

ROBERTSON'S RANT

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



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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY/TREASURER

By Norman Dunkinson

Keep your fingers-crossed, but the games schedule, as shown on the last page of this newsletter, appears to have returned to normal after 2 years of COVID-related cancellations!

The schedule shown reflects only those events for which, as of this writing, specific dates have been advertised for 2022. There are 13 games and events listed within our region at present—2 in Virginia, 4 in Maryland, and 7 in Pennsylvania. “Second half” games season events will likely be solidified in the next few months, such as the Central Virginia Games in Richmond and the Scottish Christmas Walk in Alexandria.

Please consider renewing your membership with the branch if you haven't already done so, as only 20 members have joined or renewed within the last year. Membership dues allow us to pay the fees required to set-up our tent at the games and supply our tent with materials (including food and drink at certain events). Some of these fees are now \$100 or more per event. In October 2020, we implemented online membership payment capability at www.robertson.org to provide members with a more convenient method for renewal.

Branch Officers

President:

Sam Kistler

Vice President:

Tom Due

Secretary/Treasurer:

Norman Dunkinson



Inside this issue:

Ligonier Games Report	2
Edinboro Games Report	2
Scots Humor	2
Ceud Mile Failte	3
James C. Reed	3
When England was Part of a Viking Empire	4
Clan Military Tradition Within the United Kingdom	9
Celtic Events & Games Listing	10



Blast from the Past: Norman Dunkinson, Ron Bentz, and Sam Kistler at the Fair Hill Games in 2009.

ROBERTSON'S RANT

LIGONIER GAMES REPORT

By Tom Due

In the year after the year that wasn't, Idlewild park hosted the Ligonier highland games on Saturday, September 18, 2021. Taking it in stride the organizers had pins printed to commemorate "2020 the year that wasn't". As with the other games this year, vendor turn out was light. The game was cut back to a one day-only event. The number of clans turning out was pretty close to average. A number of faces that normally stop were absent. Attendance by the public also seemed light. As always, we had a full tent. **Sam Kistler** and **Evan Duncan** made appearances. Evan brought his shortbread and Polish beer! This day goes amazingly fast and all too soon it was time to say goodbye to friends and the 2021 games season.

EDINBORO GAMES REPORT

By Tom Due

Edinboro University of Pennsylvania hosted a wonderful event on a beautiful Saturday after labor day. The clans where underrepresented as COVID had the event in a fluid status until well into the summer. Due to an unfortunate Google result, the games were listed as cancelled. Donnachaidh was one of only 7 clans to show up. As **Tristan Wyatt** lives within walking distance from campus, we typically have a great turnout and this year was no exception! We finagled two tent spaces which worked well to make the front row of our clan tent complete. After a couple near rain outs, the clans set up under a carnival tent. We shared the space this year with vendors and our immediate neighbors were the local spinning group.

As it is a college campus, COVID rules were strict and the usual events that where inside were moved. Massed bands and the heavy athletics competition were held on the parade field as usual. The layout is such that you can see the athletes compete from the clan tents!

SCOTS HUMOR

Way back in 1457, King James II of Scotland had an edict passed by the Scots Parliament to ban the playing of golf to preserve the skills of archery. Scots were prohibited from "playeing golfe" on Sundays because it interfered with military training for the wars against the English. The ban on golf wasn't lifted until 1502. Since that time, the game of golf has spread worldwide and naturally, jokes about golfers abound.

An American stops a passerby on the High Street of Fife and asks a local, "How do I get to the Royal and Ancient Golf club of St. Andrews?"

Angus Reid replies, "Practice, laddie, practice!"

Fergus Duncan who had been playing the links at Pitlochry for 10 years turns to his caddy and says "Caddy, I'd move heaven and earth to break 100."

The caddy's response, "Concentrate on heaven, sir. Ye've already moved enough earth."

CEUD MILE FAILTE—100,000 WELCOMES!

