

# Grantown 250

## Summer Heritage Festival

### 2016

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> to Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June





# INTRODUCTION

The 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1765 is an important date for Grantown. It was on that day that the first building of the new town was commenced and so began the birth and development of what is today known as Grantown-on-Spey.

To celebrate the “sestercentennial” anniversary a major festival was organised to celebrate all that this small but vibrant traditional Highland town has become. Highlights included both a “Totally Locally” day featuring High Street shops and shop-keepers all dressed appropriately and a community day in the Square with a capacity church service and a colourful and costumed picnic. Outstanding was the quality and amount of music throughout the nine days of the event.



Such was the success of the festival, despite heavy rain for a large part of the week, that it was felt a heritage festival in June should become an annual event. The event indeed received recognition through the Scottish Civic Trust “My Place” Awards in Glasgow.

So successful was the “250” brand it was decided to retain “Grantown 250”. 2016 was after all the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the transfer of the Regality Cross, the town’s symbol of power and authority, from Old to New Grantown. It was also the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Figgat Fair in the new town.

The 2015 programme was reviewed by a small group and there was consensus that the festival should continue and that it should, for this year,

be smaller but equally high profile from which subsequent festivals could grow. The draft programme was thus to start of Thursday evening with a choral evening and a pub crawl, leading to Friday’s High Street and Square heritage activities and a Georgian Ball on Friday evening. Figgat Fair would continue in the Square but move to Sunday afternoon following the Churches Together service. This left Saturday as low key to avoid clashing with Piping at Forres. There would be a fiddle festival in the morning and a major concert at night. Subsequently the historic regality procession and picnic were added to Saturday afternoon.



As 2016 was declared the international year of innovation, architecture and design, The Grantown Society added a series of smaller events prior to the main festival in keeping with this theme.

Whilst the Grantown Society would be the main organiser as previously and with the museum leading on Figgat Fair the Grantown Initiative would be the umbrella organisation providing key elements of support and infrastructure.



## Grantown Initiative

# COSTUMES

By March the sewing group under the title of “The Costume Dept. – The Returned” was in full operation. Adverts were placed in shop windows and notice boards offering places and instructions.



Ultimately as well as numerous dresses aprons and bonnets some very impressive Georgian creations appeared – some made by complete novices. The biggest debate had been whether to move to earlier or later Georgian or Regency styles.





# PUBLICITY

In order to create a successful festival, an enormous amount of publicity is required and when budgets are limited this requires some lateral thinking. With sponsorship of course this becomes easier and a new information board for the Regality Cross was put up and used as an opportunity for some PR.



Other opportunities were taken as they arose. Thus the electric car publicity tour of Britain provided a great photo opportunity and some national publicity.



Controversially, with disregard for official protocol and again with wonderful sponsorship a town flag was raised on the Council flag pole.



Adverts were taken out in Spotlight and in area guides and a festival brochure produced and delivered door to door by hand. Website and Facebook pages were brought into use with some voluntary local expertise.

To increase awareness in the town and with early visitors empty shop windows were taken over with displays and information.



## STOCKINGS

The 2016 pre- festival innovation was stocking day. This grew out of the need to raise funds – all of which were to come from local sources – and to raise awareness. This let wordsmiths to get carried away to a degree!



The first visitors that Saturday had discovered the strange event on the Scotsman website. It was also carried by the BBC. A PR success!



## ***The Socking Truth about Grantown.***

*This month a Highland Town is preparing to reveal the “socking truth” about its origins 250 years ago. The community is now willing to introduce legalised money laundering as its latest economic benefit project.*

*Grantown-on-Spey, one of the country’s best preserved and most interesting Georgian planned settlements, was founded as a “manufacturing town”. It specialised in the weaving and knitting of stocking. The town’s founder, James Grant of Grant, later known as the Good Sir James, invested over £5000 of his own money to promote business and help the new town to prosper. Some 250 years later Grantown’s citizens aim to raise a similar amount to invest in the future prosperity of the town. They are, indeed, “stocking up” for the future at a time when no less than four major businesses have closed, yet at a time when the town is on the cusp of a bright future with a thriving High Street and a vision for improvement.*

### ***An innovative “Socks and Shares” scheme***

*On May 14<sup>th</sup> Grantown Square will become a local “Stock(ing) market” and will witness an audacious and colourful event as Citizens hang up, on washing lines between the trees, socks and stockings containing donated cash. Each donation of £10 or more will receive a numbered share certificate which will later be drawn to give the proud owner a 10% share of the total takings.*

