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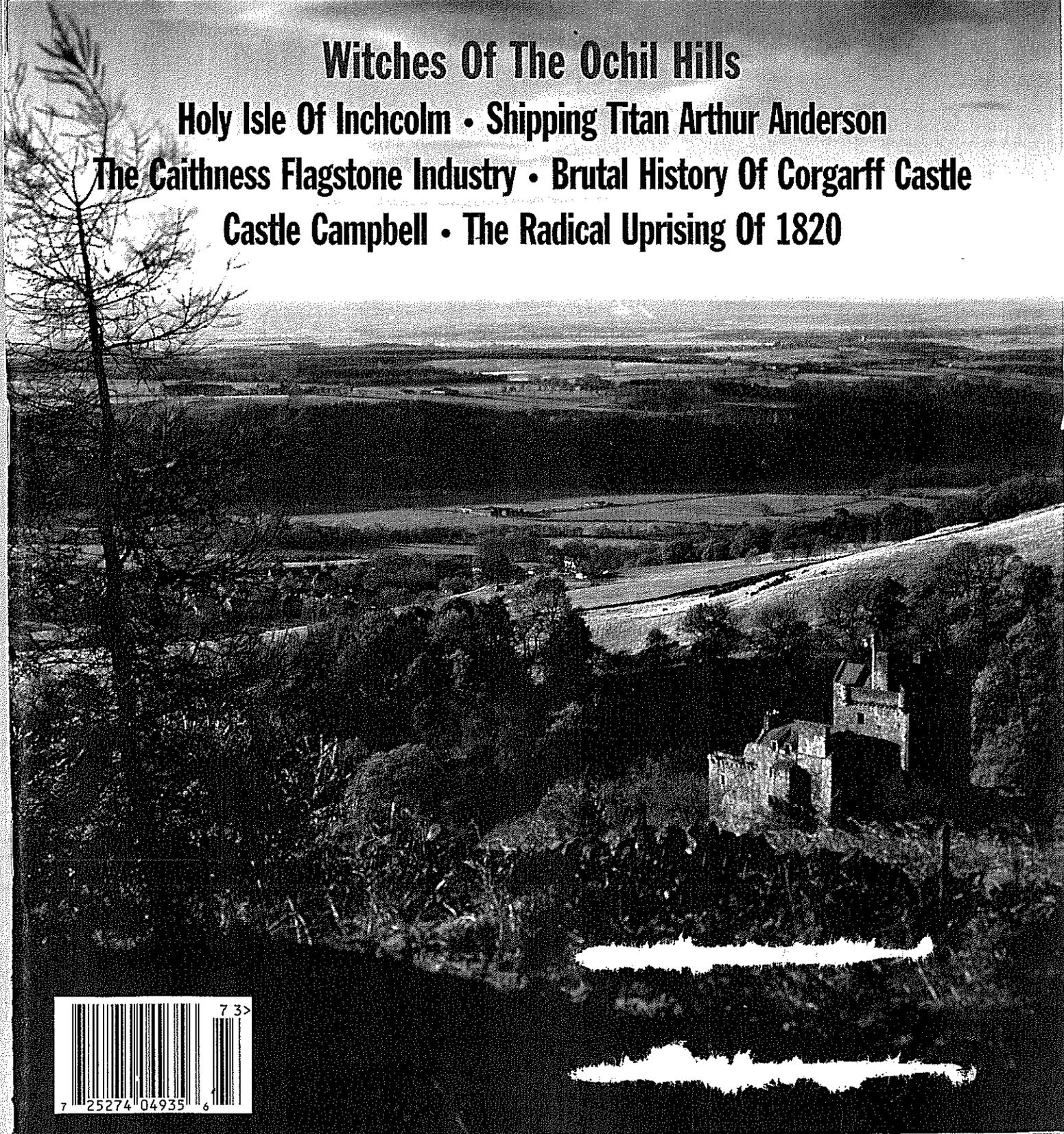
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The Falls Of Clyde, A Scottish Ship In Peril

By Bruce McEwan, President, Friends of Falls of Clyde, Chieftain, The Caledonian Society of Hawaii

Scots and those of Scottish heritage from all over the world have always been proud of Scotland's history of shipbuilding. We invite all Scots and Scottish heritage organizations to take part in saving a unique piece of Scottish shipbuilding heritage, the tall ship *Falls of Clyde*.

