

ROBERTSON'S RANT

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



BRANCH UPDATE

By Norman Dunkinson

The Branch succeeded in two major areas prior to the 2013 Games Season—the acquisition of t-shirts, as reported in the last issue, and the revamping of the www.robertson.org website. T-shirts have now been distributed to the two major convening contingents, and will be available at all Games attended by the Branch for the remainder of the year. Sizes are limited, so get yours soon! Please check out the newly redesigned website too—thanks to the efforts of **Brian Robertson** from the UK, the site has a bold new look! I would also like to thank **Mike Duncan** for maintaining www.roberston.org for so many years! Mike has now passed the mantle of Webmaster to Brian.

LEXINGTON GAMES REPORT

By Jim Fargo

On April 13th, the clan van arrived at the Rockbridge County High School in Lexington, Virginia. Branch President **Sam Kistler** and I soon had the van unloaded and gear set up at the tent site in the school parking lot. We were ready by 9am for the start of the 7th annual Lexington Scots Irish Heritage Festival. This year we were situated within a row of tents with House of Gordon and Clan O'Brien on one side and a face-painting vendor as our next door neighbor on the other. At this event, they intersperse vendors among the clan tents.

It was a beautiful sunny and windy day in the low 70s, and the attendance was pretty good. Members **Dave Strunk** and **Sonny Bishop** and his family, along with several potential new members, joined us in the clan tent. We welcomed many hungry visitors to our combined Gordon Grill/Donnachaidh Diner and everyone enjoyed themselves.

There was no official clan parade again this year. The highlight of the music tent was the Celtic Martins (formerly the Martin Family Band). There were three pipe bands on hand: Shenandoah Valley Pipes and Drums, Warpiper, and the VMI Pipes and Drums.

The sponsor of this festival is the Lexington Lions Club and the proceeds from the event go to support the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic. Sam and I had a good time and will be back next year. We hope additional clan members will consider joining us at this festival.

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JUNE 2013

Branch Officers:

President:

Sam Kistler

Vice President:

Ron Bentz

Secretary/Treasurer:

Norman Dunkinson

Inside this issue:

Southern Maryland Games Report	2
Atholl in the Crusade—1270	2
Frederick Games Report	4
Fairhill Games Report	4
New Member Welcome	5
Clan Gathering/AGM and Clan Annual Update	5
Blast from the Past	5
The Robertsons of Fearnan	6
McHenry Games Report	7
Upcoming Games and Events	8

ROBERTSON'S RANT

SOUTHERN MARYLAND GAMES REPORT

By Jim Fargo

At 8am on April 28th, the clan van arrived at the Jefferson-Patterson Park in Saint Leonard, Maryland, for the 35th annual Celtic Festival of Southern Maryland. Branch President **Sam Kistler**, several friends, and I soon had the van unloaded and gear set up at our double tent site between the missing Clan O'Brien and the Scottish Society of Middle Maryland. We were ready by 9am for the arrival of **Evan and Rosalie Duncan** with the Donnachaidh Diner provisions.

It was a wonderful Scottish sunny day in the mid-70s and the games attendance was very good. Along with the arrival of several potential new members, we welcomed many members and their families to the clan tent including **Doug and Linda Kimball**; **Harry Robertson**; and **Mike and Kathy Sears**.

Evan Duncan, Andrew Fargo, and I were joined by the **Katan family** for the official clan parade and then reconvened in the clan tent for a wonderful lunch provided by the Duncans. This year, there was a Clan Lindsay tent on the same side of the athletic field. We visited them several times during the afternoon to socialize with the Lindsay convener - **Leslie Hughes**. This year marks the 621st anniversary of the "Raid of Angus!"

This is a great Celtic festival and Sam and I believe everyone had a great time. Our double tent setup will certainly be back next year on April 26, 2014.

ATHOLL IN THE CRUSADE—1270

By Jim Fargo

Throughout the early 1260s, King Alexander III was chiefly concerned with the problems of the Western Isles which were not finally resolved until the cession of the Isles to Scotland by King Magnus of Norway during the summer of 1266. Alexander III had succeeded to the throne during the summer of 1249 at the age of seven upon the death of his father, Alexander II. Now at age 24, his attention was drawn to world concerns.

