40 fascinating 'facts' about Keith & district

1. This year (2008) the Keith Country Show celebrates its 136th year (10th & 11th August 2008).
2. Strathisla Distillery (1786) in Keith is said to be the oldest working distillery in Scotland.
3. The Keith and Dufftown Railway is an eleven-mile line linking the World's Malt Whisky Capital, Dufftown, to the market town of Keith.
4. Keith Traditional Song & Music Festival will take place from 13 to 15 June 2008.
5. Keith Football Club had to get permission in 1948 from the Ministry of Labour & Department of Agriculture to play Frank Hucker, a German Ex POW
6. Keith FC became the first Club in Scotland to wear sponsored shirts in 1976(Chivas Regal being emblazoned on the front).
7. The name Keith first appears in a charter of William the Lion around 1195, deriving from Gaelic word for 'wind' or 'pure air', a thought with which any "Keith Cyard" would cordially agree.
8. A 'cyard' or 'caird' is the traditional appellation given to someone from Keith, perhaps because of Caird's Hill to the south of the town, or perhaps a remnant of the Gaelic word for a tinker or travelling person.
9. The Auld Brig at Keith is a picturesque packhorse bridge built in 1609. It' sthe oldest bridge still standing in Moray and one of the oldest in Scotland.
10. Keith's old gallows was on the site of the present New Town, not far from the river where the present A96 crosses the Isla. Here was a deep pool, Gaun's Pot, where witches were thrown to ascertain if they were really in league with Satan. If Auld Nick supported them and they floated, they were burnt. If not, it was usually too late.
11. James Gordon Bennet, born in Newmill, emigrated to America in 1819, eventually founding the New York Herald, a paper dedicated to 'facts in a brief and agreeable form'. This enterprise made him two million pounds. His son, of the same name, earned undying fame by sending a reporter, Henry Morton Stanley, to Africa, with the terse command, 'Find Livingstone.' He did.
12. In 1580, St John Ogilvie was born in Keith. His canonisation in 1976 as a Catholic saint was the first to be bestowed on a Scot since Queen Margaret Canmore canonised 1251.
13. Fife-Keith was originally intended to be called Waterloo. Street names commemorate James Duff and the Napoleonic wars.
14. The Ogilvie family built Milton Tower in the town in the late 15th century. Its ruin can still be seen today.
15. The area around Keith and Dufftown has a number of Neolithic remains, One example is the superb recumbent stone circle, a northeast phenomenon, which lies just north of Milton of Rothiemay.
16. The Isla Way connects Dufftown and Keith with a way marked trail.
17. Drummuir Castle was built in 1847 by Thomas Mackenzie for Admiral Archibald Duff, whose distinguished career included service with Lord Nelson. The Castle is a splendid example of the Scottish Victorian architectural style. The romantic roofline with its battlements, turrets and chimneystacks is dominated by the 60 feet high central lantern tower, notable for its Gothic tracery.
18. Drummuir Castle is today Diageo's Home of Scotch Whisky on Speyside.
19. Keith was the surname of an ancient Scottish family who held the office of Knight Marischal and later Earl Marischal of Scotland. The common surname is derived from this family or the town of Keith in Morayshire.
20. There is an English rock band called Keith. They had single successes with Hold that Gun (2005) Back There (2006) Mona Lisa's Child (2006).

21. Loch Park was created in the Victorian period as a beauty spot for visitors to nearby Drummuir Castle. Set in the malt whisky trail between Keith and Dufftown in the picturesque Strathisla Valley, Loch Park provides excellent facilities for anyone interested in outdoor pursuits.
22. There's a multi-activity centre at the House of Mulben where you can do quad-biking, clay-pigeon shooting, fishing, off-road driving amongst other activities.
23. Within a 25 mile radius of Keith there are a handful of family-owned food companies that have achieved international reputations for their products: Baxter's at Fochabers; Walker's Shortbread at Aberlour; Dean's of Huntly. Glenfarclas Distillery near Aberlour is also still family-owned, which is rather unusual these days. Dean's, Baxter's have visitor centres and viewing facilities. Walker's only has a factory shop.
24. At Huntly Nordic and Outdoor Centre is Scotland's only facility for learning Nordic (cross-country) skiing all year round. Courses are run for all levels and you can hire the equipment to practice either on plastic mat tracks or on roller skis on very smooth tarmac track.
25. The Clashindarroch forest near Huntly is an excellent location for cross-country skiing (on snow!) in the winter, with various trails to for skiers to follow.
26. Well-known BBC broadcaster James Naughtie is a son of Huntly. He presents Radio 4's 'Today' programme, amongst others, and writes for national newspapers.
27. Scotland's foremost festival of traditional boats is held each June on the Banffshire coast at Portsoy. This year's dates are 21/22 June 2008. Accommodation is booked out for miles around for the duration as people come from far and wide to this event.
28. The coastal area from Macduff right along to Nairn has a brilliant range of links golf courses, and the area is rightly famous for the concentration of quality golfing options.
29. One of Britain's classic coastal lido's can be found at Macduff, though it's no longer in use as a swimming pool. Built in 1931 in high art deco style, Tarlair sea-level pool is now only used by the local model boat club. It's worth a look just to appreciate the grandeur of the design and the cast-iron constitutions that the bathers who used it must have had!
30. The easiest way to get timber to them from the inland forests along the route of the Spey was to float the logs down-river to its mouth at Spey Bay, originally known as Garmouth.
31. This was done partly to supply the Kingston shipyard near Garmouth. It had been set up by shipwrights from Yorkshire who named it after their home port. There were also major sawmills at Garmouth and Kingston at this time.
32. There are major Royal Air Force bases at Kinloss and Lossiemouth on the Moray coast. The forces are one of the area's major employers (2500 staff) both directly and of civilians in ancillary roles. This presence is a major factor in the local economy.
33. Loch Spynie north of Elgin used to be a sea loch but its sea-mouth was cut off in the middle ages by the sand spit that grew west from the mouth of the Spey.
34. Stone from quarries around Elgin was used to build London Bridge.
35. Elgin Cathedral and the town was burned by 'the Wolf of Badenoch' aka Alexander Stewart, son of King Robert II in 1390. He did it in revenge for being ex-communicated from the church for repeated adultery by the local bishop. Forres got smoked, too. Nasty man.
36. The Biblical Garden at Elgin Cathedral includes all 110 plants mentioned in the Bible. Just as well Moray has a warm, dry and sunny micro-climate compared with surrounding areas!
37. Cashmere spinners Johnston's of Elgin import fibres from as far away as Outer Mongolia to make their fine cashmere fibres, fabrics and garments.
38. At various times there have been direct train services (including sleeper trains) from Elgin to London King's Cross, and also from Elgin to Penzance creating what were the UK's longest direct train journeys at over 1000km each.
39. Sueno's Stone at Forres is the most elaborate and largest piece of early medieval sculpture in Scotland. It stands by the main road at the east end of the town and is over 21 feet tall. It was carved at the end of the first millennium AD.
40. The only oil rig in production that can be seen from the mainland is in the Beatrice field in the Moray Firth.