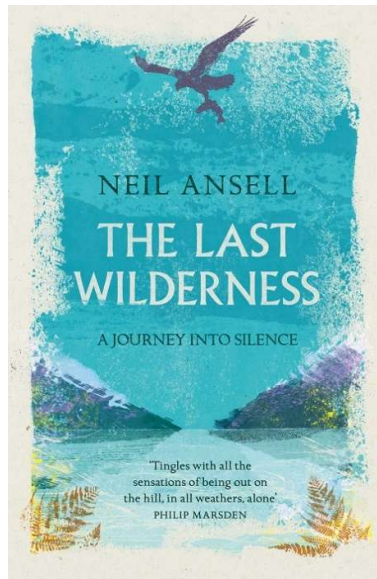


## LONG LIST FOR HIGHLAND BOOK PRIZE 2018

The Highland Book Prize, established in 2017, celebrates the finest published work that recognises the rich landscape and cultural diversity of the Highlands. This annual prize is open to work in fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

Presented by the Highland Society of London and facilitated by Moniak Mhor Writers' Centre, this literary prize aims to bring recognition to books created in or about the Highlands. The winner of the Highland Book Prize 2018 will be announced at the Ullapool Book Festival in May 2019.

This year's competition saw 56 books by 30 different publishers submitted and reviewed by a panel of 80 volunteer readers comprising both industry professionals and avid readers. From this selection, the following longlist for the 2018 Highland Book Prize was recently announced:



### **The Last Wilderness** by Neil Ansell (Headline)

Neil Ansell's *The Last Wilderness* is a mesmerising book on nature and solitude by a writer who has spent his lifetime taking solitary ventures into the wild.

The experience of being in nature alone is here set within the context of a series of walks that Neil Ansell takes into the most remote parts of Britain, the rough bounds in the Scottish Highlands. He illustrates the impact of being alone as part of nature, rather than outside it.

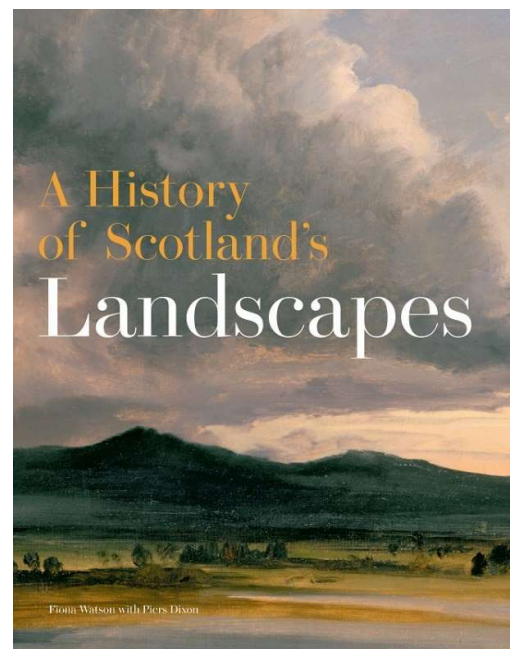
As a counterpoint, Neil Ansell also writes of the changes in the landscape, and how his hearing loss affects his relationship with nature as the calls of the birds he knows so well become silent to him.

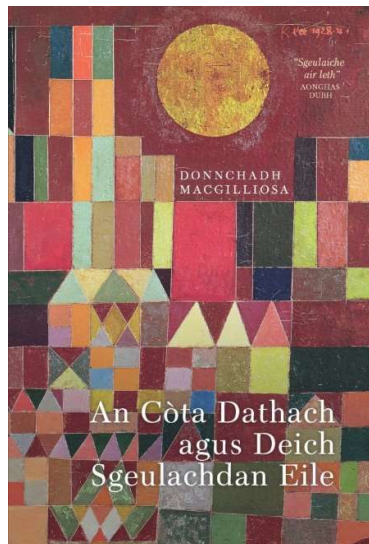
### **A History of Scotland's Landscapes** by Fiona Watson and Piers Dixon (Historic Environment Scotland)

It is easy to overlook how much of our history is preserved all around us – the way the narrative of bygone days has been inscribed in fields, forests, hills and mountains, roads, railways, canals, lochs, buildings and settlements. Indeed, footprints of the past are to be found almost everywhere.