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

Ron Bentz

Karen Layne

Sharon Mehl

JAMES C. REED (1845-1874)

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

James C. Reed was the son of Solomon Reed and Susan Brock in Vernon County, Missouri. During the Civil War, Reed joined the ranks of Missouri's Quantrill's Raiders. Following the war Reed rode for a while with the James and Younger brothers outlaw gang. In a horseback ceremony on November 1, 1866, Reed married Myra Maybelle Shirley in Texas. They had a son James Edwin (Eddie) and two daughters: Rosie Lee (nicknamed Pearl) and Elisa (nicknamed Loren Moon). After being wanted for murder in Arkansas, Reed moved to California then returned to north-east Texas to settle down with his family.

In April 1874, they robbed a stagecoach with some other outlaws and warrants were issued for their arrest. On August 6, 1874, Reed was killed in Paris, Texas. After Reed's death, Belle married a Cherokee man named Sam Starr in 1880 and settled down in the Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) where the Starr family became notorious outlaws. As Belle Starr, she became known as the "Queen of the Oklahoma Outlaws".

Son Eddie was convicted of horse theft in 1889 and after release from prison became a sheriff deputy. In December 1896, he was killed in a saloon in Claremore, Oklahoma. Pearl operated several bordellos in Arkansas from the 1890s to World War I and died in 1925. Nothing more is known of the second daughter.

Reference:

Multiple Wikipedia searches.



James C. Reed. Image from www.geni.com/people/Jim-Reed/6000000009586865718.

Telford's Bridge, Dunkeld, Perthshire, August 2003 Photo by Norman Dunkinson.



ROBERTSON'S RANT

WHEN ENGLAND WAS PART OF A VIKING EMPIRE

From sonsofvikings.com

The Saga of Ragnar Lothbrok refers to London as “the finest city in Scandinavia.” This seems like quite a mistake, considering London is the capital of England and sits on the east coast of Britain. However for the skalds who composed the old saga, London was indeed in Scandinavia, for England was once part of a Viking empire.

This part of English history is almost always glossed over or simply not mentioned at all. The tidier narrative is that Vikings invaded Britain in the 9th century, quickly knocked down most of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, but were eventually halted by the founder of England, Alfred the Great. Most history books are silent on what happens after that, before picking up the national story with the Norman Conquest in 1066.

But the whole story is a great deal more complicated. England was indeed a part of a large North Sea Empire founded by Vikings long after Alfred's death. This does not diminish the accomplishments of Alfred and the English. Instead, the whole story helps us to appreciate how complex the reality of England is. Read on, and it will soon all make more sense.



Back Story: The Great Army, Alfred, and their Legacy

A massive host of Vikings descended upon the kingdoms of Britain around the year 865. According to the sagas, this army was led by the sons of Ragnar Lothbrok, seeking revenge for their father, who had been executed in a pit of vipers. The historical and archaeological records do not commit to the saga narrative. Still, they state the Great Army was made up of Vikings from all over the north, who were suddenly united under tremendously effective leadership, and were remarkably successful.

To make a very long story short, the young ruler of the last Anglo-Saxon kingdom, Alfred of Wessex, stopped the Vikings and forced them into a lasting truce. A border or "DMZ" was marked at the old Roman road, then known as Watling Street. The Vikings got the northeast of Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons got the southwest.

WHEN ENGLAND WAS PART OF A VIKING EMPIRE (CONTINUED)



More waves of Vikings would try their luck at taking the whole of Britain, and Alfred would spend the rest of his days trying to make his enlarged kingdom Viking-proof. His efforts to unify and defend his people earned him the title Alfred the Great.

After Alfred's death, his son, Edward, and his daughter, Aethelflaed, worked to retake much of the land lost to the Vikings. It would not be until the time of Alfred's grandson, Aethelstan I, that the Vikings would be decisively defeated. The borders of England were set to more-or-less their current form at the Battle of Brunanburh (937). This is often thought of as the birth of a bona fide English nation.

This is not to say that all the Vikings in England just got up and left. The north-east of Britain had become (and in some ways continues to be) distinctly Danish in character. Though these descendants of Vikings were more prone to farming than raiding, they still retained much of their culture and identity. Viking Sea Kings like Erik Bloodaxe, Sihtric One-eyed, and Olaf the Shoe (Amlaíb Cuarán) often ruled their domains from York. Essentially, the north was still Viking ... and English at the same time.

