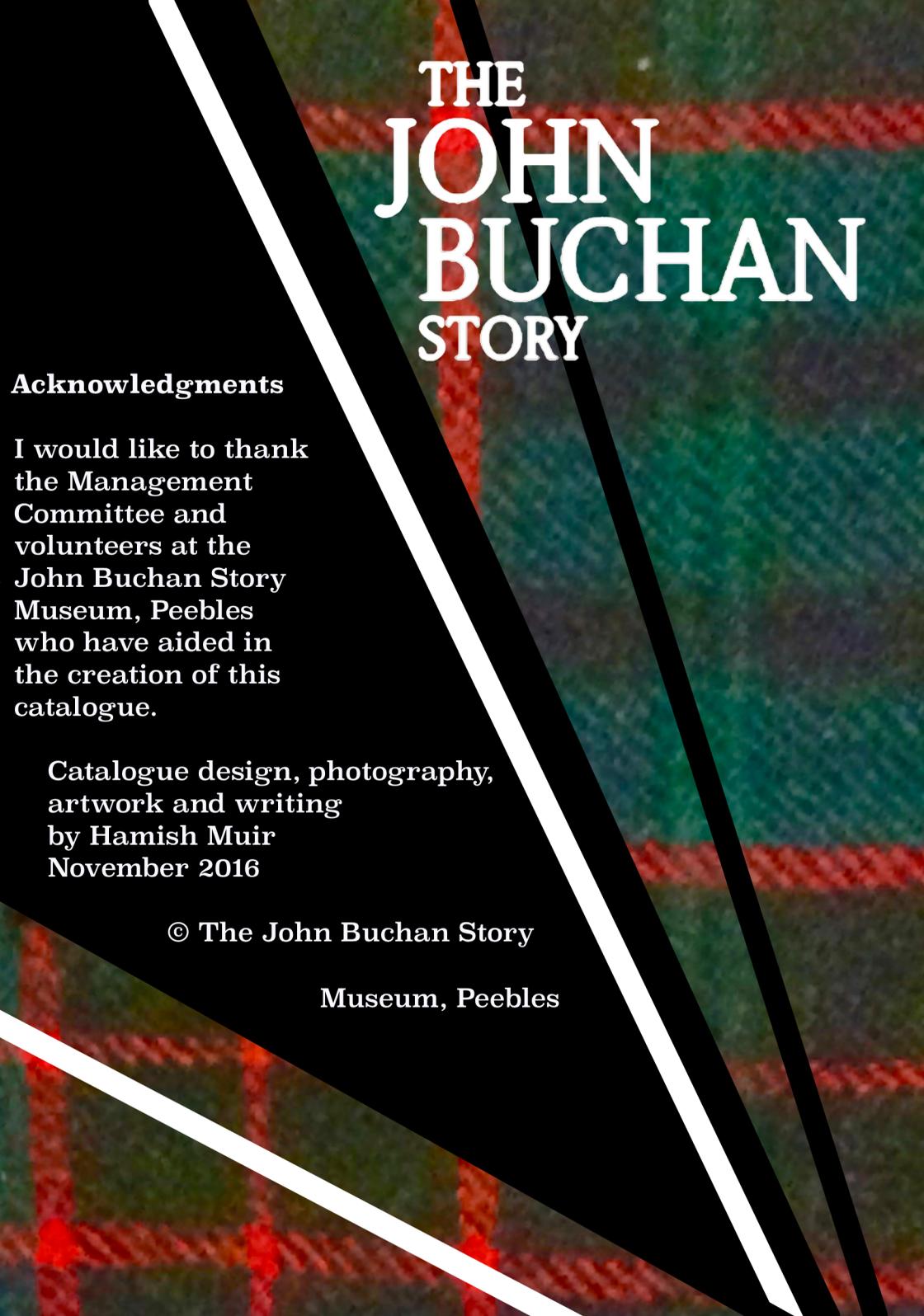




THE  
JOHN  
BUCHAN  
STORY

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE  
COLLECTION



# THE JOHN BUCHAN STORY

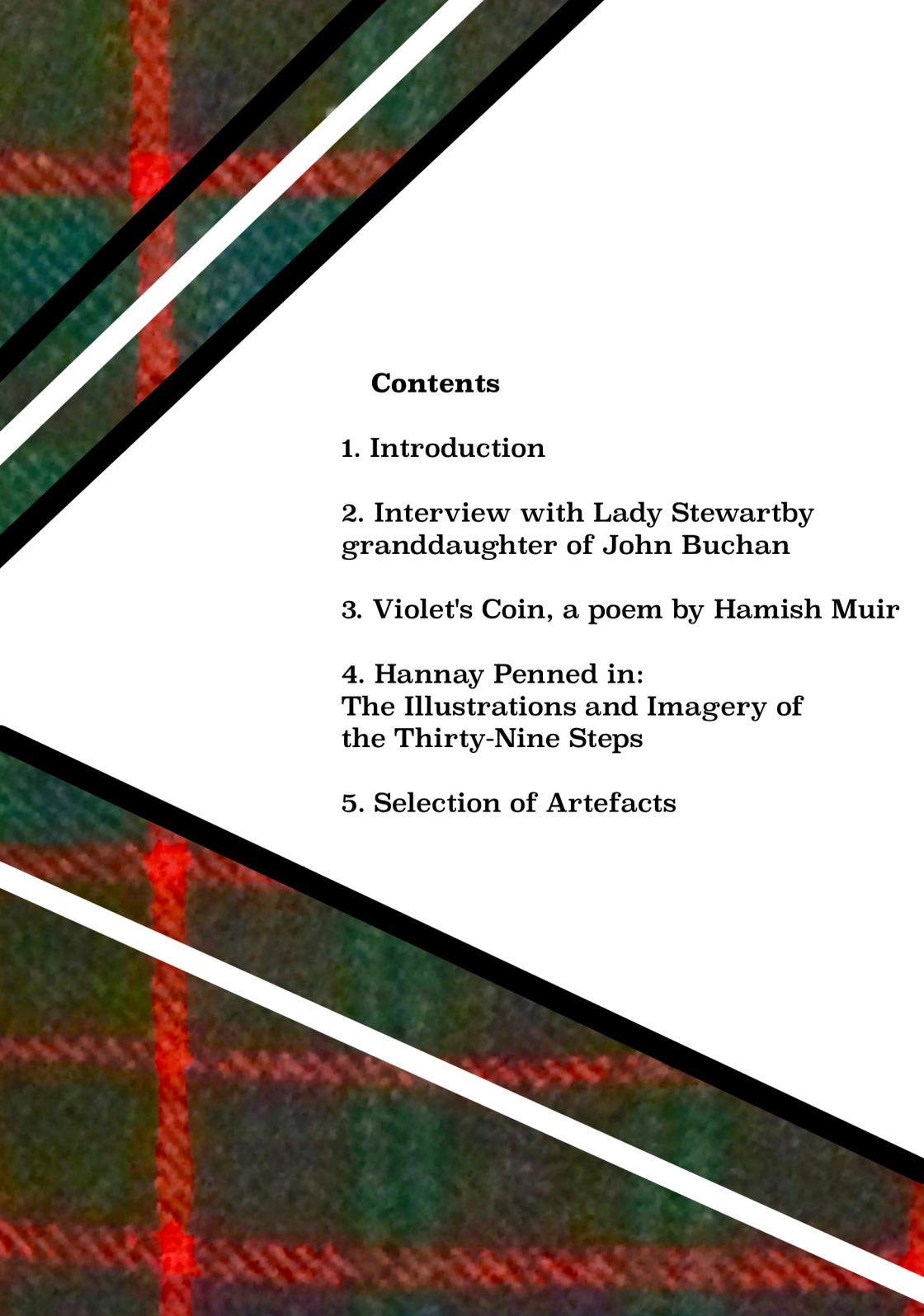
## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank the Management Committee and volunteers at the John Buchan Story Museum, Peebles who have aided in the creation of this catalogue.

Catalogue design, photography,  
artwork and writing  
by Hamish Muir  
November 2016

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Museum, Peebles



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## Introduction

