

ROBERTSON'S RANT

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



VOLUME 12, ISSUE 3
AUGUST 2023

TARTAN NEWS ALERT

by Jim Fargo

On page 13 of the July/August 2023 issue of *Archaeology* magazine, is an announcement that the oldest example of true tartan material has been identified. The woolen tartan fabric measures roughly 22 by 17 inches. Found in a peat bog during the early 1980s, it has now been analyzed by the Scottish Tartans Authority.

Using high-resolution microscopy, the analysis determined that the fabric had “a ground pattern of red and yellow with green overstripes. There is also a dark brown color, though this may be a product of the fleece’s natural color.” Further analysis found no evidence of any artificial dyes. Peter MacDonald, the head of research and collections for the Scottish Tartans Authority has confirmed by radiocarbon dating that the fabric was “likely produced in the first half of the sixteenth century.”

Although the article did not identify where in Scotland the peat bog was located and because of the coloring of the fabric, my conclusion is that this was probably not one of our early clan tartans.



Your editor in a stone sarcophagus on the grounds of Scone Palace, Perthshire. August 2003.

Branch Officers

President:

Sam Kistler

Vice President:

Tom Due

Secretary/Treasurer:

Norman Dunkinson



Inside this issue:

Thomas Dobson	2
Scots Humor	2
Ceud Mile Failte	3
Carroll County Celtic Festival Report	3
Donald B. Duncan	4
Dobson Units	5
Atholl Tartan	5
Jonathan Duncan	7
Excerpts from a Diary— First Trip to Scotland (Part 3)	8
Military Life in Crimea	12

ROBERTSON'S RANT

THOMAS DOBSON (1751–1823)

By James A. Fargo, FSA Scot

Thomas Dobson was born near Edinburgh, Scotland in 1751. On October 5, 1777 he married Jean Paton in New Greyfriars Parish. They had three daughters born in Scotland (Margaret, Alison and Catharine) before moving to Philadelphia in 1783-1784. By 1785 Dobson had a thriving printing business in Philadelphia and they later had a son Judah.

A master printer, Thomas Dobson is most famous for having published the first encyclopedia in the newly independent United States during the period 1789-1798. It was a reprint of the eighteen volume third edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica printed in Scotland with articles edited to appeal to a patriotic American audience and eliminate a perceived British bias. Dobson's Encyclopaedia contained 16,650 pages with 595 engraved copperplates. President George Washington subscribed to two sets while Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr also subscribers to the original printing of 2,000 copies. Publication was done on a regular weekly basis beginning on January 2, 1790 and the weeklies could then be bound into leather-bound volumes as publication continued. The retail price per volume was five Pennsylvania dollars.

Dobson also was the first to publish a complete Hebrew Bible in Philadelphia in 1814.

Thomas Dobson and his son Judah eventually closed the business in 1822. Thomas died in Philadelphia on March 9, 1823.

References: Multiple Wikipedia searches.

SCOTS HUMOR

The local Scottish minister was called to the local nursing home to perform a wedding.

An anxious old man met him at the door. The minister sat down to counsel the old man and asked several questions.

"Angus, do you love her?" "Nay", the old man replied.

"Is she a good Christian woman?" "I do na know," Angus answered.

"Does she have a lot of money?" continued the minister. "Nay."

Then why are you marrying her?" the minister asked.

"Cause Mary can drive at night," replied Angus.



Dobson's Hebrew Bible., 1814. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Dobson_printer.

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:

Sherry Del Rosario

S. Preston Duncan

Kathryn Fraser

Steven M. Hoffman

Patrick E. Macrae

Ernest A. Malcolm

Harry L. Robertson Jr.

Suzette M. Simpson

Ripley F. Williams

CARROLL COUNTY CELTIC FESTIVAL REPORT

By Norman Dunkinson

The 2nd annual Carroll County Celtic Festival was held at the Carroll County Agricultural Center in Westminster, Maryland, on Saturday, June 10, 2023.

I arrived about 7:15am to find the giant 15' x 30' tent erected for us by the games staff since we were the honored clan for this event. The tent, in addition to providing ample shade for guests, was also conveniently placed adjacent to the athletics. President **Sam Kistler** arrived shortly after, and we were set up and ready to go well before the gates opened at 9:00am.

