

The new romantics

One of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park's stated aims is to celebrate the art and literature associated with the area. Here Tim Edwards, the park's Director, explains how this rich cultural heritage is woven into the Park's interpretation.

The National Park's outstanding landscapes, wildlife, cultural heritage and romantic image together offer the most enduring and sustainable interpretive asset of all. These qualities, with Loch Lomond at their centre, have drawn travellers for centuries and helped establish mass tourism here early in the Victorian era. They also stimulated the creation of romantic images in literature and art. Writers and artists such as Turner, Millais, the Wordsworths and Verne were drawn here, while Sir Walter Scott's 'Lady of the Lake' inspired millions to come and enjoy the sparkling lochs and rugged mountains.

The influx of visitors continues today, and an intrinsic part of the National Park's role is interpreting this romantic landscape. The legendary and historic characters and events that have inspired writers and artists make an important connection between place and people here. Who can deny the lure of Rob Roy, brought into modern focus by the cinema, or the romantic images embodied in the steam ships SS Walter Scott and SS Maid of the Loch. More contemporary connections such as 'Dr Finlay's Casebook' and 'Take the High Road' are still enjoyed by visitors in settings such as Luss village.

For the National Park Authority the starting point for reflecting this literary and artistic inheritance has been the creation of a series of landscape images which have embodied the uncluttered but striking style of early travel posters. These images are evolving into a brand that sets the tone and reflects the values of the park.

A collection of contemporary outdoor artwork, commissioned for the National Park Gateway Centre at Balloch, and the commissioning of a new music score to accompany visual images within the centre, show a commitment by the Authority to build on the area's cultural heritage. Poetry inscribed into our new wooden seating was inspired by the landscape and was written by modern Scottish interpreter Michael Glen.

Events such as 'Singing in the Park', where communities in the Park had a chance to experience this art form in the local village hall; or the classic car run from the old Argyll Motor Works to the 'Rest and be Thankful' hill pass, which offered the opportunity to experience the landscape from behind a pair of goggles and a flowing neckerchief, all make connections between people and the park. The coming 200th anniversary of the Lady of the Lake offers the Authority and its partners a platform for a range of celebrations of the romantic literature and art across the park.

Stimulating and supporting contemporary pieces and events helps create an evolution and continuity for art, literature and music in the park. This in turn provides stimulation for people to continue to make new connections with the place, ensuring the centuries-old romance endures for the future.

Tim Edwards

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Art is born of the observation and investigation of nature

Cicero