

artsandentertainment

All style but still with plenty of substance

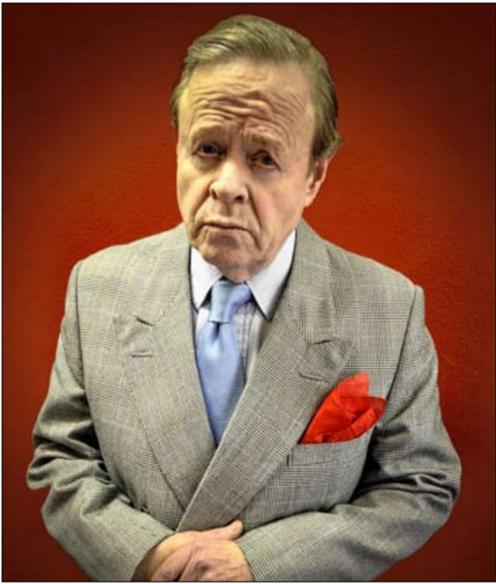
Theatre

THE story of Edward VIII — the king who gave up his crown for love — has understandably caught the attention of storytellers of the stage, screen and page ever since his 1936 abdication.

Even Madonna has had a go at retelling the story in her recent film "WE" while the effects of his decision on his brother, the future George VI, form the basis of Oscar-winning film "The King's Speech".

For his latest one-man show, award-winning Welsh actor Bob Kingdom, best known for his portrayal of Dylan Thomas, looks back at events through Edward's own eyes as an exile in France who has been persuaded to write his memoir, "A King's Story", for £1 million.

The appropriately named Kingdom granted an audience of his own to answer some questions.



Bob Kingdom as an exiled Edward VIII.

Q What made you choose the Duke of Windsor as the subject of your latest show?

A I started writing before "The King's Speech" came out, so it wasn't to climb onto a bandwagon. What starts me off is imagining myself playing a person and how I would go about it. So there have to be vocal and physical points of identification. Then, as you read up all you need to know about the subject, a way of doing it tends to emerge. The book the Duke wrote, "A King's Story", was very helpful and you can go on reading forever, but there comes a point when your own instinct takes over, things about your own life, and often those are the things that take it out of the merely biographical and communicate to an audience.

Q The show has been described as a sympathetic and thoughtful portrait of the former King, who remains a controversial figure. Was that intentional and does the Duke deserve re-evaluation?

A I hope I'm being fair. It's easy to cast someone as a cad and a rotter based on history's opinion. I hated the way he was portrayed in "The King's Speech" — as a spotty oik, vulgar and without style. I think things always need re-evaluation, otherwise we're still basing attitude on evidence given at the original trial in less enlightened times.

Q What kind of King do you think the Duke might have

made, especially with the threat of war with Nazi Germany?

A Hindsight is a convenient luxury. His grandfather, Edward VII, was a terrible glutton and oaf, an embarrassment to his mother Queen Victoria, but he changed when he became king and was very popular in the role.

Q In researching and performing the play, has your view of the Duke — and Duchess — changed?

A It helps to separate the human being from the role they're



James D'arcy and Andrea Riseborough as Edward and Wallis in Madonna's version of the story, WE

playing to get a clearer view. I didn't really have an attitude to change but using people for theatrical purposes can have an affect on an audience. And that does change your attitude when you're writing, I suppose.

Q You have performed several one-man shows about real people: Dylan Thomas, Truman Capote, Stan Laurel and J. Edgar Hoover among them. Are there any characteristics that link such disparate figures?

A See answer one, really. It's people I can do and sustain for a play in an interesting way.

Q What advice do you think the Duke might have had for his great-great nephew Prince Harry after his recent unwanted publicity?

A The Duke was nothing but style. I don't think he would have found Harry very stylish, but very ordinary. But then, they are very ordinary.

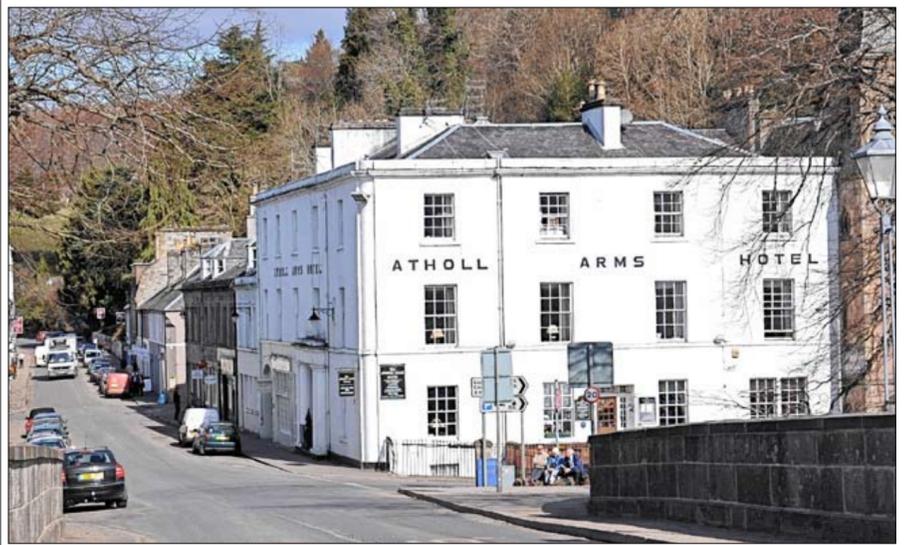
■ "An Audience With The Duke of Windsor", written and performed by Bob Kingdom, is at the One Touch Theatre, Eden Court, Inverness, at 8pm on Thursday 20th and Friday 21st September.