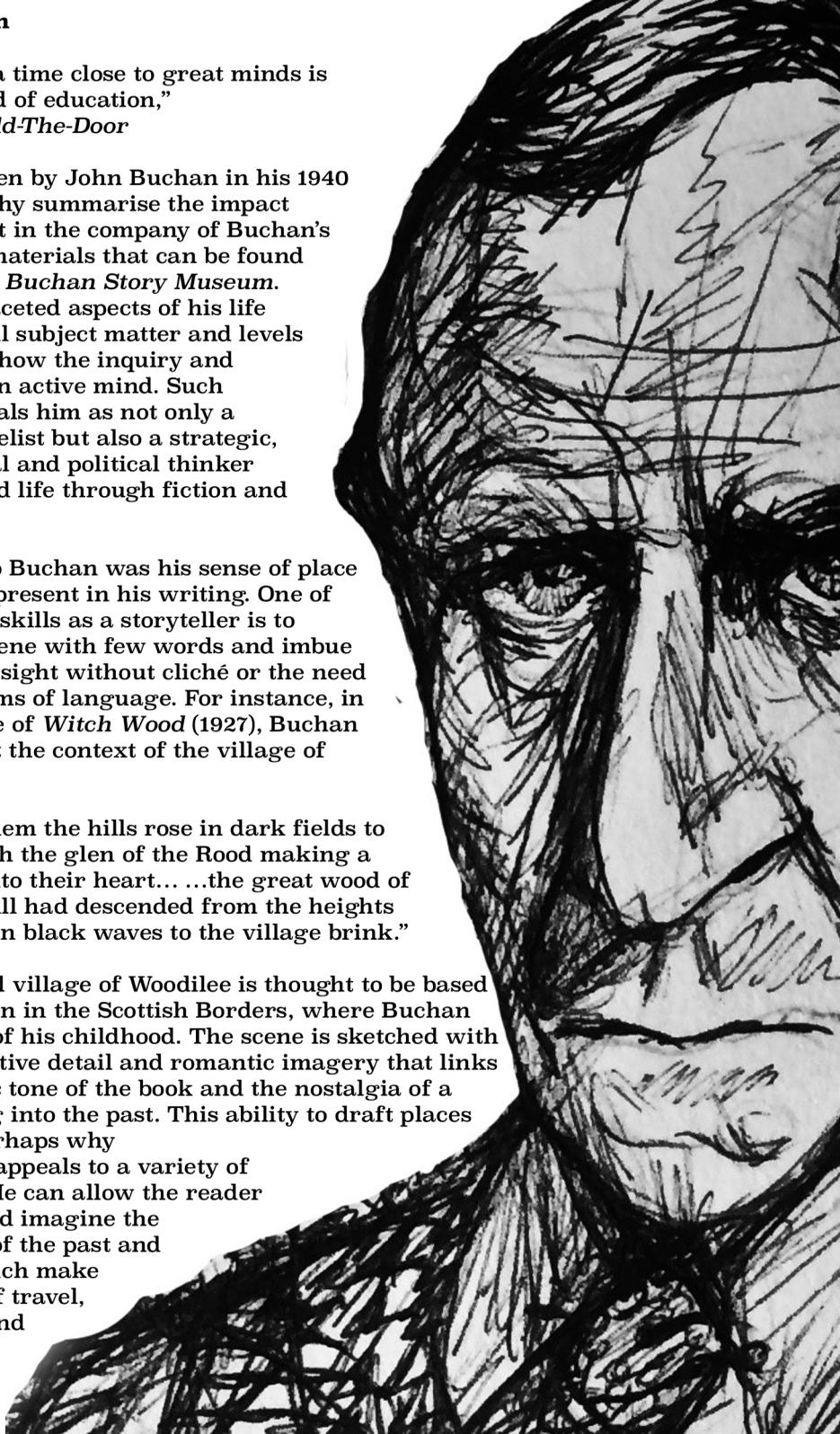
“To live for a time close to great minds is the best kind of education,”  
*Memory Hold-The-Door*

Words written by John Buchan in his 1940 autobiography summarise the impact of time spent in the company of Buchan’s works and materials that can be found at *The John Buchan Story Museum*. The multi-faceted aspects of his life that cover all subject matter and levels of intellect show the inquiry and interest of an active mind. Such variety reveals him as not only a creative novelist but also a strategic, philosophical and political thinker that explored life through fiction and fact.

