

# ROBERTSON'S RANT

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



## SECRETARY/TREASURER'S MESSAGE

By Norman Dunkinson

The officers of the Mid-Atlantic Branch sincerely hope that all of our members and their friends and families are healthy and well. The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously halted our core activity of highland game attendance, and we deeply miss meeting and greeting all of our members. Only a few games and events in our region remain on the docket at this time:

<u>Event Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
Covenanter Scottish Festival*	Quarryville, PA	Sep 12th
Celtic Classic	Bethlehem, PA	Sep 25th-27th
Central VA Celtic Festival*	Richmond, VA	Oct 24th-25th
Scottish Christmas Walk*	Alexandria, VA	Dec 5th

\*Clan tent at games or presence at event

Please be sure to check event websites, prior to travelling, for information on cancellation or postponement.

Members who typically renew their membership in person but who have been prevented from doing so can mail payment to:

Clan Donnachaidh Society—Mid-Atlantic Branch  
19354 Barrens Rd. S.  
Stewartstown, PA 17363

Of course, we also understand and appreciate that members may have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we will not remove anyone from the newsletter mailing list for inability to pay annual dues in 2020.

Whatever your activities this summer, please stay safe! We are eager to see all of you again when our normal games and events resume.

Yours Aye,  
Norman



Telephone Box, Perth, 2003. Photo by Norman Dunkinson.

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### Branch Officers

President:

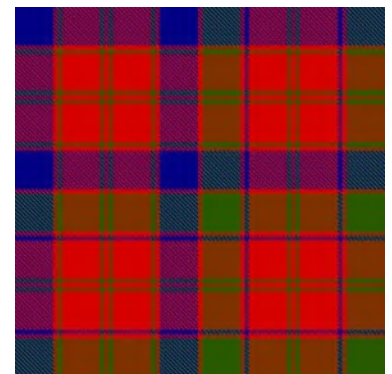
Sam Kistler

Vice President:

Ron Bentz

Secretary/Treasurer:

Norman Dunkinson



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## ROBERTSON'S RANT

### CLAN USE OF MANRENT

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

In Scots Law, the treaties and bonds of amity, or 'manrent' was a term used during the 15th to the early 17th centuries wherein a man or weaker clan pledged to a stronger lord or clan that they would assist each other by providing military assistance when called in return for protection from their enemies. By Act of Parliament on March 6, 1457 in Edinburgh, manrents were abolished "that no man dwelling within burgh be found in manrent".

In the highlands, these bonds were necessary as the Scottish government during these centuries was weak and had little authority to control the actions and disputes between clans. Probably the most well known bond was between the clans that became part of the Clan Chattan Confederation led by their Captain and MacIntosh chief.

Smaller clans or families who had lost their chiefs, frequently entered into bonds of manrent with larger clans as they were less able to defend themselves. As such they were required to engage in the quarrels and fights of the larger clan. In return for helping in the common defense, aggression or revenge in support of the larger clan, they received protection from rivals.

Within Donnachaidh history, we have several instances of this bond. The MacIver clan of Glenlyon was destroyed by the Stewarts of Garth in 1476 and their chiefly line died in battle. Survivors of the conflict fled to both Argyll and Atholl seeking safety. The Atholl MacIvers became a sept of our clan in return for land and protection by our 5th chief. See article on 'www.robertson.org' entitled "Origin of MacIver/MacIvor Sept". Both the Campbells and Donnachaidhs now have a MacIver sept.

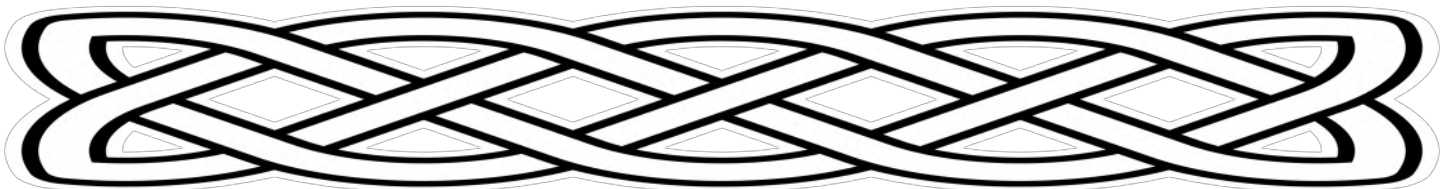
Another example involved the Camerons who lived on the south side of Loch Rannoch on lands given them by our chief. On one occasion these Camerons were attacked by their ancestral enemies (Mackintosh) and their chieftain slain. Rather than embroil our chief in this ancient conflict, these tenant Camerons went to Lochaber, pled their case, and a strong party of Camerons avenged the murder.

