



# Scorrybreac

The Journal of Clan MacNicol of North America



**VANCOUVER ISLAND  
MINI-GATHERING  
OF 2016**

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**NICOLSON NOSE  
AWARDED TO  
KATRINA NICOLSON**

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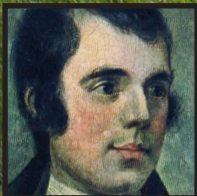
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# CHIEFLY SPEAKING

**G**REETINGS TO ALL MY NORTH American Clansmen and Clanswomen. After travelling so far with my whole family to St. Augustine last October, it was enormously disappointing that Hurricane Matthew arrived at the same time and made more of an impact than our proposed International Gathering. Nevertheless, it was great to meet some new people and enjoy the company of old friends as we bunkered down in our hotel. We felt so sorry for Cliff Wolf and his band of organizers who had worked so hard to make the event a success only to have the weather intervene in such a devastating fashion.



Moving on, however, the Scots assure us of fine weather for next year's International Gathering on the Isle of Skye! There has also been some talk about returning the Gathering to North America in 2020 to compensate for last year's non-event (under the normal rotation, the 2020 Gathering would normally be held in Australia or New Zealand).

At the St. Augustine Gathering, it had been my intention to honor the work of our late member Dick Nicol who passed away last year but, of course, apart from a minute's silence from the 20 or 30 Clan members who were there, that was not possible.

Dick and his wife Carol joined the Clan in the early 1990s. He became Treasurer in 1993 and had served in that capacity until he died in August. He was a Counsellor to the Chief, he has been a Trustee of Urras Clann MhicNeacail for many years, Treasurer of both the North American Clan MacNicol Society Inc and of Scorrybreac Fund Inc and Vice President of the North American Society.

On behalf of my father whom he served diligently, and all Clan MacNicol, thank you Dick for your incredible contribution over many years and condolences to Carol and all the family.

*Scorrybreac*

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

**W**ARM GREETINGS FROM GEORGIA where spring has arrived early this year, and we've been able to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner out of doors on our deck quite frequently.

With the changes in management outlined in the December 2016 issue of *Scorrybreac* now well in place, preparations for summer and autumn activities are close to completion.

### **2017 Ontario Provincial Reunion and Annual Meeting of Directors**

Your Clan MacNicol Society announces with pleasure that it will hold an Ontario Provincial Reunion along with its 2017 North American Directors' Meeting in Guelph, Ontario, Canada

from Friday evening, October 6 to Sunday, October 8 (the first full weekend in October which is followed by Canadian Thanksgiving and U.S. Columbus Day, both on Monday).

Our 2016 International and North American Gathering was scheduled for St. Augustine, Florida last October. Unfortunately, the passage of Hurricane Matthew dramatically altered our plans, as was explained in detail in the previous issue of *Scorrybreac*.

An enormous amount of preparatory work was carried out by our Director, Web Portal Administrator and Florida State Commissioner Cliff Wolf and his wife Claudia. Regrettably, all official events had to be cancelled. However, those

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*Recognizing Cliff Wolf for his efforts in preparing the St. Augustine Gathering*



*Jeremy at the Holiday Inn in Guelph, Ontario (April 2017)*

participants who had arrived in St. Augustine before Hurricane Matthew and who chose to ride it out at the Holiday Inn had a great time “unofficial” time! Several of us who did not make St. Augustine gathered in Crestview Florida to conduct business and recognize Cliff for his efforts.

The Clan Society’s Directors concluded that a break was needed for organizers of a 2017 event, and that a full-blown North American Gathering should be postponed until 2019.

However, the Directors have a statutory obligation to hold an annual meeting, and will do so in 2017 and 2018. We will take these opportunities to organize regional reunions in conjunction with the annual meetings and hold social events for local members, directors, officers and their families.

Please refer to the article in this issue (pages 6-7) for further details of the anticipated proceedings.

**2017 Games and Festivals Representation**

As in years past, we are planning to staff Clan tents at several Highland games and Scottish festivals in Canada and the U.S.

The provinces and states involved so far are: Alberta, British Columbia (already held), Ontario and Québec, California (one already held), Colorado (one already held), Florida (two already held), Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New

Hampshire, North Carolina (one already held), South Carolina (already held), Tennessee (already held), Texas (one already held), and Utah. Thanks to all our Games Commissioners whose hard work and dedication make all this possible.