The weather was beautiful throughout the day, with lots of sun and comfortable temperatures, and attendance was strong. We had a number of other visitors, including the **Katan family**, and did a relatively brisk business with our Clan Donnachaidh t-shirts. Former Vice-President **Ron Bentz** came out of retirement, along with his mother **Betty Bentz** and son **Liam Bentz**, and spend most of the day with Sam and I. Liam, to Ron's surprise, was simply enthralled by the athletics, with his eyes glued to those most of the day. In addition to the usual caber toss, hammer throw, sheaf toss, etc., this event included "stones of strength," and an event where athletes carried a huge stone, competing for distance. Liam even prevailed on one of the athletes to teach him how to pick-up an Atlas stone!

Celtic musicians included the Piper Jones Band, Poehemia, Kyf Brewer and Barleyjuice, and the iconic Seven Nations. In addition to us, clans and societies present included Bell, Donald, Douglas, Dunbar, Elliot, Gordon, Hannay, Hay, Johnston/e, Keith, Little, Lockhart, MacAlister, Mackay, MacLaren, MacPherson, the Brotherhood of Kilted Veterans, the Friendly Daughters of Saint Patrick, the Highland Society of Harford County, the Saint Andrews Society of Baltimore, the Saint Andrews Society of Mid-Maryland, and the Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick.

This game continues to evolve based on feedback from the clans and other participants, and it has quickly become a welcome addition to our "first half" games season schedule. Please consider joining us at Carroll County next year!



Liam Bentz with a an Atlas stone at the Carroll County Games. June 2023.

ROBERTSON'S RANT

DONALD B. DUNCAN (1896—1975)

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

Donald Bradley Duncan was born September 1, 1896 in Aplena, Michigan. He graduated in 1917 from the U.S. Naval Academy and was assigned to the USS Oklahoma (BB-37). He received a master's degree in radio engineering from Harvard University in 1925. In 1941, Duncan was the first commander of the Navy's first escort aircraft carrier, the USS Long Island (CVE-1).

In the spring of 1942, Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle was assigned the task of figuring out how to get back at Japan for their sneak attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The First Aviation Project was established by the U.S. Navy soon afterward. The initial problem was how to get short range Navy bombers close enough to bomb Japan without losing a carrier fleet. A Navy Captain named Francis S. Low came up with an idea to use longer range Army bombers from a carrier rather than carrier planes.

As an air operations officer, Captain Donald B. Duncan proved on paper that the Army's B-25 Mitchell medium land-based bomber could be flown off a carrier deck and reach Japan while the carrier was still far enough away from counterattack by land-based Japanese planes. Duncan solved the problem of the planes having to refuel, by having the bombers continue on to allied bases in China after bombing targets in Japan.

After training flight crews at Elgin Field in Florida, the crews were flown to Alameda Naval Air Station in California. There, sixteen modified B-25B Mitchell bombers were hoisted onto the flight deck of the USS Hornet (CV-8). North of Midway Island, the carrier USS Enterprise joined and formed Task Force 16 with the addition of four cruisers and 8 destroyers.

The "Doolittle Raid" on April 18, 1942, was the first of many American counterattacks on Tokyo and other sites on Honshu Island, Japan. Despite fifteen of the bombers crashing on landing attempts and only one safely landing at Vladivostok in the Soviet Union, the boost to American morale from the raid resulted in Doolittle being awarded the Medal of Honor and promoted to brigadier general.

During World War II, Duncan commanded the USS Essex (CV-9) and then the USS Long Island. Duncan served as commander of the 2nd Task Fleet after 1948 until becoming the Vice Chief of Naval Operations from 1951-1956. Admiral Duncan received an OBE (Order of the British Empire, Military Division) from the British government in thanks for his wartime contributions.

Admiral Donald B. Duncan retired on March 1, 1957. Duncan died on September 8, 1975, in Pensacola, Florida.

References:

Multiple Wikipedia searches.



Admiral Donald B. Duncan. From <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/80-G-434000/80-G-434014.html>.

DOBSON UNITS

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

Gordon Miller Bourne Dobson (1889-1976) was a British physicist and meteorologist who devoted much of his life to the observation and study of atmospheric ozone. His parents were Doctor Thomas and Marianne (Bourne) Dobson. In 1886, his parents built 'Knott End,' a substantial home in the Fylde district of Lancashire where Gordon was born on February 25, 1889.