A further example occurred during the '45, when Alexander, our 13th chief, raised his tenants and clansmen for the Jacobite cause. Willing to fight for the common defense of clan lands under our chief, these Camerons were given permission by our chief to decide if they wanted to fight under his banner in the Atholl Brigade or that of their own Cameron chief at Culloden. See article on 'www.robertson.org' entitled "Camerons in the Atholl Brigade".

#### *References:*

*Browne, James, "The History of Scotland, Its Highlands, Regiments and Clans", Vol. 8, Aberdeen Edition, Edinburgh, 1909, pp. 168-169.*

*Multiple Wikipedia searches.*



## 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:

**Harry L. Robertson Jr.**

**Marvin L. Robertson Jr.**

**Ripley F. Williams**

## SALUTE TO OUR SENNACHIES

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

The word 'sennachie' (sen-uh-kee) in Scotland and Ireland is defined as a storyteller of family genealogy, history and legends. In the past, this was an honored position in the chief's household and when asked, that person could recite from memory the oral tales, traditions and history of the clan. As our clanfolk are now spread all over the world, the sennachies of the clan have by necessity had to reach out by becoming authors rather than oral storytellers. It's important to remember and appreciate the time and effort that is required of these sennachies to research, write and submit these articles that our clan editors have reviewed and published.

Some of our early clan historians were able to privately publish the results of their research in small limited edition printings. By necessity, this only reached a few members of the clan, mainly in our Scottish homeland. The continued collection and preservation of our historical knowledge and traditions by current and past sennachies have ensured them a lasting memory and a kind of immortality with current and future generations of our clanfolk.

Later republication of some of these clan history books, our Clan Annual, and the establishment of several branch-based clan websites have allowed for and given our written history a much wider dissemination. The publication of the Clan Annual each year also allows us to read and learn about our worldwide activities and see pictures of the clan country. It's the next best thing to making an actual trip to our clan museum at Bruar and visiting the sites you read about in our publications.

From the 2017 Virginia Scottish Games at The Plains, Virginia. L to R: Robert Knight, Harry L. Robertson Jr., Sam Kistler, our sennachie Jim Fargo, Asher Dunkinson, and Norman Dunkinson.



## ROBERTSON'S RANT

### TAY BRIDGE TO HER FOUNDER

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

The Commander-in-Chief of British forces in Scotland, General George Wade, had the bridge over the Tay at Aberfeldy built in 1733. That same year, our "poet chief", Alexander Robertson of Struan wrote the following poem from the perspective of the bridge.

A good friendship had developed between the two men when Struan contracted to supply the wood for the scaffolding during the bridge's construction. Our chief, though an ardent Jacobite, welcomed the bridge and Wade's road running north through clan lands. The road opened up a market for the sale and purchase of produce and livestock, while also allowing a market for the sale of Rannoch fir wood "from which he drew considerable sums during the remainder of his life."

#### Tay Bridge to Her Founder

Long hath old Scotia dissolution feared,  
Till you, her kind auspicious star appeared;  
But soon as the celestial Power came down  
To smile on labour and on sloth to frown,  
Scotia, reviving, raised her drooping down,  
Discord and barrenness confessed their doom –  
One closed her feuds, the other ope'd her womb;  
Rocks inaccessible a passage know,  
And men innured to arms address the plough.

No less surprising was the daring scheme  
That fixed my station on this rapid stream.  
The north and south rejoice to see me stand,  
Uniting in my function, hand to hand,  
Commerce and concord – life of every land.

But who could force rough nature thus to ply,  
Becalm the torrents, and make rocks to fly?  
What art, what temper, and what manly toil  
Could smooth the rudest sons of Britain's isle?  
Methinks the reader's anxious till he is told  
That Wade was skilful and that Wade was bold.  
Thus shall his name for Britain's lorry rise  
Till sun and moon shall tumble from the skies.