I look forward to many of you joining our Games Commissioners at Clan tents later this spring, summer and fall in North America (see the related article in this issue). You are assured of a warm kinship welcome, and a wonderful day of Scottish entertainment, athletics and food.

**2017 Harman Nicholson of Balvenie Scholarship Fund**

As an important reminder, the Clan is offering two scholarships in the amount of \$500 each to be made available to members in good standing and their children and grandchildren ages 6-18 years to help offset expenses incurred in the pursuit of Scottish clan and Gaelic activities.

Interested persons are urgently invited to contact Brenda Nicholson Pritchard or Bruce McNichols at their earliest opportunity to request an application.

**New Lifetime Clan Memberships**

I would like to thank our newest Lifetime Members Elizabeth McNichols of Winston-Salem, North Carolina and Mary Jean Nicolson of North York, Ontario. Elizabeth, along with her



late husband Jerry, also belong to the "Class of 1986" foundation members for over thirty-one years. We really appreciate their generosity and trust.

**2017 Urgent Membership Renewal Request Due by July 15**  
Members are invited to renew for 2017 by completing the separate renewal form, which has been inserted for all in this issue, with the exception of lifetime members and previous multiple year renewal members. Please return the form by **July 15** to the indicated address in the U.S. or Canada—as appropriate—with your check made out to "Clan MacNicol Society, Inc."

The fee for 2017 is unchanged at \$35 equally for Canadian and U.S. members (\$30 plus an optional donation of \$5 towards maintenance of the Clan lands on the Isle of Skye in Scotland).

Membership fees fund all the Clan's activities: this journal, the website, and tents and booths at Scottish games and festivals in North America.

Despite the absence of a renewal form in the December 2016 issue, twenty-two members in Canada, England, Italy, Scotland and the U.S. took the most welcome initiative to renew since then. Our sincere appreciation to them for their thoughtfulness!

#### **Richard S. Nicoll Memorial Fund**

I am pleased to announce that an anonymous gift of \$500 has been made to launch the Fund in memory of our long-time Treasurer and Vice President, Dick Nicoll. Members who would like to add an extra donation to the Fund in support of the Clan's activities can fill out the relevant section of the renewal form.

#### **2018 Skye International Gathering**

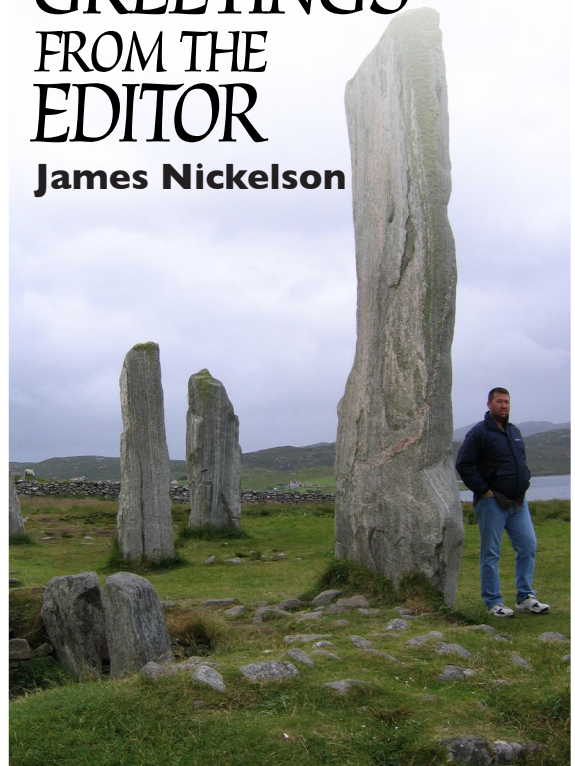
News has arrived from Donnie Nicolson in Portree confirming that our next International Gathering will be held on the Isle of Skye next year, most likely during the month of October. Further details will become available later this year, and will be posted on the website as well as included in the late fall issue of *Scorrybreac*.

Finally and as always, I invite any of you to contact me directly by phone, e-mail or letter about any Clan matter—check my masthead listing for ways to reach me.

*Jeremy Nicholson*

## GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

**James Nickelson**



*The editor visiting the Standing Stones at Calanais, a prehistoric megalithic site on the Isle of Lewis*

Welcome to the June 2017 issue of *Scorrybreac*!