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www.inverness-courier.co.uk

Travel



The Atholl Arms Hotel in Dunkeld sits imposingly by the River Tay.

Great discovery adds to charm of village life

AT first we thought the noise coming from the dry stone wall next to the path was an angry bird that we had disturbed.

But it continued and as we got closer as the face of a weasel (or was it a stoat?) appeared with an expression that left us in no doubt we were not welcome. It ran in and out of the wall several times before disappearing for good.

The surprise meeting was one of several unexpected joys of our weekend in Dunkeld, a place we had passed many times driving up and down the A9 but which we had never visited.

For anyone else as ignorant of its many charms as we were, the town is dominated by the River Tay and the stunningly located cathedral, mostly ruined but partly restored early last century to accommodate a parish church that is a popular location for weddings.

The approach to the cathedral is through a square

Dunkeld is just another sign off the A9 on the long haul south. But turn off and you find a town full of delight and surprises, as **Robert Taylor** found out

surrounded by houses and shops built after the destructive battle of Dunkeld in 1689. By the 1950s they had fallen into disrepair but a major project by the National Trust for Scotland has seen them beautifully restored.

The NTS still owns 20 properties here, many of which are private homes and not open to the public, but you can get a flavour of the architecture at the trust's Ell Shop, which takes its name from the ell or weaver's measure outside.

You might also use historical curiosity as an excuse for visiting the Spill the Beans cafe in Cathedral Street. It is a lovely old building which serves what were, quite simply, the most delicious home made cakes I have ever tasted.

With just a day to look around, and with the summer rain holding off for once,

we picked up a map in the tourist information centre of Dunkeld's extensive path network.

We tried two routes — the Bishop's Path by the cathedral and along the riverside and then, fortified by a cake or three, a lovely five-mile stroll through fields and woodland which passed by the Loch of Loves wildlife reserve.

Run by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and manned by volunteers, this turned out to be another discovery. The star turns are its pair of ospreys, which still had a chick in the nest when we called. A live television feed enabled us to watch the mother bringing food back and forth as we drank our tea, then we went out to see for ourselves in the loch-side hides which have binoculars for visitors' use.

The walk back into town cut through the golf course and was largely downhill, so we were soon back at the riverside.

Our hotel for the night was another find. The Atholl Arms sits imposingly by the bridge on the main road through town and was, in 1844, visited by Princess Victoria, later to become Queen.

It has been tastefully modernised but retains its charm. Current owners Neil and Christine Sinclair have transformed the lobby by reopening the main street frontage, making it a place to drop in for a coffee.

Here too, in the evening after a fine dinner in the restaurant (pan roasted rump of lamb with Moroccan cous cous and cucumber and tomato salad for me at

a reasonable £13.95), local musicians just call in for a drink and start playing everything from finger-in-the-ear folk to country and traditional Scottish.

The informality and spontaneity added to the enjoyment and was, for the American sat next to me who had left his wife at another, more raucous venue, one of the highlights of his two-week golfing trip to Scotland. "I wish we had stayed here," he told me.

The experience summed up the hotel. It is relaxed, informal, not smart or slick but part of the community and just a pleasant place to be. It would have been useful to have some tourist information in our room, but that is a minor gripe.

So Dunkeld proved to be a place of surprises just off the A9. We will be going back.

Essential Information

■ Until next April and subject to availability, the Atholl Arms is offering a two-night stay in a standard double room from £89 (river view rooms £99) per person including dinner on one night.

■ Contact the Atholl Arms Hotel, Bridgehead, Dunkeld, Perthshire, PH8 0AQ.

■ Telephone 01350 727219, email enquiries@athollarmshotel.com or see online at www.athollarmshotel.com

■ For general information on Dunkeld see www.dunkeldandbirmam.org.uk

Ben just wants to keep on playing

Pop

SINGER Ben Montague is used to extremes in the sizes of concerts he plays.

Plying his trade as a singer-songwriter, he is used to appearing at some of the more intimate venues on the British music circuit, such as Mad Hatters bar in Inverness where he plays this weekend.

On the other hand, supporting the Stereophonics and boy band The Wanted means he has also appeared in front of thousands of music fans at some of the biggest venues in Britain.

