had died in a shipwreck. Now he had another chance. He told both men that they must do homage to him, and so accept his overlordship, before he would help settle the question. He then invaded Scotland and put one of them, John de Balliol, on the Scottish throne.

De Balliol's four years as a king were not a success. First Edward made him provide money and troops for the English army and the Scottish nobles rebelled. They felt that Edward was ruining their country.

Then Edward invaded Scotland again, and captured all the main Scottish castles. During this invasion he stole the sacred Stone of Destiny from Scone Abbey. The legend said that all Scottish kings must sit on it. Edward believed that without the Stone, any Scottish coronation would be meaningless, and that his own possession of the Stone would persuade the Scots to accept him as king. However, neither he nor his successors became kings of Scots, and the Scottish kings managed perfectly well without the stone.

All this led to the creation a popular resistance movement. At first it was led by William Wallace, a Norman-Scottish knight. But after one victory against English army, Wallace's "people's army" was itself destroyed by Edward in 1297.

It seemed that Edward had won after all, Wallace was captured and executed. His head was put on a pole on London Bridge. Edward tried to make Scotland a part of England as he had already done with Wales. Some Scottish nobles accepted him, but the people refused to be ruled by the English king. Scottish nationalism was born on the day Wallace died.

A new leader took up the struggle. This was Robert Bruce, who had competed with John de Balliol for the throne. He was able to raise an army and defeat the English army in Scotland. Edward the I gathered another great army and marched against Robert Bruce, but he died on the way north in 1327. On Edward's grave were written the words "Edward, the Hammer of the Scots". He had intended to hammer them into the ground and destroy them, but in fact he had hammered them into a nation.

After Edward's death Bruce had enough time to defeat his Scottish enemies, and make himself accepted as king of the Scots. He then began to win back the castles still held by the English. When the son of his old enemy Edward II invaded Scotland in 1314 Bruce destroyed his army at Bannockburn, near Stirling. Six years later, in 1320, the Scots clergy meeting in Arbroath wrote to the Pope in Rome to tell him that they would never accept English authority: "for as long as even one hundred of us remain alive, we will never consent to subject ourselves to the dominion of the English."

In the long, bitter struggle for independence, Scotland never capitulated, and when at last it became part of the United Kingdom in 1707 it was by treaty, even if many Scots regarded the Act of Union⁶ as a piece of treachery. It is still a land apart, with a very separate culture. Scotland retained its separate legal and ecclesiastical systems, and until well into the 20th century its separate system of free education was the most advanced and generous in Britain. Nowadays, it has its own Parliament.

III. Scotland's beautiful capital.

⁶ Act of Union – 1707 act of Parliament that brought about the union of England and Scotland

1. Introduction

Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. This distinction is partly an accident of Nature, for the city is built upon jumble of hills and valleys; however, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the natural geography was enhanced by the works of a succession of distinguished Georgian and Victorian architects.

Evidence that Stone Ages settlers lived in Edinburgh has been found on Calton Hill⁷, Arthur's Seat⁸ and Castlehill, and the town's early history centres around Castlehill. Some historians believe that this volcanic hill was a tribal stronghold as early as 600 BC.

One tribe who definitely made their mark were a group of Nothumbrians, whose 7th-century king Edwin⁹, is thought to have given his name to the castle and town. "Burgh" is a Scottish word for borough (a small town).

2. Edinburgh's Castle

The Royal Castle of Edinburgh is the most powerful symbol of Scotland. For centuries, this mighty fortress has dominated its surroundings with a majesty, which has deeply impressed many generations.

The volcanic castle rock in Edinburgh was born over 340 million years ago following a violent eruption deep in the earth's crust. Its story as a place of human habitation stretches back a mere 3,000 years, to the late Bronze Age. It was evidently a thriving hill-top settlement when Roman soldiers marched by in the first century AD.

The place had become an important royal fortress by the time of Queen Margaret's¹⁰ death there in November 1093. Throughout the Middle Ages Edinburgh Castle ranked as

⁷ Calton Hill – overlooks Central Edinburgh from the east.

⁸ Arthur's Seat – hill of volcanic origin to the east of the centre of Edinburgh. It forms the core of Holyrood Park and is a dominant landmark: Castlehill is the rock of volcanic origin on which Edinburgh Castle is situated.