Built in 1878 by Russell & Co. in Port Glasgow, the four-masted, iron-hull sailing ship *Falls of Clyde* has resided in Honolulu Harbor for more than 50 years. She was one of the first of the "Falls" series of ships named for the various waterfalls on the River Clyde. A sleek cargo ship plying the seas from Britain to the Far East, she was renowned for her speed.

Coming into the Hawaiian service in 1898, she was purchased by Captain William Matson who was starting a commercial service between the mainland United States and the Territory of Hawaii. She flew the Hawaiian flag for about a year before being reflagged in the U.S. Sold to Associated Petroleum in 1907, she was converted to a sailing oil tanker by constructing 10 steel tanks into the ship. She carried oil to Hawaii and took back molasses from sugar plantations to the West Coast. She was retired from the Hawaii service in 1923 and was sold, becoming a floating bunker vessel for the

fishing fleet in Ketchikan, Alaska.

After being taken out of service in Alaska, the ship was mothballed and was put up for sale to be scrapped. In the early 1960s, citizens from Hawaii, led by an historian and a newspaper journalist, began a campaign to raise funds to purchase *Falls of Clyde* and bring her to Honolulu. In 1963, their project was successful and the ship

maritime center became a part of Bishop Museum, the major museum in Hawaii. In 1989 the ship became a National Historic Landmark as the only remaining sailing oil tanker in the world.

Unfortunately, Bishop Museum was not committed to a maritime exhibit and did not adequately support either the Hawaii Maritime

Center or the *Falls of Clyde*. Although dry-docked and restored in 1988, the ship was not maintained and in 2007 the ship was closed to the public for safety reasons. In 2008 Bishop Museum had the ship surveyed and a report determined it would take more money than they wanted to commit to fully restore her as a historic museum ship. The Museum's Board of Directors authorized the derigging and sinking of the ship because

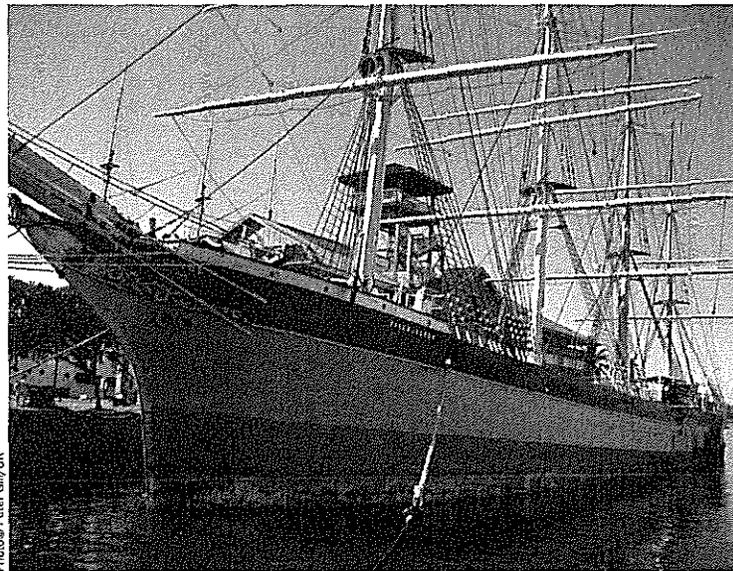


Photo © Peter Gil/UK

The Clyde-built ship needs a complete restoration.

was towed by a U.S. Navy vessel from Seattle, WA, to Honolulu. An organization was formed to take ownership and responsibility for restoration of the ship, which was accomplished in the early 1970s. The ship became an attraction for local residents and tourists and ownership was transferred to the Hawaii Maritime Center. She was a popular venue for events, as well as an educational museum artifact. The local Caledonian Society held events and its members did volunteer work aboard the *Falls*. In 1988 the

they deemed it financially impossible to maintain as a museum exhibit.

