

# Brockville Author Transports Back in Time with Novel

By Phillip Melchers



When launching her debut novel, *A Shadow in the Past in Scotland*, Melanie Robertson-King was asked by a reader if she would call her novel, “a ladies book.” Certainly the novel, a story about a young contemporary girl transported back to Victorian Era Scotland could be seen as geared towards feminine appeal, especially in considering its romantic narrative, and yet Robertson-King says that the story wasn’t written with any single gender in mind. In fact, there are only two people she had initially written the novel for, one being herself and the other her father. He had been a home child who emigrated from Scotland to Canada as a farm labourer in 1930.

Although Robertson-King had grown up in Brockville most of her life, she feels a strong connection to her father’s homeland and often travels to Scotland with her husband. As for the novel, the story features real locations in Scotland related to where her father was born. Although she changed the

names of some places, the locations are still recognizable for some local Scottish folk.

It was during her latest trip to Scotland, where Robertson-King hosted a launch of her book in Kennethmont, Aberdeenshire, the village where her father was born. Describing this as the highlight of her trip, it was when visiting this village that she was met by family and friends, some of which travelled great distances to see her. After the event, she was even given the opportunity to market her book around some local Scottish stores. She describes the people she met during that trip as both warm, and receptive.

As a hobby genealogist, it is use of sites such as Ancestry.com that Robertson-King has been able to further connect herself with her Scottish past. In remembering her father, she mentions that he was never afraid to speak of his time spent as a home-child. Her father was also a veteran of WWII fighting for the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders. In connecting herself to her

Father and his heritage, Robertson-King was encouraged at a young age to take up both dance and piping. Nowadays she mostly continues on her father’s memories through her writing. If *A Shadow in the Past* testifies anything then it would be for a daughter’s love towards her father and the country that brought him.

As Canadians, especially ones who live within such a historically rich region as ours, it is important to remind ourselves of the homes our ancestors had left behind. Although the reasons for moving are indeed varied, as a colonial country, it is acceptable to think that most Canadian families come from some source of immigration, the only exception being First-Nations people. In realizing this, there is a parallel to be drawn between Melanie Robertson-King and the main character of her novel. Although *A Shadow in the Past* takes place in Scotland, it is the author herself who makes the story Canadian, creating a bridge between her father’s ancestral past and her own present; between Scotland and Canada. It is through her trips to Scotland that Robertson-King strengthens this bridge, reminding us of not only our connectivity within Northern borders, but also of the ones that exist beyond it as well. [LH](#)

Melanie Robertson-King’s novel as well as her recently published anthology, *The Consequences Collection* is available online and in print. For more information on Melanie Robertson-King visit her website: [www.melanierobertson-king.com](http://www.melanierobertson-king.com)