

rather 'swims' across the surface (good swimmer in water). You will remember in *The Wind in the Willows*, Ratty was very caring of his friend Mole. Author Kenneth Grahame (1859-1932) was born in Edinburgh into an old Scottish family of lawyers; as a youngster he lived near Loch Fyne, but his mother died when he was five and his father was an alcoholic, so he was brought up by elderly relatives, latterly by a grandmother in a Berkshire village on the banks of the River Thames, the inspiration for the book's setting. Not allowed to go to university he had a successful career in the Bank of England but also turned to writing.

Originally letters to entertain his son who was partially blind – and was nicknamed *Mouse* – it was one of many publications; his most famous short story is *The Reluctant Dragon*. While the book with its E.H. Shephard's illustrations grew in popularity, the tale really took off with its adaptation for the stage presentation *Toad of Toad Hall* by A.A. Milne. This was the time of Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, J.M. Barrie, etc.

Just as the mole is often hidden, so may words or phrases have hidden meanings. The toast "To the little gentleman in the black velvet jacket" was to the mole: whilst out riding, the hated King William IV's horse stumbled on a molehill and he was thrown; he died from his injuries. The dislike of him in Scotland was largely caused by the failure of The Darien Scheme. The plan to set up a Scottish colony (as the English had done) to trade in the Americas, attracted a large proportion of the country's wealth so its failure had tremendous repercussions on the whole country.

Admittedly the three expeditions were not sufficiently well-equipped for the rigours of the chosen site – the Panama isthmus (in view of the subsequent building of the canal a good spot), but it was felt that the King blocked its progress because he was busy cultivating the Spaniards who were of course very active on that side of the Atlantic, to benefit his Dutch connections and also to placate the English merchants who saw it as a threat to their trade. William's more or less peaceful ten-year reign (not counting events in Ireland) was good for the country; the King was keen to end the religious strife in Scotland and set up the Presbyterian Kirk as the national church, also it gave the Scottish Parliament more freedom from English control. However as the English became more aware of this, the concept of a union of the Parliaments developed resulting in the act of 1707. Whilst this may seem to have been a bad thing, in fact it opened up England to a subsequent Scottish 'take-over' in many business areas and allowed wider trade and advances in education.

William died in 1702; *The Mouldiewort* appeared in a dance collection dated c.1755, but maybe it had been devised earlier? Such publications would not have been so quickly off the press as nowadays, so perhaps it was prompted by the molehill 'event'?

Though to some the mole is seen as a pest, it keeps many garden nuisances at bay, its engineering feats as a tunneller provide a system of surface drainage, and its excavations help the soil to turn over. A molehill can be about one foot high and three feet broad; it is a build-up of a number of heaps of soil excavated in a small area. We are all familiar with the phrase "to make a mountain out of a molehill"; if there is a slip-up in the execution of a dance, do not turn it into something big, go – not blindly – but blithely on to pick up the threads - keep dancing – keep smiling!

Obituary for Isla Norris

from Margaret Sparrow, Ngaio Club

It was with sadness that many Scottish Country dancers attended the funeral of Isla Norris only three and a half months after husband Eric was laid to rest.

Isla and Eric and their only daughter Gaye who died 20 years ago, were foundation members of the Ngaio Scottish Country dance club when it was established nearly 40 years ago. Prior to that they danced at the Kelburn club. They were also regular attendees at Johnsonville, and Tawa clubs.

Isla was 97 years old and danced well into her nineties only stopping because of declining health and mobility. Her kindness to new dancers was always appreciated. Isla and Eric were both known for their community work.



Isla at the mid-winter dinner/dance for the Ngaio club at The Pines in Island Bay in June 2006.