

ROBERTSON'S RANT

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



ROMAN ARMY IN CLAN COUNTRY

By Jim Fargo, FSA Scot

Prior to the second half of the first century AD the Celtic peoples of what is now known as the highlands of Scotland lived a fairly peaceful life. There was no standing army among the Picts and Celts. The warriors were mostly farmers and hunters, along with craftsmen and merchants who gathered at the local hill-fort with their weapons when summoned by their chiefs. There was no central government or dominant king in what became Scotland to co-ordinate defense against the initial Roman advance. Each individual tribe known collectively by the Romans as the Northern Picts operated independently until they realized that the building of forts and roads meant that the Romans were planning to stay.

Titus became the new Emperor of the Roman Empire on his father Vespasian's death in 79 AD. Later that same year, the volcanic eruption of Vesuvius destroyed Pompeii. The previous year, Agricola's predecessor as Governor of Britannia, had taken the II Augusta Legion westward into southern Wales and defeated and subjugated the Silures tribe. On Agricola's arrival in Britannia, as Legate, he led the XX Valeria Victrix Legion into North Wales, the territory of the Ordovices and as later recorded by his son-in-law Tacitus, "Almost the entire people was cut to pieces." This was known as the 'Pax Romana'. One of Titus' first orders to the new governor was to take the XX Legion and conquer the northern tribes.

To begin the northern campaign in 79-80 AD Agricola split the Roman legions into two battle groups for the advance into what became Lowland Scotland. The western army, consisting of the II Adiutrix Legion and auxiliaries, moved up along the coast in a pincer movement to encircle the hostile Selgovae tribe around the River Clyde.

By the late summer of 80 AD, the eastern Roman army, the XX Legion and auxiliaries, had advanced to the southern shore of the Firth of Tay without serious opposition. Agricola decided to establish a new frontier line along the Allan Water and the Gask Ridge. To the east lay the territories of the Venicones (Fife and Kinross). It ran from Doune near Stirling to Perth. On the western side of the Gask Ridge were the hill peoples known as the Caledonii. This new Roman frontier defense line lay along a pre-existing boundary which divided the Caledonii tribe from the Venicones tribe. As stated by Alistair Moffat, this "divided the hillmen from plainsmen, shepherds from ploughmen and those friendly toward Rome from those hostile to Rome." This fortified frontier defensive system predates Hadrian's Wall by 40 years and the turf Antonine Wall by 60 years.

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ROMAN ARMY IN CLAN COUNTRY (CONTINUED)

Traces of eighteen watchtowers have been found in the valley of the Allan water and on the Gask Ridge. Each tower was a two story timber and turf construction manned by a platoon of eight soldiers and approximately a mile apart so that each could be seen by neighboring towers. A road connected these watchtowers to four forts at Doune, Ardoch, Strageath, and Bertha (Perth). West of the frontier road, three additional forts were built in the mouths of the glens which reached into the Highlands. These forts were positioned to observe movement, detect any hostile intentions and alert the frontier line of danger. This building program kept the soldiers busy, provided the legions with a safe refuge from attack and a place to stay during the winter months.

Further south during 81, Agricola began the construction of forts across the narrow waist of Scotland from the Firth of Forth westward to the Clyde. Emperor Titus died in September 81. His brother Domitian became the new emperor. Military activities were stalled until new instructions arrived from Rome so Agricola continued the Romanization process within the province. In the summer of 83 the Roman army moved north in three divisions. The smallest of the three was the IX Hispana Legion. After setting up a marching camp, the Caledonii warriors launched a night attack to wipe it out. Agricola's arrival with reinforcements from another division prevented the IX Legion's annihilation and by morning the warriors had been driven off.

The individual tribes decided upon an alliance to fight the advance of the Romans. The Caledonian confederation was commanded by a war leader named by Tacitus – Calgacus which meant 'the swordsman'. He was chosen to be the supreme war leader over all the kings of the northern tribes. In 84, the warriors were called to meet on the slopes of the Graupian mountains at an unknown battle site somewhere near Aberdeen named by the Romans, Mons Graupius. Agricola sends his fleet along the eastern coast to conduct raids and provide supplies to the Roman army as it moved northward. Tacitus reported that 30,000 Britons were arrayed against Agricola's 8,000 infantry and 5,000 auxiliary cavalry. Tacitus stated that 10,000 enemy were killed while Agricola only lost 360 Roman soldiers. No mention was made of how many Roman auxiliaries were killed.