⁹ Edwin (c585 – 633) – king of Nothumbria from 617. He captured and fortified Edinburgh, which was named after him.

one of the major castles of the kingdom and its story is very much the story of Scotland. But within the building of the Palace of Holyroodhouse in the early 16th century, the castle was used less and less as a royal residence, though it remained symbolically the heart of the kingdom.

Edinburgh Castle is the home of the Scottish Crown Jewels, the oldest Royal Regalia in Britain. The Honours of Scotland – the Crown, Sword and Sceptre – were shaped in Italy and Scotland during the reigns of King James IV and king James V and were first used together as coronation regalia in 1543.

After the 1707 Treaty of Union between Scotland and England, the Honours were locked away in the Crown Room and the doors were walled up. 111 years later, the Honours were rediscovered and immediately displayed to the public. Displayed with the Crown Jewels is the Stone of Destiny, returned to Scotland after 700 years in England.

Edinburgh Castle boasts having the giant siege gun Mons Meg in its military collection. Mons Meg (or simply “Mons”) was made at Mons (in present-day Belgium) in 1449. It was at the leading edge of artillery technology at the time: it weighs 6040 kilogrammes and its firing gunstones weigh 150 kilogrammes. It soon saw action against the English. But its great weight made it ponderously slow to drag around – it could only make 5 kilometres a day. By the middle of the 16th century it was retired from military service and restricted to firing salutes from the castle ramparts. It was returned to the castle in 1829.

3. The Military Tattoo

For many visitors the castle means nothing without the Edinburgh Military Tattoo¹¹ which is taking place at the Castle Esplanade. The esplanade had been a narrow rocky ridge until the middle of the 18th century when the present platform was created as a parade ground.

¹⁰ St. Margaret (c1045 – 1093) – Queen of Scotland. She was canonized in 1251 in recognition of her benefactions to the church.

¹¹ Tattoo – the word derives from the Dutch word “tap-toe”, which means “turn off the taps”.

The signal (Tattoo) indicated that soldiers should return to their quarters and that the beer in the taverns should be turned off. This signal was transmitted by drum beat each evening. Eventually this developed into a ceremonial performance of military music by massed bands.

It began when the city held its first International Festival in the summer of 1947. The Army staged an evening military display on the Esplanade. The march and counter-march of the pipes and drums which was held near one of the most dramatic places anywhere in the world made it an immediate success. The Tattoo has been repeated every summer since on the same site. Each Tattoo closes with another "tradition"- the appearance of the lone piper on the battlements of the castle.

4. St. Giles' Cathedral

If Edinburgh Castle has been at the centre of Scottish life for 9 centuries, St. Giles' Cathedral, the High Kirk of Edinburgh, has been the religious heart of Scotland for even longer.

In 854 there was a church. It belonged to Lindisfarne, where Columba's monks first brought the Gospel from Iona. In 1150, the monks of St. Giles' were farming lands round about and a bigger church was built by the end of the century. The first parish church of Edinburgh was dedicated to St. Giles, a saint popular in France. It was probably due to the Auld Alliance of Scotland and France against the common enemy of England.

St. Giles' Cathedral is one of the most historic and romantic buildings in Scotland. Founded in 1100s, this church has witnessed executions, riots and celebrations. Its famous crown spire has dominated Edinburgh's skyline for over 500 years. Scotland was a Catholic nation until the Reformation in the mid-16th century.

John Knox¹², the fiery "Trumpeter of God", who preached against Popery, brought St. Giles into great prominence. Knox's aim was to create a reformed Church of Scotland, to banish "popery", to strengthen democracy and to set up a system of comprehensive education. The religious transition was to take 130 years of struggle to achieve.

¹² Knox, John (1513 (1514) – 1572) – Scottish reformer, founder of the Church of Scotland

Many of the famous Scots are commemorated in the church, including R. Burns and R. L. Stevenson.

The Giles is famous for its Thistle Chapel, which is home to the Order of the Thistle¹³ and honours some of the greatest Scots of the last 300 years. This exquisite little room will take one's breath away. Its magnificent carvings and stonework evoke the ancient origins of the order and will amaze anyone with a wealth of details associated with Scotland, for example, the angel that plays the bagpipe.