Important to Buchan was his sense of place that is ever present in his writing. One of his greatest skills as a storyteller is to conjure a scene with few words and imbue mood and insight without cliché or the need for high forms of language. For instance, in the Prologue of *Witch Wood* (1927), Buchan writes about the context of the village of Woodilee:

“...beyond them the hills rose in dark fields to mid-sky, with the glen of the Rood making a sword-cut into their heart... ..the great wood of Melanudrigill had descended from the heights and flowed in black waves to the village brink.”

The fictional village of Woodilee is thought to be based on Broughton in the Scottish Borders, where Buchan spent some of his childhood. The scene is sketched with both descriptive detail and romantic imagery that links to the gothic tone of the book and the nostalgia of a man looking into the past. This ability to draft places simply is perhaps why his writing appeals to a variety of audiences. He can allow the reader to absorb and imagine the landscapes of the past and present, which make his stories of travel, adventure and pilgrims’ journeys so engrossing.



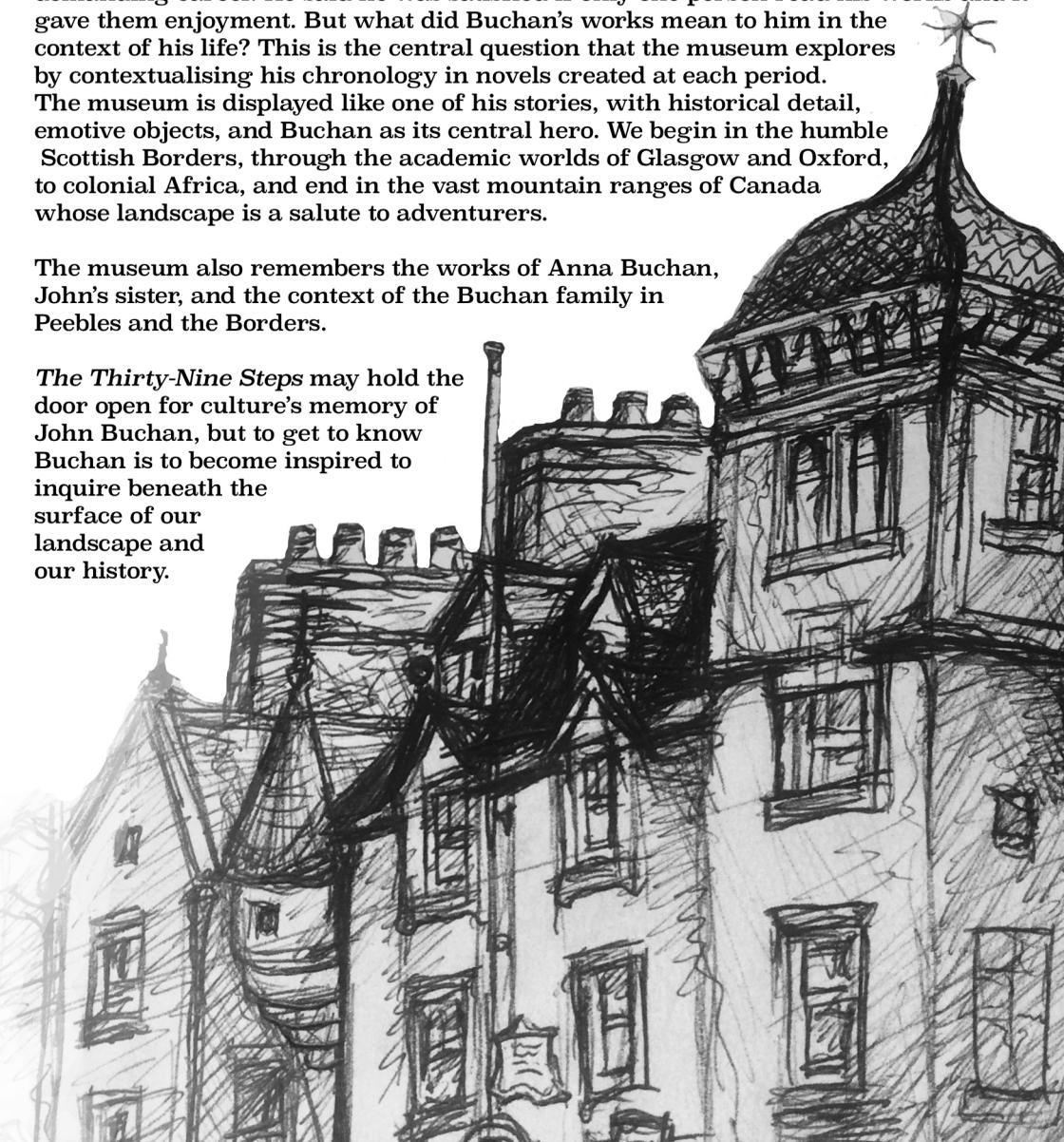
Taking on the mantle of Scott, he weaves narrative through fixed points in space and time. This is why the location of Peebles is so important to the museum. The understanding of Buchan does not begin and end at the museum door. The patchwork coloured, lowland hills in the surroundings invigorate the imagination. We can almost see Richard Hannay running through the gorse.

Buchan was a countryman; he enjoyed what the land could offer. Despite travelling and writing about characters on the road and in distant lands, the Scottish countryside was an important pasture for him and a grounding compass for his work.