In July 1266 the Mameluk Sultan of Egypt had 1,700 Christian prisoners decapitated at the huge Templar castle of Safed which dominated the upper Galilee. This atrocity motivated King Louis IX of France to begin planning his second crusade to rescue the Holy Land. A Papal legate, Cardinal Ottoboni de Fieschi, was sent to the British Isles to collect money for the aid of this planned crusade to the Holy Land.

The legate's relations with Alexander III did not get off to a good start. By the summer of 1267, the papal legate's visit became increasingly directed toward preaching a new crusade to the Holy Land. The legate demanded a subsidy of four merks from each parish and six merks from each cathedral church in Scotland just to cover his own expenses. Also, the funds raised were to be given to the English to support the cost of Prince Edward's expedition. Not one to financially support the raising of an English army (even if it left England!), Alexander forbid the export of more than 2,000 merks to England. At the end of 1267, Louis IX took the cross for the second time.

In 1268 Antioch fell to the Sultan Baibars after 170 years of Christian rule and with that defeat, came additional pressure for a crusade. King Alexander continued to resist English demands for money and promised to send men instead.

One of the problems was that coinage was in short supply and the Scottish economy was mainly based on a barter system outside of the major trading towns. The first independent Scottish king to issue coins was David I, an event that was clearly the result of the capture of Carlisle by the Scots in 1136 which gave David an established English mint and nearby silver mines. All Scottish coinage up until Alexander III's second recoinage in 1280 was limited to the silver penny. A Scottish penny was based upon the English sterling (0.925 silver) measure of the same design and weight (22.5 grains) with 160 pennies equal to one merk (called a mark in England) or one pound of silver bullion. A penny represented a substantial sum of money, a full day's wage for a skilled workman and since no smaller denominations were struck, it was common practice to cut these pennies into halves and quarters (farthings) to make

change as needed.

Alexander III's reign produced the most extensive of all Scottish medieval coinage and included the introduction of the round halfpenny and farthing in 1280. Because the intrinsic value of the English and Scottish penny were the same, both coinages were freely exchanged between the two countries. Because of limited quantities of silver mined in Scotland, English pennies gained through trade with England made up the bulk of currency circulating in Scotland, and its removal to fund the English army would have had serious economic consequences.

Hector Boece in his history stated that in early 1270 Alexander sent 1,000 men under the earls of Carrick and Atholl and many other noble captains to join the French expedition which sailed to Carthage and who were all slain in Africa through excessive heat and pestilence. Fordun reported that David earl of Atholl and Adam earl of Carrick died at Carthage in the company of King Louis IX. The Melrose Chronicles also provides firm contemporary evidence that the earl of Atholl died in the company of King Louis IX. The crusader army had arrived before the city of Tunis on July 18th. Bower's "Scotichronicon" states that David de Strathbogie, the earl of Atholl died at Carthage on August 6, 1270. Louis died on August 25, 1270 and the crusade was abandoned. It is not recorded if any survivors were able to return to Atholl although a crusader gravestone can still be seen in the Moulin church yard.

David of Strathbogie was the 7th earl of Atholl, through marriage to

the youngest daughter of Constantine, who was the eldest son of Henry, last Celtic earl of Atholl. In 1269 while David was away in England arranging his army's passage through England to France, John Comyn of Badenoch took the opportunity to enter the earldom of Atholl and begin construction of a stone tower in the strath of Garry in Blair Atholl. This John Comyn was the grandfather of the John Comyn killed in Dumfries by Robert the Bruce in 1306. Once this encroachment was reported to King Alexander, Comyn was forced to abandon this tower and leave the earldom. This tower remains our only physical connection to that time and place. Visitors to Blair Castle walk through this tower on the guided tour. The "Cumming's Tower" contains the Treasure and Old Scots rooms on the ground floor, the Blue Bedroom on the first floor and the Tapestry Suite on the second floor. "On April 23, 1270 the earl had letters of protection for four years from all plaints and pleas of the English Crown, presumably on behalf of his wife's lands in England." Once he had this protection, he set out immediately thereafter via England for France.