5. Edinburgh's museums.

In the field of arts, Edinburgh has a host of outstanding attractions for different tastes and interests. The Scottish National Portrait Gallery provides a unique visual history of Scotland, told through portraits of the figures who shaped it: royals and rebels, poets and philosophers, heroes and villains. All the portraits are of Scots, but not all are by Scots. The collection also holds works by great English, European and American masters. Since the Gallery first opened its doors, the collection has grown steadily to form a kaleidoscope of Scottish life and history. Among the most famous portraits are Mary, Queen of Scots, Ramsay's portrait of philosopher David Hume, Nasmyth's portrait of Robert Burns, and Raeburn's Sir Walter Scott. In addition to paintings, it displays sculptures, miniatures, coins, medallions, drawings, watercolours and photographs.

The Royal Museum and the Museum of Scotland are two museums under one roof. The Royal Museum is Scotland's premier museum and international treasure-house. It contains material from all over the world. A vast and varied range of objects are on display – from the endangered Giant Panda to working scale models of British steam engines. The Museum of Scotland tells the remarkable story of a remarkable country from the geological dawn of time to modern-day life in Scotland. The variety and richness of Scotland's long and vibrant history, is brought to life by the fascinating stories each object and every gallery has to tell.

¹³ The Order of the Thistle – Scotland's highest order

At the heart of the museum is the Kingdom of the Scots. This is the story of Scotland's emergence as a distinctive nation able to take its place on the European stage. Here are the icons of Scotland's past – objects connected with some of the most famous events and best-known figures in Scottish history, from the Declaration of Arbroath¹⁴ to Mary, Queen of Scots.

Described as “the noisiest museum in the world”, the Museum of Childhood is a favourite with adults and children alike. It is a treasure house, full of objects telling of childhood, past and present. The museum has five public galleries. A list of their contents makes it sound like a magical department store. There are riding toys, push and pull toys, doll's prams, yachts and boats, slot machines, a punch and judy, a nickelodeon, a carousel horse, dolls' houses, toy animals, zoos, farms and circuses, trains, soldiers, optical toys, marionettes, soft toys, games and much, much more.

In addition, the museum features a time tunnel (with reconstructions of a school room, street scene, fancy dress party and nursery from the days of our grandparents) an activity area, and video presentations. The museum opened in 1955 was the first museum in the world to specialize in the history of childhood. It also helps to find out how children have been brought up, dressed and educated in decades gone by.

“The People's Story” is a museum with a difference. As the name implies, it uses oral history, reminiscence, and written sources to tell the story of the lives, work and leisure of the ordinary people of Edinburgh, from the late 18th century to the present day. The museum is filled with the sounds, sights and smells of the past – a prison cell, town crier, reform parade, cooper's workshop, fishwife, servant at work, dressmaker, 1940s kitchen, a wash-house, pub and tea-room.

These reconstructions are complimented by displays of photographs, everyday objects and rare artifacts, such as the museum's outstanding collections of trade union banners and friendly society regalia.

6. Where life is one long festival.

¹⁴ Declaration of Arbroath – Declaration 26 April 1320 by Scottish nobles to their loyalty to King Robert I and of Scotland's identity as a kingdom independent of England.

Edinburgh may be called the Athens of the North, but from mid-August to early September that's probably because it's hot, noisy and overpriced – and crawling with foreign students.

Over the next three weeks the population will double as half a million visitors invade Britain's most majestic city.

If you are a theatre buff or a comedy fan, Edinburgh at Festival time¹⁵ will be your idea of heaven. But the city is a centre for culture all year round.

In the run-up to Christmas there are hundreds of shows, including Noel Coward's *Relative Values* at the King's Theatre and the Anatomy Performance Company's dance theatre at the Traverse. *Romeo and Juliet* is at the Traverse, *Les Misérables* at the Playhouse and *The Recruiting Officer* at the Lyceum. And outside Festival time, you'll find it a lot easier to get tickets.

As for the visual arts, Edinburgh's museums more than match any of the special exhibitions mounted during the Festival.

Most attractive is the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, in a stately home on the outskirts of the city. Here you can find unbeatable masterpieces created by Picasso, Matisse and Hockney.

If shopping is more your style, Jenners¹⁶, on Princes Street, is Edinburgh's answer to Harrods. And the Scottish Gallery on George Street is a happy hunting ground for collectors of fine art. Edinburgh is full of good hotels but its dramatic sky-line is dominated by two enormous hostelrys at either end of Princes Street. The Caledonian and the Balmoral (formerly the North British) were built by rival railway companies in the days when competing steam trains raced from London.