After graduating from the University of Cambridge, Dobson arrived at Oxford in 1920 to take up the position of University lecturer in Meteorology, having previously served as Director of the Experimental Department at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough during World War I. Dobson set about developing methods of measuring atmospheric ozone from the ground.

In 1923, Dobson produced the first Dobson Ozone Spectrometer, to be succeeded in 1931 by his Spectrophotometer. This device measured the intensity of solar ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Dobson determined that the warmth in the stratosphere (the layer six to 30 miles above the Earth's surface) was caused by the absorption of UV solar radiation by ozone, in what has become known as the ozone layer. Dobson's device was the source of the discovery in 1984 of the Antarctic ozone hole.

A Dobson Unit represents how thick a layer of ozone from the surface to the top of the atmosphere would be if it all existed at 0 degrees Celsius and the average surface pressure. The amount of ozone in an atmospheric column at any given location is measured in Dobson Units. One Dobson Unit is defined to be 0.01mm thickness at STP (standard temperature and pressure). For example, 300 Dobson Units is about 3mm thick or approximately the thickness of a dime.

[Continued on Page 6.](#)

ATHOLL TARTAN

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

Our clanfolk are fortunate to have a variety of tartans associated with our clan to choose from when considering the purchase of tartan material.

In addition, we have the option to wear the well known Perthshire regimental tartan, the Black Watch, as our clan is based in Perthshire. Another option is to wear the Atholl District tartan. The Atholl tartan is one of the earliest known district tartans with the earliest known reference to it being around 1619. The current Atholl District design was published by Wilsons of Bannockburn in 1819. It is peculiar to the district of Atholl and is not defined to a specific clan. This is not the same as the Murray of Atholl tartan.



[Atholl District Tartan.](#)

When the English government approved the idea of recruiting local men to serve as a military police force in the highlands to control thievery and clan warfare, they needed a standardized uniform. Two designs were put forward to General Wade by the initial company commanders. The Black Watch tartan was chosen for the long kilt (the breacan-feile) while the Atholl design was used for the little kilt, the feileadh-beag. The use of these tartans was to distinguish these men from the regular troops, known as redcoats.

Reference: Zaczek, Iain, "World of Tartans", Collins & Brown Limited, 2001, pp. 28.

ROBERTSON'S RANT



L to R: Ron Bentz, Sam Kistler, Betty Bentz, and Norman Dunkinson at the Carroll County Celtic Festival, Westminster, Maryland. June 2023.

DOBSON UNITS (CONTINUED)

For his work, Dobson was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1927 and made a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1951.

Dobson died on March 10, 1976.

References:

Multiple Wikipedia searches.

JONATHAN DUNCAN (1756—1811)

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

Jonathan Duncan was born on May 15, 1756. Duncan began his career in India at the age of sixteen in 1772 and in 1784 was one of the charter members of the Asiatic Society founded in Calcutta. He was appointed superintendent and resident at Benares by Governor-General Lord Cornwallis where he helped stamp out the practice of infanticide. In 1791 he started the Sanskrit College at Benares to promote the study of Hindu laws and philosophy.

Appointed Governor of Bombay to head the colonial administration in that part of India, Duncan resided at Government House which had been a Franciscan monastery when the Portuguese still had control over the area. It was part of the dowry that King Charles II received when he married Catherine of Braganza, daughter of the King of Portugal. King Charles thought so little of this harbor that he rented it to the East India Company for ten pounds a year.

In 1798, Napoleon attempted to conquer Egypt by sending a fleet and an army of 40,000 to Cairo. His intention was to continue on to conquer the British empire in India. The French fleet was destroyed by Admiral Nelson at the naval battles at Aboukir Bay and the Nile, but an intact French Army was still an invasion threat to British India. Governor Duncan of the East India Company had charge of the Company's Bombay navy and army. The new Governor-General of Bengal, Richard Wellesley, brought half the Bengal native army and 4,000 British regulars to reinforce Duncan's local garrisons. His younger brother, Colonel Lord Arthur Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington), was second in command to General Harris. With the defeat of Napoleon's army in March 1801 at Alexandria, Egypt, by General Sir Ralph Abercrombie's British expeditionary force, the French threat to India was eliminated.