The battle began with the Roman auxiliaries (Batavian and Tungrian mercenaries from the continent) attacking up the slope of the mountain toward the Caledonii. The legions were formed up behind and were not brought into battle. The Roman cavalry broke the confederation's flanking movement and caused a general retreat. What followed was a series of separate rearguard actions as the retreating tribes regrouped on ridge lines, fought back then retreated again. By nightfall the Romans had won the field but could not follow the victory with annihilation of the enemy as the bulk of Calgacus' army had vanished back into their mountains. As summer came to an end, Agricola moved the army back south and allowed his fleet to raid up into the Orkneys.

Several months after the battle, Agricola was recalled to Rome and a new governor arrived to continue the road and fort building program in lowland Scotland. Dunkeld was the capital of the Caledonii tribe in the midlands of the ancient Pictish kingdom and was the gateway into Atholl. At Inchtuthil north of the River Tay between Dunkeld and Perth, a legionary fortress was begun in 84 to house the XX Legion and keep the Caledonii in check. The fortress was never completed and because of trouble elsewhere in the Empire, the II Legion was transferred from Britannia and Inchtuthil was abandoned in 86.

By Hadrian's reign (117-138) continued Celtic attacks had resulted in the Roman governor withdrawing troops to a more defensible position to what became known as Hadrian's Wall. Begun in 122, it ran from the Solway Firth to the mouth of the Tyne. It was a massive stone defensive system nearly 73 miles long.

The Caledonii lands in Atholl were not successfully menaced by Roman forces again until the spring of 209 AD when Emperor Septimus Severus made his great invasion, crossing the River Tay and progressing as far as the Moray Firth. The Pictish tribes avoided any major battles and practiced a guerrilla warfare campaign against the 20,000 man Roman army. On Severus's death at York in February 211, the Roman army held possession of the lowlands of Angus up to the River Dee near Aberdeen but had not brought the Picts to a decisive battle.

ROMAN ARMY IN CLAN COUNTRY (CONTINUED)

Severus had several forts erected in Atholl to secure his flank from attacks during this campaign. At Fortingall, near Kenmore and west of Aberfeldy at the northern end of the Loch Tay, are traces of the remains of a Roman marching camp. It was constructed to close up Glen Lyon and the north side of Loch Tay. Many centuries later the Robertsons of Fearnan were living on the north shore of Loch Tay. Mitchell states that a fort was built to block the valleys of the rivers Tummel and Garry on the north side of Loch Tummel near Pitlochry. "It was situated on the north side of the Tummel in the field now occupied as a recreation ground (1923), and which has always been known as 'Dalcampai' or the field of the camp. The lines of the fort were visible at the beginning of the last century, but since then they have been obliterated by the plough." This area became the heartland of our clan.

Caracalla became emperor on his father's death and changed the strategy of conquest. He abandoned the campaign and even the Antonine Wall defenses. The army fell back to the more defensible Hadrian's Wall and reinforced it. This successful Roman retrenchment would have been seen differently by the Caledonii and the other Pictish tribes. The enemy had been driven back and the Antonine wall of turf was soon overrun. The Roman army never returned to Atholl.