As I finish my contributions for this issue and send it for layout, I am taking a moment to reflect on Scotland's availability in the media for those of us who need a little "Scottish fix" every once in a while. If you're a fan of the popular Showtime series *Outlander*, you'll know that it has been a while since the last season ended with the Battle of Culloden. *Outlander* isn't for everyone, but at least it features some historical Scotland.

In *Outlander's* absence, I had been eagerly awaiting the release of *Trainspotting 2* as another dose of Scottish culture. Again, probably not for everyone, but I enjoyed the original *Trainspotting*, especially since it was released while I was a student in Scotland and it was filmed at several locations near where I lived. Unfortunately, *Trainspotting 2* has only seen a "limited release" in the US. What this means is that in 4 months since its premiere, it hasn't

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been played within a 2-hour drive of where I live. Therefore, I have not seen it yet.

Fortunately, I have discovered the Scottish TV series *Still Game* which has 6 seasons now available on Netflix. Based in the fictional Glasgow suburb of Craighlang, *Still Game* features the adventures and misadventures of pensioners Jack Jarvis and Victor McDade as they navigate retirement, pension lines and their local pub the Clansman. Jack and Victor are played by middle-aged actors Ford Kiernan and Greg Hemphill who also write and produce the show. As an added bonus, the show's dialogue is in a Glaswegian dialect which was watered down a bit after the third season when it received wider release throughout the UK. As with most things on TV these days, *Still Game* features a good share of colorful language, but it is still worth checking out, especially for the experience of the dialect.

I hope you will enjoy the contents of this issue. Since my academic and early professional background is in history and archaeology, many of the articles I write are on those topics such as the article on St. Columba's Isle from 2015, and the current series on Scottish Diaspora. To help keep this journal fresh and different, I will always encourage you to submit your articles. Do you have a unique story? A tale that many of us would like to hear? If you don't think you have what it takes to write an article, you probably do and just don't know it. If it's not perfect, that's where the editor steps in to help clean it up. If you're still not sure you can write something, I am also open to suggestions for articles. In fact, the Presidential article and the *Auld Lang Syne* article in this issue both started with suggestions. Thanks Mary Lou and Bruce!

*James Nickelson*

Please share your story of how you became involved in the Clan and what you do to promote the Clan—or how you show your MacNicol pride.

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## 2017 ONTARIO CLAN REUNION GUELPH, ONTARIO, CANADA FRIDAY TO SUNDAY OCTOBER 6 TO 8

Your Clan MacNicol Society announces with great pleasure that it will hold an Ontario Provincial Reunion along with its 2017 North American Directors' Meeting in Guelph, Ontario, Canada from Friday evening, October 6 to Sunday, October 8 (the first full weekend in October which is followed by Canadian Thanksgiving and U. S. Columbus Day, both on Monday).

All members, families and friends are cordially invited to join the Society's Officers and Directors for a couple of days of leisure activity, sightseeing, socialising, and dining.

Given Guelph's location in southwestern Ontario and relative proximity to the greater Toronto metropolitan area, we expect

a good participation from those members nearby, as well as those further afield in Québec. U.S. members from upstate New York, and the midwest states of Ohio and Michigan, plus those from New England will find Guelph relatively easy to reach by road.

**ATTENDANCE IS BY ADVANCE RESERVATION ONLY.** To register your participation, please return your completed attendance form enclosed in this issue to Mary Lou Nicolson Klimek as soon as possible but no later than **JULY 31**. Mary Lou's contact details are listed at the bottom of the attendance form as well as on the page 2 masthead.

**Projected events currently include:**

**Friday:** Informal dinner  
**Saturday:** Directors' meeting (private), daytime group leisure activities, and evening banquet

Members should check the North American Clan Website [www.clanmacnicol.org](http://www.clanmacnicol.org) during the months ahead for further details on activities.

*(Continues on next page)*

Our most recent gatherings in Canada were held in Vancouver, British Columbia (2010), Montreal, Québec (2006), and Glasgow, Prince Edward Island (2003) with great success and enthusiastic attendance.

The principal venue for the 2017 Reunion and Meetings will be the **Holiday Inn Guelph Hotel and Conference Center** at 601 Scottsdale Drive, Guelph, Ontario N1G 3E7 Canada.

