

# ROBERTSON'S RANT

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



## BRANCH UPDATE

By Norman Dunkinson

My apologies for the late publication of this first issue of *Robertson's Rant* for 2015. I've used this issue to catch up on a few outstanding reports from 2014 (working for the largest online retailer in the world is truly a 24/7 job!). 2015 is off to a great start, with the Branch attending four games — Southern Maryland, North Central West Virginia, Frederick, and Fair Hill— so far this year. Thanks to all of our conveners! Unfortunately, however, the long-standing McHenry games were not held in 2015 (this was my very first game too, over 20 years ago—how time flies!). We have 36 paid members at present— a handful more than at this time last year. So please remember to renew if it's been more than a year since you've paid Branch dues. The black clan crest t-shirt stock has been replenished, and t-shirts are available at all games that the Branch attends. Please see the listing on the last page of this issue for the remaining games of the 2015 season.

## CENTRAL VIRGINIA CELTIC FESTIVAL AND GAMES (2014)

By Jim Fargo, FSA Scot

The Central Virginia Highland Games & Celtic Festival was held this year at the Richmond Raceway Complex (formerly the VA State Fairgrounds) on October 25th-26th. Our double clan tent space was in our usual "ceilidh corner" spot with House of Gordon's two tents right next door. Our combined Donnachaidh Diner/Gordon Grill team (headed by master chef Dave Todd) was the place to be throughout the festival. Much thanks to everyone from both clans for bringing food and beverages to help stock the Diner/Grill on both Saturday and Sunday.

Saturday's weather was a beautiful fall day without last year's cloudy and cold drizzle. This year, there was a parade of clans on Saturday for the first time and we fielded a large contingent of clan folk before enjoying lunch. The afternoon went by quickly with a constant stream of visitors coming by to learn about their clan history. We welcomed 5 new members to our Branch: **William M. Benson** (Robertson), **Kathleen L. Maynard** (Duncan), **Jeffery L. Newton** (Robertson), **Timothy D. Robertson** and **Thomas Stark**.

Returning bright and early on Sunday morning, we shared breakfast with the House of Gordon and prepared for another beautiful day. While visitors to the tent were way down from Saturday we had a good number of new visitors join

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Branch Officers:

President:

Sam Kistler

Vice President:

Ron Bentz

Secretary/Treasurer:

Norman Dunkinson

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### CENTRAL VIRGINIA CELTIC FESTIVAL AND GAMES (2014) - CONTINUED

our regulars. The clan parade on Sunday was at noon and the clans followed the massed bands onto the athletic field. Our Donnachaidh contingent roared the clan war cry as we passed the announcer. After the parade, the Diner/Grill reopened and we again had a steady stream of visitors to the tent.

This was the last festival of our Mid-Atlantic games season and is one of the best. Put this event on your calendar for next year!!!

### ALEXANDRIA SCOTTISH CHRISTMAS WALK PARADE (2014)

By Jim Fargo

Our last Branch event of 2014 was the Scottish Christmas Walk in Olde Town Alexandria Virginia. This is always held on the first Saturday of December (December 6th this year) and marks the start of the Christmas shopping season in Alexandria. We arrived at 8AM and had breakfast at the local Subway after dropping off some "Toys for Tots" gifts at the local Starbucks. **President Sam** was helping at the collection site with the Scottish American Military Society (SAMS).

We stepped off about 11:40am after a good hour of socializing and various flask refreshments at our assigned spot in the staging area. Leading off our clan unit were **Don Behe** and myself with the clan banner. Because of the weather prediction of rain all day, our wolf head totem stayed home this year. **Steve Hoffman** carried the Saltire flag instead. We quickly warmed up as we continued along the parade route practicing the clan war cry. **Jill Stark** was instrumental in getting **Allan Robertson** to join us along the parade route as did **Beth** and **Sandy Perviss** and **Lee Robertson**. As we passed the reviewing stand, we gave a hearty "Fierce When Roused" to the honored guests. Even though the weather was a wee bit cool, we were very lucky as the rain didn't really start until after we had finished the parade route.

Upon the conclusion of the parade at Market Square, most of our 20 plus marchers headed for the traditional Branch luncheon at the Fish Market Inn (105 King Street). We were joined by clans Wallace, MacCallum and MacNaughton and had a delicious lunch. Afterwards, most of us wandered over to Murphy's Pub for a wee dram before heading home.

As always, it was a great day for a parade and concluded our 2014 event season. Please make plans to join us in Alexandria next year!

### MILITARY STRENGTH OF THE CLAN IN THE JACOBITE ERA

By Jim Fargo

General George Wade in his report to the English government dated December 10, 1724 estimated that the military strength of our clan to be 800 men in 1715 and that an additional 2,000 Atholl men were also in rebellion then. Lord President Duncan Forbes of Culloden in his report in 1745 estimated that our chief could raise 200 men on his own estate and there were another 500 Robertsons who were tenants of the Duke of Atholl. The Atholl brigade was reported to be able to muster about 3,000 men in 1745.