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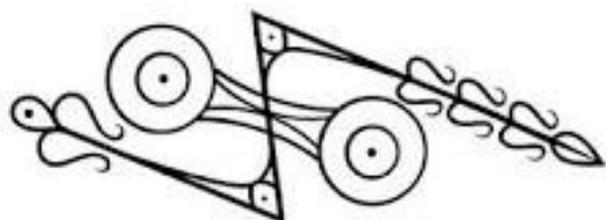
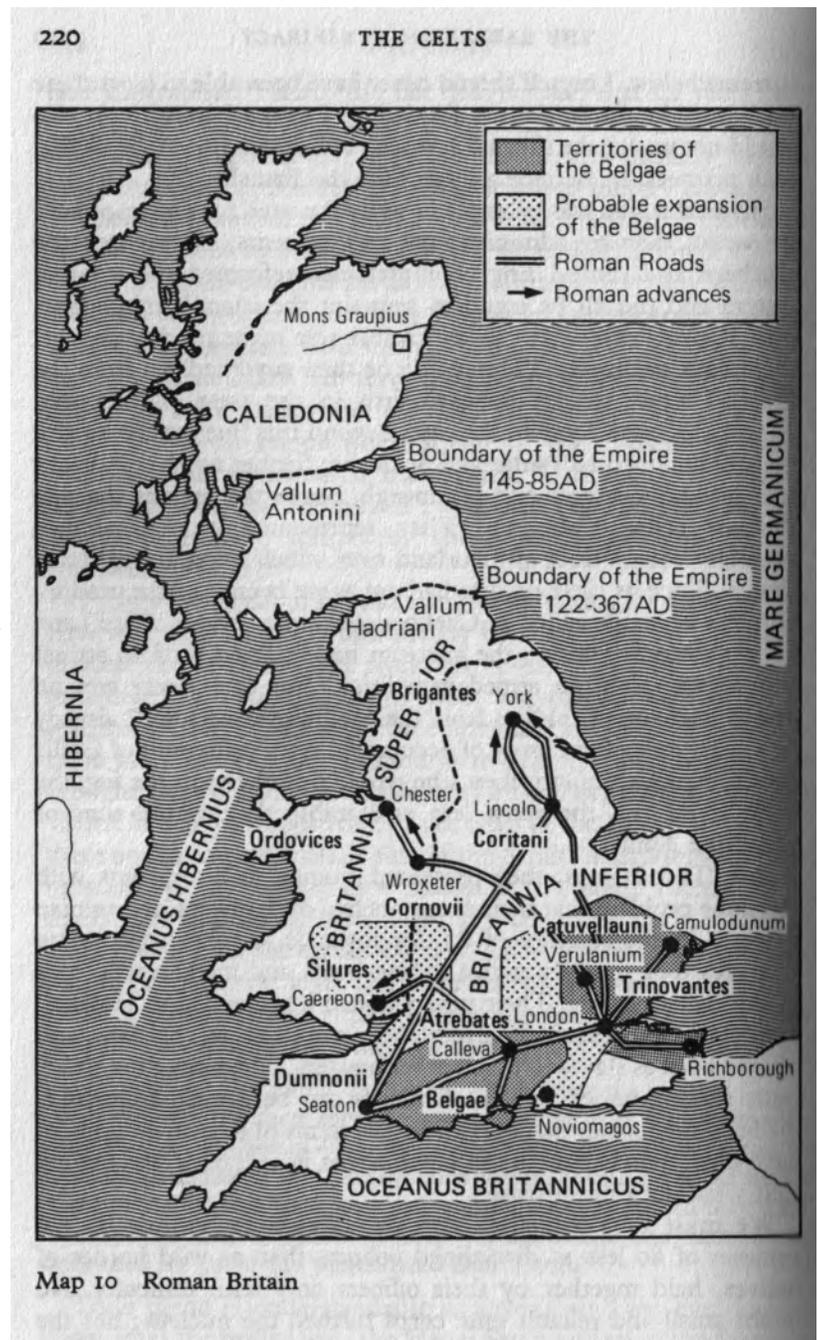
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RADFORD HIGHLANDERS FESTIVAL REPORT

By Jim Fargo

On Saturday October 6th, the clan van arrived at Bisset Park in the City of Radford VA for the 22nd annual Radford Highlanders Festival. Son **Andrew, Robert Knight** and I quickly set up our one tent between clans McCallum and Wallace. The other clans present were Donald and Douglas.

Because there were only five clans in the clan row, I had a great time assisting the many visitors to research their surnames and determine which clan(s) they would be eligible to join. The clan parade began around 10:30 as we joined three pipe bands onto the athletic field for the opening ceremonies. Afterwards we hiked over to the food and craft vendors to see what was available then wandered by the beverage garden, swordplay demonstration area and listened to celtic music by the group 'Tuatha Dae' from Gatlinburg Tennessee.