Mary Lou has reserved a block of non-smoking rooms (either single, double or queen) at the Holiday Inn Guelph Hotel at the favorable rate of **CAD\$120 per night plus 13% tax** (roughly equivalent to US\$90 + tax). These special rates can be extended to 3 nights before the event (October 3, 4 and 5) and 3 nights afterwards (October 9, 10 and 11), subject to room availability. Upgrades are also available at higher rates: top floor queen and king bedrooms at CAD\$125 plus tax.

Gathering participants must make their own hotel reservation as soon as possible, but no later than July 31, 2017. Please phone the Holiday Inn Guelph **In-House Reservations Department** directly at **(519) 836-0231** between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, Eastern Time (Do not call the 1-800 number for Holiday Inn). Callers must provide our group reservation code **CMN** and mention our group name **Clan MacNicol** to ensure that they receive the appropriate rate and are included in the guest room block attendance.

The Holiday Inn features an indoor swimming pool, newly renovated fitness facilities, and an in-house restaurant serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. In-room wireless Internet access is free, as is on-site parking.

Guelph, a thriving city of approximately 132,000 inhabitants carries the sobriquet of "The Royal City". It has a pleasant spacious feel, a low crime rate, clean environment and a generally high standard of living. In fact, Guelph is consistently rated as one of Canada's best places to live. Our former Director Stewart Nicholson and his wife Marie live there. Ontario Games Commissioner Kim Simpson works in the city, and long-time Clan members Charles and Joyce Nicholson Schofield lived in Guelph for forty years before retiring to Fort Erie on the Niagara River. Guelph has its own comprehensive research university with a well-known postgraduate level Scottish Studies program.

Guelph is located approximately one hour's drive west of Toronto's Lester B. Pearson International Airport to which there are numerous daily flights from across North America. The closest major highway is "the 401", the MacDonald-Cartier Freeway, from which one drives North on Route 6 to the Stone Road exit in Guelph. The Holiday Inn is less than a quarter mile East towards Guelph center.

For further information about the Reunion, e-mail Mary Lou at [malonikl@telus.net](mailto:malonikl@telus.net). 



## CLAN MACNICOL FAMILY TREE DNA PROJECT

Tracing your ancestry through genealogical records alone can be hard work and often leads to dead ends. Many researchers find that DNA testing can be used to help fill in the gaps. If you choose to participate in the FTDNA Project, please consider the following tips to get the most from your results:

- 1) Test to 111 markers  
(if feeling very adventurous then test BigY).
- 2) Test to your terminal SNP (pronounced 'snip').
- 3) Provide any genealogical detail you have  
(also upload on FTDNA).
- 4) Denote country of origin, town, parish or general location if known (include family lore).
- 5) Encourage your close kin to join and participate  
(triangulation is a powerful tool).
- 6) Test for mtDNA and sign up for FTDNA family finder.

*Ron Nichols, new Family DNA and Genealogy Project Manager, and his wife Lilia*






## VANCOUVER ISLAND MINI-GATHERING OF 2016

**By Deborah Nicol**

This past year, our annual gathering was held in December with nine members and guests meeting for lunch followed by a tour of the soon-to-be famous Victoria Caledonia Distillery and Brewery, for a little pre-Xmas cheer. It was so nice to see everyone after the summer, and catch up on all the news. Mary Lou flew out from Calgary especially to be with us bringing along her old chums Alice and Frank for the fun. Alan and Christine had just returned the week before from St. Petersburg, Russia and we enjoyed listening to them describing their fantastic trip.

Brenda introduced Eileen and Michael to the Clan via the Victoria Weavers Guild, of which they are both members. It was such a surprise to see their names on our guest list at the Highland Games this past summer. Imagine having two Clan members sitting side by side happily weaving away. I can certainly imagine them 200 years ago blethering away in the Gaelic while they wove the cloth, inside one of the old Black Houses on Lewis. In fact at this year's Games, the Weavers Guild teamed up with our Victoria Gaelic Choir and together, they performed a 'waulking' song with some of the cloth they had woven. 

*Brenda Nicolson, Alan Maddock and Christine Nicol Maddock, "debs" Nicol, Mary Lou Nicolson Klimek and guests Alice & Frank Campbell, and our newest members Eileen & Michael Nicholls.*



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# NICOLSON NOSE AWARDED TO KATRINA NICOLSON

By Katrina Nicolson

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE  
IN *THE SOUTHERN CROSS*

**A**S HURRICANE MATTHEW WROUGHT its destruction last year (see previous newsletter) the the Australian Clan Society's 2016 Annual General Meeting (AGM) was postponed. It ended up being held in Sydney Australia in December 2016. It was a fun night and had quite a reasonable roll up, all things considered.

