Stirling Highland Games Announces Jackie Pirie as Chieftain for 2026

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The Stirling Highland Games is proud to announce that **Jackie Pirie**, the Stirling?born television actress, acclaimed author and arts advocate, will serve as **Chieftain of the Stirling Highland Games 2026**.

Jackie began her professional career at just **11 years old**, going on to enjoy a successful and varied career across **television, film and theatre**. Her credits include **Mary MacDonald** in the Jacobite?era feature film *Chasing the Deer*, **Tina Dingle** in *Emmerdale*, and **Linda Baldwin** in *Coronation Street*.

Her work earned widespread recognition, including **nominations for Best Newcomer and Best Actress at the National Television Awards**, and a **Best Storyline win at the British Soap Awards in 2001**. She has also been honoured with **Stirling's Provost Award for Services to Arts and Culture**.

In 2001, Jackie stepped away from the spotlight but went on to found her own **Academy of Performing Arts**, which grew into **12 stage schools across the UK**, delivering a bespoke programme of dance, drama and vocal training to young people aged 6 – 18.

In 2009, she took her work overseas to **Canada's Pacific Northwest**, where she continued mentoring and teaching young performers on Vancouver Island. Canada also proved to be the setting for her second major creative chapter as a writer. Her **crime fiction debut novel, *In The Still***, was published in 2017, followed by ***Briefly Maiden* in 2018**, both featuring **Ali Dalglish**, a central character born in Stirling. Jackie continues to write further novels in the series, alongside screenplays centred on **female Scottish leads** and a poetry collection entitled *Under Stirling's Wing*.

After **16 years living in Canada**, Jackie has **recently returned home to Stirling**, where she now continues her writing and creative work. She is also the founder of **The Godmother Network**, which works to educate and provide resources for women and children experiencing or escaping domestic abuse.

Announcing her appointment, **Matt McGrandles**, President of the Stirling Highland Games, said: *"The search for Stirling's next Chieftain really is one of the most enjoyable parts of my role. I get to speak with so many amazing people and Jackie is a truly outstanding choice as Chieftain for the 2026 Stirling Highland Games. She is Stirling?born, Stirling?rooted, and Stirling?proud — someone who has carried that identity with her throughout a remarkable career. Jackie's creative achievements and deep love for this city and its people make her a perfect ambassador for the Games and for Stirling itself."*

Reflecting on the announcement, Jackie Pirie said: *"I've lived in many places, including on a tiny island in the Pacific Northwest, but wherever I've lived, Stirling always called me back and returning home after decades away was a no?brainer. Stirling is, and always has been, my home. Being Chieftain means so much to me. I resonate with this land and its people. I am of this land, and I am one of its people."*

A keen **artist, upholsterer and carpenter**, Jackie draws inspiration from Stirling's landscape, people and layered history, which continue to shape her writing and creative projects.

The role of Chieftain is one of the highest honours of the Stirling Highland Games, recognising individuals whose lives and achievements reflect Scotland's cultural heritage, creativity and community spirit. Jackie also shared a lighter note on the ceremonial role: *"I looked up the meaning of Chieftain: 'the leader of a people or clan', and while I recognise that this is a purely ceremonial role for only one year, I'm tempted to let it go to my head a little. I don't know how that will go down at home or in the supermarkets, but we'll see!"*

The **Stirling Highland Games 2026** will once again bring together competitors, performers, clans and visitors from around the world to celebrate Highland tradition in one of Scotland's most historic cities.

Further details on the 2026 Games programme and the Chieftain's involvement will be announced in due course.

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