Aethelred the Unready

Aethelstan, the grandson of Alfred and the hero of Brunanburh, only knew two years of peace after that great battle. He died young around 939 and left his newly unified kingdom to his brother. A few successful rulers followed, but a few decades later (978), a young king named Aethelred II came to the throne. Aethelred (or Ethelred) was nowhere near the ruler his predecessors had been and was known even in his own time as Aethelred the Unready (also known as Ethelred II or Aethelred the Un-counseled).

Smelling weakness, the Vikings, Scots, and Irish again began raiding England. But while King Alfred had been ready to use arms, diplomacy, and Danegeld (bribes) to manage the Vikings, Aethelred only threw money at the problem. Under Aethelred, the English paid vast quantities of silver to the Vikings, but so ineffective was Aethelred's leadership that he sometimes broke the treaties this silver bought.

In a final act of weakness, Aethelred the Unready ordered a massacre of all the Danes that could be caught, whether they be Viking marauders, traders, or even settlers. This atrocity took place on Saint Brice's Day, 1002.

Recently, archaeologists have found mass graves in Weymouth and Oxford dated to 975-1025. Each contains the skeletal remains of up to 50 decapitated Vikings. DNA analysis of these remains reveals that the victims were from Scandinavia, Iceland, Russia, and the Baltic. The term "Danes" in English sources, as always, is a catch-all term for Vikings. It is possible that these mass graves date to the Saint Brice's Day massacre of 1002. If so, it is likely but one of many others that lay undiscovered.

Aethelred's bad decisions were compounding, though. One of the massacre victims was a woman named Gunnhild, the wife of a Danish chief and the sister of none other than Svein Forkbeard. Of course, Vikings would never ignore



ROBERTSON'S RANT

WHEN ENGLAND WAS PART OF A VIKING EMPIRE (CONTINUED)

such a brazen and cowardly act. The murder of Svein's own sister made retaliation inevitable.

Svein Forkbeard

In the mid-tenth century, much of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, were united by the great king, Harald Bluetooth. Yes, this is the same Harald Bluetooth that Bluetooth technology is named for. However, Harald's estranged son, Svein Forkbeard, led an open rebellion against his heavy-handed father starting in the late 970s. Harald died or was killed sometime during that civil war. After that, Svein became King of Denmark, though Norway and Sweden had already taken advantage of the instability and went their own way.

Svein Forkbeard was a powerful and charismatic leader who had already proved himself highly skilled in war. Whether to take advantage of England's disarray, avenge his people's slaying, or both, Svein launched a series of attacks on England starting in 1004. These culminated in a full-scale invasion of England in 1013.

The Vikings landed in the center and swept north, using the support of the entrenched Danish population there to quickly secure the area. They then turned their attention to the wealthy southwest and the seat of Anglo-Saxon power.

The dramatic conclusion of Svein's invasion took place in London in the winter of 1013-1014. Svein Forkbeard's forces assailed an English army supported by Viking mercenaries under Svein's former ally, Thorkell the Tall. This battle was the likely origin of the children's nursery rhyme, "London Bridges Falling Down," for the fortified bridges of London (like Paris before it) were crucial for resisting the Viking longships. And yes, some elements of our collective culture really are that old (and older).

Svein Forkbeard won the day. Aethelred the Unready fled to his wife's family in Normandy. Svein was crowned king, and for that brief moment, held England and Denmark along with parts of Norway and Sweden. Svein Forkbeard was the most powerful man west of Byzantium. He was no longer just a king ... he was an emperor.

But life is uncertain, and this was especially true for the 11th century. Svein only reigned in England for about five weeks before he suddenly died. The English immediately recalled Aethelred the Unready (supporting his revered dynasty more so than the man who had so often failed them). The reinvigorated English drove Svein's son, Knut (or Canute), back to Denmark.

The Vikings were not so easily scared off from what had been one of their most significant accomplishments, and Knut re-invaded England in 1015. Aethelred also soon died and was replaced by his dynamic son, Edmund Ironside.