The last French supported Sultanate, the kingdom of Mysore, was led by Tipu Sultan. Three separate British forces converged on Mysore in April 1799. Two British-led East India Company armies from Bengal, led by Colonel Wellesley and General Harris, and a third army from Bombay attacked and defeated Mysore at the Battle of Seringapatam. General Harris was said to have exclaim after the death of Tipu Sultan that "Now India is ours."

Duncan had an illegitimate son born in Bombay known as 'Jonathan Duncan, the younger' (1799-1865). After his father's death, the son was raised by Sir Charles Forbes, a Scottish politician from Aberdeenshire.

Jonathan Duncan was Governor of Bombay from December 27, 1795, until his death on August 11, 1811. His tombstone is in Saint Thomas Cathedral in Mumbai.

References: Barnett, Correlli, "Bonaparte", Hill and Wang, 1978, pp. 55-62; Horne, Alistair, "The Age of Napoleon", Modern Library, 2004, pp.10-12; Hunter, Seth, "The Spoils of Conquest", London, 2013, pp.132-133, 390-391; Multiple Wikipedia searches.



Jonathan Duncan. From <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/28426/honourable-jonathan-duncan-1756-1811-governor-bombay>.

ROBERTSON'S RANT

EXCERPTS FROM A DIARY—FIRST TRIP TO SCOTLAND (PART 3)

By Norman Dunkinson

Day 5 (Wednesday, 30 May 2001)

We awoke early to ensure adequate time to don our wedding attire. I wore my kilt and Chris wore her navy blue full-length dress purchased for the occasion. Chris also wore a modern Duncan sash attached with a silver Celtic brooch to match my kilt—she did look stunning!

After breakfast, we paid our respects to Heather and took the road to Alloa. We arrived around 8:30am and visited the Alloa Tower to occupy us before our 9:45am appointment. We also picked up the bouquet and boutonniere that Chris had ordered on Monday. The bouquet consisted of five white calla lilies with sea holly thistles and assorted greenery, tied with a Black Watch ribbon.

We arrived early at the Registrar's and Mrs. Johnston rang up our witnesses to speed the proceedings. Our witnesses were Helen Duncan and Barbara Armstrong, both of whom appeared to be more than happy to perform this necessary function. All of the ladies commented favorably on our attire and the word "smart" was used more than once.

The ceremony began to a lovely traditional Gallician tune by Milladoiro and was performed in the Ochil room. Present were only Mrs. Johnston, our two witnesses, and ourselves. The Scottish civil ceremony is wonderfully simple and maintains the character and substance of the old Scottish contractual marriage rite. The introduction, swearing-in of the witnesses, and vows were all completed within

minutes. The signing of the certificate formed the basis for most of the photographs taken by Mrs. Johnston. The rain, considered lucky on a wedding day according to local sources, subsided as we exited the office to obtain a few outdoor photos. It was somewhat strange to have Helen and Barbara throw confetti on Chris with no other spectators but myself and Mrs. Johnston. We received a card and gift from the ladies. Expressing our thanks and acknowledging the best wishes, we pointed the car toward the town of Dollar and to Castle Gloom.

Arriving via Hillfoots Road at the lower carpark of Castle Gloom, now called Castle Campbell, we took advantage of



The wedding at Alloa, Clackmannanshire. May 30, 2001.

EXCERPTS FROM A DIARY—FIRST TRIP TO SCOTLAND (PART 3) (CONTINUED)

another break in the rain to change into more comfortable clothes. Perched at the head of Dollar Glen, the castle would still warrant its name of yore if not for the bright gardens at its feet. The approach to the castle was steep, but not difficult, and we were greeted at the entrance by Andrew Skelton, a resident of Alloa, who came out of the visitor's centre and gift shop to greet us. It was evident that there were few visitors preceding us this day as Mr. Skelton's welcome was exceptionally warm and friendly. After a brief discourse upon the history of the castle and its various building phases, we were left to ourselves to explore the ruins. The weather was perfect for a visit to such a place and I, not the first time since our arrival, held my cap in place with my hand while on the parapets. Chris, of course, particularly enjoyed the gardens, and, after visiting these, we retired to the castle tea-room for sandwiches and a most excellent carrot and turnip soup. Mr. Skelton was about and asked us to be sure to stop by the gift shop on our way out. He popped a Scottish music tape in the stereo in the corner.