The real fighting strength of the clan would, of course, have been smaller seeing that the clan would not have marched out of the district with every able-bodied man. At Sheriffmuir in 1689, 500 of the clan were present under

the leadership of Struan yet the clan is reported to have been able to muster over 600. Had everyone gone, the clan lands would have been left defenseless against forays of caterans, attacks from neighboring clans or from government troops quartered in the area. The young boys, disabled men and old men would have remained as a home guard during any clan "expeditions" outside the area.

One instance of this occurred when the clan was called up for the Atholl brigade in 1715. One young man, Robert Mclan, had been left in charge by his father, Ian Robertson of Drumachuine, to protect the family home while his father and two elder brothers were gone. The homestead was subsequently raided by some Cameron caterans and several horses were driven off. Gathering a body of remaining clansmen, he successfully counterattacked the invaders and not only recaptured the horses but killed in single combat the leader of the caterans. Unfortunately, near the end of the conflict he was captured by the remaining caterans and had to be rescued from their vengeance by the celebrated outlaw, Rob Roy MacGregor and his men.

Another instance occurred in 1745, when Struan mustered 140 of the 200 clansmen who still followed his command and placed them under the leadership of Donald Robertson of Woodsheal as part of the Atholl brigade. Over 500 more of our clansmen were mustered by Lord George Murray as part of the Atholl brigade since these men were tenants on the lands of his elder brother, the Duke of Atholl. When the clan marched out of Atholl in 1745, Donald Robertson of Woodsheal left his father, Robert Ban Robertson of Invervack who was then 72 years of age and his youngest brother, John, then about 16 years old in charge of a small party of clansmen to protect the countryside during the clan's absence.

With the Disarming Act of August 1746, the carrying of weapons was outlawed. The penalty for the first offense was a fine. If not paid, and if the offender was fit for military service, he could be sent as a soldier to serve in America. If not fit, then the penalty was imprisonment for six months. The penalty for a second offense was to "be liable to be transported to any of His Majesty's Plantations beyond the Seas, there to remain for the Space of Seven Years." These same penalties applied to the wearing of "highland garb" unless the man was a soldier in His Majesty's forces. Heritable Jurisdictions were also eliminated at this time. This meant that a chief or his representatives could not make decisions on their own, but had to check with the government factor on the management of their estates.

In 1795, at the beginning of the Napoleonic era, Robertson of Auchleeks raised and commanded a regiment of clansmen for home defense distinguished with the appropriate name of Clan Donnachie Fencibles. This unit was disbanded when the real threat of a French invasion was eliminated by Admiral Adam Duncan's naval victory over the Dutch fleet at Camperdown in 1797.

From 1803 to 1809, General William Robertson of Lude raised at his own expense, the Loyal Clan Donnachie Volunteers for homeland defense against another possible French invasion by Napoleon. The battalion was composed of two infantry companies (Lude and Glenorchy), wearing kilts and red jackets with white facings (the Struan colors) while the Mounted artillery company wore blue coats and facings with blue breeches. The infantry companies wore the Atholl tartan with the addition of white stripes. This became the Robertson Hunting tartan. This was the last time our clansmen served in a strictly clan military unit.

#### References:

*"Historical Geography of the Clans of Scotland"*, T. B. Johnston & Col. James A. Robertson, 1899, pp. 26, 33, 38-46.

*"Short History of Clan Robertson"*, J. Robertson Reid, 1933, p. 131.

*"The Robertsons"*, Iain Moncreiffe, 1954, pp. 22-23.

*"Story of the Atholl Highlanders"*, Sir Iain Moncreiffe, undated, p. 7.

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### NORTH CENTRAL WEST VIRGINIA GAMES REPORT

By Tom Due

Our first games of the year opened to a clear sky and a warm very not Scottish weather. The Grand Marshall apologized for this during the opening ceremonies! **Sam Kistler** greeted us as we arrived at the clan space just before 8:00am and lent a hand setting up before heading off to visit the vendor tents. There were six Donnachaidhs marching in the parade.

Clan Hay was the honored clan of this year's games. Our tent was between Clan Hay and Clan Bell. We had a small lunch on hand for visiting clan members, but the spread the Ladies Hay had was stellar. They gracefully opened the several tables of food to the other tents as well as all the dancers in the dancing exposition.

The morning air made set-up a breeze. The light early turnout gave us time to walk the vendor area as a group. Twenty-one clans and societies, a games record, were present at the games.

As noon and the opening ceremony approached, the crowds gathered for the parade and massed band. A constant parade of guests at the clan table, both curious and intrigued strolled past. We offered assistance to those inquiring with the sept names list pointing many in the correct direction.

We had 13 clansmen sign in at the tent, including **Ms. Allison Duncan**, Piper for the Northeast Branch! She is currently enrolled at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. We look forward to seeing her again in September at the games held at the school. We also welcomed three new members.

This is a very nice games nestled in the highlands of West Virginia. The layout is such that you can see the heavy athletes compete from the clan tents, crowd depending, and vendors alike. A short walk away is the food vendor area for those that must have their Haggis or meat pie fix. This was the 14th annual games, and our third visit with the clan tent. Iona and others graced the stage, entertaining the festival goers and volunteers alike. We are making plans to attend next year and hope to see even more members. Bring your tartan and march with us in the opening parade!