The year 2008 is when members of the maritime industry and the Scottish community in Hawaii came together to rescue the ship from its impending fate. A small group of community members began meeting with a representative of Bishop Museum in an attempt to dissuade them from destroying the ship. The Caledonian Society of Hawaii Chieftain Bruce McEwan was part of the community group as someone who was both in the maritime

industry and a leader in the Scottish community. The community group formed a charitable, non-profit organization called Friends of *Falls of Clyde* (FFOC) to negotiate a change of ownership with Bishop Museum.

On September 30, 2008 FFOC purchased *Falls of Clyde* from Bishop Museum for \$1. Fortunately, a substantial amount of money donated for the maintenance of the ship came with the new ownership, so FFOC has been able to work on the ship and prepare to take her into drydock for preservation work. Much work has been done to document the condition of the ship and in 2013 a naval architectural firm was hired to inspect the ship and provide a condition report and a plan for drydocking.

This was done and in mid-2014 the local shipyard in Honolulu Harbor committed to doing the work, but required FFOC to raise the funds, estimated at \$1.5 million. At the end of 2014, the state's administration changed with a new governor. As FFOC began to plan for a capital campaign starting in 2015, the new Deputy Director of the Department of Transportation, Harbors Division, communicated that the support that FFOC had over the years was now lapsed. The new administrator did not have a maritime background as did the two previous Deputy Directors, and he made it clear the state now wanted *Falls of Clyde* to be removed from the harbor. This led to a very stressful two years for FFOC. It was impossible to raise funds with the uncertain future that became more dire when the Harbors Division impounded the ship in June 2016 because FFOC had not moved the

ship out of the harbor. All arguments for supporting a National Historic Landmark with a 50-year history as an iconic visitor attraction fell on deaf years.

When everything seemed bleakest, a plan was set in motion to bring *Falls of Clyde* back to where she was built in Scotland. Glaswegian David O'Neill, founder of the Old Gorbals Heritage Group, is the driving force behind the initiative to save this important piece of maritime history. There is now a link with the world-renowned Glasgow Nautical College and Ferguson Marine, the modern successor to the shipyard where *Falls of Clyde* was built. There is worldwide support for saving *Falls of Clyde* and contact has been made with Hawaii's governor to get a reprieve while the Scottish plan

comes together. There is consideration being given to conduct a fundraising tour of the U.S. and Canada to speak to Scottish organizations about the future plans as *Falls of Clyde* is restored.

The Caledonian Society of Hawaii in conjunction with the other Hawaiian Scottish associations will be working diligently to gather financial support in Hawaii. To return *Falls of Clyde* to Scotland it will take a rally among Scots and Scottish organizations throughout the United States, Scotland and elsewhere to fund the move and begin the restoration work. For more information, Friends of *Falls of Clyde* can be contacted at www.friendsoffallsofclyde.org and David O'Neill at savefalls@clcyde@gmail.com.

Gaelic USA Seeks Donations For Scottish Gaelic Studies Course

Gaelic USA, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, was recently formed to: to encourage and support the development of the study of Scottish Gaelic language, literature, history and culture in our institutions of higher learning; to facilitate the flow of information from academic research to the general public; to provide grants and other support of Gaelic language and cultural revitalization initiatives; to advocate for the representation and celebration of Gaelic history and culture in Scottish American heritage organizations and activities; and to coordinate and work with other contemporary

ethnic communities toward achieving common goals and interests.

As part of this mission, the organization submitted a proposal to the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) to create a visiting lectureship in Scottish Gaelic Studies for the 2018-2019 academic year. Now the university has accepted proposal, contingent upon Gaelic USA raising the necessary money to pay the lecturer's salary and related costs. The goal is to raise \$75,000 by April 2018. Anyone who is interested in the initiative, donating to the cause or joining Gaelic USA, can learn more at <https://gaelicusa.org/contact/#!form/Contact>.