Unfortunately, our President **Sam Kistler** got caught up in a major traffic accident backup on Interstate 81 and didn't arrive until 1 PM. He soon recovered from the seven hour trip and helped greet our visitors and guests. We had many clan folk visiting including our clan piper Ripley Williams from the Virginia Highlands Pipes and Drums.

I really enjoy this festival as it is in a great setting with the New River flowing nearby. However, I personally would like to see it move back to Moffet Field on the Radford University campus where all the clans, vendors and events are closer together.



Radford Highlanders Festival. L to R: Jim Fargo, Sam Kistler, Robert Knight, Andrew Fargo.



Ligonier Highland Festival. L to R: Madjid Djellouli, Tom Due, Patrick Due, Tristan Wyatt, Sam Kistler, Heather Due, Laura Wyatt.

CEUD MILE FAILTE (100,000 WELCOMES)!

We'd like to welcome the following 5 new and returning members who joined us or renewed since the last report:

Don Behe

Kathy Fraser

Ellen Hansen

Bob McRobbie

Marjorie Wells



ROBERTSON'S RANT**GUN CLUB - BOOK REVIEW**

By Evan Duncan

In *The Gun Club: U.S.S. Duncan at Cape Esperance* (Winthrop & Fish: 2018. ISBN 978-09990753-0-2; available from Amazon), Robert Fowler describes the military career of the father he never knew. "Gun Club" refers to officers who specialized in gunnery and ordnance between the wars. Duncan's captain, Lt. Cdr. Edmund Taylor, and executive officer Lt. Louis Bryan, were members.

In January 1942, Robert L. Fowler 3rd was newly married and a newly-fledged ensign from Harvard's ROTC program (he was a Lieutenant (junior grade) at the time of his death). He was assigned as torpedo officer of the U.S.S. Duncan, a destroyer under construction at the Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company in Kearney, NJ. Duncan was launched on February 20, commissioned April 16, and completed sea trials in May. The author of the book apparently was conceived just before the Duncan went to war.

Fowler the author attended several reunions of Duncan crew members and acquired many details of shipboard life. Naval Academy graduates looked down on reservists as "officer passengers." Reservists in turn thought regular officers were more intent on advancing their careers than in quickly winning the war. Executive Officer Bryan took being an SOB as part of his job description. Captain Taylor acquired an ice cream maker for the wardroom. When it was in use, there was no ice for anyone else. A frustrated sailor eventually threw it overboard.

Duncan first deployed to the Canal Zone, where she escorted convoys to and from Guantanamo Bay and Jamaica. On August 21, Duncan deployed to the Pacific as one of the escorts of the new battleship South Dakota. The battleship had to return to Pearl Harbor after striking an uncharted reef near Tongatapu. Duncan's first brush with combat took place September 15, when a Japanese submarine torpedoed the aircraft carrier Wasp. Duncan rescued over 700 of Wasp's crew. Feeding three times the normal compliment and keeping the ship stable were major problems.

Duncan was then assigned to Task Group 64.3, a cruiser and destroyer force commanded by Rear Admiral Norman Scott. Admiral Scott's mission was to train a force that could challenge Japan's nighttime dominance of the waters around Guadalcanal. He got his chance on the night of October 11-12, when he set out to intercept a Japanese supply convoy. The U.S. Navy still had much to learn about night fighting and the capabilities and limitations of radar. When the Task Group reversed course west of Savo Island, Adm. Scott was in position to "cross the T" of a Japanese cruiser force. Communications breakdowns left his three lead destroyers operating independently between the opposing forces. Division flagship Farenholt took "friendly fire" while dashing to the head of the column. Laffey doubled back to the rear of the column. Duncan had detected the oncoming Japanese and swung out of line to get into position for a torpedo attack.

When the shooting started, Duncan was caught in the middle and hit by both sides. Lt. Fowler was struck down after launching a torpedo at the lead Japanese cruiser. The torpedo tube crew launched two more at a second cruiser and claimed a hit. With severe fires forward and damage to her engineering plant, Duncan circled twice, came to a stop, and was abandoned. Shortly before dawn, sister ship McCalla found Duncan adrift off Savo Island. A search party found the after half of the ship nearly intact, the forward half gutted by fires, and the boilers burned out. There were too few in the search party to plug all the holes in the hull, and Duncan sank early in the afternoon.