These evocative spaces provide unique evidence for the way this land and its wealth of resources has been lived in, worked on, ruined, abandoned, restored and celebrated – offering valuable clues that bring the past to life far more effectively than any written history.

*A History of Scotland's Landscapes* explores the many ways that we have used, adapted and altered our environment over thousands of years. Full of maps, photographs and drawings, it offers a remarkable new perspective on Scotland – a unique guide to tracing memories, events and meanings in the forms and patterns of our surroundings.





### **An Còta Dathach agus deich sgeulachdan eile** le Donnchadh MacGillÌosa (Clàr)

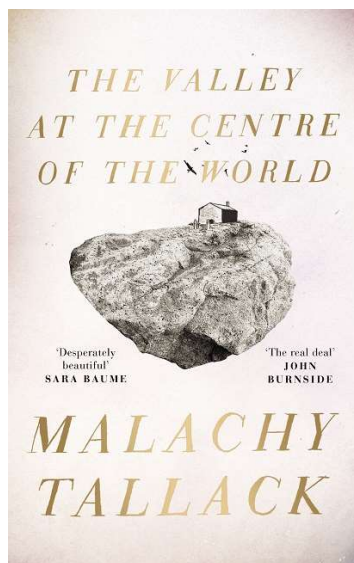
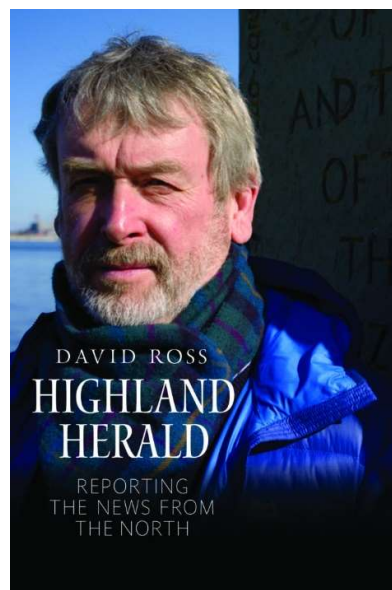
Seo an treas cruinneachadh dhe na sgeulachdan goirid aig Donnchadh a dh'fhoillsich CLÀR. Tha mòran dhe na sgeulachdan air an suidheachadh ann an Nis, is a' chainnt a tha a' toirt dealbh air a' choimhearsnachd gu h-àraid làidir mar gum biodh an sgrìobhadair beò an lùib nan caractaran air a' mhòintich, am broinn an taighean, a-muigh air an rathad.

This is the third collection of short stories by Duncan published in Gaelic by CLÀR. Many of the stories are based in Ness (Lewis). The vigorous language describing the community makes one feel the writer is there with the characters, out on the moor, inside their houses, accompanying them as they walk along the road.

### **Highland Herald: Reporting from the North** by David Ross (Birlinn)

From 1988 to 2017 David Ross was the Highland Correspondent of The Herald. His patch stretched from the Mull of Kintyre in the south to the Shetland island of Unst in the north; and from St Kilda, in the West, to the whisky country of Speyside in the east. From his home on the Black Isle he covered all the big stories, from the fight against a nuclear waste dump in Caithness to plans to remove half a mountain on the island of Harris. He helped the first community land buyout in modern times in Assynt, covered in depth the anti-toll campaign on the Skye Bridge, the efforts to save Gaelic and protect ferry services.

In Highland Herald he reflects on the important issues which affected the Highlands and Islands during his time. He tells how his late father-in-law, the Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean, helped him. He had never written in depth about Sorley when he was alive, as it would have been 'excruciatingly embarrassing for both of us'; but does so now.



### **The Valley at the Centre of the World** by Malachy Tallack (Canongate)

Shetland: a place of sheep and soil, of harsh weather, close ties and an age-old way of life. A place where David has lived all his life, like his father and grandfather before him, but where he abides only in the present moment. A place where Sandy, a newcomer but already a crofter, may have finally found a home. A place that Alice has fled to after the death of her husband.