*This “Socks and Shares” scheme will help finance the Grantown 250 festival in June which aims to enhance economic activity and showcase Grantown as an important Georgian planned town and Strathspey as a unique environment, a first class business location, an excellent centre for sport and a wonderful tourist destination.*

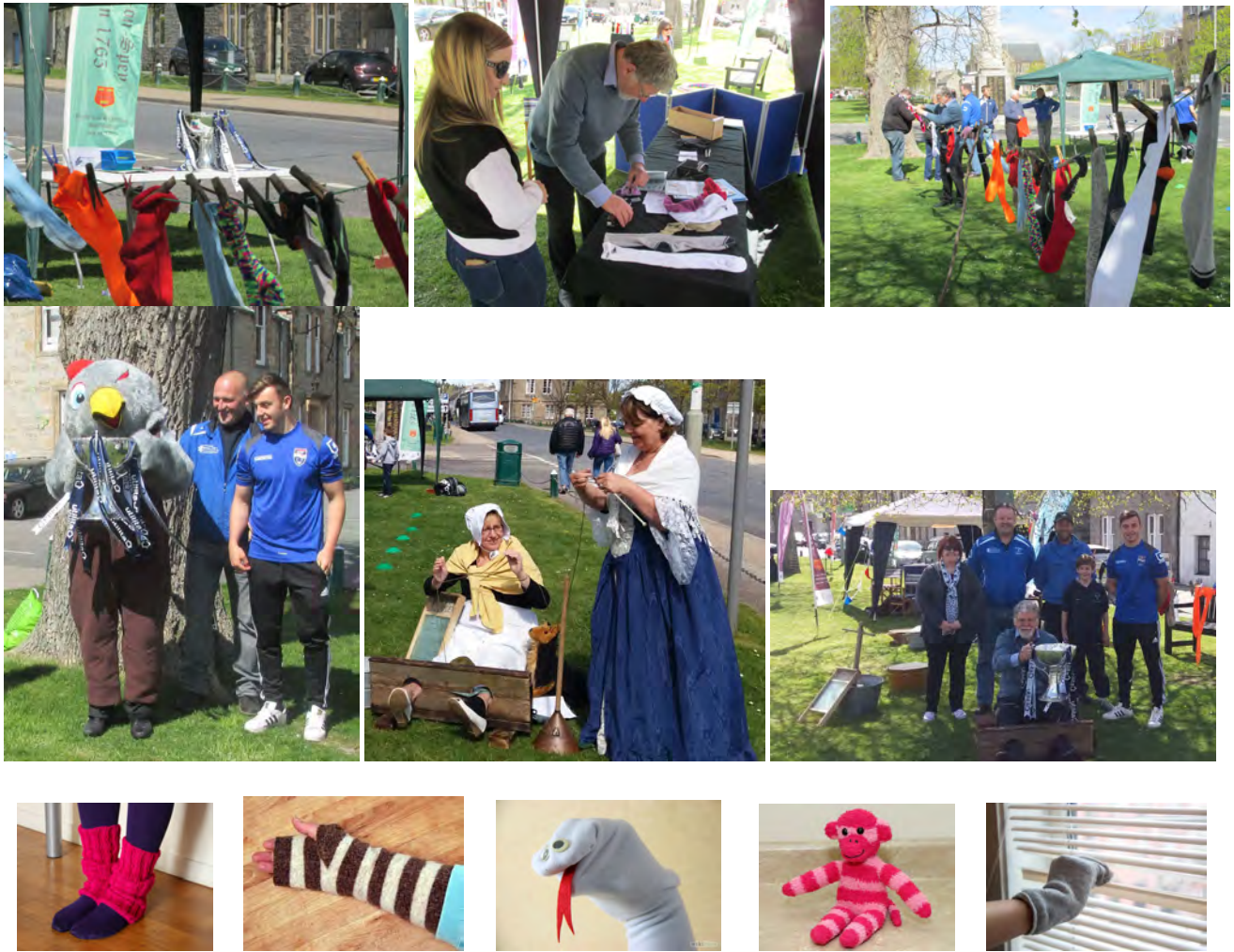
*The investment from these willing “stocking souls” will help Grantown flourish with an enhanced place on the map of Scotland. It is the year of innovation, architecture and design and a special focus, here, will be on the architecture and layout of planned villages, of which Grantown is one of the finest examples. We shall celebrate and promote the music of the Spey, traditional and modern crafts and businesses, sporting successes, tourism, hospitality, the legacy of the “Highland Enlightenment” and the wonderful scenery and attractions of “Romantic Strathspey”.*

