

**The Centre for Scottish Culture  
University of Dundee**



**Scottish Heroes & Villains:  
The First Symposium**

**Saturday 11 October 2014**

**Plenary Speaker: Professor Graeme Morton**

Literature thrives on conflict (the *agon*) between a protagonist and an antagonist. Political, military and media history pits victors against failures. Art lingers on the fame and infamy of its subject matter in equal measure. But what marks out a hero or a villain? How have hallowed and maligned figures contributed to lingering national myths in Scotland and elsewhere? What is their role in the modern world? Scotland in particular has a long history of hero worship, often wryly so, from Blind Hary's long and often improbable ballad *The Wallace* to Hugh McMillan's playful poem *The Spider's Legend of Robert the Bruce*. Scotland has its villains, too. Early modern plays recount in grizzly detail the story of the cannibal and mass murderer "Sawney" Bean. Edinburgh city counsellor and swindler Deacon Brodie influenced Stevenson's iconic *Jekyll and Hyde* and a wave of other Gothic tales in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the infamous grave-robbers Burke and Hare similarly inspired *The Body-Snatcher*. And new figures such as *Saltire*, Scotland's First Superhero, are being invented today, at a time in which Scotland's constitutional future lies open to significant change. Some figures blur the line between heroism and villainy. Some have yet to be brought back to public consciousness.

As part of Dundee's *Scottish Heroes & Villains Month* this October we invite 20-minute papers that address the broad theme of heroes and villains in a Scottish context for a one-day academic symposium. Topics might include but are not restricted to:

- Ethical, political or social distinctions between heroism and villainy;
- Depictions in text or image of Scottish political, religious or military figures;
- Literary or visual depictions of real-life or fictional heroes or villains;
- The persistence of Scottish heroes and villains in public history or policy making;
- Regional, national or diasporic representations of Scottish heroes or villains.

Abstracts of no more than 250 words, along with your name and academic affiliation, should be sent by email to Dr. Daniel Cook before **15 August 2014**. We welcome pre-fabricated panels of no more than three speakers, roundtables involving no more than five speakers, or alternative formats.

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