Knut the Great

Edmund Ironside was a great warrior, charismatic leader, and heroic king. But fate was not on his side, and he was up against one of the most successful Vikings of all time. Knut scored a decisive victory over Edmund's English in 1016, and the scion of Alfred died of wounds he sustained in that battle.

For the second time in two years, the crown of a united England was in the hands of a Viking. To underscore his legitimacy and emphasize that he was there to stay, Knut married Aethelred's widow, Emma of Normandy. This move

WHEN ENGLAND WAS PART OF A VIKING EMPIRE (CONTINUED)

(bizarre and grim to the modern eye) was a 10th-11th century convention, with examples from Ireland to Russia. The marriage of Knut to Emma was also to prove fateful. It was partially on the grounds of this union that William the Conqueror would base his claim to the English throne half a century later.

Circumstances continued to favor Knut. Norway and other lands his father Svein had once controlled soon fell under his dominion, mainly through peaceful means. His reign was long (almost 20 years), relatively tranquil, and prosperous. The effectiveness of Knut's rule was even more evident by the disarray of the rest of western Europe at that time. The death of Brian Boru in Ireland (1014) and the feebleness of the Capetian dynasty in France meant that Knut was almost peerless. As his boundaries extended and his peace continued, he became known as Knut the Great. Knut ruled his North Sea Empire primarily from England through it all, continuously presenting himself as "a true Christian monarch in the European style" (Price, 2020, p. 472). His English and Norwegian subjects probably never loved him. Still, they eagerly accepted the stability he brought and the goodwill he was always eager to display.

The Legacy of Knut the Great

Knut died in 1035. He left several sons, including his successor by Emma, Harthacanute. Unfortunately, Knut's heirs could not match their father's political or military ability. As a result, the North Sea Empire quickly fell apart. Nevertheless, the urgency to rebuild it would serve as an impetus for many ambitious men over the following decades. In 1066, both William the Conqueror and Harald Hardrada probably saw themselves as the heir to this tradition of a unified northwestern Europe.



As for Knut's memory, sources differ dramatically. Almost everything from Knut's lifetime is favorable (though much of it is deliberate propaganda, perhaps). In England, he was considered a good king, a patron of the Church, a generous and wise man, a lawgiver, and a law follower. We are told Knut even disbanded his Viking bodyguard, entrusting himself to his English subjects.

In Norse sources, such as the *Heimskringla*, a fuller picture emerges, with Knut displaying cunning, violence, and vindictiveness characteristic of the most ruthless rulers. Later English folk tradition - perhaps embarrassed that their proud nation was dominated by a foreigner - turned on the man altogether. They portray him in ridiculous tales recycled from old stories of Rome's hated emperor, Caligula. One of these paints Knut as a mad king, standing on the beach and commanding the waves not to roll up on shore.

More often, though, Knut the Great is forgotten entirely – a footnote on the wrong side of history. The legacy of a Viking England exists more in the fine print: for example, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* when the Danish prince is sent to England to "collect our long-neglected tribute."

As Knut is connected to the foundations for 1066, he is a part of all of England's remarkable history since that time. Moreover, the legacy of the Vikings in England would prove to be inseparable from the nation itself. Winston Churchill would later remark on the many contributions to England's laws, legislature, industry, warfare, and its very personality that the Viking settlers would perpetually contribute. He wrote, "the tribulations of [the years] had not reduced the

ROBERTSON'S RANT

WHEN ENGLAND WAS PART OF A VIKING EMPIRE (CONTINUED)

strength of their original character, nor their attachment to the conquered soil. All through English history, this strain plays a gleaming part" (1956, p. 111).

References

Sir Winston Churchill. *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples: Book 1, the Birth of Britain*. Reprint by Barnes and Noble. USA. 1993.

Rodgers, D. & Noer, K. *Sons of Vikings*. KDP. The United States. 2018.

Price, N. *Children of Ash and Elm: A History of the Vikings*. Basic Books, New York, 2020.

Image Source:

North Sea Empire: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cnut-north-sea_empire.png

Aethelred: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethelred2_King_of_England.jpg

Knut: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Knut_der_Gro%C3%9Fe_cropped.jpg



Pre-dating the Vikings, the Stoney Littleton Long Barrow in Somerset, England, was constructed about 3500 B.C. Photo by Norman Dunkinson (September 2015).