### ***Citizens to wash their dirty linen in public***

*Whilst in these days of austerity keeping money in a sock under the bed may be a useful way of saving, local banks have agreed to become part of a local “sock taking” and accept donations for “Grantown 250” The town has a celebrated banking history with the origins of the TSB, Bank of Scotland and Royal Bank of Scotland reaching back well the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Grantown 250 is proud to announce the banks’ participation with sox boxes for donations.*

### ***Ross County Socks on Display (and the Scottish League Cup***

*Grantown “Stocking Day” on May 14<sup>th</sup> will feature this unusual washing line as well as Information and displays on knitting socks and recycling old socks and stockings. There will be competitions, a very special, “socker special” with skills competitions and a chance to see and be photographed with the Scottish League Cup, thanks to champions, Ross County. A display entitled “an old fashioned wash day” will also feature and a literary stocking event. Many helpers will be in period costume, others with a “shocking stocking” attire. It is expected young and old will be legging it to this unusual 21<sup>st</sup> century on-line stock taking festival. Best keep clear of the Georgian Stocks!*



## NOT [Quite] THE EUROPEAN FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The soccer theme continued with the 250 soccer sevens which involved some 140 young players in a tournament arranged and run by Highlife Active Schools and local football players and officials





The fundraising effort continued through this time, thanks to the generosity of local individuals, shops and businesses. Certificates appeared in business's windows illustrating those who had become Granttown partners, All three banks agreed to act as collecting points and housed elaborately constructed and decorated collecting boxes.



## THEMES

The festival, as previously, celebrated the town's origins and development through seven main themes.

**Heritage:** celebrating Granttown as a very special Georgian planned town, its Victorian growth and its international influences from the far East to the Russia of the Tsars.

**Environment:** uniquely surrounded by native and ancient woodland, close to Scotland's fastest flowing river, illustrating glacial features, home of abundant wildlife and with a built environment that tells its own story.

**Travel:** centre of a network of roads, within easy distance of hill and coast and neighbouring attractions. Built close to the only 18<sup>th</sup> cent bridge across the Spey between its mouth and Garvamore near its source.

**Trade:** founded as a manufacturing town based on woollen and linen goods, home since the Adam brothers of skilled tradesman and builders and site of vibrant small independent High Street shops.

**Sport:** providing access to a plethora of sporting venues from bowling green to orienteering courses, cycling grass track to outdoor draughts board. Easy access to two ski centres and a cyclists paradise..




**Music:** home of the "Strathspey" and origin of the art icon of piping – the Laird of Grant's Piper, of nationally and internationally recognised musicians past and present and a of musical culture and heritage of which to be proud.

**Food and drink:** gateway to whisky country and keeper of a thousand tales of food and drink exploits. Meeting place of game and fishing, agriculture and internationally know names from Speyside.

The festival aimed to help put Granttown and Strathspey on the map, both as a tourist destination and as a sporting and business location.; to link with both Speyside and Badenoch to make a more powerful marketing brand; and thirdly it to provide both a sense of pride and pleasure – the Highland's Big Heritage Party!.



# INNOVATION, ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

 <p><b>Tomintoul Dufftown Aberlour Archiestown</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday June 22<sup>nd</sup></b></p> <p>10.00 – 3.30 Planned Villages tour: leaving from Grantown Square. Guided minibus tour of near-by planned villages with an introduction to their origins and development Pre-booking essential. £15.00 excl lunch etc.</p> <p>7.30 – 9.00 Conservation planning – talk and workshop: Grant Arms Hotel. Illustrated talk by Andrew Wright, Conservation Architect followed by discussion on how best to protect and enhance Grantown's Conservation Area.</p>	 <p><b>Grantown</b></p> <p><b>Thursday June 23<sup>rd</sup></b></p> <p>1.30 – 3.30 Guided Historic walk around Grantown. Walking tour from the Regality Cross through Georgian and Victorian Grantown. Meet at 1.30pm at Regality Cross, The Square. (Donations)</p> <p>2.00 – 4.00 – Visit Grantown's three beautiful Churches - St. Columba's, Grantown Baptist, and Inverallan Churches</p> <p>4.00 – 5.00 A Walk Around The Square. An in-depth look at the buildings in the Square, their origins and development. Meet 4pm at the marquee in The Square. (Donations)</p>	<p><b>Georgian Planned Towns and Villages</b></p>  <p><b>June 22 and 23 2016</b></p>
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Appropriately in the year of architecture and in line with the aim of linking with other communities, The Grantown Society led off the festival (or what might be called the festival fringe) with a Georgian Villages Tour.