We did all the formalities and legal requirements and believe it or not, they weren't boring! Even with just 15 of us, the experience is still interesting and everyone can have an input if they want to. There were discussions to do with all sorts of issues to do with the Clans which everyone will be updated on once decisions have been made.

I have to admit, I got the surprise of my life. Cliff Wolf from the North American Society

of our Clan was in town. He was the previous recipient of the Nicolson Nose and has held it for two years. It was his turn to pass it on and he did, to me. I was, still am, and always will be, tickled pink about it. Cliff carried the 2.5 kg (5.5 pound) Nose all the way from Florida to Sydney.


My parents (Ross and Zelma) were under strict instructions to make sure I got to the AGM but as I usually can't get to them, being too far away, I was intending to go. They were still an encouragement though and it did help my resolve having them turn up at my home and having Trevor drive us all in to the city.

Only once before has the Nicolson Nose been awarded to a female, Carol Nicoll, back in 2012 and that was as part of a duo with her husband. I do feel very honoured.

*Cliff Wolf, Katrina Nicolson, and Chief John Nicolson*



After all the formalities were held, we went into the dining room for dinner. It was great catching up with some familiar faces I hadn't seen in a long while. Thanks is due to Cliff for travelling such a long way—to Chief John travelling down from Ballina, Scott, Bob and Les for travelling from Queensland. Also to the Sydneysiders for making the effort. Without our dedicated clan members there would be no active clan.

The worldwide Nicolson Nose trophy is awarded every two years at the Clan's International Gathering for "Loyal and Dedicated Service to Clan MacNicol." For a full history of the Nicolson Nose, please see the clan Website: [clanmacnicol.org/nose-award](http://clanmacnicol.org/nose-award). 





# IMPROVEMENT AND CLEARANCE TRACING THE CAUSES BEHIND THE SCOTTISH DIASPORA – PART 2

By James Nickelson

*Runrig agriculture on the modern landscape at Clachtoll, in Sutherland. Photo by Jeanette Stafford.*

**I**N THE LAST ISSUE OF *SCORRYBREAC*, we examined how the failure of the Jacobite cause and the resultant legislation against the clan system and the Scottish people were among the initial causes for the Scottish Diaspora. In this issue we will examine how many of the Scottish people came to be removed, or cleared, from their lands due to changes in farming practices and land usage throughout the Highlands, as well as the changing relationships between the landlords and their tenants.

## FARMING AND LAND USE IN THE HIGHLANDS

Scotland's inherent ruggedness and the land's fragmentation into so many isolated straths, glens, peninsulas, and islands, presented a challenge for the farming communities who relied on the soil for their subsistence for only

a small fraction of the land was suitable for cultivation. In fact, only about 9% of the land in the Highlands and Islands was considered arable. Despite the limited amount of arable land, the bulk of rural settlement in Scotland after the 12<sup>th</sup> century and through the 18<sup>th</sup> was increasingly based on the township or *toun*, known as a *baile* in Gaelic.

The typical *toun* would have two to four tenants and their families based around the arable land, which in most of the Highlands was found in irregular, discontinuous areas interspersed with patches of grass, stone outcrops, or waterlogged ground. Farming followed the runrig system of cultivation until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Each tenant was allotted scattered strips of land known as rigs, raised lazy-bed ridges, separated by drainage furrows known as runs