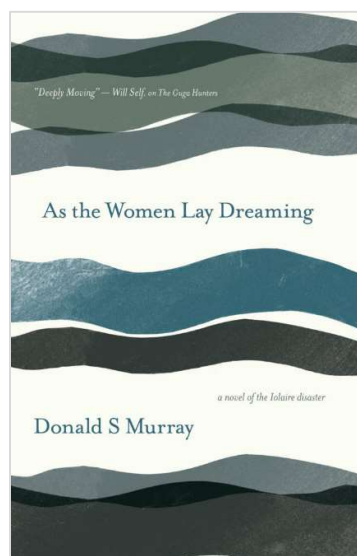
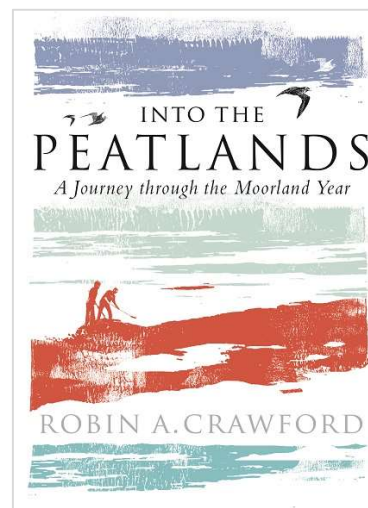
But times do change – island inhabitants die, or move away, and David worries that no young families will take over the chain of stories and care that this valley has always needed, while others wonder if it was ever truly theirs to join. In the wind and sun and storms from the Atlantic, these islanders must decide: what is left of us when the day's work is done, the children grown, and all our choices have been made?

**Into the Peatlands: A Journey Through the Moorland Year** by Robert A Crawford (Birlinn)

The peatlands of the Outer Hebrides are half land, half water. Their surface is a glorious tweed woven from tiny plants, a habitat rich in wildlife, but underneath is layer upon layer of dead mosses transforming into the peat. One can, with care, walk out onto them, but stop and you begin to sink into them. For time immemorial the peatlands have been places – for humans at least – of seasonal habitation but not of constant residence.

In describing the seasonal processes of cutting, drying, stacking, storing and burning he reveals one of the key rhythms of island life, but his study goes well beyond this to include many other aspects, including the wildlife and folklore associated with these lonely, watery places.

Widening his gaze to other peatlands in the country, he also reflects on the historical and cultural importance that peat has played and continues to play – it is still used for fuel in many rural areas and plays an essential role in whisky-making – in the story of Scotland.



**As the Women Lay Dreaming** by Donald S Murray (Saraband)

In the small hours of January 1st, 1919, the cruellest twist of fate changed at a stroke the lives of an entire community. Tormod Morrison was there that terrible night. He was on board HMY Iolaire when it smashed into rocks and sank, killing some 200 servicemen on the very last leg of their long journey home from war. The disaster would mark Tormod indelibly.

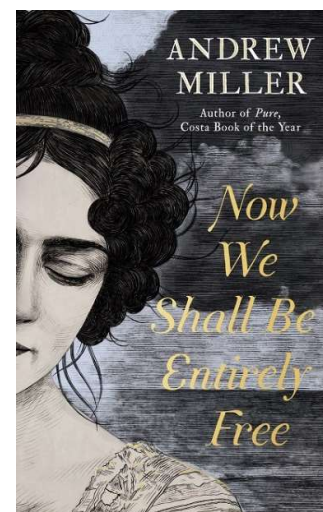
Two decades later, Alasdair and Rachel are sent to the Isle of Lewis to live with Tormod in his traditional blackhouse home. Their grandfather is kind, compassionate, but still deeply affected by the Iolaire shipwreck – by the selfless heroism and desperate tragedy he witnessed.

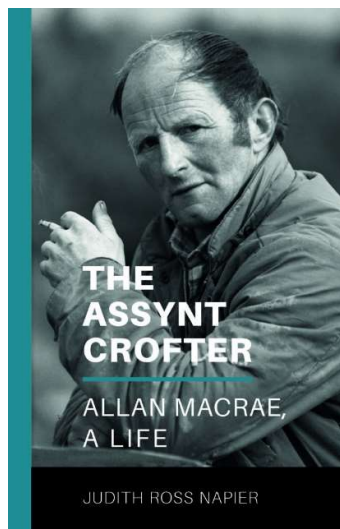
A deeply moving novel about passion constrained and coping with loss, *As the Women Lay Dreaming* explores how a single event can so dramatically impact communities, individuals and, indeed, our very souls.