Thus in two minibuses a group of some twenty folk set out for Tomintoul, Dufftown, Aberlour and Archiestown. Fitting too for an intergenerational festival, the party were met by the pupils of primaries one to four from Tomintoul Primary School.





They told the group of the “house and half house’ design of the town and of its hotels.

*“There were four hotels in Tomintoul. They were the Richmond, the Gordon, the Glenavon and the White Heather. The White Heather burnt down. ....the Glenavon was a temperance hotel – that means no Alcohol!”*

*“The Richmond Hotel used to be very big. There was the Duke of Richmond and Gordon who owned the land. It was named after him. There were lots of fishermen there and a ‘restrant’ for the ‘gests’. “*

The pupils told of their own families and of Tomintoul in days gone by.

*“Did you know that the cobbler was related to me. The cobbler was also a draper and a baker. Mrs Birnie’s family owned the baker’s. There were no cars so that meant the shops were all local.”*

*“In the olden days at the Richmond Hall there used to be a library but we use the hall for PE. There used to be a Duke of Richmond and Gordon and he ruled it. The hall was used every weekend because there was a ceilidh which means there was singing and dancing and lots of people went. In the army all the people that died is on the hall and it is called the war memorial.”*

Furthermore there was information on another important event in the Tomintoul calendar:

*“The highland games used to be held in the Square. The organisers needed more space so they moved it to a field. The games stopped during the war and have also been cancelled a couple of times because of poorly weather. They always happen on the third Saturday in July. This year’s highland games is going to be the 175<sup>th</sup> one.”*



Armed with this knowledge the group spent time in the museum and were able to listen to the history of the origins of the town from Grantown historian George Dixon, whose research on the topic is unequalled. To follow the youngsters hotel information, his talk included the story of the town’s first inn-keeper, Janet Mackenzie, ‘the Countess’ whose first inn was in Grantown but whose lifestyle was perhaps considered too much for that town’s douce citizens.

The group’s second historian, Dr Douglas Lockhart, whose book on Scottish Planned villages was published by the Scottish Local History Forum in 2002, gave an introduction to the development of Dufftown. Both George and Douglas continued to impart information at Aberlour (along with tea and cakes) and at Archiestown, with added information from local residents.

One of the travellers, a blue badge guide, wrote later,

*“It was a good day, thank you, and I learned a lot which will be very useful to me. So many thanks for organising such an inspired and inspiring event.”*

## PHOTOS AND PHOTOGRAPH OPPORTUNITIES



Meanwhile back in Grantown, there was the opportunity to discover something of the origins of the town through a visit to the museum. In the afternoon the three local churches opened their doors to visitors allowing them to see some of the wonderful architecture and carvings and to learn of such famous preachers as Peter Grant, the Gaelic hymn writer.



Another building open to all was the YM community centre which had for the week been converted into a Victorian Tea room. There, too, was an exhibition of photographs, the results of a photographic competition, displaying features of Grantown's architecture. These Grantown (fringe) events were available on three days of the festival.



In the evening One of the many highlights of the week was a talk from conservation architect Andrew Wright. He pointed out a number of very interesting features to be seen in Grantown – a result of which many folk have been observed standing still looking upwards towards the chimney pots of older buildings. Such features may well form the basis of another Grantown Society meeting later in the year. A more important possibility is a review of Grantown's Conservation Area, sadly ignored by too many over the years.



The suggestion is not that the conservation area should be in any way diminished but indeed extended to include the Georgian and Victorian heart of the town. This hopefully will lead not only to discussion on the merits of such a scheme but also to the possibility of large scale funding such as from the CARS programme. (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) providing the community as a whole gets behind the initiative.