Andrew de Atholia acquired the lands of Glenerochie and Murelaggan (area around Fortingall between Loch Rannoch and Loch Tay) on his marriage to one of the daughters of Ewan de Glenerochie,



second son of Conan of Glenerochie, natural son of Henry the last Celtic Earl of Atholl. Andrew was the son of Duncan, a younger brother of Earl Henry. These lands, when added to his own lands of Strowan, Lude and Strathtummel made him one of the largest Celtic landowners in the earldom. Ewan de Glenerochie would have probably been present at the Norman earl's regality court at Tulliemet or "Hill of Judgment" to watch the earl lead his men south toward England. Certainly we know he stayed behind. Ewan's cousin and future son-in-law Andrew de Atholia (the father of Duncan, our first recognized clan chief), was probably born about 1275.

The picture, below center left, shows the obverse and reverse of a Scottish penny (second coinage) that was in circulation during Alexander's reign. Note the cross on the reverse side of the penny which facilitated its being cut into halves and quarters to make change.

Sources:

Bateson, Donald "Scottish Coins", Shire Publication # 189, 1987, pp 2-5.

Brown, James "History of Scotland", Vol. 8, 1909, pp 266-279.

Clan Donnachaidh 2007 Clan Annual, pp 9-12.

Cowan, Samuel "Three Celtic Earldoms" 1909, pp 11-17.

Dixon, John H. "Pitlochry, Past and Present", 1925 pp 145-6.

Holmes, N.M. McQ., "Evidence of Finds for the Circulation and Use of Coins in Medieval Scotland", Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot, Vol. 134 (2004), pp 241-280.

Paton, Noel "Descendants of Conan of Glenerochie", privately printed 1873, p 4.

Robertson, James A. "Earldom of Atholl", privately printed 1860, pp 1-23.

ROBERTSON'S RANT

FREDERICK GAMES REPORT

By Ron Bentz

I'm very pleased to report that we were the Honored Clan for 2013. It's been a joy to be a part of this event as it's grown, from its beginnings at Beatty Cramer house. As myself and my mother **Betty Duncan Bentz** arrived, we were pleased to find the House of Gordon to our right. **Sam Kistler** soon arrived but left around eleven with some excuse of his son graduating from American. I guess that's a valid reason to leave!

We were also very grateful for all the help at the tent, and a wonderful Donnachaidh diner provided by **Evan and Rosalie Duncan**. Thanks—we know it's a ton of work! This was our first event with our new t-shirts; they come in grey, red, and light blue and they were a hit! Entertainment was provided by the American Rogues, and a personal favorite of mine, Barleyjuice. They're a great time—if you get the chance check them out!

I'm pleased to report that I've now contributed to the proud history of Donnachaidh in the bonny knees competition by taking first place! As I was contemplating how to reive a coo from Lindsay, we were hit with quite the storm. However, at Fair Hill I was able to reive a lonely hieland coo. When I returned it, I was presented with a wayward Donnachaidh coo. Turns out he was meant to be returned at Frederick in honor of our being Honored Clan. Had a wonderful visit with clan Lindsay.

It was a wonderful day despite the rain. This is usually my first event of the year. I greatly look forward to it in the dog days of winter!

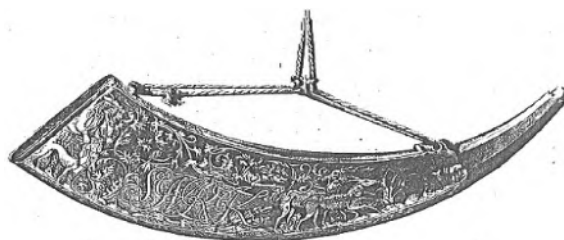
FAIRHILL GAMES REPORT

By Ron Bentz

Norman Dunkinson and I have been doing this event since the 90's. Circumstances have prevented me from attending the last three. Pulling in this year, was like visiting a dearly missed friend. Although we drove through some rain on the way, the day itself was very nice. After we had set up, it was no time at all until **Sam Kistler** arrived. So we had all the Clan officers ready to greet Clan folk. There was no Donnachaidh diner like the prior week at Frederick, but we were grateful for the friendly House of Gordon and their wonderful BBQ!