We met the old fellow on our way out and were given the first of many wedding gifts by kindly persons not at all connected with the wedding itself. We then moved on to Blairgowrie and Craighall Castle.



Castle Gloom, Dollar, Clackmannanshire. May 30, 2001.

From the roadside Craighall Castle appears to be no more than the typical Scottish country manor house of the baronial sort. An envelope, attached to the front door by a thumbtack and addressed to Mr. Dunkinson, contained a letter explaining that the proprietors would not return until 4:30pm. The letter was signed "Nikki Rattray." Being about 3:00pm, we decided to make the most of this and pursued a footpath to the right of the house. It became evident that the home truly was a castle as the one wing, instead of extending to the right or left, or to both sides of the main entrance, extended straight back upon a sheer, black cliff-face overlooking the River Ericht. The walls were red, black, and grey, and I remembered that construction of the castle was begun in 1530. We did not descend the path to the river as the conditions of the morning had made it quite slippery and dangerous. Instead, we walked toward the field directly opposite the castle and visited with some sheep and a Shetland pony.

Mrs. Rattray arrived at the time indicated, with children and a Jack Russell terrier named Spike in tow. Spike is probably the most intelligent dog Chris and I have ever encountered. Our room was appointed with 18th and 19th century furnishings, in accord with the rest of the home, and our bed was a canopied four-poster.

ROBERTSON'S RANT

EXCERPTS FROM A DIARY—FIRST TRIP TO SCOTLAND (PART 3) (CONTINUED)

After a brief freshening up, we took the advice of Mrs. Rattray and located Cargill's Restaurant in the heart of Blairgowrie and again near the River Ericht. With an appetizer of stuffed flat mushrooms, reminiscent of escargot, we had Angus ribeye steak with hot mustard and roast pork loin with leeks. Chris had a chocolate bramble crème brulee for desert. Our waitress was also exceptional and was repaid in kind.

Upon returning to Craighall, we were greeted by Lachie Rattray, whom I suppose is the head of the family. Lachie was an interesting specimen, standing about 5'5", very thin, with a disheveled and weather-beaten appearance, but who greeted us in a gracious, lively manner. We placed the ages of Mr. and Mrs. Rattray at about 35 to 37. Lachie informed us that Spike had had a long day after travelling the three or so miles to town to burst in upon a wake as an uninvited guest. We assumed that this accounted for Mrs. Rattray's absence at our arrival. Lachie lit a fire for us in the hall, or main room, with five tall windows looking out upon the defile. The room was surrounded by a narrow ledge, enclosed by a slight iron railing, accessed by the room itself, and affording the most magnificent of views northwest up the gorge—had one the stomach to walk upon this dizzying height. There was something intangible about this place, as if one had gone back in time, or, more correctly, that time had stood still. Surrounded by portraits of generations of the Lords Rattray and their wives, we settled down by the fire and fancied, for a short time, ourselves as the Lord and Lady of the manor. Spike must have felt the same (and with more right than Chris or I), as he laid prone upon his belly stretching his feet toward the grate.



Craighall Castle from the River Ericht, Perthshire. May 31, 2001.

EXCERPTS FROM A DIARY—FIRST TRIP TO SCOTLAND (PART 3) (CONTINUED)

Postscript: Though we didn't know it at the time, Lachie was indeed Lachlan Rattray, the 29th Chief of Clan Rattray. Unfortunately, he sold Craighall Castle per the excerpts below from an article appearing in the Scotsman on May 29, 2010:

Baron Yields Castle After 500 Years

From the spectacular ramparts of Craighall Castle towering above a gorge on the River Ericht, the Rattray clan withstood a siege by Cromwell's roundheads and fought off attacks by feuding rival clans.

But now, after 500 years, the clan seat has finally fallen to the Sassenach – a London investment banker.

Craighall of Rattray on the outskirts of Blairgowrie, has been home to 20 generations of clan chiefs but the current laird, a descendant of William the Conqueror, has been forced to sell his title and the fortified mansion of Craighall of Rattray Castle, which has been occupied by his family since 1533.

Lachlan Rattray of Rattray has sold the historic Scots baronial building and its surrounding 176 acres of "ancient native woodland" and sporting and farm estate for an undisclosed sum to a London investment banker, who plans to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on the dilapidated pile and turn it into his own family home.