GUN CLUB - BOOK REVIEW (CONTINUED)

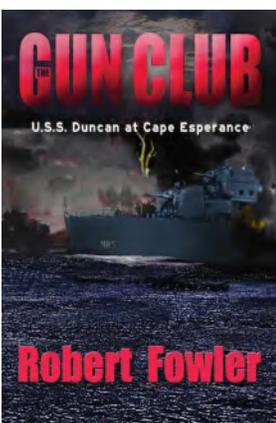
McCalla, meanwhile, devoted her efforts to rescuing Duncan's crew, who had attracted the attention of the local sharks. With help from Marine landing craft, 196 of Duncan's crew were saved while 48 were lost in the battle or its aftermath. After his wounding, shipmates lowered Lt. Fowler from the bridge, got him over the side, and kept him afloat until rescue came. He died aboard McCalla the following morning and was buried in the American Military Cemetery in Espiritu Santo. After the war he was moved to the Punchbowl Cemetery in Honolulu.

Duncan's able-bodied survivors returned to the United States aboard the cruiser Boise, which had been seriously damaged in the battle and had provided much of the "friendly fire" that ravaged Duncan. After Boise reached Philadelphia, the Navy announced the victory at Cape Esperance, which avenged its defeat at Savo Island two months earlier. Boise became known as "the one-ship task force," and her crew claimed to have won the battle single-handedly. Although Lt. Cdr. Taylor had a lot of explaining to do after the battle, he was awarded the Navy Cross. He and his executive officer received command of new destroyers and divided Duncan's crew between them.

Lt. Fowler was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross and had a destroyer escort named for him. His son was born February 26, 1943. His widow served with the Office of Strategic Services in London and Spain. A note on names: Duncan's crew included sailors named Duncan and Fowler. The former survived the battle; the latter did not. The writer of this review claims no kinship to Silas Duncan, namesake of four U.S.S. Duncans. Silas was from New Jersey. My seafaring Duncan ancestors were from Bath, Maine.



The Navy Cross.



Gun Club Book Cover. The U.S.S. Duncan.



ROBERTSON'S RANT

SCOTS HUMOR

Courtesy of Andrew Fargo

An Englishman traveling north in Perthshire came upon a roadworker clearing out a roadside ditch. He asked the man if this was the way to Aberfeldy. The laborer, glad to take a rest asked the stranger "Now, where cam' ye from?"

The Englishman, nettled at not receiving a direct answer, asked him "What business have you to ask where I came from?"

The Scotsman, turning to resume his work, replied, "Oh, just as little business as to where you are gainin' to!"



Clan Donnachaidh at the 48th Annual Scottish Christmas Walk in Alexandria, Virginia.

CENTRAL VIRGINIA GAMES REPORT

By Jim Fargo

On October 17th, the clan van arrived at the Central Virginia Highland Games & Celtic Festival which is held at the Richmond Raceway Complex. Our two clan tents were right next to House of Gordon to allow for our usual four tents mingling. We were on the side of the field closest to the vendors. **Robert Knight** arrived soon after I did and we had the tents ready for President **Sam Kistler's** arrival with coffee reinforcements. **Evan Duncan** and **Harry Robertson** arrived to help greet clan folk and visitors to the tent. Saturday's weather was typically Scottish, with a steady drizzle under dark clouds until about 2 PM followed by some sun!

Our combined Donnachaidh Diner/Gordon Grill team (headed by master chef **Dave Todd**) was again the place for lunch. Thanks to everyone (from both clans!) for bringing various snacks and beverages to help stock our Diner/Grill this weekend. The Diner/Grill began serving hot food after the massed band performance. Our Clan Lindsay guests were invited to lunch and were very complimentary on the tastiness of their "former" cow and wondered if there were more in the vicinity!

The clan parade at 3 PM was well attended with many of our prospective member families joining our regular parade crew. All the clans formed up and marched onto the athletic field and our Donnachaidh contingent of fifteen roared the clan war cry "Fierce When Roused" as we entered the field.

I was unable to return on Sunday, so President Sam and Robert hosted the clan tents. They reported that the weather was just as cold with the addition of high winds that made it difficult to stay warm.