**Now We Shall Be Entirely Free** by Andrew Miller (Sceptre)

One rainswept winter's night in 1809, an unconscious man is carried into a house in Somerset. He is Captain John Lacroix, home from Britain's disastrous campaign against Napoleon's forces in Spain. Gradually Lacroix recovers his health, but not his peace of mind, so when the command comes to return to his regiment, he lights out instead for the Hebrides – unaware that a vicious English corporal and a Spanish officer are secretly on his trail.

In luminous prose, Miller portrays a man shattered by what he has witnessed, on a journey that leads to unexpected friendships, even to love. But as the short northern summer reaches its zenith, the shadow of the enemy creeps ever closer. Freedom, for John Lacroix, will come at a high price.





### **The Assynt Crofter** by Judith Ross Napier (Acair Books)

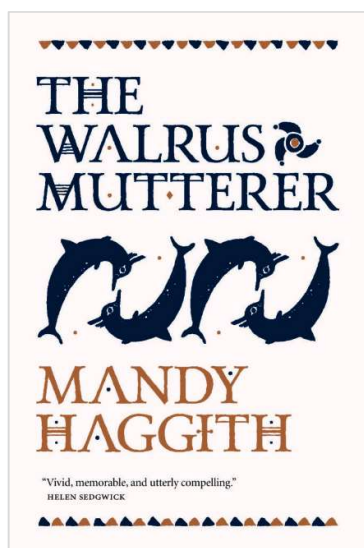
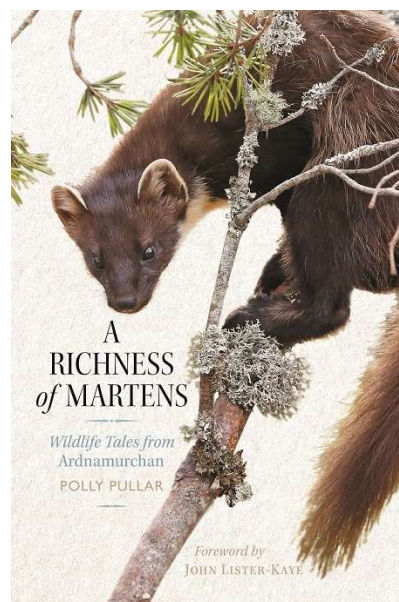
Some names are so closely linked with historical events that they almost become one and the same. One such is Allan MacRae, who, along with a small group of fellow crofters, led to victory the ground-breaking Assynt Crofters Trust land buy-out. Allan MacRae's unique character was informed by the Highland Clearances, staunch Presbyterianism and, extraordinarily, the London music hall.

Judith Napier's well-researched biography explores the life of a remarkable man – stonemason, orator, athlete, campaigning writer, but above all a crofter who cared deeply for his beloved Assynt.

### **A Richness of Martens: Wildlife Tales from Ardnamurchan** by Polly Pullar (Birlinn)

When Les and Chris Humphreys moved to Ardnamurchan 15 years ago, little did they realise they would be sharing their retirement with some of Britain's most elusive and misunderstood mustelids. Amongst all the animals and birds that visit their garden, they have formed a special bond with numerous pine martens and have studied them and a cast of other creatures at close range through direct observation and via sensor-operated cameras.

Naturalist and photographer Polly Pullar has known the Humphreys and their pine martens for many years. In this anecdotal, amusing and informative book she weaves together natural history with her own deeply moving personal experiences to reveal much about the wildlife of one of Scotland's richest habitats, the oakwoods of the Atlantic seaboard. Together with evidence from the Humphreys' intimate observations, the result is a unique picture of a rare mammal with an almost limitless appetite for mischief, as well as a passionate portrait of Ardnamurchan, the UK's most westerly mainland peninsula.



