

# ROBERTSON'S RANT

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



## SOUTHERN MARYLAND GAMES REPORT

by Jim Fargo

On April 23rd, the clan van arrived at the Jefferson-Patterson Park in Saint Leonard, Maryland, for the Southern Maryland 'Comeback' Celtic Festival. **Robert Knight**, son **Andrew** and I soon had the van unloaded. With help from **Jerry Vandenberg** and President **Sam Kistler**, our double tent layout between Clan McDougall and the Manx Society was quickly set up. Soon after, clanfolk began arriving to join us for the day's festivities.

It was a typical sunny "Scottish" day with the temperature in the low-70s. The overall games attendance was about what we expected – lots of people for the first local D.C.-area Celtic event of the year after a two-year COVID drought.

We welcomed a number of members and guests along with their families to the clan tent including **Alex Duncan**; **Evan Duncan**; **Steve Hoffman** and his family; the **Katan (Reid) family**; **Anne (Donachie) Wright** who has moved back to the area from the Southern California branch; and **Heather Smylie** and her family who joined us for the parade.

Watching the highland games events was especially noteworthy as we had two clansmen (**Justin Pearce** and **Charlie Kyle**) participating this year. In the open class, Justin took first place in the Sheaf Toss, Weight over Bar, Braemar stone and Open stone events along with a 2nd in the light hammer and 3rd in the heavy hammer. Unfortunately in the master class, I was unable to get Charlie's results.

We barely made the clan parade this year, as we were only alerted by the sound of the pipes leading the clans to the opening ceremonies. After the parade, we returned to our tents to socialize over a light lunch with various liquid refreshments. **Chris Lindsay** (the convener for Clan Lindsay) came by during the day for refreshments and received several reminders (moo-o-o!) that this year marked the 630th anniversary of the "Raid of Angus" in 1392!

This is one of the best run Celtic festivals in our region and Sam and I believe everyone had a good time and enjoyed themselves. We will be back with our double tent setup again next year on April 29, 2023. Hope you can join us there!

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### Branch Officers

President:

Sam Kistler

Vice President:

Tom Due

Secretary/Treasurer:

Norman Dunkinson



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## ROBERTSON'S RANT



Clan Donnachaidh at the Southern Maryland Celtic Festival and Highland Games.

## SCOTS HUMOR

During an airplane flight from London to Edinburgh, an English Member of Parliament gets up from his seat in economy class and takes an empty seat in first class. The flight attendant sees him do this and asks him politely to return to his seat in economy. The politician says, "I'm an elected official, I'm important. I'm on my way to an important meeting and I'm staying here!"

The flight attendant tells the pilot and copilot about this. The copilot then goes to ask the politician to return to his original seat. Again the politician refuses and insists, "I'm an elected official, I'm important and I'm staying here!"

The copilot returns to the cockpit and informs the pilot, Captain Angus Reid, that the politician just won't listen. "I fly this route all the time," Angus says. "I'll handle this."

Angus walks back to the politician and whispers something in his ear. The politician says, "Oh, I'm sorry," and then gets up and goes back to his seat in economy class.

The flight attendant and the copilot are amazed and ask Angus what he said to make him return to his original seat. "Och, it was easy," replied Angus. "I told him that first class isn't going to Edinburgh."



## 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:

**Tommy Crewe**

**Kathy Fraser**

**Steven M. Hoffman**

**Carol A. Lucian**

**Patrick E. MacRae**

**Matthew Roberson**

## FAIR HILL GAMES REPORT

By Norman Dunkinson

After a two-year hiatus, it was great to see the Colonial Highland Gathering – otherwise known as the Fair Hill Games – back on the schedule for 2022!

The Fair Hill Games are one of the oldest and longest running in the Mid-Atlantic, and this year was the 60th event year! This year, the entire event was moved just east of the normal Fair Hill Races site to the Cecil County Fairgrounds site. I arrived about 7:15am on Saturday, May 21st, and set up the tent in short order. The Clan Murray ladies, **Jane and Pepper**, arrived shortly after, and I was pleased to assist them with unloading, setting up their tent next to mine, and fixing one of their tables that was being uncooperative (thankfully Jane carries needle-nose pliers!).

