

# Shinty painting on show for the first time in fifty years



## REDISCOVERED SHINTY PAINTING EXHIBITED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FIFTY YEARS AT THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

The painting *A Highland Landscape with a Game of Shinty* is the most famous depiction of the world-celebrated Scottish sport and one of the treasures of the game. Last seen in 1962, the painting disappeared from public view for over fifty years, although it has frequently been used in books and articles to highlight the provenance of the game. After a three-year search triggered by the *Playing for Scotland* exhibition at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, the picture was eventually uncovered in a private collection belonging to a descendent of the last-known owner. *A Highland Landscape with a Game of Shinty*, attributed to the artists Daniel Cunliffe and A. Smith of Mauchline, is now on long-term loan to the Galleries and will join the many other works in *Playing for Scotland*, which explores the rich history of Scottish sporting traditions.

To celebrate the painting going on public display for the first time in half a century, shinty's greatest ever goal-scorer Ronald Ross, MBE and the sport's noted BBC commentator and historian Dr Hugh Dan MacLennan were at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery today with the premier prize in shinty: the Scottish Hydro Camanachd Cup.

The only man to have scored more than 1000 goals in the sport, Ross has earned the eponym 'Ronaldo of the Glens', after the Brazilian footballer. He recently announced his retirement from active play for Kingussie Camanachd, officially the world's most successful sporting team of all time, according to the *Guinness Book of Records*. Ross recently crowned a

stellar career with a man-of-the-match performance as led Kingussie lifted the Camanachd Cup in 2014 for the twenty-third time.

The game depicted in the painting quite possibly took place on the Cluny estate near Newtonmore. Sticks (camans) are raised in frenzied action; the presence of pipers, dancers and refreshments implies this match is a festival game, perhaps enjoyed at New Year. The Badenoch and Strathspey Shinty Heritage Project believe the scene almost certainly depicts one of the famous shinty ball-plays organised by Cluny Macpherson, Chief of Clan Chattan. The setting and painting are probably the source of many depictions of shinty which followed from the mid-nineteenth century.

Shinty has been described as the oldest-known Celtic sport. The Camanachd Association (CA) was founded in 1893 to lead the development of the game by ensuring there was one set of rules and a framework for organising competitions nationally. Currently based in Inverness, the CA remains the governing body for shinty across the world.

Jim Barr, President of the Camanachd Association said: “The Camanachd Association is delighted that the iconic painting *A Highland Landscape with a Game of Shinty* has been located, and will be on display at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. We would like to thank the owner of the painting and the National Galleries of Scotland for displaying one of Scotland’s most iconic and most important sporting paintings. The scene very much embodies the spirit of the game, which is still played in some of the most attractive settings in the world”.

Commenting on this new long-term loan, Christopher Baker, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, said: “After a three-year search, I’m delighted that *A Highland Landscape with a Game of Shinty* is now on long-term loan to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and will be on display

in *Playing for Scotland*. Our visitors can enjoy it amid many iconic artworks, brought together for the first time, which depict the nation's sports".