General Wade.  
Image from  
[sath.org.uk](http://sath.org.uk).



The Tay Bridge at Aberfeldy. Image from [undiscoveredscotland.co.uk](http://undiscoveredscotland.co.uk)

Reference:

Campbell, Duncan, "The Lairds of Glenlyon: Historical Sketches", Perth, 1886, pp. 104-5.

## REIGN OF KING ALEXANDER II (1214-1249)

A Continuation of the “Royal House of Dunkeld” Article Series by James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

Alexander came to the throne on the death of his father, King William the Lion at the age of sixteen. In 1215, two rebellious Moray clans MacUilleim and MacHeths led by Donald Ban, a great-grandson of King Duncan, broke out into revolt against King Alexander II, whose father had died in December 1214. Forces loyal to the royal House of Dunkeld led by a powerful celtic lord, Farquhar MacTaggart, speedily quelled the rebellion. MacTaggart was the lay abbot of the monastery of Applecross. After the June 1215 victory, Alexander knighted him for beheading the rebel leaders.

After the death of King John of England in October 1216 the treaty of Kingston between the ten year old Henry III of England, King Louis of France and Alexander insured peace between the three countries. This peace was further strengthened by Alexander’s marriage to Henry’s older sister Joan in June 1221.

In 1222 the semi-independent district of Argyll rebelled against Alexander’s plans to absorb it into the kingdom. This rebellion was ruthlessly suppressed with assistance from MacTaggart’s army. This successful campaign probably included Athollmen led by Thomas, 5th Earl of Atholl. Thomas had become earl in 1220 through his marriage to Earl Henry’s granddaughter Isobel. Earl Henry’s natural son, Conan, could not inherit the earldom and so it passed in turn to the husbands of his half-brother’s daughters. Conan is an ancestor of our chiefly line and received from his father, lands in Glenerochy that were not tied to the earldom. Conan made a grant around 1216 to the abbey of Cupar for their use of his woods. This grant was confirmed by his son Ewen.



King Alexander II. Image from [Britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com)

King Alexander II awarded lands to the Clan MacIvor in 1222 in return for their military services rendered during the conquest of Argyll. Some of these MacIvors, from Glenlyon in Perthshire, then migrated and held these lands as a distinct and separate branch of their clan in Argyll.

In 1223 a bloody revolt in Caithness was suppressed. That same year MacTaggart was rewarded and made the new Mormaer or Earl of Ross. Another royal expedition in 1225 was successful in quelling a second northern rebellion in Moray.

With Scotland’s southern border with England secure, Alexander turned his attention to acquiring the semi-independent district of Galloway. On the death of Alan, lord of Galloway in 1234, his three daughters and an illegitimate son contested the lordship. Alexander supported the husbands of the three daughters and his forces suppressed a revolt in 1235 and successfully crushed an invasion attempt the following year by its exiled leaders. Alexander divided Galloway between the three daughters thus bringing an end to Galloway’s independent existence.

In 1235, Alexander founded a chapel in the cathedral church at Elgin where masses were sung for his soul of his ancestor, King Duncan I.

Sometime between 1235 and 1242 Conan granted a charter to the Abbey of Lindores for certain sums to be paid from his lands “for the weel of the souls of himself, his wife, his ancestors and his successors”. Among the witnesses to

[Continued on Page 6](#)

## ROBERTSON'S RANT

### REIGN OF KING ALEXANDER II (1214-1249) (CONTINUED)

this charter were his son Ewan, Hath son of Gilbrid and Madith de Clonyn. Quite possibly, these two men might have been the husbands of his two daughters as the estate of Clonyn bordered Ewan's lands.

In 1237 Alexander and Henry III concluded the Treaty of York which defined the boundaries between the two kingdoms and Alexander rescinded Scottish claims to Northumbria and Cumbria.

In 1242, Patrick, sixth Earl of Atholl had been treacherously killed by the Bisset family. He was the last heir-male of Isobel, granddaughter of Earl Henry of Atholl and her celtic husband Thomas of Galloway. Patrick's half-sister Lora on his death was said to have disputed her aunt Fernelith's claim to the earldom to no avail. In the Melrose Chronicles Lora is identified as the countess of Atholl and was buried at Melrose Abbey in 1269. Fernelith, the other granddaughter, had married an Anglo-Norman, Sir David de Hastings. Their male descendants continued as Anglo-Norman earls of Atholl until 1314 when the 11th earl revolted against King Robert the Bruce and was deprived of his office and estates in Scotland.

