

# ROBERTSON'S RANT

The Newsletter of the Clan Donnachaidh Society—Mid-Atlantic Branch



## VIRGINIA SCOTTISH GAMES REPORT

By Jim Fargo

The second half of my Games Season began with the 41st annual festival at Great Meadows located near The Plains on Labor Day weekend (August 30 and 31). Arriving at 8:00am on Saturday morning, we were situated beside our House of Gordon cousins at the end of a clan row with the highland athletic field behind us so we could watch the highland athletic competitions. This was the first time that our combined tent area covered five tent spaces. Both days were the typical late-August weather (hot and humid) with a steady cooling breeze and fortunately no rain until after the close on Sunday. Our location this year was again about 50 feet from the entertainment tent and was an ideal site for listening to the Celtic music.

As usual, we combined our Donnachaidh Diner with the Gordon Grill and everyone in both clans were very well fed. Much thanks to **Evan and Rosalie Duncan** for hosting our Diner again this year and to **Dave and Lois Todd** for hosting the Gordon Grill.

The Scottish Fiddling tent was located over by the highland dancing area, near the main entrance, about as far from our location as possible. We sponsored the "Ronald Duncan Gonnella Memorial" 2nd place Open trophy again this year, but I was unable to get over there Sunday afternoon to determine who won it.

Lots of friends, visitors and clan folk came by our double tent site each day. In addition, over the course of the weekend we chatted with three Lindsay visitors and I continue to hope they can have a Clan Lindsay tent here in the future. President **Sam Kistler** came on Sunday to help us at the tent as he spent Saturday helping run the clan tent at the Carlisle Games in Pennsylvania. We had 24 visitors on Saturday and 11 on Sunday that signed our guest register. This was the first time I actually ran out of membership application forms! We were pleased to welcome five new members who joined our Clan Society over the weekend: **Brenda Abbott (Robinson), Amy B. Castleman (Robertson), Seth Duncan, Michael Quilliam (Roberts)** and **Ian Reid**.

This festival has always been well run with lots of attractions (living history, British car show, moon bounce for kids, shepherding, harp and fiddling competitions, etc.) for the whole family to enjoy. It is well worth attending and I hope you can include this festival in your calendar for Labor Day weekend next year.

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Ron Bentz

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## ROBERTSON'S RANT

### MCLAIN GAMES REPORT

By Ron Bentz

I made my way to the grounds early in the morning for the McLain Celtic festival, always held on the Saturday before Labor Day. The tent was set up in no time, and I was soon joined by **Sam Kistler** and my mother, **Betty Duncan Bentz**. The weather was absolutely perfect. From our vantage point at the tent, we had a perfect view of one of the entertainment stages which once again featured the talents of the Martin Family Band. If we looked out the back of the tent we could see the Highland games, again judged by **Dave Strunk**.

While clan traffic at the tent was sparse, we were busy all day at the tent talking history and helping folks find their clan affiliation. I managed to find some folks almost as enthusiastic as myself about using DNA testing for finding our roots. All in all, it was a very enjoyable day, and I hope to see more Branch members at these games in 2015!

### HOMES OF THE CLAN CHIEFS

By Jim Fargo

Most clanfolk are familiar with "Tom an Tigh Mhor" (knoll of the great house) which is located beside Struan Kirk. Despite the name, this was not the home of our first recognized chief, Duncan the Stout. This site at the confluence of the rivers Garry and Errochty was considered by the pre-Christian local people to be an 'assembly' place or 'court of justice'. It probably served as the 'mote hill' where the clan would gather to see their chief administer justice. When Saint Fillan arrived to bring Celtic Christianity to Atholl, he naturally established his church here.

The first recorded stronghold of our clan chiefs was built on an artificial island in the northwestern corner of Loch Tummel. This was the home of Duncan, our first chief. The ruins of this tower castle were submerged in 1950 when the level of the loch was raised by 5 meters on completion of a hydro-electric dam.