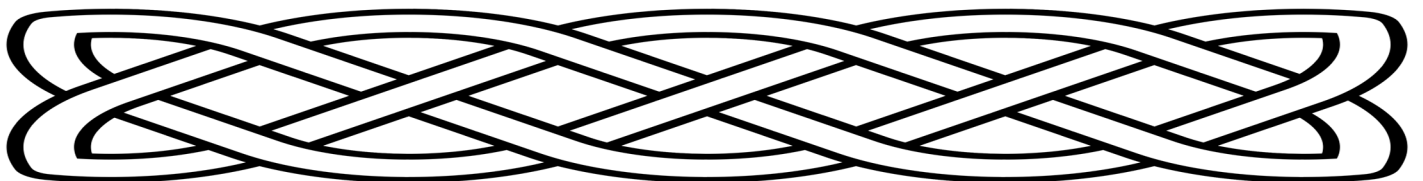
The clachan consisted of about 20 tents. In addition to Clans Donnachaidh, Murray, Nisbet, Turnbull, Forsyth, Maclaren, Maclean, Keith, Bell, Johnston, Hay, McPherson, Donald, Campbell, and McAlister, the St. Andrew's Society of Baltimore, the St. Andrew's Society of the Eastern Shore, the Cecil County Democrat Club, and the Language Village were also on the field.

The unseasonable heat was brutal, but it did not deter visitors and we still did the march of the clans as part of mid-day ceremonies. While I was initially a bit concerned with our location at the “rear” of the event, we had steady traffic throughout the day. My father, **Norman G. Dunkinson III**, and his friend **Lynn** arrived in the late morning, and I was pleased to welcome several former and prospective society members at the tent.

After the presentation of the haggis, I was recruited by the Language Village to participate in something that I've never done in my 28 years of involvement in the highland games – “waulking the cloth” while singing the chorus of a Gaelic song! It was quite enjoyable (and ammonia free!), and I can't get the refrain of “he mandu hi ri oro” out of my head!

As if our waulking demonstration wasn't enough for festivalgoers, this event featured the popular Scottish band Albannach, as well as the Philadelphia-based Bogside Rogues.

I highly recommend this event to all members of the society, and I hope to see you there in 2023!



## ROBERTSON'S RANT

# DEATH OF KING JAMES II—1460

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

After the Yorkist victory at Northampton in July 1460 over the Lancastrian forces during the English War of the Roses, King James II attempted to recover the Castle of Roxburgh from the English. The castle overlooks the junction of the rivers Tweed and Teviot in the Borders region of Scotland.

The English garrison made a long valiant defense against the Scottish besiegers. James had deployed bombard (cannon) to weaken the walls and was very interested in the progress made by the artillery. When the Earl of Huntly responded to James's request and arrived with reinforcements, James decided that he had sufficient forces to storm the castle. The first Principal of the University of Aberdeen, Hector Boece, published his "History of Scotland" in 1527, and stated in it that on August 3, "But while this prince, mair curious nor became him or the majesty of a king, did stand near hand by the gunners when the artillery was discharging, his thigh bone was dung in twa with a piece of a mis-framed gun that brak in the shooting, by which he was stricken to the ground and died hastily thereof."

Responding to Huntly's request, Alexander Robertson of Strowan, 5th chief, gathered our clansmen and set off for Roxburgh, by way of Dunkeld. The reason for this longer route was for Alexander to seek revenge for his father's recent death. The bonus was to plunder the Torwood church lands rented by Robert Forrester and gather provisions to feed our clansmen during the siege. This Forrester had earlier that year given Robert (4th chief) a serious head wound (from which he later died) during an altercation over the ownership of these contested Dunkeld Abbey lands.

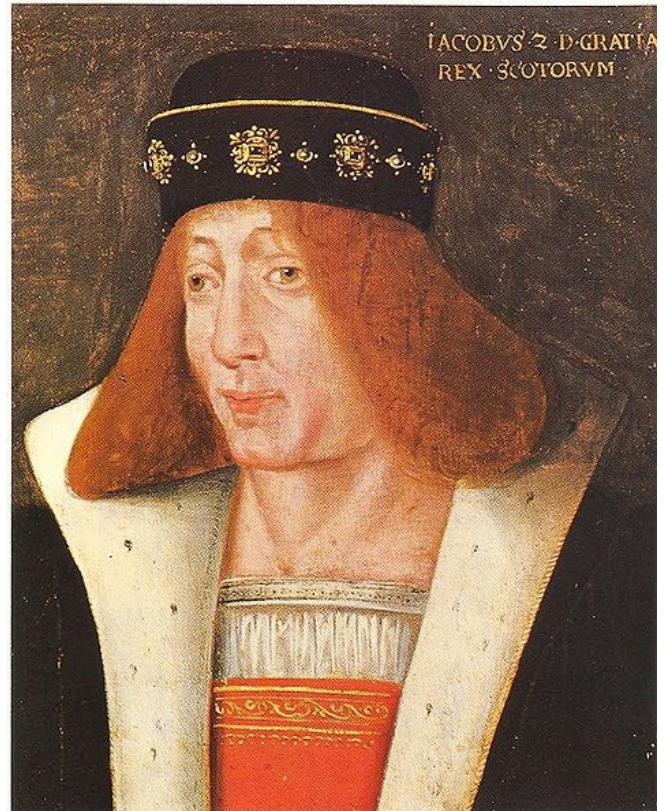
Queen Mary of Guelders, with her ten year old son, James III, came to the leaders of the army and besought them to conceal the King's death so the army wouldn't be disheartened. She urged George the "Red" Douglas, Earl of Angus, to convince the other leaders to press forward and capture the castle. A few days later the castle was overrun (with no prisoners taken) and it was demolished so it could not be reused by the English in the future.