His pursuit of fiction writing was also a pasture that he could escape to from his demanding career. He said he was satisfied if only one person read his works and it gave them enjoyment. But what did Buchan's works mean to him in the context of his life? This is the central question that the museum explores by contextualising his chronology in novels created at each period. The museum is displayed like one of his stories, with historical detail, emotive objects, and Buchan as its central hero. We begin in the humble Scottish Borders, through the academic worlds of Glasgow and Oxford, to colonial Africa, and end in the vast mountain ranges of Canada whose landscape is a salute to adventurers.

The museum also remembers the works of Anna Buchan, John's sister, and the context of the Buchan family in Peebles and the Borders.

*The Thirty-Nine Steps* may hold the door open for culture's memory of John Buchan, but to get to know Buchan is to become inspired to inquire beneath the surface of our landscape and our history.



# Interview with Lady Deborah Stewartby, granddaughter of John Buchan

To begin, can you give a brief outline of the current Buchan family?

It's interesting, from a family that nearly died out, John Buchan was the only one of his five brothers and sisters who had children. We've now gone the other way - my father had 9 children, there are 30 grand children, something like 18 great grandchildren and 6 great great grandchildren. The present Lord Tweedsmuir is my brother Toby, who is a publisher. My immediate family consists of 6 brothers and sisters, of whom there's me, Toby and Edward, who is a trustee of the museum. I have twin sisters, one of whom is Ursula, who is writing the new biography of Buchan, my sister Laura, and my brother James is quite a well known novelist.

Is Elsfield, the Buchan estate in Oxford, still in the family?

David Buchan, who is another grandson, and the son of Alastair Buchan, lives at Elsfield. But it has been divided up so part of it is still in the family.

The museum is a testament to Buchan's legacy, what do you think he has given to British literature and Peeblesshire?

The first spy thriller, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, which has never been out of print and was published 101 years ago. That makes an excellent jumping off board to look at his more serious works and his very interesting although rather short life. As for Peeblesshire, he was the deputy lieutenant for Peeblesshire, he was a parliamentary candidate in Peeblesshire, his grand parents lived in Peeblesshire, and his family lived in Peebles. He is part of the story that is Peeblesshire and now the museum is a reason for people to come and learn more about him. Having said that, the museum used to be in Broughton was also very much visited and loved.

It is a fitting context for such a museum. Have your family been connected with this part of the world since his death?

The Buchan children, that are my father's generation, took along time to recover from the legacy of their father and with the exception of John Tweedsmuir, none of them lived in Scotland. It wasn't until towards the end of John Tweedsmuir's life, when my father came a lot to visit him, that the family began to drift back. Having said that, the house in Broughton has always been in the family. It has always been lived in by one of us.

You are the current owner of the house in Broughton. In terms of other impacts Buchan has had on your life, what traits do you feel you have inherited from him?

I share with him a strong work ethic. It's the feeling that every minute has to be filled with sixty seconds worth of distance run. I think the whole family are all pretty driven. I don't think we feel competitive, not this generation, maybe my father's generation felt that they were constantly being compared. I don't think we feel that, even the writers amongst us don't feel that.

What is your favourite object from the Museum's collection in Peebles?

The penny that I found between the floorboards in the attic at Broughton Green, which little Violet wore around her neck. She died in Broughton when she was five. I think the most touching object in the museum, is the censored card from Alastair, which arrived back here in Peebles after he had been killed.

And to finish, can you talk about your favourite piece of John Buchan's writing?

My favourite book is *Prince of the Captivity*. It's a story about a man who goes to prison for a crime his wife committed just before the First World War and as a result of that he has to live out the rest of his life in the shadows. It's about what he does and how eventually he finds peace just before he is killed.

*Interview conducted by Hamish Muir at the John Buchan Story Museum, Peebles on 13th of July 2016. Thanks to Lady Stewartby for her time and insights.*

**Violet's Coin**  
**by Hamish Muir**

Found between the boards,  
Treasure small and playful.  
Let others value sails and swords,  
As you lie in the cradle.

Engraved in name,  
The currency of family.  
Not by material claim,  
Mark you cannily.

What could have been?  
You ask to remember.  
What bright sheen  
Is Memory now an ember.

Fragment found,  
In sake of times that were many.  
Life in a round,  
Spun on a simple penny.

Your childlike personality,  
And sound an innocent chime.  
It may be no immortality,  
But an anchor in the passage of time.

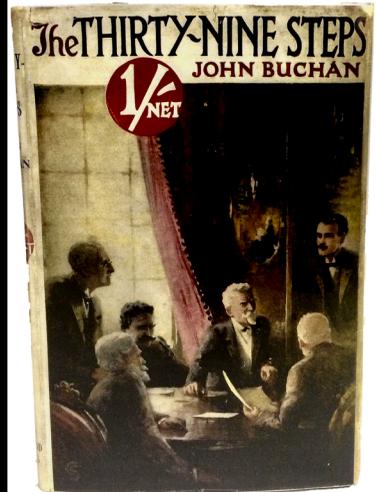
*Violet Buchan, John Buchan's sister, lived only until she was 5 years old. A coin with her name engraved upon it was found in the Buchan's house in Broughton and is displayed in the museum to remember this member of the family.*

## Hannay Penned in:

### The Illustrations and imagery of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*

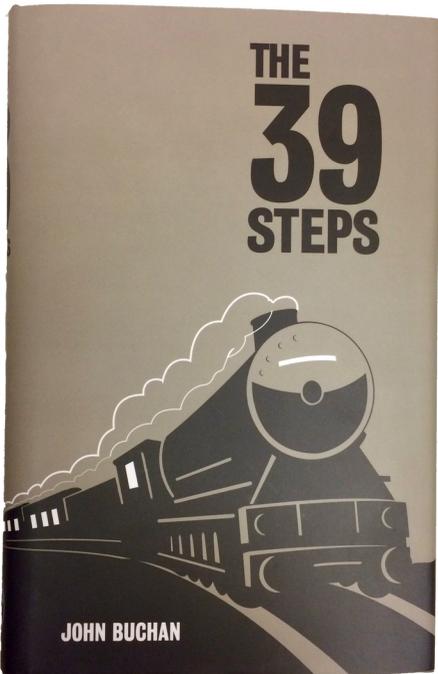
Richard Hannay running from his assailants across the Scottish moors has become synonymous with the work of Buchan and has had a consequent effect on spy and thriller stories on page and on screen following the book's publication in 1915. Cary Grant being pursued by an agricultural aircraft in Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959) is one such example that has its roots in stories such as *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Indeed, Buchan was an influence on Hitchcock's style through the creation of the 1935 film adaptation. Hitchcock's later films regularly featured wrongfully accused men on-the-run and sequences set on steam trains.