Prior to the architecture talk, a slide show of all the entries for the photographic competition was presented and the winners announced. The winning photo, appropriately was of – chimney pots on the Bank of Scotland building. The winner had previously said, *"We had a lot of fun on our photo shoot on the High Street - it's amazing how much there is to see when you start really looking!"*





# HERITAGE DAY

Thursday marked the true start of the festival with a welcome to Grantown from the bells of Inverallan Church, St Columba's, the museum, the Primary School and from the Town Bellman.

During the day The Grantown Society fringe events continued with guided historical tours through Georgian and Victorian Grantown and around the Square, Grantown's original market place, the latter tour ending with information on how a former Grantownian had influenced Russian foreign policy some 200 years ago.

The proposed concert was moved to Monday which allowed the Primary Seven Pupils to add an international element with their show entitled "Rio Olympics".

The evening continued with an historical, or perhaps hysterical pub



crawl, the script for which was based on actual reports and accounts from Grantown's past. The various wanderings took in all Grantown's hotels and pubs and some which no longer, alas, exist. Characters such as the Queen Victoria, James Stuart, an early Grantown Doctor, James Macgregor, the founder of Balmenach Distillery, Andrew Macpherson, the first provost and Mr McBean who complained about the provost's "robbery and jobbery" were all there along with other no lesser

members of the various casts. Refreshments were graciously provided by the Garth, The Claymore, The Rosehall, and the Craiglynne. The pub crawl started in the Legion with much laughter and ended in the very supportive Georgian Inn (aka the Ben Mhor).





# GEORGIAN DAY

Friday was dubbed Georgian or Totally Locally Day. Decorated shops and costumed shopkeepers attracted considerable interest. The horse drawn carriage likewise.



Young musicians added charm and vitality by busking and during the morning especially there was a real buzz about the street and the Square. The atmosphere was enhanced with rebel soldiers, circus performers and a stilt walker.





# THE WEIRD, THE WONDERFUL AND THE WACKY

The marquee in the Square, which was only possible through sponsorship this year – again local sponsorship as the festival had no external funding - was set up on Wednesday 22nd. It became the hub of activities especially on Friday when it had been dedicated to a display and demonstrations reflecting our crofting and craft heritage. At the last minute inevitably circumstances led to changes. One performer had to send a replacement as his flight from Paris had been cancelled. Crofting connections pulled out which meant the bus loads of youngsters did not arrive. Instead a programme of “the weird the wacky and the wonderful” created an entertaining and informative exhibit with items from a magic lantern to an ash toilet on display. A spinner from Cullen demonstrated the traditional skill but the leather worker came and then vanished as did the environmental group. Meanwhile the photo booth proved a great success. This was a wonderful intergenerational and inspirational event which enhanced both the aims of keeping the festival as intergenerational and fitting for the year of innovation, architecture and design.

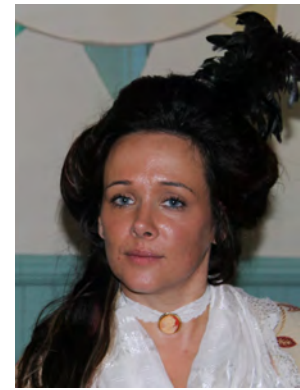


At the other end of town The Lairds Table was postponed until later in the year and the carnival in the park cancelled. The early afternoon claps of thunder were described as applause from the gods but the ensuing rain was an unwelcome and uninvited guest.

It was especially unwelcome in the community centre where it created near panic by destroying the décor for the Ball in the upstairs “Assembly Rooms” and forcing the entire event to be moved downstairs. Organising the ball had been a huge task and the flooded “ballroom” piled on even more pressure. Ultimately those who attended the ball or ceilidh as it became had a magnificent evening. Earlier, along side the Victorian tearoom and the photographic exhibition, the “People and Place” event attracted an audience interested particularly in genealogy.





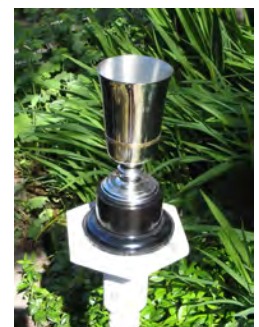


## REGALITY DAY

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> was declared to be Regality Day – this on the strength of the planned procession to the Regality Cross later in the day. Firstly though, as well as continuing events such as People and Place, Three Churches there was a craft fair in the Elephants in the Pantry. Most importantly the Fiddler of Strathspey event was taking place in the Wheatley Hall and St Columba's.