Our 3rd chief, Duncan, was known as Duncan "of Atholia" (of Atholl) and as the Lord of Rannoch. His residence was at Bun Rannoch at the southeastern end of Loch Rannoch. Duncan acquired the lands of Strowan through marriage and his son, Robert (4th chief), known as Robert Ruadh (the Red), is the first chief to be called by the designation "of Strowan" when all of his lands were erected into a free barony by King James II in August 1451.

In 1513, the battle of Flodden was a Scottish disaster. The King and much of the aristocracy were killed. The resulting regency allowed lawlessness to reign. The Earl of Atholl captured William (6th chief) after a boundary dispute and he was eventually beheaded on April 7, 1516. A year earlier, the Earl of Atholl was able to acquire most of the Strath-tummel property including the island stronghold "for default of a payment of debt of 1,592 pounds Scots." These clan lands were never recovered.

Robert Robertson of Strowan (7th chief) was an infant when his father was executed by the Earl of Atholl at Tulliemet. In 1545 MacGregor outlaws living on the wild northern slope of Loch Rannoch captured him. Eventually freed, he then built a fortified tower house as his primary residence. The site of the 'Black Castle' of Invervack lies west of the current Invervack farm on the south bank of the river Garry near the footbridge that crosses over the river from the west gates of Blair Castle. The Invervack estate was the principal home of the barons of Strowan probably from before the barony's creation until the 1720s. The heavily mortgaged estate was eventually bought by a Duke of Atholl in 1826. The castle itself was burned "in Cromwell's time" after the abortive 1653 rebellion against Oliver Cromwell known as the Glencairn Rising. The old home of the Robertson of Lude family and Garth castle were also destroyed by the parliamentary forces garrisoned at Blair Castle. There is no record of the castle being rebuilt. After the English forces were withdrawn Robert continued to live on the Invervack estate until his death on May 23, 1566. He was buried at Struan Kirk.

Robert (10th chief) was fortunate to have his father's forfeited estates restored to him debt-free by gift from a loyal clansman in a Crown Charter dated January 1600. The sasine was taken in July 1604 at his residence at Invervack for all the lands remaining in the barony of Strowan. Sometime between then and the death of both Alexander (12th chief) and his oldest son Robert who predeceased him in 1688, the family had a home at Kinloch Rannoch near where the present Dunalastair Hotel is located. It too was burned down in 1746.

Alexander (13th chief), became chief on the death of his father and older brother in 1688. His mother had written (to no avail) from her dower home at Carie requesting the chieftains of the clan to discourage her son from leaving St. Andrews University to participate in the 1689 Rising. Alexander came home and raised the clan anyway. He was eventually pardoned for his activities in that Rising and returned from exile in France in 1703 and built his residence, the 'Hermitage', at Dunalastair (Mount Alexander). After the 1715 Rising, he was once more deprived of his estates and fled to France. His forfeited estates were restored to his sister living at Carie in 1726 and he was allowed to return to live at Mount Alexander. It was probably around this time that the designation "of Invervack" was transferred to Alexander's cousin Robert Ban (the Fair) Robertson who was instrumental in rescuing Alexander after his capture at the battle of Sheriffmuir in 1715. After the last Jacobite rebellion, the 'Hermitage' was burned down and he retired to Carie House on the southern shore of Loch Rannoch. This was where he died on April 18, 1749 and was buried at Struan Kirk.

Col. Alexander Robertson (15th chief) built a new house at Dunalastair (see picture) in 1796 while living at 'Rannoch Barracks'. George Duncan Robertson of Strowan (18th chief) was the last chief to live there. He sold Dunalastair in 1853 and built a new home 'Dall House' in 1855 on the southern shore of Loch Rannoch west of Carie. Terms of the sale guaranteed in perpetuity the Dunalastair burial grounds for him and future clan chiefs. Five clan chiefs are known to be buried there.