Last year the baronial property was on the market for 2.2 million, with the title thrown in.

Lachlan, his wife, Nicky, and their three children, Thomas, 16, Hewie, 13, and Flora, ten, were the 20th generation of the family to live at Craighall.

Lachlan said: "I'm feeling quite relieved that it's now sold. It was a lot of money to have tied up in one place, and I didn't have the finance available to carry out the kind of work that was required for it. So, I'm actually pleased to be out of it.

"It was sold on 30 March to a London-based investment banker who is going to make it his family home. It needs a lot of work. I hope the new owners will be able to restore it to its former glory and retain some of its atmosphere. I am happy that it has gone to someone who can afford to look after it."

He added: "We have bought a little sheep farm in the area. Psychologically, we have moved up the hill. We haven't actually moved up in the world, but we have moved up the hill. The title stays with the house so I will simple be known as Mr Rattray. I've gone from being a laird to a farmer and I'm quite happy about that."

The red sandstone castle, which was first put on the market in 2008 in a "secret sale," was sold furnished with a collection of family heirlooms and portraits dating back to 1533.

The location, perched above Scotland's second-deepest ravine, was originally chosen by the Rattrays as a fortress to defend against attacks from their arch-enemy, the Earl of Atholl. The estate includes the ruins of a Pictish fort, which stands on a serpent-shaped mound associated, according to local tradition, with pagan rites.

A glossy brochure produced by the estate agents, and circulated privately, described the property as "one of Scotland's most spectacular homes".

Lachlan, an Old Harrovian and son of the eccentric late laird Captain James Silvester Rattray, who lived in a council house in Blairgowrie, has struggled to maintain the 13-bedroomed property, as well as its sprawling gardens. For the past few years, the Rattrays have opened up the castle as a bed & breakfast, with double rooms from 35 per night.

The laird also took on the task of restoring the ancient building through the 1990s, and he ran an architectural salvage business from the castle during the restoration. Since 2001, Lachlan has travelled the UK as the "Bath Wizard", restoring old baths, but the

ROBERTSON'S RANT

EXCERPTS FROM A DIARY—FIRST TRIP TO SCOTLAND (PART 3) (CONTINUED)

business has failed to save the family pile from being sold.

Last July, he sold three war medals at auction for 2,800. The silver medals – Crimea 1854-56, an Indian Mutiny 1857-58, and a Turkish Crimea award – belonged to Lieutenant General Sir James Clerk Rattray.

Lachlan said: "It was a challenge just moving out. I worked out that the last clearout had been in 1817 and in one form or another it has been the family home since 1533. This is a new chapter in the family history. It's a little bit surreal but we haven't had time to dwell on the significance. We're busy getting our new place ready."

MILITARY LIFE IN CRIMEA—1854-5

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

The Crimean war began in October 1853, between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. Fearing an Ottoman army collapse, Britain (allied with France, Sardinia and Austria) declared war in February 1854 and sent troops to support the Ottoman Empire. The British fear was that if the Ottoman Empire collapsed, then British India would be in danger. French and British fleet commanders decided to attack the Russian main naval base of Sevastopol in the Black Sea. The naval base had been established in 1783 by Catherine the Great. Allied armies boarded ships for transport to Crimea and landed on the peninsula in early September 1854 and won the Battle of the Alma on September 20, 1854. The Russians counterattacked on October 25th in what became known as the Battle of Balaclava. A second failed Russian counterattack at Inkerman in November ended in a stalemate. The front settled into the Siege of Sevastopol. The war was a crushing defeat for Russia. Russia's armies were beaten four times and they were forced to abandon the harbor of Sevastopol in September 1855. Russia didn't get it back until 1917 near the end of World War I.

During this same time period, the British had a second front open up in the Cape Colony in southern Africa. Having made peace with the Boers in 1854 by recognizing their independence, the Xhosa tribe (known as Kaffirs) rebelled against British rule. Unable to send reinforcements to South Africa, the British employed former German mercenaries to make up the shortfall and put down that rebellion.

Conditions for the troops on both sides in Crimea were brutal. The weather was awful and housing conditions were spartan at best in the Crimea for British and allied troops. Most officers and their men billeted in tents in the open fields. Senior officers might be lucky enough to find an abandoned farmhouse to set up headquarters, but all were still within artillery range of the enemy. The prevalence of disease, unsanitary conditions, physical wounds and mental anguish sent many men to the hospitals.