### References:

Rait, Robert S., "The Making of Scotland", London, 1929, pp. 119-120.

Robertson, James, "Chiefs of Clan Donnachaidh 1275-1749", Perth, 1929, pp. 46-47.

Multiple Wikipedia searches.



From King James II of Scotland: A Reign of Murder and Mayhem—[Medievalists.net](http://Medievalists.net).

## CARROLL COUNTY GAMES REPORT

By Norman Dunkinson

The 1st annual Carroll County Celtic Festival was held on Saturday, June 11th, at the Carroll County Agricultural Center in Westminster, Maryland. This is somewhat of a replacement for the Mid-Maryland Celtic Festival, last held in Mount Airy, Carroll County, Maryland, in 2018. Other than one or two clans who set up their tents the day before, I was first on the field and first to be completely set up. Unusually, the clans organizer allowed us to set up anywhere within the clan row that we liked (first come, first served was nice!).

President **Sam Kistler** arrived shortly thereafter and he and I assisted various other clans, organizations, and vendors with setting up their respective tents. We ended up with Clan Elliot on one side and Clan Bell, the honored clan for these games, on the other. Having Elliot and Donnachaidh side-by-side was quite fitting for me, given that my mother is an Elliot (though spelled with two "t's") and my father a Donnachaidh!

It rained off and on throughout the morning, which limited early attendance, but cleared up between 11:00am and 12:00pm when attendance picked up. Sam and I both marched in the Parade of Clans around 11:45am. For a first-year event, these games featured a full compliment of vendors and were well attended by the clans and the various Scottish organizations. Also impressive for a first-year small to mid-size event was the caliber of the musical groups, including Seven Nations and the Rogues. Sam and I were happy to welcome a number of visitors to the tent throughout the day, including a few with Donnachaidh ancestry, as well as a repeat visitor from the Fair Hill



Sam Kistler at the Carroll County Games. Photo by Norman Dunkinson.

Games! We also had a great view of the athletic competitions throughout the day, as the field used was literally right in front of us (the judges frequently warned those passing by our tent to take cover when the one left-handed athlete was performing the hammer toss!). We were also quite near one of the beer tents where the Rogues closed out the afternoon.

The clans organizer, **Mike Bell**, President of the Clan Bell Society, has already solicited feedback from the various clans on how to improve on this event next year (not there were any major issues or concerns). It is great having a clan convener, who understands and appreciates the integral part that the clans play at all highland games, running the show!



## ROBERTSON'S RANT

### ALEXANDER ROBERTSON OF STRUAN IN 1685

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

In February 1685, King James VII and II of Great Britain came to the throne, succeeding his brother Charles II. There were two rebellions against his assuming the throne.

In Scotland, Archibald Campbell (9th Earl of Argyll) returned to Scotland and led a parallel rebellion to Monmouth's Rebellion (May-July 1685). After several false starts in raising his clansmen in Argyll, he found that his campaign was in danger of collapse as a large army led by the Marquess of Atholl had entered Argyll. The Earl's army of clansmen melted away. The Earl was captured and imprisoned in Edinburgh castle. Because he was already under a prior sentence of death, the Earl was beheaded on June 30, 1685 in Edinburgh. Many of Argyll's followers made their escape to Ulster in Ireland.



Judge Jeffries at the Bloody Assizes. From [The many reinventions of Winchester Castle's Great Hall – Flickering Lamps—flickeringlamps.com](#).

Back in December 1681, the Earl's Argyll estates had been confiscated and his hereditary jurisdictions assigned to the Marquess of Atholl by King James II after the Earl had been convicted and sentenced to death for treason. Argyll escaped to the Netherlands before the death sentence could be carried out.