You can also have a look at the Gothic monument to Sir Walter Scott, which stands in East Princes Street Gardens and was begun in 1840. It is rather high, and narrow staircase (a total of 287 steps in several stages) offers spectacular views of the city. Not far

¹⁵ Edinburgh Festival has annually been held since 1947. It takes place from August to September and includes music, drama, opera and art exhibition.

¹⁶ Jenners – the oldest independent department store in the world.

from the monument in Princes Street Gardens one can find the oldest Floral Clock in the world, built in 1903, consisting of about 25,000 flowers and plants.

Like all the best capitals, Edinburgh boasts cosmopolitan influences. Asian shopkeepers sell Samosas and Scotch (mutton) pies in the same thick Scots brogue, and the city is littered with Italian restaurants.

The city has three universities: the University of Edinburgh (1583), Herriot-Watt¹⁷ (established in 1885; received university status in 1966) and Napier¹⁸ University.

Edinburgh is also an industrial centre. Its industries include printing, publishing, banking, insurance, chemical manufacture, electronics, distilling, brewing.

Conclusion.

I. "Scottishness".

Oh Scotia! My dear, my native soil!

Robert Burns

Scotland is a country of great variety with its own unique character and strong tradition. Its cities offer a mixture of designer lifestyle and age old tradition, while the countryside ranges from Britain's highest mountains and waterfalls to the most stunning gorges and glens.

Scotland's national tradition is rather intense and much alive even now and is rather rare in the modern world. Scotland is part of Britain. But it is not England. The Scottishness is a real thing, not an imaginary feeling, kind of picturesque survival of the past. It is based on Scot's law which is different from the English. Scotland has its own national heroes fought in endless battles against the English (William Wallace, Sir John the Grahame , Robert Bruce and others).

1. 'A wee dram'

¹⁷ Heriot, George (1563 – 1624) – Scottish goldsmith and philanthropist; Watt, James (1736 – 1819) – Scottish engineer who developed the steam engine in 1760.

¹⁸ Napier, John (1550 – 1617) – Scottish mathematician who invented logarithms in 1614.

Scots have their own national drink, and you need only ask for Scotch, and that's quite enough, you get what you wanted. More than half of Scotland's malt whisky distilleries are in the Grampian Highlands, and thus a third of the world's malt whisky is distilled here. A combination of fertile agricultural land, a sheltered, wet climate and the unpolluted waters of the River Spey and its tributaries, combined with the obvious enthusiasm of the locals for the work (and the product!) mean it is an ideal place to produce malt whisky. Many distilleries are open to visitors, and often offer samples!

The Scots are fond of the following joke about scotch:

A young man arrives in a small village situated near Loch Ness. There he meets an old man and asks him:

- When does the Loch Ness Monster usually appear?
- Usually it appears after the third glass of Scotch, - answered the man.

2.Scottish national dress.

There is also a distinctive national dress, the kilt. Strictly speaking it should be worn only by men; it is made of wool and looks like a pleated skirt. The kilt is a relic of the time when the clan system existed in the Highlands. But its origin is very ancient. The Celtic tribes who fought Ceasar wore kilts. When the Celts moved north up through Cornwall, and Wales, and Ireland, and eventually to Scotland, they brought the kilt with them. A thousand years ago, there was nothing specially Scottish about it. Now it has become the Highland's national dress and is worn in many parts of Scotland. It is probably the best walking-dress yet invented by man: there is up to 5 metres of material in it; it is thickly pleated at the back and sides; it is warm, it is airy, leaves the legs free for climbing; it stands the rain for hours before it gets wet through; it hangs well above the mud and the wet grass; briefly it is warm for a cold day, and cool for a warm one. And, what is more, if a Highlander is caught in the mountains by the night, he has but to unfasten his kilt and

wrap it around him – 5 metres of warm wool – he'll sleep comfortably enough the night through.

3. A few words about tartan.

Every Scottish clan had its own tartan.¹⁹ People in Highlands were very good weavers. They died their wool before weaving it; the dyes were made from various roots and plants which grew in this or that bit of land. Therefore one clan dyed its wool in reddish colours, another in green, and so on. And they decorated them differently so as to distinguish the clansmen in battle (especially between neighboring clans which happened rather often).