Fair Hill is well known for their bagpipe competition, and you could hear the pipes wherever you roamed on this day. Entertainment was provided by Searson, who've been a staple for several years, as well as the tribal pipes and drums of Albannach, who bring their following wherever they go.

I've missed Fair Hill and this day didn't disappoint. We had a wonderful time with clanfolk who visited, both old friends and new. I know I can speak for Norman when I say we are looking forward to the Fairhill Games in 2014!.



CEUD MILE FAILTE (100,000 WELCOMES)!

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

Donald E. Behe Jr.
Betty Bentz
Robert B. Duncan
Michael O. Duncan

Harper Griswold
Douglas C. Kimball
Carol A. Lucian
Marvin W. Reed

David W. Reed
Harry L. Robertson Jr.
Donald W. Robertson
Michael R. Sears

Douglas W. Senn
Diane M. Smith
Kenneth R. Stiles

We hope to see you at the remaining Games in 2013!

CLAN GATHERING/AGM AND CLAN ANNUAL UPDATE

The Clan Gathering will be held from Thursday, September 5th, through Sunday, September 8th, in Scotland. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place at Killiecrankie Hall in Killiecrankie at 2:00pm on Saturday, September 7th. Paid Parent Society members not attending the AGM can designate a Paid Parent Society member who is to represent them at the AGM. Additional details are posted to www.robertson.org. Note also that the Clan Annual will be delayed due to the publisher going out of business. The search for a new publisher is underway.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

By Norman Dunkinson

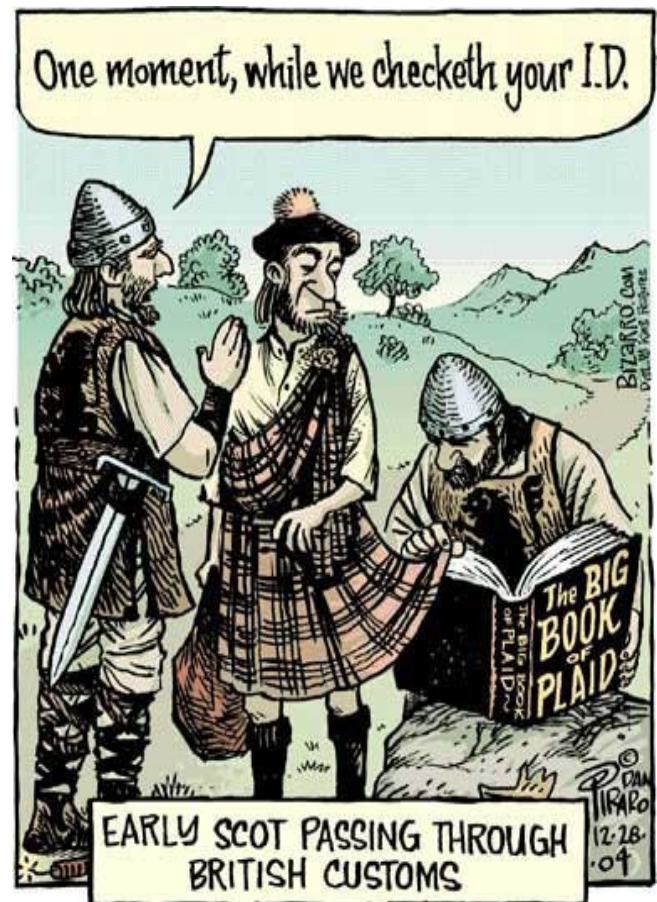
The following is a selection from *Robertson's Rant* volume 12, issue 3, published in June 1994. Boy how time flies—I was one of the newest members of the Branch when this issue was published 19 years ago!

In the beginning, while God was creating the world, He was sitting on a cloud telling his buddy, the angel Gabriel, what he was planning for the people of Scotland.

"Gabriel," he said, "I'm going to give these people high majestic mountains, purple glens, streams laden with salmon, golden fields of barley from which a whisky coloured nectar can be made, coal in the ground, oil under the sea, gas..."

"Hold on," interrupted the bold Gabriel, "aren't you being a bit too generous to these Scots?"

Back came the Almighty One's reply: "not really—wait until you see the neighbors I'm going to give them!"



