



Diana Gabaldon talks to STV about her love for Scotland and Castle Leod

OutlandishScotland.com

A Novel Holiday Travel Guidebook

Aberdeen STV Article by Neil Drysdale,
Published on March 12th, 2015

In 2019, we discovered that this 2015 article has been removed from the Internet. Happily, we had copied its content back when we found it, in 2017.

<http://aberdeen.stv.tv/articles/315281-best-selling-author-diana-gabaldon-talks-to-stv-about-her-love-for-scotland/>



via STV

Diana Gabaldon talks to STV about her love for Scotland and Castle Leod

By Neil Drysdale on Sunday 29 March 2015

Diana Gabaldon was sailing on the Seine on Friday, but the best-selling author still found time to explain her love for Scotland.

As the best-selling author of the smash-hit series **Outlander**, which was unveiled in Britain this week, the 63-year-old American is a tireless communicator and her enthusiasm is positively refreshing.

She has been all over Europe in the last few days as part of a hectic promo tour where she has amused, provoked and enlightened her followers.

When she wrote her first novel, her knowledge of Scotland was restricted to carrying out extensive research on the Scottish Highlands in the 18th century, when, amongst other things, she studied the style of housing, from crofts and estate manors to castles.

But, in the intervening years, Diana has developed a passion for Scottish history and heritage and taken an active interest in striving to preserve it for future generations.

Aberdeen STV Article by Neil Drysdale, Published on March 12th, 2015

As she told STV: "One day, 15 or so years ago, I was appearing at a Highland Games in California, and stopped by the Clan Tents area, where the Clan Societies and Associations provide information to people looking for their own historical Scottish associations.

"I went by to say 'Hello' to the Clan Fraser and Clan MacKenzie people, who were all pleased to see me - particularly so, the MacKenzies. 'Look!', said one of them proudly, opening a scrapbook in front of me. 'I went to Scotland this year and got pictures of our castle - and it's just like you described it in the book.'

"I was quite bemused. I was in fact looking at a castle very much like Castle Leoch, but this one was called Castle Leod, as the accompanying caption told me.

"Now, frankly, the names were a complete coincidence, and the striking similarities in appearance were merely due to my ability to look up and adequately describe the details of a fortified tower house.

But the MacKenzies were so pleased that I didn't mention this to them. And then our friendship flourished and, in the fullness of time, I was formally 'adopted' by the Clans Fraser, MacKenzie and Henderson."

It might have had a touch of serendipity about it. But that meeting has led to Diana forging a deep-rooted camaraderie with those who are trying to restore and revive Castle Leod.

Outlander fans crave precious snippets of detail about the characters, locations and development of the novels, and how they will be portrayed on TV. At first glance, Castle Leod might have seemed the perfect place to shoot scenes for the new TV production, but Diana spelled out the stark reality as to why it wasn't.

She told us: "The castle is beautiful and it teems with both history and atmosphere, but it is in a difficult position: Strathpeffer, to be exact.

"When the TV show began scouting locations, I suggested Leod as a possibility. It's entirely accurate as to period, of course, and has magnificent grounds, with a park of enormous, exotic trees planted by centuries of MacKenzies and their visitors. (Diana herself planted a "very modest" rowan, as her "own wee contribution" to the history).

"The production people were interested, but the costs and logistics of moving a complete production, with cast, crew and equipment 90 miles from Inverness, were totally prohibitive.

"Yet I do have some hopes that the producers can persuade [clan chief] John MacKenzie - and possibly Simon Fraser, the current chief of the Frasers of Lovat - to appear in cameo roles at some point in the series."

But, despite Outlander's mythical appeal, Diana recognizes there are very real problems for those working to protect this cherished location for future generations.

As she told STV: "On a recent trip to Scotland, John and [his wife] Eve invited my husband and I to stay at the castle for a couple of days: we did, and enjoyed their hospitality very much. But we were also treated to an in-depth tour of the castle, which featured enough instances of shocking disrepair to keep any fix-up show on TV in business for years.

"John described to us his heroic efforts to get much-needed funding for things such as new lead for the roof.

Aberdeen STV Article by Neil Drysdale, Published on March 12th, 2015

"This struck us as being more than a Sisyphean task, but as John said: 'After 600 years, you don't really want to be the one to give up.'

"That stuck with me. John and his family are constantly exploring ways and means of maintaining and improving the wonderful asset that has been entrusted to them.

"I consider it both a responsibility and an honour to help them. And I have a keen interest in the well-being of the castle and its inhabitants."

The initial response to the TV version of "Outlander" has been positive, but there again, this series is one of modern literature's most remarkable phenomena.

Diana might have described her success as "good fortune" and been a tad modest in remarking that her novels have become "rather popular".

But they've actually been published in 42 countries and 38 languages and sold around 28 million copies. None of that happens by luck.

Nor will the attempts to breathe fresh life into Castle Leod, which explains why the MacKenzies should be delighted to have Diana on board.

She's a force of nature. One with an indefatigable desire to weave fact and fiction into a tangible whole. And there's nothing outlandish about that.