We had a lot of potential clanfolk families and visitors coming by the tent to learn about their clan history. Several branch members renewed their dues on Saturday: **Ellen (Robertson) Hansen** and **Marjorie (Robertson) Wells**.

This was the last festival of our Mid-Atlantic games season and is one of the bigger ones with more vendors present on the field than at other festivals. Please consider adding this two day event on your calendar next year and join us at the tent on October 26-27, 2019!

ALEXANDRIA SCOTTISH CHRISTMAS WALK REPORT

By Norman Dunkinson

As usual, the Dunkinson family (wife **Chris**, son **Asher**, and I) rolled into the Sheraton Suites in Old Towne Alexandria – after braving the nightmare rush-hour traffic on interstates 695, 95, and 495 – on the evening of Friday, November 30th. On the morning of the parade, we sighted **Jim Fargo**, **Andrew Fargo**, **Robert Knight**, and President **Sam Kistler** in the window of the Subway on King Street. After greeting our fellow clanfolk, we grabbed coffee at Starbucks and proceeded to the parade check-in station and to our formation site at the corner of Pitt and Wilkes Streets.

The Fargo crew soon arrived, followed by **Evan Duncan**, **Steve Hoffman** (with sister and niece), **Don** and **Mary Alice Behr**, **Don Stark**, **Steve Duncan**, **Brendan Baggitt** and a number of other clan members. It was a bit on the chilly side, and we all hoped that the rain would hold off until after the parade. Alas, our hopes were frustrated. The resourceful Fargos had a plastic bag at the ready for our wolf head totem!

The good news is that the rain appeared to have little effect on the parade watchers, as the crowds lining the streets appeared as strong as ever. Luckily, Asher allowed me to carry his (quite sharp) axe (see photo), which helped avoid casualties during the march. We practiced our war cry multiple times as we proceeded along the parade route, and let 'er rip, of course, at the reviewing stand.

I believe everyone was thankful when we made it to the warm and dry environs of the Fish Market restaurant, where we joined Clans Wallace, McNaughton, Malcolm, Scott, and the Scottish American Military Society for our joint post-parade luncheon. As far as weather, we've had it all over the years at Alexandria, and one never knows what they'll get; except a great time, regardless of the weather, at this end-of-year event!



**CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY
MID-ATLANTIC BRANCH**

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The Clan Donnachaidh Society is a world-wide organization dedicated to the preservation of our Highland heritage. Membership is open to those persons bearing recognized sept surnames and their descendants and spouses.

Membership in the parent Clan Donnachaidh Society in Scotland includes a subscription to the Clan Donnachaidh Annual.

Membership in the Mid-Atlantic Branch of the Clan Donnachaidh Society includes a subscription to the Branch newsletter, Robertson's Rant, published quarterly and containing listings of Highland Games and Celtic Festivals throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, Game and Festival reports, historical and biographical articles, and news items of interest to Donnachaidhs everywhere. Membership also includes an open invitation to join your fellow society members at the Clan Donnachaidh Tent and Diner at numerous Games and Festivals, and at other activities including the annual Scottish Christmas Walk and Clan Donnachaidh luncheon in the Old Town section of Alexandria, Virginia, in early December.

Parent Society membership dues are \$25.00 per year (individual) and \$35.00 per year (family = two persons/same address). Mid-Atlantic Branch membership dues are \$20.00 per year (individual).

CELTIC EVENTS AND GAMES—2019 (1ST HALF OF GAMES SEASON)

<u>Event Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
Southern Maryland Celtic Festival	St. Leonard, MD	Apr 27th
Colonial Highland Gathering	Fair Hill, MD	May 18th
Garrett County Celtic Festival	Friendsville, MD	Jun 1st
Cumberland Valley Scottish Games	Shippensburg, PA	Jun 8th
Mid-Maryland Celtic Festival	Mt. Airy, MD	TBD
Celtic Fling & Highland Games	Manheim, PA	Jun 22nd-23rd
Jersey Shore Piping and Drumming Classic	Toms River, NJ	TBD
Adams County Irish Festival	Gettysburg, PA	TBD
Green Hill Highland Games	Salem, VA	Aug 24th