Unfortunately, Dall House too had to be sold in 1861 and our chiefs moved to the west end of the loch to 'Rannoch Barracks'. This 19,000 acre estate was sold in 1926 to pay estate taxes due after the death of the 20th chief in 1910. It is a strange irony that although originally built to house the government troops stationed in the clan country to keep us in check; it became the last home of our clan chiefs in clan country.

#### *References:*

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*"Short History of the Clan Robertson", J. Robertson Reid, 1933*

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## ROBERTSON'S RANT

# EDINBORO GAMES REPORT

By Thomas Due

Traditional Scottish weather greeted us at the Edinboro Highland Games, sponsored by Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, on September 6th. Despite the weather, the games were a fantastic event enjoyed by all.

We arrived shortly after seven o'clock in the morning only to find a tent set up in our spot. Upon quick inspection, the tent had been set up on the other end of clan row. We attempted to set the tent right and locate it back in the proper spot when Clan Wallace arrived. Fortunately, they had been talking about getting a new tent. The powers that be made the decision for them. We then setup our tent, only to be approached by representatives from the other clans. After a meeting of the conveners that were there, the consensus was to move to the "rain" location inside the Pogue Student Union Center.

In a somewhat cramped setup, we were able to get twelve of the fourteen clans that were present set up. Clan Nesbit had a huge tent for their AGM and toughed out the weather. One other clan braved the day in their tent. The advantage to the rain location is that the traffic in front of us grows by leaps and bounds. The solo piping competition and the US Championships for Fiddle are both held in the same building. We were located between Clan Cameron and Clan Douglas, albeit separated from the latter by a pillar.

The personal plus to these games is our oldest son attends the university (the university mascot is 'The Fighting Scot' complete with targe, sword and kilt)! As such, our clan tent is crowded throughout the day with college students. Needless to say, the biggest crowd comes at lunch time.

During the opening ceremony after the parade of clans the University Marching Band, which includes a piper, marched onto the field. In an unusual twist, the heavy athletes paraded onto the field carrying the three cabers. Attached to the thin end of the caber were the American Flag, the Scottish Flag, and Royal Scottish Flag. The athletes stood the cabers up throughout the remaining ceremony. The Star Spangled Banner was followed by Flower of Scotland performed by a member of Chelsea House.



## CEUD MILE FAILTE (100,000 WELCOMES)!

We'd like to welcome the following 24 new and returning members who joined us or renewed since the last report:

<b>Brenda Abbott</b>	<b>William Benson</b>	<b>Leslie Bruchey</b>	<b>John Bullach</b>	<b>Amy Castleman</b>
<b>Joanne Douglass</b>	<b>Seth Duncan</b>	<b>Michael Ehart</b>	<b>Ellen Hansen</b>	<b>Tara Jones</b>
<b>Kathleen Kasiorek</b>	<b>Carol Lucien</b>	<b>Kathleen Maynard</b>	<b>Jeffrey Newton</b>	<b>Michael Quilliam</b>
<b>Ian Reid</b>	<b>Jonathan Reid</b>	<b>Robert Rhodes</b>	<b>Gregory Robertson</b>	<b>John Roberston</b>
<b>Ronald Robertson</b>	<b>Timothy Robertson</b>	<b>Thomas Stark</b>	<b>Linda Wangberg</b>	

## LIGONIER GAMES REPORT

By Jim Fargo

On September 20th, the clan van arrived at Idlewild Park in Ligonier, PA. President **Sam Kistler**, son **Andrew Fargo**, friend **Robert Knight** and I soon had the clan van unloaded and gear conveyed by two golf carts to the clan tent site. We were set up and ready by 8:30am for the start of the 56th annual Ligonier Highland Games. **Tom and Laura Due** and their two children (**Heather** and **Patrick**) arrived and we put up their clan tent. This year we were initially situated between clans Montgomery and Henderson. By 9:30am, we determined that the Montgomery folks were not coming and, being ever resourceful, **Tom** (our western PA convener) and I moved the dining tables into that spot for a two-tent, three-space area. We needed the extra space later in the day!