### FREDERICK MARYLAND GAMES REPORT

By Ron Bentz

Every year this is my first event of the season. So bright and early, my mother **Betty Duncan Bentz** and I, made the short trek to the festival site. I set my GPS this year so there was no adventure getting to the site! Soon after arrival, we were set up and ready to go. As always we were joined by **President Sam Kistler**, who puts in work all year on this, his home event. Good job Sam! We were also pleased to once again have **Evan** and **Rosalie Duncan** set up the Donnachaidh Diner, a wonderful spread! We were also pleased to welcome **Secretary/Treasurer Norman Dunkinson** and family this year!

The event itself is always very enjoyable with great entertainment and athletics. This event marked the return of our black t-shirts which were a hit as always! I encourage all members to make this event in the future if possible — you won't be disappointed!

## SOUTHERN MARYLAND GAMES REPORT

By Jim Fargo

At 8:00am on April 25th, the clan van arrived at the Jefferson-Patterson Park in Saint Leonard, Maryland for the 37th annual Southern Maryland Celtic Festival. My son **Andrew, Robert Knight** and I soon had the van unloaded and gear set up at our double tent site between our Welsh and Scottish American Military Society (SAMS) neighbors. We were ready by 8:30am for the arrival of **Evan** and **Rosalie Duncan** with the Donnachaidh Diner provisions.

It was a typical windy Scottish day in the mid-50s with rains during the afternoon. Although the games attendance was less than we hoped for, we were able to welcome some members and their families to the clan tent including **Alex Duncan, Trish Katan** and **Harry Robertson**.

Evan Duncan, Andrew and I were joined by **President Sam Kistler, Patrick MacRae** from our Northern California branch, and **Duncan Simpson** (nephew of Alex Duncan) for the official clan parade. After the parade we reconvened in the clan tent for a wonderful lunch provided by the Duncans.

This year, there was a Clan Lindsay tent on a side row of the athletic field. We visited them several times during the afternoon to socialize with the Lindsay convener - **Leslie Hughes. Chris Lindsay** and his two sons “raided” us several times during the afternoon looking for a stray cow or two but only managed to acquire food and drinks. This year marks the 623rd anniversary of the “Raid of Angus”!

This is a great celtic festival and Sam and I believe everyone had a great time. We will be back with our double tent setup next year on April 30, 2016. Hope to see you there!

## FAIR HILL MARYLAND GAMES REPORT

By Norman Dunkinson

The 55th annual (yes, these games started in 1960!) Colonial Highland Gathering in Fair Hill, Maryland, was held on Saturday, May 16, 2015. My wife **Chris**, son **Asher**, and I had the tent up and ready to greet visitors in no time. We were soon joined by **President Sam Kistler**, my father **Norman**, his friend **Lynn**, and **Smitty Woodland**. When a fellow Donnachaidh lad showed up, he and Asher promptly commenced practicing their swordsmanship with their wooden swords and dirks! Asher also proudly participated with his father in the Parade of Clans.

The Celtic music group Searson, Charlie Zahm, and Carl Peterson are mainstays at this game, but they were also joined this year by the very popular Albannach – thanks to Sam for allowing the family and I to take a break from the tent and enjoy the music! We did a brisk business at the tent throughout the day, and were happy to welcome new member **Charles Roberts** to the Society, as well as a number of other clanfolk and friends who are perennial visitors at these games.

Despite the beautiful weather and large crowds, a number of clans packed up early. Clan Donnachaidh, however, was one of the last to leave. I was greeted with quite the surprise, though, when I returned to my car, parked behind one of the buildings that borders the clachan. My vehicle was completely blocked by two large tents occupied by numerous pipe band members, obviously celebrating the successes of the day. With the help of a few of them, I was able to just squeeze through!



Asher Dunkinson at the Fair Hill Games

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**UPCOMING CELTIC EVENTS AND GAMES—2015**

<u>Event Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
Grandfather Mountain Highland Games	Linville, NC	Jul 9th-12th
Adams County Irish Festival	Gettysburg, PA	Jul 18th
McLain Celtic Festival	Carlisle, PA	Sep 5th
Virginia Scottish Games & Festival	The Plains, VA	Sep 5th-6th
Edinboro Highland Games & Scottish Festival	Edinboro, PA	Sep 10th-13th
MD Renaissance Festival Scottish Weekend	Annapolis, MD	Sep 12th-13th
Octorara Scottish Festival	Quarryville, PA	Sep 12th
Celtic Classic	Bethlehem, PA	Sep 25th-27th
Ligonier Highland Festival	Ligonier, PA	Sep 26th
Radford Highlanders Festival	Radford, VA	Sep 26th
Williamsburg Celtic Festival	Lanexa, VA	TBD
Chesapeake Celtic Festival	Snow Hill, MD	Oct 3rd-4th
Central Virginia Celtic Festival & Games	Richmond, VA	Oct 24th-25th
Scottish Christmas Walk	Alexandria, VA	Dec 5th

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).