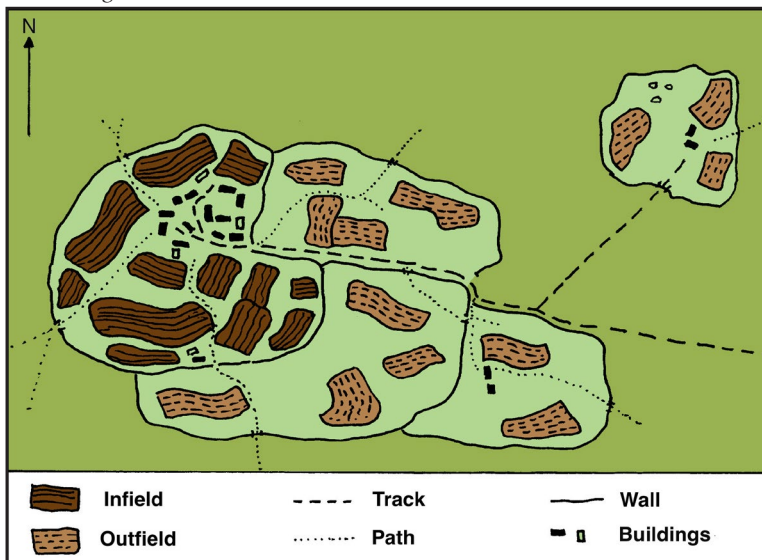


Satellite view of runrig on field system at Port of Ness on the Isle of Lewis showing the disjointed nature of the field system. Map Data: Google

(shown on cover of this issue). Any given tenant's rigs would not necessarily be grouped together in a single plot, and rigs were commonly reallocated or rotated between tenants annually. Conceptually this operates much as the open fields of continental Europe.

The cultivated land was usually enclosed by a stone or turf dyke, with many areas having two dykes. An inner dyke surrounded the core cultivable land known as the infield which was farmed every year and maintained with regular manuring. The outer dyke, or head dyke, enclosed the outfield which was more grassland than arable. Typically, only a quarter to a half of the outfield would be farmed in any given year, and cultivation would be rotated to new parts of the outfield every two to three years.

The layout of a sample Highland township showing the plots of infield and outfield runrig as well as the shielings.



Every Highland township had ready access to extensive tracts of hill or mountain grazing land. Once the growing season was underway, usually by May 1st, the livestock would be moved from the township beyond the head dyke to the mountain pastures. Known as shielings, these upland pastures featured open grazing lands and small structures known as bothies, which were occupied by the herders for up to 8-10 weeks. After the harvest, the livestock were returned to the town and allowed to graze on the infield where they would clean the crop stubble and manure the land for the upcoming growing season.

The most commonly grown crops were oats and bere. Oats served as the dietary staple, as well as the typical form of rent payments. Bere was a form of barley used for milling and malting as well as for thatching roofs. Livestock in the Highlands was valued more as a source of milk, butter, and cheese than as a source of meat. Fish was commonly used as a dietary supplement in coastal areas, although a few townships were known to pay rents in fish.

Much of the evidence for Highland townships comes from surviving land charters which assessed land on the basis of the arable parcels rather than the total land available which also included pasture and grazing land. Charters also outlined the rent paid for the use of the arable lands which often came in the form of food rents (grain, meat, poultry, or fish) and occasionally included additional labor such as peat cutting.

Charters measured lands in traditional land units such as the *davoch* and the *pennyland* (*peighinn* in Gaelic). The *davoch* seems to be of Pictish origin but is thought to be equivalent to the Norse *ounceland*, the amount of land which would pay one ounce of silver in rents. A *davoch* was subdivided into anywhere from sixteen to twenty *pennylands* (this number was

(Continues on next page)



standardized at sixteen in 1661). In practice the *davoch* is estimated to be equal to 100-104 Scots acres (52.8 hectares, or 130 US Acres), or the amount of land which could support about 60 cattle. Examples of the pennyland can be found near Portree on Skye in the surviving place names of Peiness, Penifiler, and Penimore).

### AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENTS AND SHEEP FARMING

After the Battle of Culloden and the collapse of the clan system, chiefs could no longer call upon the military support of their followers, nor did they have an obligation to protect them. Many therefore sought to codify their power by seeking Crown charters for their lands. The chiefs who did so became legal landlords backed by the power of the Crown to enforce payments of rent. This allowed them to maintain a dominant role in the society of the Highlands while securing an annual profit from the collection of rents. In the cases where lands had been forfeited for involvement in the Jacobite rising, charters were obtained by outsiders.

After Culloden, farming practices from England and the Lowlands were quickly adopted by Highland landowners. These improvements generally consisted of abolishing runrig and

combining smaller plots into larger holdings called crofts which were intended to be held by a single tenant farmer, or crofter. This system as designed by the landlords was intended to allow the tenant to provide a suitable living for himself simply by farming the land. However, landlords also began to raise rents at the same time, commonly increasing them between two and five-fold. As the kin ties dissolved and the landowner tenant relationship became more formalized, the landowners came to see profit as more important than benevolence.