"I've been very lucky," he said. "For me the best experience was playing at London's O2 Arena



when I supported The Wanted. It was so big, so many people and I was so nervous!

"You kind of get dropped into it, but it's amazing how you kind of adapt. Your confidence builds and you develop your sound and you start feeling comfortable within each of the performances.

"When I got the call from The Wanted, I didn't think they were the right audience for my music, but I gained so many great fans through

doing it that I'm really grateful to The Wanted for letting me support them."

Kent-born Montague tasted success when his independently-released single "Broken" became a huge radio hit, only for his independent status to deny him the chance to capitalise on his popularity.

"I was lucky enough to get one of my songs heard by a radio pluggger and from there I got Record of The Week on Radio 2. It was all very quick and an amazing feeling, but I was all on my own because I was entirely independent," he said.

"Then I got a new management company and after that got a record deal, so it's

always felt hard work, but work that will pay off in the end.

"It's almost like a ladder. When you make your record and once you've got distribution from a label you feel that you've gone up a notch on the ladder, then once you get radio play, that's another notch, and then there is the connection with the audience, which I would say is the final definition of success.

"I just hope people will like my music enough to enable me to keep doing it."

His first album, "Tales Of Flying And Falling", is due for release in January.

■ Ben Montague is at Mad Hatters, Church Street, Inverness, on Sunday.

EXPOSING INVERNESS - Give it your best shot!

The Inverness Courier

PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

The Inverness Courier has teamed up with the Inverness Marketing Group to source the very best images of Inverness for the Inverness Courier Calendar 2013.

And that's where you come in! We're looking for aspiring amateur photographers whose shots of Inverness demonstrate their skill behind the camera and their passion for the subject in front of the lens.

We'll choose 13 winning photographs to feature in the Inverness Courier Calendar and at photographic exhibitions in Inverness and Beaulieu. What's more, your images will be seen in print and online by thousands around the world from Inverness to Innsbruck to Indiana.

The image the judges choose as the overall winner will star on the front cover of the calendar and the winner will also receive a Tamrac Adventure 10 Rucksack worth £240 from Ffordes Photographic in Beaulieu.

We know that Inverness, the city in the Highlands, is an energetic and exceptional place to visit, explore, shop and relax as well as to live in. So, if you love Inverness as much as we do, send us photographic proof on any of the following themes, and let's share our combined pride with fans and visitors world wide:

- eventsinverness • classicinverness • seasonalinverness • unexpectedinverness • festiveinverness • ruralinverness
- funinverness • lochness • activeinverness • musicinverness • naturalinverness • shopinverness • illuminatedinverness

Whatever it is you love about Inverness check out www.inverness-scotland.com for more information and follow us on www.facebook.com/InvernessCityUK or on Twitter @InvernessCityUK

The Inverness Courier Calendar 2013 costs £5.99 and will be available to purchase online at www.inverness-courier.co.uk and from selected bookstores and newsagents from 1st November, 2012.

HOW TO ENTER

- Simply email your best two shots as high resolution jpg files or raw images, caption them and send your name and telephone number to promotions@spp-group.com If you don't have access to email, please send your high resolution image to: Calendar Competition, New Century House, Stadium Road, Inverness IV1 1FG. Only memory sticks sent with self addressed envelopes will be returned.
- The competition closes at midnight on 28th September.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Entrants can submit a maximum of two photographs, although no more than one prize can be awarded per entrant; Entrants agree that all images submitted can be used for marketing and publicity purposes by the Inverness Courier and the Inverness Marketing Group. Photographers will be credited whenever possible; Photographs must be of Inverness, Loch Ness or the immediate surrounding areas; All images must be high resolution, captioned and credited, and include the photographer's telephone number; All entries for the competition must be submitted by midnight on 28th September, 2012. Any photographs entered after this time will not be considered but can still be uploaded; All entries are sent at the photographer's risk and Inverness Courier/Inverness Marketing Group cannot accept liability for damage or loss. All photos must be legally obtained, with permission if appropriate; Entrants must be the sole author and owner of copyright for all images entered; The competition is not open to employees of the Inverness Courier, their families or anyone else professionally connected to the organisation; Winners will be notified by 19th October, 2012; All winning photographs will appear in the Inverness Courier Calendar 2013, and be displayed at a photographic exhibition at the Eastgate Centre, Inverness and the Beaulieu Gallery in Beaulieu. The overall winner will also receive a Tamrac Adventure 10 Rucksack worth £240 from Ffordes Photographic of Beaulieu and their winning image will appear on the front cover of the Inverness Courier Calendar 2013. All winners will receive a copy of the calendar; The Inverness Courier reserves the right to verify the eligibility of all entrants; Inverness Courier reserves the right to cancel this competition or alter any of the rules, if necessary; The decision of the judges is final; By entering this competition, all entrants agree to the terms and conditions listed above.