The first dust cover illustration printed for the book in 1915 (right) was less action packed but depicted a dramatic moment in the meeting at Sir Walter Bullivant's home in Berkshire, perhaps when the group learn of Karolides' assassination. This is an important image that remembers the secret communes, discrete political negotiations, and grave announcements that occurred in the 1910s. This image suggests the book is not just superficial entertainment. The book was written from Buchan's sick bed during the First World War and may in part be escapism but it also picks up on the paranoia of trust and the worries of being caught, lost, and alone during political conflict.



Hitchcock's film changed this perception of the book and created a format for later films that combined a sympathetic hero and a fast paced, time ticking escapade. A book cover was created for the release of the film in 1935 (left), a practice we take for granted today but would have been rare at this period. The cover illustration depicts a mysterious figure, possibly a spy, with a similarity to Godfrey Tearle in the part of Professor Jordan, who famously has a missing finger but whose character does not appear in the book. The drawing is a sketch behind stylised stairs and writing in newspaper style print. This simple design is striking and foreboding, looking to pick up on the enhanced thriller tone that the film emphasises.

Besides Hannay running and hiding, the steam engine has been used on several iterations of the book cover. The steam, like mist, adds mystery and the engine itself is a symbol of action and travel significant to the plot. The 2011 version (below) is a bold and refreshing take that limits the colour palette and uses clean, crisp, minimal lines making it feel contemporary. The John Buchan Society printed a special edition of this version for the opening of *The John Buchan Story Museum*.



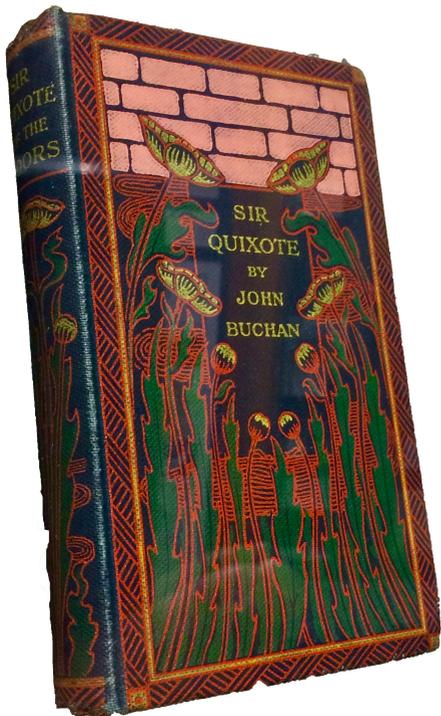
The train journey has been a significant set piece for the different film adaptations. The use of the Forth Bridge in the 1959 version starring Kenneth More is chosen for the poster (above). It depicts this scene with the recognisable bridge almost as an abstract pattern in the hurried commotion of the tense moment.

The story has been adapted for the stage and screen and continues to be in print through new editions and different versions, such as the Classics Illustrated comic version. Its prosperity is partly due to this evolution, but one that has come from a strong foundation in Buchan's writing. It will be interesting to follow the new imagery and illustrations that comes from this source in the future.

## SELECTION OF ARTEFACTS

### ***Sir Quixote of the Moors* by John Buchan (October 1895)**

**Provenance:** donated to the museum in 1985 by Leland Schubert, Cleveland, Ohio, whose bookplate is stuck inside the front cover. It originally was the property of Gilbert Murray.



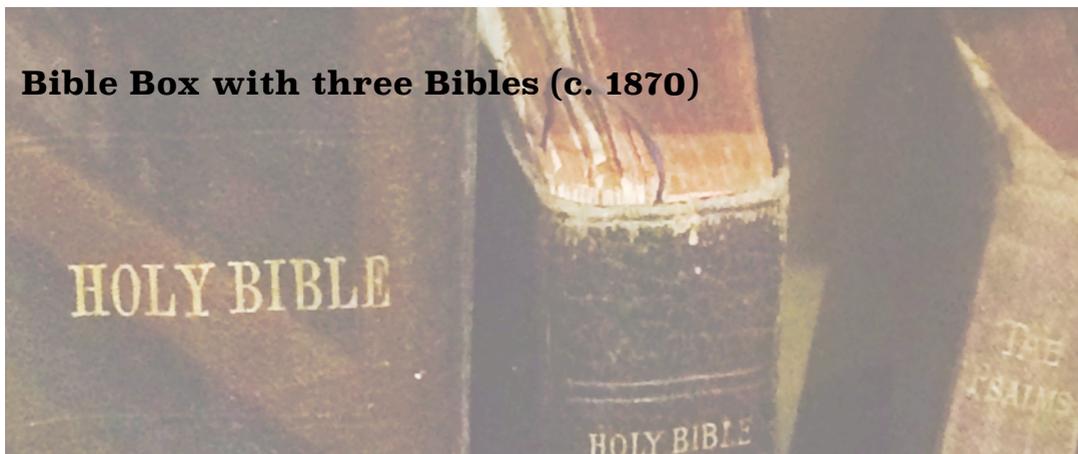
The UK first edition printed by T. Fisher Unwin, London, of Buchan's first novel, written when he was twenty, is dedicated to Gilbert Murray, Buchan's Classics tutor and mentor at the University of Glasgow. The message from Buchan reads:

“To Gilbert Murray whatsoever in this book is not worthless is dedicated by his friend.’