It wasn't long before landlords decided that large scale sheep farming offered a high-profit alternative to farming. By combining the lands previously held by numerous small farmer-grazers into large plots to support massive herds of sheep, the rents earned by the landlords could be drastically increased. Landowners either canceled leases or raised rents to impossible levels in inland areas, which were more suitable for grazing sheep, and the tenants were removed or evicted to areas which were less profitable for sheep grazing, usually near the sea coast. In some places a sheep-farm run by one shepherd and two assistants could replace as many as 30-40 families or 120 people.

*Herds of sheep like the one pictured here soon became more common than people in parts of the Highlands during the Clearances.*





Displaced Highlanders could harvest kelp which washed up on the shores as seen here near Aird a' Mhorain on North Uist. Kelp could be processed to produce alkalis for industrial purposes. Image © Hugh Venables cc-by-sa/2.0.

## THE KELP INDUSTRY

The populations which were displaced to the coasts were quickly engaged in a newly developing industry in the Highlands. Continental wars disrupted trade routes and prevented the importing of traditional sources of alkalis used in the manufacture of glass, textiles, paper, and soap. In Britain, the kelp which freely washed up on the shores was the only readily available source of soda ash (sodium carbonate) and potash (potassium carbonate) needed by those industries. Prices for kelp rose steadily from the 1760's average of £2 per ton to the 1790's price of £10 per ton. After 1790 landlords with coastal holdings quickly engaged their tenants in the kelp trade, harvesting and burning the abundant seaweed of Scotland's coasts. Prices continued to soar to the 1812-1815 average of £20-24 per ton.

Crofters were generally able to maintain their rent payments if they supplemented their agriculture and husbandry with work in either the fishing or kelp industries. The kelp trade

provided the people of the islands with much work and they prospered for a time but by 1828 scientific methods of producing alkali had been developed and the Napoleonic wars had ended. The value of kelp fell to just over £3 per ton. This entirely cut out the profit margin of the landlord and effectively caused the end of the kelping industry. Landlords were prompted to increase their efforts in sheep farming to maintain their profits, thus causing more evictions without a means of support for the people.

## CLEARANCE AND EMIGRATION

Up until the collapse of the kelp industry, clearance had not necessarily meant depopulation. Tenants were more typically relocated to less profitable parcels of a landlord's property where they could be used as cheap labor in more profitable work, like kelp processing. However, it is reported that by April of 1803 two-thirds of the tenants of the parishes of Strath and Sleat were making or had completed plans to emigrate to America. This and similar movements were halted by the passing of the Passenger Vessels Act of 1803. The landlords had insisted that such an act be passed and in theory it improved the conditions of intercontinental voyages thus increasing the chances of safe transit. But, as the landlords had intended, the act also put the cost of the voyages which had previously cost £3-4, up to £10 or more, out of the range of most tenants who wished to emigrate. In turn these tenants were forced to accept the crofting life and to work in the kelp or fishing industries for the greater profit of their landlords.

Although the emigration during and resultant from this period of improvements was heavy, it continued well after this. The reports of numbers from Scotland itself are piecemeal at best. Where numbers are known, they are either limited in time or location, such as: the government assisted the emigration about 4000 individuals to Canada between 1815 and 1821, the Highland and Islands Emigration Society assisted the passage of 4700 individuals to Canada in 1852-5.

In the next issue, we will examine how the clearances continued and intensified as the Highlands were struck by a famine that would hit harder and last longer than the more famous Irish Potato Famine. 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿



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# THE DEADLY EFFICIENCY OF THE SCOTS


FROM A LETTER TO  
THE MONTREAL STAR  
MARCH 1976

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**T**AKE THE AVERAGE ENGLISHMAN as he moves about the home he calls his castle. Watch him enjoying his breakfast marmalade (invented in Dundee) on toast. Or slipping on his national costume, a raincoat (patented by Charles MacIntosh, a Glasgow chemist). Follow him out on to an English road (surfaced by Charles MacAdam of Ayr). The English bus takes him to work on pneumatic tires invented by John Boyd Dunlop of Dreg-horn. The English steam train which shipped him into town works on a principle devised by James Watt of Greenock. See him at his office answering his mail (the adhesive stamp was a Scottish invention).

At home his wife is preparing his national dish for lunch—roast beef of old England (prime Aberdeen Angus); this sets his heart beating a little faster as he enters his dining room whistling a nationalistic air (“Ye Mariners of England” by Thomas Campbell of Glasgow), for roast beef is one of the revered institutions like the British Crown (which first rested on a Scottish head in 1603).