ROBERTSON'S RANT

THE ROBERTSONS OF FEARNAN

By Jim Fargo

The lands of Fearnan were obtained by Duncan de Atholia (our first chief) by charter from Duncan Earl of Fife in 1343. The thirty-merk land of Fearnan extended from the west side of the port on the north shore of Loch Tay and south of Fortingall in Atholl. Fearnan was included in the charter our 4th chief, Robert, received from King James II in August 1451 when all of his lands and estates were erected into a free Barony. This Crown charter was in reward for our chief's capture of two of the regicides of James I in August 1437.

The barony of Fearnan was a self contained community made up mainly of Robertsons and MacGregors and consisted of nine properties. The lands were divided into the five-merk land of Kinghallin, the five-merk land of Stronfearnan and Margcroy, the five-merk land of Borland, the three-merk land of Croftnallin, the three-merk land of Balnairn, the three-merk land of Tomintyvoir, the two-merk land of Ballemenach, the two-merk land of Corriecherrow, and the two-merk land of Lagfern. A merk was a silver coin first issued in the 1570s, and was also a unit of value equaling 2/3s of a Scottish pound (13 shillings, 4 pence). The number of merks represented the annual income from a piece of property. In the year 1649, the rent rolls made out by order of Parliament for Perthshire state that the Fearnan estate produced an annual rent of 466 pounds, thirteen shillings and four pence.

The main village of Fearnan was located at Stronfearnan as was the ferry to get to the south shore of Loch Tay. The mill was at Croftnallin. A smithy was located at Balnairn and the marketplace was at Lagfern. The estate was also home to a healing stone, the "Clach-na-Gruich" (the measles stone) which was shaped like a chair with a natural hollow where rain water collects and children were still being taken to drink from it in the mid 19th century.

Fearnan contributed its share of men when our "poet" chief sent around the fiery cross to raise the clan in all three Jacobite risings. In December 1730, the pro-Jacobite Strowan sent the following letter to the Reverend John Hamilton, the minister of Kenmore, who was a strict Hanoverian. Strowan's tenants had complained to him that the space in the church allotted to them was being taken up by others and that they were being compelled to stand during the service. Note the veiled threat in the following letter that if his tenants didn't get their seats back, he would come and "Cause a Rupture amongst you"!

Sir,

Since my tenants, I do not know by what inspiration, are willing to hear a person of your persuasion, I hope you will not see them dispossessed. Their seats in the Kirk are well known, pray let them sit easy and have Elbow room, Least a dispossession may Cause a Rupture amongst you, not for the Honour and Interest of that Unity, we ought to be visited in the People of God. You, who are a kind of Exorcist, cast out the Spirit of oppression, hatred, and malice, from amongst us, That every Man may possess his Paternal Inheritance from the Throne in Westminster Abbay to the Cobler's sate in the Kirk of Kenmore. In doing this you will be Rever'd by Sr,

Your most hmble servt.,

Alexander Robertson, of Strowan

On Alexander's death in 1749, the barony of Strowan was inherited by Duncan Robertson of Drumachune (14th chief), but in 1752 the Government took it from him. Sadly, the lands of Fearnan were lost in 1767 and never recovered. Fearnan was disposed by Act of Parliament to John Campbell, third Earl of Breadalbane, by the Commissioners of the Annexed Estates. Much of the remaining barony of Strowan was restored to Drumachune's son Colonel Alexander Robertson in 1784.

References:

"Lairds and Lands of Loch Tayside", by John Christie, 1892, pp. 36-38.

"Highland Perthshire", by Duncan Fraser, 1969, p. 93.

"The Earldom of Atholl", by J.A. Robertson, 1860, pp. 1-42.

"Coins and Tokens of Scotland, Seaby's Numismatic Pubs., 1972, p. 73.



