

Scottish Readers Remember Scottish Books



Well, usually the books you got, as a prize, would maybe be something like Walter Scott, something like that. I remember Treasure Island with great fondness ... Burns, of course, you would get.
Cathy

One of the interesting questions raised by *Scottish Readers Remember* was the extent to which readers in Scotland consciously read material that was Scottish in terms of its content or origins. The twentieth century saw an increased sense of a distinctive Scottish literary canon, both in terms of the line stretching from Henryson and Dunbar through Burns to MacDiarmid and Gunn and in terms of contemporary literary fiction from the 1950s onwards. This canon became institutionalised through its adoption within education and its propagation through secondary publications.



The exception to this lack of specific interest in material of Scottish provenance was popular fiction. The contents of D.C. Thomson magazines such as the *People's Friend* were keenly read as were the works of novelists such as O. Douglas and her brother, John Buchan. The combination of a strong narrative and a Scottish setting created a strong appeal for readers. Other instances of Scottish material remarked upon were also published by D.C. Thomson: the stories of *Oor Wullie* and *The Broons* found not only weekly in the *Sunday Post* but also collected as Annuals.



However much interviewees were aware of writers firmly embedded in the past such as Scott, and felt Burns to be part of the rituals of the Burns Supper and Hogmanay, there was little sense of participating as readers in a distinctive and living Scottish tradition of writing. Scott and others were associated with the dull but worthy set texts of education rather than books to be read for pleasure. Only ex-pat readers privileged Scottish authors over others.