The novel reveals Buchan forming his style with interests in history, Romanticism and the depiction of wild, country settings. Buchan's Romanticism is more sober than that of the likes of Scott, as the central protagonist has a conflicting relationship with

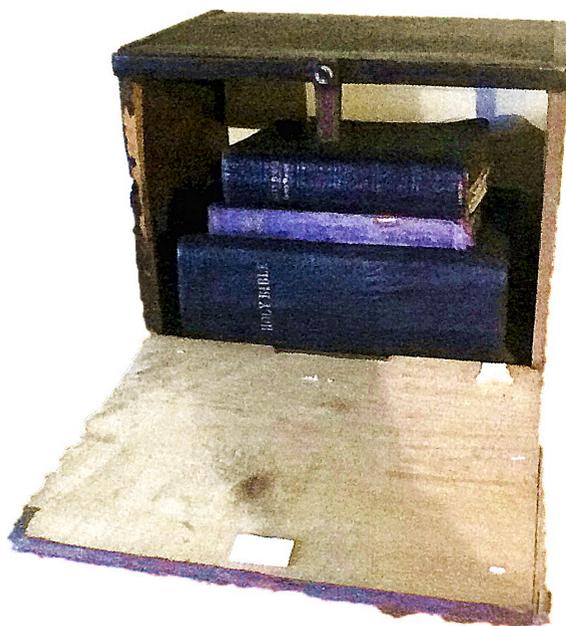
religion and honour, partaking in fanatical and extremist attacks. It shows a youthful vigour from the early writer, eager to explore ideas through fiction.

## Bible Box with three Bibles (c. 1870)



**Provenance:** gifted by the Buchan family to the museum. It has been in the family through the maternal line.

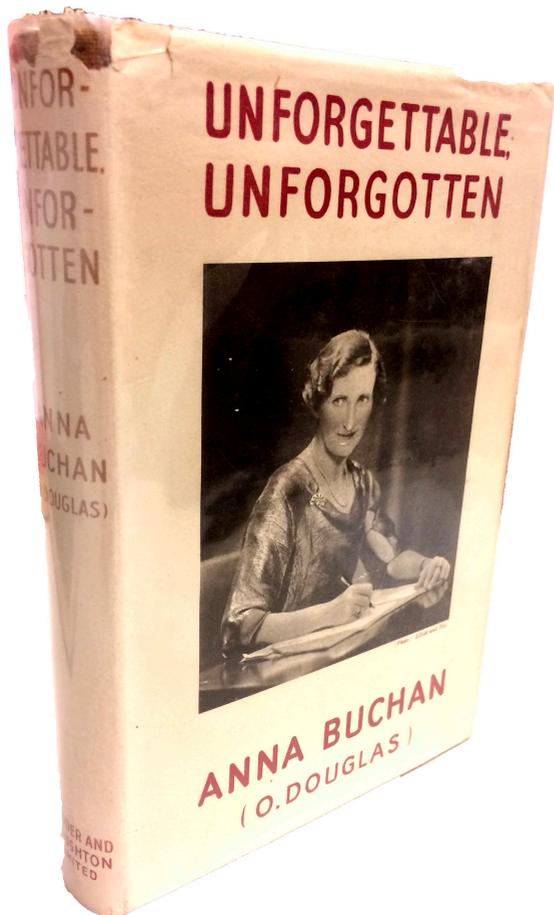
As novels represent Buchan in the museum, the Bible Box represents his family. It belonged to the Mastertons, Helen Masterton being Buchan's mother. Her family were ministers at the Free Church in Broughton. Buchan's father, John Buchan Sr., became minister in Broughton and likely used this same Bible box. The box shows part of the practical



operations of being a minister in that manuscripts and documents needed to be preserved, transported and accessible. It is a simple object, made for practical use rather than decoration like other Bible boxes, which sometimes doubled up as a lectern to read from.

## **Unforgettable, Unforgotten by Anna Buchan (1945)**

**Provenance:** donated by Miss Margaret Crichton to the Museum.



This First Edition printed by Hodder and Staughton is signed with a note of gratitude from Anna Buchan (below). Her commentary on her upbringing and family is set against the context of the end of the British Empire and the World Wars. The dust cover is in a similar style to John Buchan's autobiography 'Memory Hold-the-Door' and the two biographies make excellent companion pieces that shed light on the authors who directly and indirectly must have influenced each other's writing. Parallels could be drawn between similar literary siblings such the Wordsworths, the Rossettis or the Brontes.

With best wishes  
of gratitude for kindness received  
from Anna Buchan  
Oct. 1945

## Watercolour of Lodge in Johannesburg by John Buchan (c. 1901)

**Provenance:** from the 2nd Lord Tweedsmuir.

This is a delicate work by Buchan depicting a sketch of his lodgings that he shared with other 'Milner's kindergarten' colleagues during his time in South Africa as a private secretary to Lord Milner. Buchan paints a colourful depiction of the house, picking up on the light and climate of the location. As with his writing, Buchan captures a fairly accurate representation of the house but there is a fondness and excitement in the style, which suggests his emotional connection with this period of his life. In this sense, the painting acts as a memory as well as a decorative object.





## Map of Prester John's Territories (c. 16<sup>th</sup> century)

**Provenance:** given in 2014 by the Right Hon. The Lord Brooke of Sutton Mandeville, former Government minister and Buchan scholar.