MCHENRY GAMES REPORT

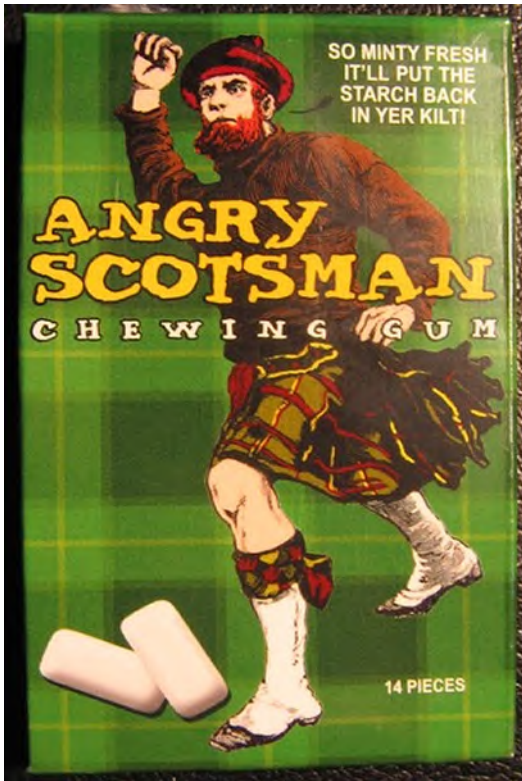
By Jim Fargo

At 8am on June 1st, the clan van rolled into the fairgrounds of Garrett County, Maryland. Robert Knight, son **Andrew**, and I soon had the clan tent set up and ready for the start of the 26th annual McHenry Highland Festival. President **Sam Kistler** arrived shortly after and brought a container of our new clan t-shirts that are now available for sale to clanfolk! There were ten clan tents set up this year and we were situated between the Welsh tent and the St. Andrew Shriners of Ali Ghan Temple in Cumberland.

In addition to the arrival of several regular attendees (**Harry Robertson**, **Kenneth Robertson**, and **David McCrobie Strattan Jr.**), we welcomed many other visitors to our tent. The Seton Hall University pipe band (wearing the ancient Duncan tartan) played in the clan area. I reminded their former pipe major and the new pipe major (clansman **Josh Dobbin**) that we are still interested in purchasing all of these Duncan band kilts when they eventually get their new Seton Hall tartan kilts. The City of Winchester pipe band (wearing the Gordon tartan) also attended this year and were disappointed to learn that House of Gordon wasn't in attendance.

Five clansmen and one young lassie (**Amber**) marched in the parade of tartans. We joined the other clans and formed up in a line near the reviewing stand after the bands arrived onto the field. The clans then marched by the reviewing stand and formed up behind that stand to watch the parade of dog breeds and listen to the massed band performance, a solo fiddle performance by Bonnie Rideout, and customary speeches. After the parade, we returned to the tent and set up the Donnachaidh Diner for lunch. Although they arrived after the parade, I was very pleased to see **Dan Roberson** and his son **Adam** in their kilts after a gap of several years.

We had a lot of non-Donnachaidh visitors to the tent this year due to the small number of clans attending. I enjoy chatting with them and helping them to determine which clan(s) they might be eligible to join. This festival is always held on the first Saturday of June. Hope to see you next year!



**CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY
MID-ATLANTIC BRANCH**

19354 Barrens Rd. S.
Stewartstown, PA 17363

E-mail: ngdiv@verizon.net

UPCOMING CELTIC EVENTS AND GAMES—2013

<u>Event Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
McLain Celtic Festival***	Carlisle, PA	Aug 31 st
Virginia Scottish Games & Festival***	The Plains, VA	Aug 31 st -Sep 1 st
Edinboro Highland Games & Festival***	Edinboro, PA	Sep 7 th
Ligonier Highland Festival***	Ligonier, PA	Sep 21 st
MD Renaissance Festival Scottish Weekend	Crownsville, MD	Sep 21 st -22 nd
Celtic Classic	Bethlehem, PA	Sep 27 th -29 th
Williamsburg Celtic Festival***	Lanexa, VA	Sep 28 th -29 th
Chesapeake Celtic Festival	Snow Hill, MD	Oct 5 th -6 th
Radford Highlanders Festival***	Radford, VA	Oct 12 th
Central Virginia Celtic Festival & Games***	Richmond, VA	Oct 19 th -20 th
Scottish Christmas Walk***	Alexandria, VA	Dec 7 th

*** Mid-Atlantic Branch tent/contingent at these events

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).