On the subject of shopping for tartan, the choice is wide. Some designs are associated with particular clans and retailers will be happy to help you find “your” own pattern. By no means all tartans belong to specific clans – several are “district” tartans, representing particular areas. The fascinating story of the tartan itself is told at the Museum of Scottish Tartans.

The museum possesses lots of rare exhibits. One of them is the remarkable woman's Plaid or Arisaid, the oldest dated in the world: 1726. The Arisaid, worn only by women, reached from head to heels, belted at the waist and pinned at the breast.

The oldest piece of Tartan found in Scotland dates back from about 325 AD. The cloth was found in a pot near Falkirk²⁰, a simple check in two shades of brown, a long way from the checked and coloured tartans that came to be worn in the Highlands of Scotland in the 1550s. There are now over 2,500 tartan designs, many of them are no more than 20 years old.

¹⁹ Tartan – it is traditional Scottish drawing which consists of wide and narrow cross stripes of different colour and size; the softest wool of vivid colouring.

²⁰ Falkirk – unitary authority, Scotland, 37 kilometres west of Edinburgh.

4.The national musical instrument of the Scots.

Scotland has its own typical musical instrument, the pipes (sometimes called the bagpipes). The bagpipe was known to the ancient civilizations of the Near East. It was probably introduced into Britain by the Romans. Carvings of bagpipe players on churches and a few words about them in the works of Chaucer and other writers show that it was popular all over the country in the Middle Ages.

In Scotland the bagpipe was first recorded in the 16th century during the reign of James I, who was a very good player, and probably did much to make it popular. For long it has been considered a national Scottish instrument. Even now it is still associated with Scotland.

The sound of the bagpipes is very stirring. The old Highland clans and later the Highland regiments used to go into battle to the sound of the bagpipes.

The bagpipe consists of a reed pipe, the “chanter”, and a wind bag which provides a regular supply of air to the pipe. The wind pipe is filled either from the mouth or by a bellows which the player works with his arm. The chanter has a number of holes or keys by means of which the tune is played.

5.Highland’s dances and games.

You can also find in Scotland its own national dances, Highland dances and Scottish country dances; its own songs (some of which are very popular all aver Britain), its poetry (some of which is famous throughout the English-speaking world), traditions, food and sports, even education, and manners.

Speaking about sports I can’t but mention Highland Gatherings or Games held in Braemar. They have been held there since 1832, and since Queen Victoria visited them in 1848 the games have enjoyed royal patronage. The Games consist of piping competitions, tugs-of-war (a test of strength in which two teams pull against other on a rope, each trying

to pull the other over the winning line), highland wrestling and dancing, and tossing the caber.²¹

²¹ Tossing the caber – Scottish athletic sport. The caber (a tapered tree trunk about 6 metres long, weighing about 100 kilograms) is held in the palms of the cupped hands and rests on the shoulder. The thrower runs forward and tosses the caber, rotating it through 180 degrees so that it lands on its opposite end and falls forward. The best competitors toss the caber about 12 metres.

6. The famous Loch Ness.

Fact or fiction, the Loch Ness monster is part of Loch Ness's magnetic appeal to visitors. But there is much more to do and see around the shores of this famous waterway than just monster-spotting, and a pleasant day, or even longer, can be spent exploring the many activities. 24 miles long, a mile wide and up to 700 feet deep Loch Ness is a land-locked fresh water lake lying at the eastern end of the Great Glen²², a natural geological fault which stretches across the width of Scotland. The loch forms part of the Caledonian Canal completed by the celebrated civil engineer Thomas Telford (1757 – 1841), in 1822. Telford took 19 years to build the canal, which spared coastal shipping and fishing vessels a voyage through the waters of the Pentland Firth²³.

The story of Nessiteras Rhombopteryx or Nessie for short in Loch Ness has persisted down the centuries. The monster was first mentioned in AD 565 when St Columba allegedly persuaded it not to eat someone. Since records began, in 1933, more than 3000 people have claimed to have seen it, but others are skeptical. They point out that no good photographs exist of the monster, that there have been no eggs found, no dead monsters (can it really be 2563 years old?) nor any other compelling evidence. Believers think the monster is a plesiosaur, an otherwise extinct sea-dwelling reptile. Anyone who did prove conclusively the monster's existence would be hailed as a pioneer, so it is no surprise to learn that monster-spotting is a popular pastime!