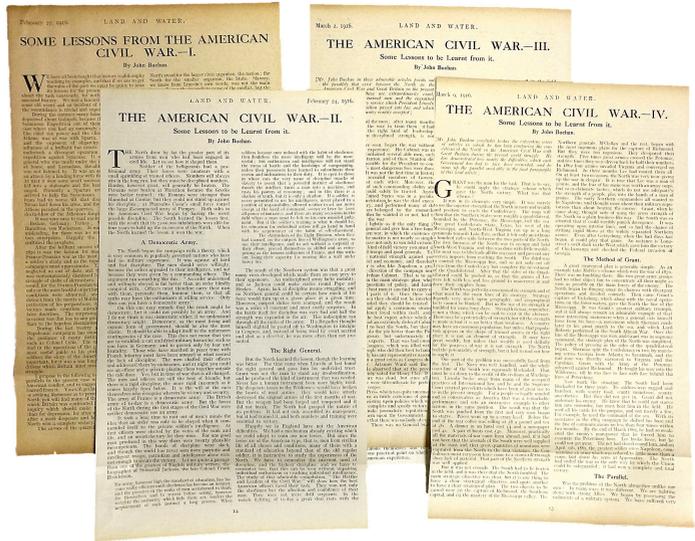
This map depicts the African territories ruled by mythical King, Prester John, at the end of the medieval period. It is roughly equivalent to Ethiopia today. It is a print of the map created by Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) but this copy may have been printed later. Prester John was said to be a Christian leader who ruled India. India was used inaccurately to mean a distant Eastern land and so this region of Africa became associated with his kingdom as the legend developed. Prester John was said to lead an uprising against the Arabs. This is what Buchan draws upon, coupled with his experience of Africa, to write his novel that takes the name of the legendary monarch. The map is an interesting reflection on truth and myth in history, in that it depicts falsity with a great deal of accuracy, making it convincing and powerful. These ideas occupy much of Buchan's writing and commentary on history.

# Some Lessons from the American Civil War articles by John Buchan (1916)

## Provenance: -

Buchan draws on historical battles to look at the First World War from a different perspective via applied history. The series of articles were written for Land and Water publication, which would later become The Field. During the War, Land and Water covered the events of the conflict. Buchan does not only draw parallels with the American Civil War; when discussing leadership he looks to figures such as Napoleon and Hannibal in discussing the successes and failures of the past. Buchan describes Lincoln as a figure who 'was beyond doubt one of the two or three greatest men ever born of our blood... in many respects the foremost statesmen of our race.'

Despite this, he goes on to say that Lincoln took a long time to learn his function in the war effort. By comparing leadership, geography, strategy, weaponry, government, trench warfare, compulsory service, and the use of untrained soldiers, Buchan finally looks to how the Allies could achieve victory and argues that it will end in one final conflict in the field.



Rudyard Kipling

## Letter to John Buchan from Rudyard Kipling (11<sup>th</sup> May 1933)

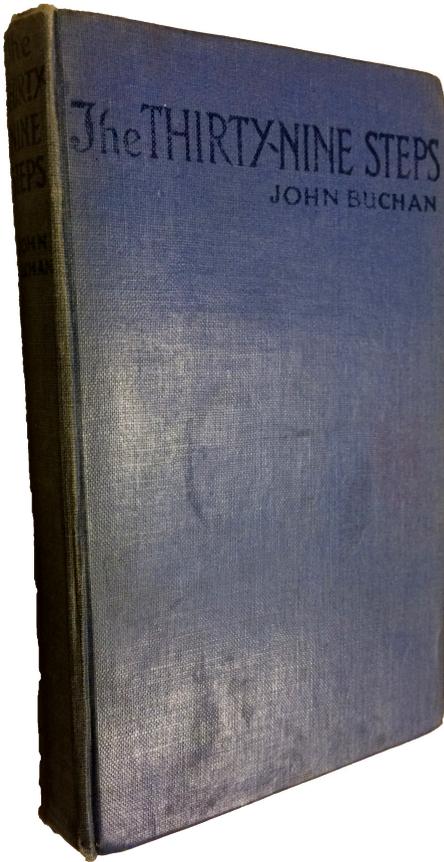
**Provenance:** copy from Queens's University Archives

The letter begins with an innocent book recommendation between literary scholars before moving onto the rise of Hitler. This was written at a time when the consequences of the Nazi uprising were not fully realised. Kipling refers to Hitler as 'the Hun', and describes him as a 'loup-garou' or a were-wolf, which suggests the notion of split intentions between human strategy and animalistic brutality. It is interesting that Kipling should use animals as metaphors, as this is a technique he applies in his own fiction. The werewolf is a reference to classical stories, myths, and moral fables that Kipling uses to rationalise Empire and War in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The letter begs the question, what was Buchan's reply?

BURWASH  
ETCHINGHAM  
BATEMAN'S  
BURWASH  
SUSSEX  
MAY 11/33  
Dear Buchan,  
I have only this week come back from Paris where I have been hung up for more than a month. But, while I had to wait, I read a book called "The Blanket of the Dark" which ~~xxxxxxx~~ and delighted me. It was also a tour de force. Do you know anything about it?  
I expect that the situation has cleared up a bit since your letter to me, which I found here of the 23rd of March.  
I have always held that we can trust the Hun, and if we will only believe him, he will save us.  
He is quite right about his race and his "Nordic" ancestry, and (did you notice that?) his hints of evolving a "Nordic" religion. He is the world's loup-garou-- the creature for whom it is essential that he must, at intervals function as a wolf.  
In other words he is the Fenrys Wolf broke loose

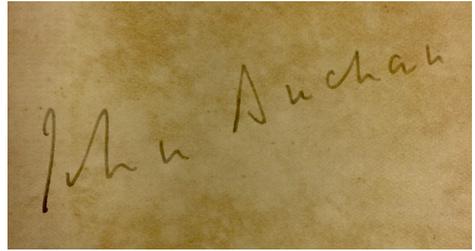
again. (You will remember that when the Aesir tried to bind the Fenrys Wolf, for the first time he broke loose. It's all in the old sagas.)  
All his Jew-hunting &c is just to snap the Pack  
on to the trail once more. When he is ready he will begin again to make the Twilight of the Gods.  
Meantime we are disarmed, impotent and bankrupt.  
There is a cheering thought and no wise help by adding round-robins to the Son of Loki.  
Ever sincerely and gratefully  
Rudyard Kipling  
P.S. A matter of detail you'll find the files of 'RS'-- It's rather interesting to read. We have gone through the whole thing before--line for line and almost letter for letter.