CLAN MILITARY TRADITION WITHIN THE UNITED KINGDOM

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

While Admiral Lord Adam Duncan of Camperdown is well known in the history of our clan, we are not really known for being a naval clan. On the contrary, our history is replete with instances of heroic accomplishments and awards for service in the British land forces. Twenty-three clansmen (based on surname) have been awarded the Victoria Cross. There are many others, just as brave and fearless, that have served in the United Kingdom's armed services.

The following series identifies some of these illustrious clansmen that have served in various British military campaigns up through World War II. It is certainly not complete and will be augmented as time permits in the future. Probably the most well known within our clan, are General John Reid of Straloch, who wrote the words to "The Garb of Old Gaul", the regimental slow march of the Black Watch and Colonel James A. Robertson who wrote our clan history "The Chiefs of Clan Donnachaidh 1275-1749" published in 1929.

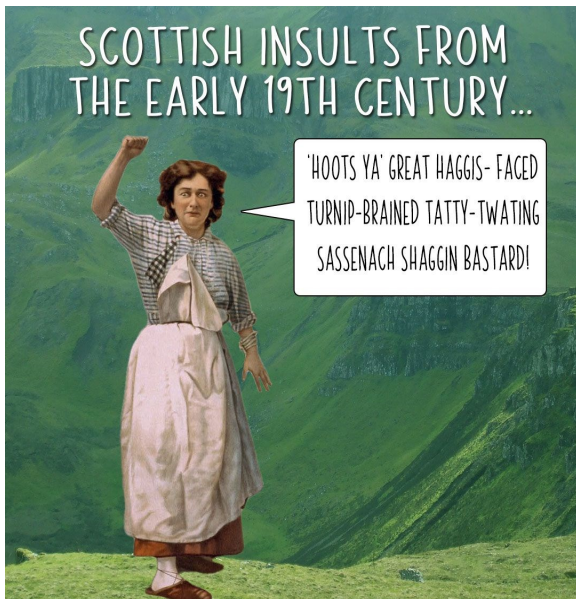
Certainly less well known is trooper McConnachie of the Royal Scots Greys in 1916. Steel helmets (which were then being compared to inverted soup plates) were introduced to the dismounted cavalry battalions for trench warfare during the Battle of the Somme as a replacement for the traditional wool headgear. This helmet was not initially looked on with favor by the Greys until one day when our clansman sustained a direct hit from anti-aircraft shrapnel. Learning that he survived with only a headache, and seeing the damage done to his new helmet, it was readily adopted by his fellow troopers for front line use.

Reference:

Wood, Stephen, "In the Finest Tradition", Edinburgh, 1988, p. 115.



Royal Lochnagar Distillery and the River Dee, Royal Deeside, August 2003. Photos by Norman Dunkinson.



From www.pinterest.com/pin/329607266479260438/.

**CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY
MID-ATLANTIC BRANCH**

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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).

CELTIC EVENTS & GAMES—2022

<u>Event Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
Pittsburgh Tartan Day Celebration	Bethel Park, PA	Apr 2 nd
Southern Maryland Celtic Festival	St. Leonard, MD	Apr 23 rd
Colonial Highland Gathering	Fair Hill, MD	May 21 st
Garrett County Celtic Festival	Friendsville, MD	Jun 4 th
Cumberland Valley Scottish Games	Shippensburg, PA	Jun 11 th
Carroll County Celtic Festival	Westminster, MD	Jun 11 th
Celtic Fling & Highland Games	Manheim, PA	Jun 25 th -26 th
Virginia Scottish Games & Festival	The Plains, VA	Sep 3 rd -4 th
Edinboro Highland Games & Scottish Festival	Edinboro, PA	Sep 9 th -10 th
Covenanter Scottish Festival	Quarryville, PA	Sep 10 th
Ligonier Highland Festival	Ligonier, PA	Sep 17 th
Celtic Classic	Bethlehem, PA	Sep 23 rd -25 th
Radford Highlanders Festival	Radford, VA	Oct 8 th