This amazing little competition, had been advertised nationally and had attracted entrants for all four classes, Under 12 , under 16 Open for the Maggie Adamason trophy and Open for the Reidhaven Quaich. The adjudicators were Maggie herself and Paul Anderson and it was a fiddler from Tarland who eventually won both trophies. The event was dedicated to strathspeys and especially those collected by Grantown's own Angus Cumming and



published in 1780. The morning was directed by Donald Barr and Kirsten Shearon and concluded with Paul and Maggie entertaining the near-capacity audience .



The Regality procession was smaller than that of the previous year and departed from Grant House Gardens where a picnic had been organised by the Co-op Local Forum and featured a project enhancing the garden in recognition of international co-op fortnight. This was another truly intergenerational event with those taking part ranging from 4 to 104. It was a huge pleasure to see the commitment of the Grant House Staff and the enjoyment of the residents, all entertained by Black Isle Jazz.



### Co-ops Fortnight – Big Co-op Clean – Granttown on Spey – Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016



Saturday night was marked by the big event of the festival, the Highland Premiere of the river, by Hamish Napier. It attracted practically a full house and received huge acclaim from the audience – some of whom claimed the performance was better than the original in the Concert hall in Glasgow. The piece had been commissioned by Celtic Connections and featured several of the country's top musicians. It was predicated by members of the Grammar School trad band. By way of a contrast this was followed by a Scots Night in the Ben Mhor where participants enjoyed music from the Forres Accordion and Fiddle Club who enlisted the support of Maggie Adamson for the event. Lucy Fraser entertained with a selection of dances accompanied by "Spud" the piper. There was also a delightful set of songs from a duet who enthralled the audience – and all this, plus tea and shortbread, in a fantastic venue, for £5.





**HIGHLAND PREMIERE AT THE  
GRANTOWN 250 FESTIVAL**

The soundtrack to Strathspey! The much-anticipated Highland Premiere and album launch of local composer/multi-instrumentalist Hamish Napier's piece dedicated to the Spey.

**SATURDAY 25TH JUNE  
GRANTOWN GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
DOORS 7PM | SHOW 7.30PM-9.30PM**

**£15 (£10 CONC.)**  
TICKETS ON THE DOOR OR FROM  
THE BOOKMARK, GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY

WITH SUPPORT FROM:

**Grammar School Trad Band directed by Hamish Napier**

**PRE-CONCERT ART EXHIBITION (6pm-7.30pm)**

Discover the work of Highland multimedia designer Somhairle MacDonald, the artist behind the album cover artwork for 'The River' as he showcases his stunning range of beautiful original art prints.

Commissioned by Scotland's international world music festival Celtic Connections, The River features a stellar band of Scotland's finest folk musicians, including members of Admiral Fallow and Breabach. The piece brings to the surface vivid sonic images of occurrences, past and present, along the mile-long stretch of the Spey that flows past his home: enchanting natural beauty, hilarious anecdotes, tales from the darkest depths and musical wizardry.

More info at:

**WWW.HAMISHNAPIER.COM  
WWW.GRANTOWN250.ORG**



**"An excellent flute player."**  
*The Guardian*

★★★★★  
**"Top-class... capturing the  
emotions of his Speyside  
inspirations."**  
*The Herald*

★★★★★  
**"Scintillating...  
brilliantly vivid"**  
*The Scotsman*



# FAIRS DAY

Sunday was planned as one of the “big” days of the festival. In glorious sunshine the Churches Together service was highly successful with a capacity crowd.; the established church minister playing his part to the full dressed as an 18<sup>th</sup> century clergyman. The collection raised around £500 with Christian Aid as the main beneficiary.



With ever darkening skies the action moved to Figgat Fair which itself had moved from its time slot of Saturday last year in order to encourage more local traders to take

part. Gaining full community support for the event had been hard and there were numerous empty sites. Similarly with a highly restrictive budget there was no music though an appearance of the Bicycle Thieves had been anticipated and a pipe band or two returning from Forres hoped for. Whilst for some trade was slow others produced both mirth and money. The Grantown Society had a much more serious event with both stocks and pillory available. Some great photos were taken of visitors and citizens in the pillory and



have no doubt travelled around the world. The stocks, too, are travelling - to a Railway event later in the year. And then, once more the heavens opened. Whilst this benefited the tea tent it meant other stall holders sheltered and considered packing up early. Once more however the brave ladies in crinolines made an appearance visiting all the stances and bestowing gracious comments on their occupants and, as before, attracting international interest.