## ***The Thirty-Nine Steps* by John Buchan (1916)**



### **Provenance: -**

Buchan has signed this first edition hardback published by Blackwood and Sons of Edinburgh (below).



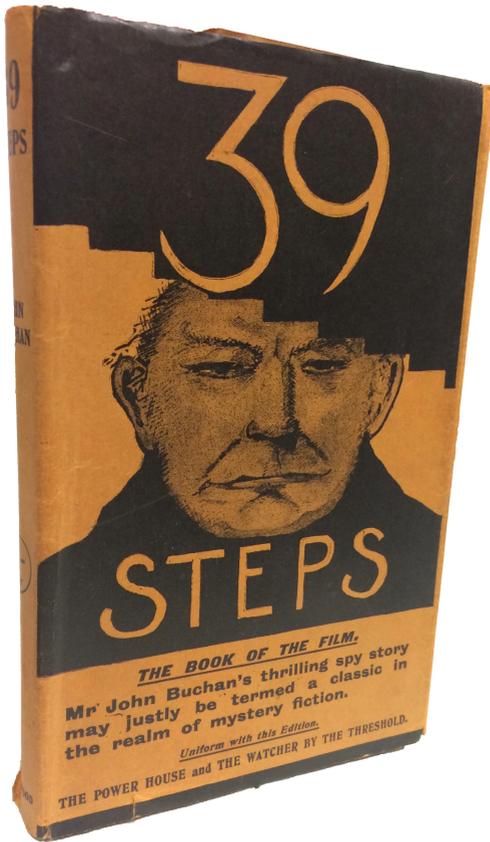
This is the original book design created by Blackwoods that stands at the beginning of the book's success and would lead to the many variant publications and formats of the story ever since. The Museum also holds an original of the Blackwoods Edinburgh

magazine with information and advertisements for *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, which would prove highly popular. Buchan went on to publish *The Power-House* and *The Courts of the Morning* with Blackwoods. *The Thirty-Nine Steps* puts Buchan's place in the canon of British literature as one of the earliest spy thrillers, depicting the gentleman spy adventure that would influence Fleming and Le Carré amongst many others.



## ***The Thirty-Nine Steps* by John Buchan (1935)**

**Provenance:** inscribed to Adam Dickson, Biggar, 15th January 1936



This is another edition of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* printed by Blackwood and Sons, with the original dustcover related to the release of Hitchcock's 1935 film. It is interesting to note that both the film and this edition of the book change the titling of *Thirty-Nine* from letters to numbers. The numbers suit the film because they can make a punchy, visual impact on a movie poster. This edition adds to the success of Buchan's

story by allowing audiences to view it from a different perspective. Hitchcock's visuals act as illustrations and influence the depiction of Hannay in particular via Robert Donat's suave and dapper hero. However, this edition depicts the dark, enigmatic, and ominous figure of a spy staring out of the cover, like the antithesis of Lord Kitchener's famous war poster, both address and assess the viewer directly.





**Film still of Alfred Hitchcock and John Buchan  
(c. 1934)**

**Provenance:** on long term loan from Kate Macdonald July 2007

During the interval at the Premiere of 'The 39 Steps', Hitchcock asked Buchan, 'What do you think of the film?' Buchan replied 'I'm enjoying it Mr. Hitchcock but how does it end?' Whilst taking licence with the story by adding in new characters and disposing of others, the Hitchcock film is its own interpretation of the book and helped form Hitchcock's style and introduced a wider, new audience to Buchan's writing. This image shows the level of respect and spirit of collaboration between the two. The fact that the film has large differences from the book means that it does not directly copy Buchan and so leaves the written story intact for readers to enjoy separately from the film.

# Time Magazine (21<sup>st</sup> October 1935)

Provenance: -



Next to an article about the birth of the present Duke of Kent, Buchan is reported as the new Viceroy of Canada in Time Magazine being displayed on the acclaimed cover photo. The article is critical of the position and outlines the difficult task Buchan has ahead of him to please the Canadian people after his predecessor, the Earl of Bessborough.

Alongside a variety of Scottish jokes, Buchan is described as smallish, sharp-nosed and pucker-lipped. Despite these minor jibes, his varied accomplishments and background set him

aside from previous Governor-Generals and suggests his success may be due to a 'canny Scottish tact and disarming Scottish directness'. His ability to engage with all levels of society was an asset that would make a success of his vicerealty in Canada despite the trepidations outlined in this article.

## Bust of John Buchan after Clapperton (c. 2001)

**Provenance:** from Lord and Lady Stewartby, given to the museum in 2001.

Thomas Clapperton originally created his sculpture of John Buchan in 1940, which is held at the National Galleries of Scotland. This bust was a copy made by Grandison of Peebles and bronzed by Mackison. It is a sympathetic portrait of Buchan created at the end of his life. Clapperton cuts off the sculpture at the neckline. Earlier drafts suggest that he considered including shoulders and clothing, but his final version appears more iconic and honest. Clapperton creates Buchan's distinguished profile and accurately relays his features such as the scar on his forehead that Buchan received after a horse and cart accident when he was very young.



# The Vice Regal Journey to the North West Territories and Eldorado Coppermine Album (1937)

**Provenance:** from the 2nd Lord Tweedsmuir.

This album was a diplomatic gift to Buchan, then Governor-General of Canada. It is a selection of prints of Buchan's trip to Eldorado Coppermine on a state visit through Canada. With regular opportunity to fish, travel by seaplane, and take picnics outdoors, the album is reminiscent of one of Buchan's adventure stories. The photography and the quality of the images are excellent, depicting dramatic landscapes, some of the social history of the period through the local communities and some of the best natural, action shots of Buchan fishing. Harry Snyder, who led expeditions to this part of Canada, presented the Album to Buchan in Christmas 1937.