### **The Walrus Mutterer** by Mandy Haggith (Saraband)

Northern Britain, Iron Age. Rian, a carefree young woman and promising apprentice healer, is enslaved by a spiteful trader and forced aboard a vessel to embark on a perilous sea voyage. They are in search of the fabled hunter known as the Walrus Mutterer, to recover something once stolen.

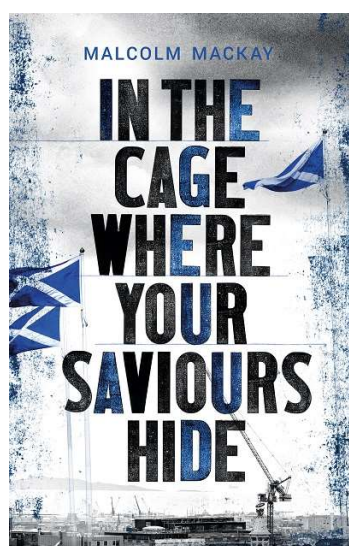
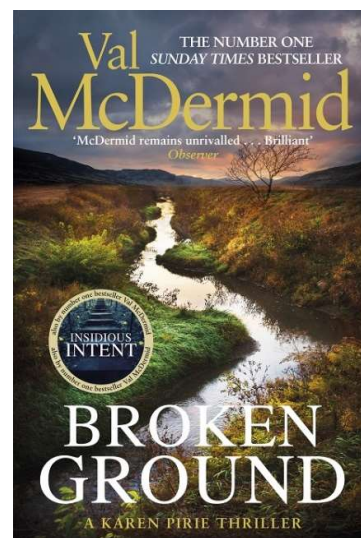
The limits of Rian's endurance are tested not only by the cruelty of her captor, but their mysterious fellow passenger Pytheas The Greek – and the merciless sea that constantly endangers both their mission and their lives.

A visceral evocation of ancient folklore and ritual, *The Walrus Mutterer* introduces an unforgettable cast of characters in an extraordinary, vividly imagined Celtic world.

**Broken Ground** by Val McDermid (Little Brown)

When a young couple arrive in search of treasure left buried in the Highlands by an ancestor stationed in Wester Ross during the Second World War, they discover more than they bargained for. Their tattered and crumbling map leads them to the resting place of something far more sinister. Is this a body that has been in the ground for seventy-two years? The corpse's footwear tells a different story... one that needs DCI Karen Pirie and her Historic Cases Unit to understand what the past is trying to explain. But Karen has other cases on her mind, with equally useful reminders that the past has a habit of catching up with us all eventually...

Moving seamlessly between 1944 and the present day, Val McDermid weaves an intriguing tale of atmospheric suspense and suspicion.



**In the Cage Where your Saviours Hide** by Malcolm Mackay (Head of Zeus)

The independent kingdom of Scotland flourished until the beginning of the last century. Its great trading port of Challaid, in the north west of the country, sent ships around the world and its merchants and bankers grew rich on their empire in Central America. But Scotland is not what it was, and the docks of Challaid are almost silent. The huge infrastructure projects collapsed, like the dangerous railway tunnels under the city. And above ground the networks of power and corruption are all that survive of Challaid's glorious past.

Darian Ross is a young private investigator whose father, an ex-cop, is in prison for murder. He takes on a case brought to him by a charismatic woman, Maeve Campbell. Her partner has been stabbed; the police are not very curious about the death of a man who laundered money for the city's criminals. Ross is drawn by his innate sense of justice and his fascination with Campbell into a world in which no-one can be trusted.

**The Story Keeper** by Anna Mazzola (Headline)

From the author of *The Unseeing* comes a sizzling, period novel of folk tales, disappearances and injustice set on the Isle of Skye.

When Audrey Hart flees London for the Isle of Skye, she does not envisage the power and influence of the island's folklore and superstitions. It is 1857 and the Highland Clearances have left devastation, poverty and a community riven by fear. On arrival, Audrey is met with hostility; it is clear that she is not welcome here. And then she discovers the body of a young girl. As others vanish, locals insist the girls are the victims of the restless dead: spirits who take the form of birds. Unconvinced, Audrey takes it upon herself to find answers. But what hideous truths lie behind these fairy stories?