The Official Loch Ness Monster Centre is opened all year round and has exhibits showing geology, prehistory and history of Scotland, along with SONAR records and underwater photography relating to the monster.

The **Original Visitor Centre** offers a half hour video of the monster detailing the research that has taken place, along with a video about Bonnie Prince Charlie.

²² Great Glen – valley in Scotland following coast-to-coast geological fault line, which stretches over 100 kilometres south-west from Inverness on the North Sea to Fort William on the Atlantic coast.

²³ Pentland Firth – channel separated the Orkney Islands from the northern mainland of Scotland.

The loch has been surveyed for decades, by the RAF²⁴, eminent scientists, cranks, crackpots, mini-submarines and millions of pounds worth of high technology, including NASA²⁵ computers. And still there is no proof...

7. Saint Andrew's cross.

The Church of Scotland, a Presbyterian²⁶ denomination, is the official state church. The Roman Catholic church is second in importance. Other leading denominations are the Episcopal Church in Scotland, Congregationalist, Baptist, Methodist, and Unitarian. Jews are a small minority.

St. Andrew's cross is the national flag of Scotland. It consists of two diagonal white stripes crossing on a blue background. The flag forms part of the British national flag (Union Jack).

The flag of Presbyterian Church differs a little bit from that of Scotland. It is also St. Andrew's cross but with a little addition: it has a burning bush centered, which signifies Presbyterianism.

The symbol comes from the motto of the Presbyterian Church, *nec tamen consumebatur* (neither was it consumed) referring the bush that burnt, but was not consumed, so will be the church that will last for ever.

St. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. He was a New Testament apostle who was martyred on an X-shaped cross. He was said to have given the Pictish army a vision of this cross at the battle of Athenstoneford between King Angus of the Picts and King Athelstan of the Angles. St. Andrew was foisted upon Scotland as its patron when the old Celtic and Cudlee centers were superseded by the new bishopric of St. Andrew's. His feast-day is 30 November. On this day some Scotsmen wear a thistle²⁷ in the buttonhole.

One of the greatest treasures of Huntley House Museum (Edinburgh) is the national Covenant, signed by Scotland's Presbyterian leadership in 1638. Covenanters are

²⁴ RAF – Royal Air Force, the British airforce.

²⁵ NASA – National Aeronautics and Space Administration, a US government organization that controls space travel and the scientific study of space.

²⁶ Presbyterianism – a religion close to Protestantism

17th-century Scottish Presbyterians who bound themselves by covenants to maintain Presbyterianism as the sole religion of Scotland and helped to establish the supremacy of Parliament over the monarch in Scotland and England. Early covenants supporting Protestantism were signed in 1557 and in 1581. In 1638 the covenant of 1581 was revived, and its signatories added a vow to establish Presbyterianism as the state religion of Scotland.

²⁷ Thistle is also the emblem of the whole Scotland.

II.Scotland for every season.

If you hunt for the real Scotland, there will be many times when you know you have found it: when you hear your first Highland Piper with the backdrop of Edinburgh Castle; on some late, late evening on a far northern beach as the sun sets into a midsummer sea; or with your first taste of a malt whisky, peat-smoked and tangy; or when you sit in a café with the real Scots. By the way, the Scots are very sociable people. They like to spend their free time together, drinking coffee or scotch and talking. Scottish people are fond of singing at the national music festivals in chorus, at the fairs and in the parks. Most of Scotsmen are optimists. They don't lose their heart and smile in spite of all difficulties.

The real Scotland is not found in a single moment – nor is it contained in a single season. Though the moorlands turn purple in summer, Scotland in spring is famed for its clear light and distant horizons, while autumn's colours transform the woodlands... and what could be more picturesque than snow-capped hills seen from the warmth of your hotel room?

Scenery, history, hospitality, humour, climate, traditions are offered throughout the year.

Even if you can feel it now you should visit Scotland all the same, and see and enjoy this magic country with your own eyes!

Litterature

1. "Discovering Britain" Pavlovsky V.M. St Petersburg, 2003
2. "Britain in brief" Shustilova I.I., Moscow, 1997
3. "Across England to Scotland" Markova N.N., Moscow 1991
4. "Pages of Britain's history Kaufman K.I., Kaufman M.U., Obninsk, 1998
5. Un illustrated history of Britain McDowall D., Edinburgh, 1998
6. "Robert Burns country" Swinglehurst E., Edinburgh, 1996