

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

XX August, 2017

Boatbuilders, bobbies and Hollywood stars: Plockton's fascinating history comes to life with National Trust for Scotland ranger walk

It's been the home to fictional bobby Hamish Macbeth and his loyal sidekick Wee Jock; the scene of a pagan sacrifice in 1970s horror film *The Wicker Man*; and one of the few places in Scotland where palm trees thrive.

The stunning village of Plockton on the west coast is renowned for many reasons – and now people have a chance to learn some lesser-known secrets of the village that has enjoyed an international spotlight.

Curious tourists, day trippers – and even some locals – have been exploring the village through a series of walks organised by the country's biggest conservation charity, The National Trust for Scotland.

Ranger Gavin Skipper, who is based at the Trust's Balmacara Estate, has been digging deeper beneath the headlines and Hollywood to reveal the heritage of the village, which dates back to 1801.

"Some scenes for *The Wicker Man* were filmed in Plockton – which was supposed to be the Summer Isles – and even though the film was made in 1973, it's still what many people most associate the village with," says Gavin.

"Moving on from that, the BBC show *Hamish Macbeth* was filmed here in the 1990s and you'd be surprised by how many people remember that too. It really is a stunning little village, and I can completely understand why it has such an appeal for film makers.

"What I aim to do is help people really explore the village, and share lots of stories and facts. For example, despite being on the same latitude as Moscow, Australian cabbage palm trees thrive in Plockton.

“They are able to grow because of the relatively mild climate, and are a real talking point with visitors. On a sunny summer day, we look more like the Caribbean than Scotland.”

The next group walk in Plockton – which translates as town on a lumpish promontory - takes place this Wednesday (August 9) and sets out at 10am. The tour will visit the main areas of the village, including the old pier and pontoons, the Brae with its crofts and ancient trees, and the rather unusual open air church.

The preaching place was used for some years by the Free Church of Scotland, after the local congregation, like many communities in the Highland, staged a breakaway from the Church of Scotland during the Disruption of 1843.

It was not uncommon for communions, weddings, christenings and funerals to take place on the site, which is a hollow surrounded by rock slopes which are terraced to form a few rows of seats, up until the 1930s.

Gavin adds, “The split in the Church of Scotland is an important chapter in the history of Plockton, and we will chat about this during the tour. I’ll also be looking at the long tradition of boat use and the fact that the village still has a strong interest in its boat heritage.

“The Plockton local boat is the one of the few traditional boats in the north west of Scotland still being regularly used, with a fleet in excess of 16 and an annual regatta, races and events, organised by the Plockton Small Boat Sailing Club. Plockton has its own unique design of small clinkerbuilt sailing boat, with one as old as 120 years old still in use.

“Why is there a Cooper Street in Plockton? Plockton is a planned village built on the back of the herring fishing industry and herring is a fish that can be preserved in salt, placed in barrels and taken to market. A cooper is a barrel maker.

“Although Plockton is a planned village, it has no river or burn flowing close by. Initially fresh water was collected from wells and then when the railway arrived in 1896 the steam trains received water piped in from Loch Lundie and this source was also used to supply the village.”

There will be another guided walk taking place in Plockton on Wednesday, August 23, and there are plans for one in October as part of the Wester

Ross Walktober Week celebrations. The tour costs £5 for adults - children are free - and must be booked in advance by contacting the Balmacara Estate on 01599 566325.

The walking tours are just one of hundreds of events being staged by the National Trust for Scotland its properties up and down the country this summer. For more information on what's happening, visit www.nts.org.uk

- ENDS -