On his arrival in England, the Duke of Monmouth pressed his claim to the throne and on July 5th (a week after Argyll's death) at the battle of Sedgemoor his army was defeated. Monmouth was later executed. Many of his surviving followers were either transported to various colonies or hanged after mock trials that became known as the "Bloody Assizes".

The Marquess of Atholl raised the manpower of Atholl to fight against Argyll's rebellion against King James, but Alexander, our clan's 12th chief, refused to call up his clansmen citing an ancient bond of hospitality and friendship that existed between the houses of Struan and Argyll which differences of political sympathies could not overcome. The real reasons for not calling out our clansmen might have been his illness and more likely his displeasure over losing several land disputes with the Marquess of Atholl.

Eventually, King James II fled to France and the English invited William of Orange (King James' nephew and son-in-law) to take the throne. On hearing of his father's illness, young Alexander left St. Andrew's University and returned home. When Alexander (12th

chief) heard that King James had fled, he told his son to continue always loyal to the true line of the Stuart Kings. In December 1688, the father died and his eldest surviving son, Alexander, became chief. It fell to him to raise the full strength of the clan in July 1689 and he arrived at Killiecrankie with our clansmen the day after the battle. This set

## ALEXANDER ROBERTSON OF STRUAN IN 1685 (CONTINUED)

the stage for the Jacobite period of Scotland's history. Later captured after the battle of Dunkeld, Alexander was taken prisoner to Edinburgh. Alexander was treated kindly by the first Duke of Argyll in thanks for not participating against his father's failed rebellion. He was set at liberty on his parole out of the Tolbooth of Edinburgh and exchanged as a prisoner of war for Sir Robert Pollock. Alexander eventually joined the exiled King James II in France and stayed there from 1690 until his pardon was granted in 1703.

Postscript: The Errol Flynn movie "Captain Blood" alludes to these trials. In the movie, Dr. Blood (Flynn) is transported to Jamaica after conviction by Baron Jeffries in a mock trial for his participation in Monmouth's rebellion. After escaping from the plantation, he turns pirate and was finally reconciled with the English government in 1688 after King James II's overthrow and the accession of "good King William" to the throne.

### References:

Black, Jeremy, "A History of the British Isles", New York, 1996, pp. 140-142.

Clan Donnachaidh 1955 Annual, p. 38.

Robertson, James, "Chiefs of Clan Donnachaidh 1275-1749", Perth, 1929, pp. 56-57.

Sinclair, Rev. John, "Schiehallion", Stirling, 1905, pp. 31-32.

## CLAN WAR CRY PRONUNCIATION

By Jim Fargo

This article is for those of you who are not members of the Parent Society in Scotland but do receive our 'Robertson's Rant' newsletter as members of the Mid-Atlantic Branch. This year's Clan Annual (on page 20) provides the correct pronunciation of the clan war cry -- in Gaelic!

'Garg'n uair dhuisgear' is pronounced as -- GARaag nooar GhooSHgar. "The OO sound should be very long. GH is the softened G sound, made with the back of the tongue arching against the palate. To reproduce it, rub the G against your palate while pursing your lips for the OO."

For those of us who prefer to use the anglicized version (Fierce When Roused!) when our assembled clanfolk yell our war cry during clan parades and other events we attend, we will continue to do so. Frankly, if we yelled it in Gaelic, no one would have a clue to what we had said. Feel free to practice and we might give a 'prize' to the best effort during your next visit to the clan tent.





From [i.pining.com](http://i.pining.com).

**CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY  
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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>
Celtic Fling & Highland Games	Manheim, PA	Jun 25 <sup>th</sup> -26 <sup>th</sup>
Virginia Scottish Games & Festival	The Plains, VA	Sep 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup>
Edinboro Highland Games & Scottish Festival	Edinboro, PA	Sep 9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup>
Covenanter Scottish Festival	Quarryville, PA	Sep 10 <sup>th</sup>
Ligonier Highland Festival	Ligonier, PA	Sep 17 <sup>th</sup>
Celtic Classic	Bethlehem, PA	Sep 23 <sup>rd</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup>
Radford Highlanders Festival	Radford, VA	Oct 8 <sup>th</sup>
Scottish Christmas Walk	Alexandria, VA	Dec 3 <sup>rd</sup>

*As of the time of this writing, the website for the Central Virginia Celtic Festival (i.e. the Richmond Games, typically held in October), has not been updated for 2022*