King Alexander's wife Joan died in March 1238 while on a visit to England and Alexander married his second wife, Marie de Coucy, the daughter of a French lord in May 1239. They had one son in September 1241, the future Alexander III and last king from the House of Dunkeld.

In July 1249 Alexander II led a military expedition to the Hebrides to bring these islands clearly under the crown of Scotland and not Norway. Alexander fell ill near Oban on his way to enforce this claim and died. He was buried at Melrose Abbey. Gaining control of the Hebrides was left to his son to successfully complete.

#### References:

*Cowan, Samuel "Three Celtic Earldoms", 1909, pp. 15-16.*

*Hamilton, Ronald "A Holiday History of Scotland", 1975, pp. 69-70.*

*MacGregor, Gordon A., "Clan Donnachaidh Annual", 2007, p 10.*

*Magnusson, Magnus, "Scotland: The Story of a Nation", New York, 2000, pp. 95-107.*

*Paton, Sir Noel, "Descendants of Conan of Glenerochy", 1873, p.4.*

*Rait, Robert S., "The Making of Scotland", 1929, pp. 52-55.*

*Robertson, James "Gaelic Topography of Scotland", 1869, pp 384, 415-416.*

Seals of King Alexander  
II. Image provided by  
James E. Fargo, FSA Scot.



## MOUNT ALEXANDER GATE

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

In November 1688, Alexander Robertson of Struan (12th chief) died soon after the death of his eldest son Robert. His second son, Alexander became chief and was “out” with “Bonnie” Dundee in the 1689 Rising. With his estates forfeited, Alexander fled to France leaving his widowed step-mother and younger brother Duncan at home on his estates. While in exile, the step-mother remarried and Duncan took exception to the marriage and “entered into very illegal plans for depriving her of all means and authority.” In March 1700, his step-mother had papers drawn up requiring John Campbell of Glenlyon to provide security for the good behavior of his younger brother.

In France, the gay and licentious morals of the Court under King Louis XIV and the Regent Orleans gave Alexander a low opinion of the fair sex. Known as our “poet chief”, when he heard of this unworthy marriage of his step-mother, he vowed he would never marry, and kept this vow for the rest of his life.

On Alexander’s return to Scotland after the Proclamation of Indemnity by Queen Mary in March 1703, he began to improve the estate income and started work on the construction of his ‘Hermitage of Mount Alexander’ at Dunalastair. When completed, Alexander posted over every door and gate, snippets of his poetry. His sister Margaret he often referred to as ‘Black Margaret’ and until her death, his forfeited estates were in her name.

### Lines over Mount Alexander Gate

In this small spot whole paradise you’ll see,  
 With all its plants but the forbidden tree.  
 Here every sort of animal you’ll find,  
 Subdued, but woman who betrayed mankind.

#### Reference:

*Campbell, Duncan, “The Lairds of Glenlyon: Historical Sketches”, Perth, 1886, pp. 119-5.*

## SCOTS HUMOR

Courtesy of Andrew Fargo

A father was meeting his daughter’s new fiancé for the first time. The happy couple came over for dinner and the father quickly realized his daughter’s fiancé was deeply religious.

“So tell me lad,” the father asked the young man across the dinner table, “What are your plans for the future?”

“Well,” said the young man, “I plan on studying holy works all of my life.”

“And how do you plan on supporting my daughter if you spend all day studying?” questioned the father.

“I’m sure the Lord will provide,” answered the young man.

“And what about my grand-children? How do you plan on supporting them?”

“The Lord with provide,” replied the young man.

The father nodded and headed into the kitchen to talk to his wife.

“How’s it going out there?” she asked.

“Fantastic!” the father replied. “I just met the young fellow and he already thinks I’m the Lord!”



Image from [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)

**CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY  
MID-ATLANTIC BRANCH**

19354 Barrrens Rd. S.  
Stewartstown, PA 17363

Email: [ngdiv@verizon.net](mailto: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).

Corran  
Lighthouse  
on Loch  
Linnhe,  
Argyll,  
2003.  
Photo by  
Norman  
Dunkinson.