# CELEBRATION DAY

Figgat Fair was to have marked the festival finale but due to a hectic schedule of musical and school events the final concert took place on Monday evening in Inverallan. The setting was quite spectacular with Church Avenue lined with the 250 “feathers” and flowers outside the Church. The event matched the setting and was a huge success with a considerable collection for various good causes. The Grantown 250 festival certainly set the scene well for this event and the event certainly made a great finale and a fitting celebration of Grantown’s talents.



One comment was simply “awesome”. The Strathy reported comments of “an overwhelming success” and “a damp squib”. Without doubt it was a huge effort and without doubt those who attended this year’s events had a magnificent time.



## AND SO THE BIG QUESTIONS

Was 2016 Grantown 250 festival a success? Should it continue and in what form? If it continues who and how should it be run? What scale should be attempted? What are the legacies of Grantown 250 2015 and 2016?



Neither is there any doubt that overall Grantown 250 has much to commend it and much that should be continued. It has helped put Grantown on the map and helped increase visitor numbers. Long may this trend continue.

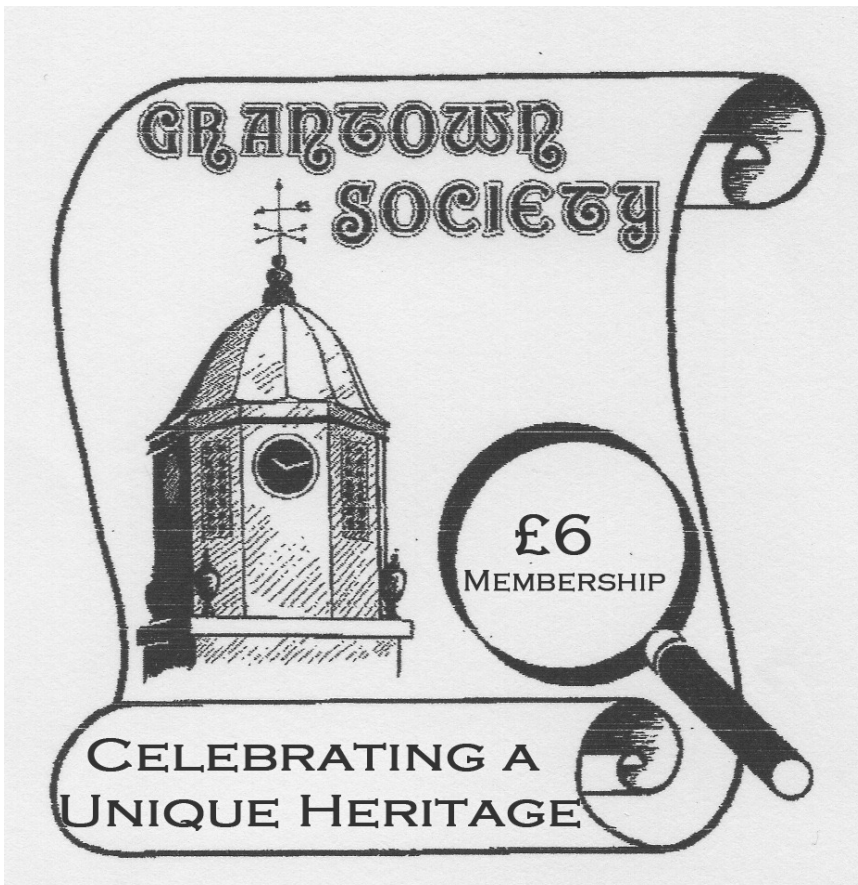




There is no doubt either that such progress in Grantown's revival is due in no small part to the festival sponsors over two years. Thanks go to this year's main sponsors, Revack Estate and the Co-op and the great many local people who supported the events both in cash and in kind.







## AND FINALLY

There are some even bigger questions which need to be addressed. They refer to the role of the “super powers”, the “Strategy and Policy” organisations - National, Regional and Local: Visit Scotland; Historic Environment Scotland; Scottish Natural Heritage; Highland Council; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; The Cairngorms National Park Authority; Visit Cairngorm; The Grantown Initiative; the Grantown-on-Spey and Vicinity Community Council. These issues are yet to be tackled.

Bill Sadler July 2016