The weather was outstanding (sunny and warm) and the opposite of last year's rains. We had twelve families visit our tents and sign the guest register. Many more came by but didn't sign in. We had fifteen clan folk march in the parade of tartans. **Dave Strunk** was doing the judging at the athletics field and he and wife **Roz** waved as we marched by the athletic tent. Passing the reviewing stand we saluted and gave a hearty "Fierce When Roused" to **Gordon Reid**, President of the Clan Donald Charitable Trust, which sponsors the festival.

After the parade, the Donnachaidh Diner was in operation and **Evan and Rosalie Duncan's** shortbread and Struan bread were welcome additions. Along with the arrival of many new attendees from the western Pennsylvania area, we were also joined by members **Ellen Hansen, Ken Stiles, Cindy Matera, and Merle and Karen Russo**. Our last visitors of the day were **Bruce and Carrie Roberts** and their two daughters (**Ruby and Rose**). **Sam** and I were each given bouquets of oak leaves by these young ladies. We were pleased to welcome two new members who joined our Clan Society: **Kathleen Kasiorek (Reid)** and **Robert P. Rhodes (Robertson)**.

By 4:30pm, we decided to pack up and depart.

Although there was no clan Lindsay tent again this year, we did get some hearty "Moos" from several Clan Lindsay men during the day! By the time we got everything carried back to the van, about half of the clan tents were gone and most everyone left were waiting for the arrival of golf carts to haul their gear back to the parking lot.

We look forward to seeing everyone at next year's Ligonier Highland Games under the same sunny skies. The date is September 19, 2015.



VP Ron Bentz (left) and President Sam Kistler (right)  
at the McLain Games on August 30th

#### CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY MID-ATLANTIC BRANCH

19354 Barrens Rd. S.  
Stewartstown, PA 17363  
Email: [ngdiv@verizon.net](mailto:ngdiv@verizon.net)

The Clan Donnachaidh Society is a world-wide organization dedicated to the preservation of our Highland heritage. Membership is open to those persons bearing recognized sept surnames and their descendants and spouses.

Membership in the parent Clan Donnachaidh Society in Scotland includes a subscription to the Clan Donnachaidh Annual.

Membership in the Mid-Atlantic Branch of the Clan Donnachaidh Society includes a subscription to the Branch newsletter, Robertson's Rant, published quarterly and containing listings of Highland Games and Celtic Festivals throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, Game and Festival reports, historical and biographical articles, and news items of interest to Donnachaidhs everywhere. Membership also includes an open invitation to join your fellow society members at the Clan Donnachaidh Tent and Diner at numerous Games and Festivals, and at other activities including the annual Scottish Christmas Walk and Clan Donnachaidh luncheon in the Old Town section of Alexandria, Virginia, in early December.

Parent Society membership dues are \$25.00 per year (individual) and \$35.00 per year (family = two persons/same address). Mid-Atlantic Branch membership dues are \$20.00 per year (individual).

## ALEXANDRIA SCOTTISH CHRISTMAS WALK

The 44th annual Scottish Christmas Walk will be held in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, on **Saturday, December 6th**.

Please join us to march in the parade and for our annual luncheon at the Fish Market at 105 King Street (ordering this year will be off of the standard menu). The parade begins at 11:00am at Wolfe and South Saint Asaph streets and ends at Market Square. We hope to see you there!

As noted at the Campagna Center website (<http://www.campagnacenter.org/events/scottish-christmas-walk-weekend>), Scottish weekend activities begin on Friday, December 5th: "warm your heart with holiday cheer and join a full lineup of festivities that celebrates the rich Scottish heritage of Old Town Alexandria. Tour historic Old Town homes decorated for the season, wander through a marketplace full of greenery and unique gifts, purchase greenery for your Christmas decorations, enjoy the tastes of fine Scotch, and last, but certainly not least, take in the sights and sounds of the unique Scottish Christmas Walk Parade with its stirring bagpipes and magnificent Clan tartans. The Weekend is hosted by The Campagna Center, and proceeds benefit its six educational programs that touch people of every age group."