Each regiment had a surgeon captain and two assistants, who ranked as lieutenants. Each battalion had been issued eight stretchers. Surgeons could be appointed with or without having to purchase a commission, and the profits of selling the commission accrued to the colonel of the regiment. Regimental uniforms were purchased from the regimental agent, who was appointed by that same colonel. Douglas Arthur Reid was appointed an Acting Assistant Surgeon in 1854 to the Duke of York's staff and had to provide himself with scarlet full dress, blue undress and an assortment of other accoutrements. Six weeks later he was posted to the 90th Light Infantry, then in Crimea, and learned that he needed a completely new uniform, together with a "portable bed and bedding, bullock trunks, water-proof rug, canteen supply of warm clothing and Dean and Adams revolver. The Bill for all this was a heavy one, and my pay

MILITARY LIFE IN CRIMEA—1854-5 (CONTINUED)

was seven shillings and six pence a day. It took quite a year's pay to clear me of debt."

Front line surgeons worked out of a general hospital at Balaclava established in a unused school with a capacity for about 110 men, but could hold up to 300, and, in October 1854, over 500. Most combat casualties (amputations, etc.) were from musketry and round/canister shot from cannons. Fortunately the availability of sulfa drugs, chloroform, and the development of blood transfusions helped reduce the death rate, although there was little sanitation or cleanliness for operations and nursing. The death rate for post-operative infections from amputations was 63 percent. Those that survived immediate treatment were sent by sea to the Barrack Hospital at Scutari, Turkey, run by Mary Seacole, the daughter of a Creole woman and a Scottish soldier. Assistant Surgeon Reid wrote that "She did not spare herself if she could do any good to the suffering soldiers. In rain and snow, in storm and tempest, day after day, she was at her self-chosen post, with her stove and kettle..." Her 'hotel' was a substantial hut which offered accommodation, supplies and meals. The hospital at Scutari was where Florence Nightingale and her nurses assisted the wounded. Through their efforts, the mortality rate dropped from 44 percent to 2 percent. The ratio of British medical doctors per combatant was 1 per 77.

Interestingly, daily life was not all grim on the front lines despite enemy fire, practice drills to fire in line and march in column. The Highland Brigade (42nd, 79th and 93rd regiments) wore the kilt under the command of Major-General Sir Colin Campbell. In addition to trench digging, various sports were encouraged to relieve boredom between engagements with the Russians. The Scots played golf, putting the stone and cricket with competitions between companies, regiments and allies. Officers brought boxes of books to pass the time when not fox hunting or playing cards. Officer messes regularly held balls to which local ladies were invited.

Postscript: The victories over the vaunted Russian army of the 1850s exposed their army as being poorly led, mismanaged, and with poorly supported logistics to keep an army in the field. Similarly, the British government headed by Lord Aberdeen was exposed as inept in the same areas. Britain's Royal Navy eventually overcame many of the logistics problems associated with supporting troops half a world away.

References:

- Holmes, Richard, "Redcoat", Harper-Collins, London, 2001, pp. 114, 188, 249-251, 261-2,
James, Lawrence, "The Rise and Fall of the British Empire", New York, 1995, pp. 182, 255.
Strong, Roy, "The Story of Britain", Pegasus Books, New York, 2019, p. 389.



Crimea War Medal. From <https://crimeanwar-veteranswa.com/veterans-index/g-h/higgins-william/>.



**CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY
MID-ATLANTIC BRANCH**

19354 Barrrens Rd. S.
Stewartstown, PA 17363

Email: 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).

CELTIC EVENTS & GAMES—2023

<u>Event Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
Virginia Scottish Games & Festival	The Plains, VA	Sep 2nd-3rd
Edinboro Highland Games & Scottish Festival	Edinboro, PA	Sep 8th-9th
Covenanter Scottish Festival	Quarryville, PA	Sep 9th
Ligonier Highland Festival	Ligonier, PA	Sep 16th
Celtic Classic	Bethlehem, PA	Sep 22nd-24th
Radford Highlanders Festival	Radford, VA	Oct 14th
Richmond Highland Games	Richmond, VA	Nov 4th-5th
Scottish Christmas Walk	Alexandria, VA	Dec 2nd