In the evening the kids will come home, and Mum retires to the kitchen to fry fish (Finnan haddock from Aberdeen) and chips (from Ayrshire potatoes) while Dad supervises the homework; logarithms were invented by John Napier of Edinburgh, and English literature is stuffed with books like *Treasure Island*, written by a Scot, and *Robinson Crusoe*, based on the life of a Scot from Kinghorn in Fife. In desperation Dad will pick up the Bible; here at last is one book where he will not be reminded of the Scots. But he is wrong—the first man mentioned in the preface is a Scot, James VI of Scotland and James I of Britain, who authorized the translation. It’s hopeless!

There is nowhere an Englishman can turn to escape the deadly efficiency of the Scots. Even desperate measures are in vain; he could take a drink (but Scotland provides the best in the world); he could stick his head in the gas oven and end it all (but coal gas was invented by William Murdoch of Ayrshire). It might be thought that he could always take a rifle and blow out his brains, but even here is a difficulty—the breech-loading rifle was invented by Major Patrick Ferguson, a Scottish officer in the British Army. Anyway it wouldn’t work; they would plunk him on the operating table, pump him full of penicillin (discovered by Sir Alexander Fleming of Darvel), give him an anaesthetic (by courtesy of Sir James Simpson of Bathgate) and perform an operation (antiseptic surgery was pioneered at Glasgow’s Royal Infirmary). The first thing he would hear when he woke up would be the voice of a Scottish surgeon telling him he is safe, “safe as the Bank of England” (founded by William Paterson of Dumfries). 



# PRESIDENTIAL CONNECTIONS

By James Nickelson



President Obama with Marvin Nicholson and Helen Pajcic after their wedding. Is it just me, or do you prefer a kilted wedding too?

We're always on the lookout for Nicolsons in the news, whether they are members of the Clan or not, and the beginning of 2017 did not disappoint.

Perhaps in the first Nicholson wedding of the new year, Marvin Nicholson married Helen Pajcic on the evening of January 6<sup>th</sup>, in Jacksonville, Florida. Both the bride and groom worked in Washington—the bride for the Department of Education and the groom as a member of the White House staff. "It was really the most beautiful wedding... Everybody in the room loved the couple, and that's what weddings are all about," said the couple's wedding planner, Lorna Meehan of Amelia Weddings and Events.

Normally, a wedding wouldn't be national news, but in this case, it was one of Marvin's chosen groomsmen who drew national attention to his wedding—his golfing buddy President Obama. President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry, who officiated the wedding, had flown from Washington DC that morning to attend the couple's joyous event and returned after the ceremony.

In an effort to remain politically impartial a Scottish theme appeared in the presidential elections only two months before the Nicholson-Pajcic wedding. It is fairly well-known that President Donald Trump has Scottish roots—his mother is a MacLeod from the Isle of Lewis—but he is also well-known for his real estate holdings which include the Trump International Golf Links at Balmedie.

Trump's mother, Mary Anne MacLeod, was born in 1912 and grew up in the village of Tong on the Isle of Lewis. She was the daughter of the village postmaster who also worked as a fisherman. In 1930, she set sail for New York on the SS *Transylvania*, following three of her sisters who had previously emigrated to America. By 1934 she had met Fred Trump, a New York property developer and they were married in 1936. Donald was their fifth and youngest child.

When newspapers across the world reported President Trump's victory on the morning of November 9<sup>th</sup>, the *Buchan Observer* in Scotland reported the odd but factual headline "Aberdeenshire Business Owner Wins Presidential Election," referring to his local golf course. Not to be outdone by the *Buchan Observer*, the *Stornoway Gazette*, based on the island where Trump's mother was born, was quick to point out in an article titled "Will Trump get his Boots On?" that his Lewis heritage made him the only US president to ever be qualified to play for the island's local football team. 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁳󠁣󠁴󠁿

A screenshot of a news article from the Buchan Observer. The headline reads "Aberdeenshire business owner wins presidential election". The article features a photo of Donald Trump and text stating "Donald Trump, owner of Trump International Golf Links at Balmedie, has been elected as the next President of the USA." It also includes a "Trending" section with five items and a "More from News" section.



# MEMBER PROFILE

## KEN MACNICOL

By Cliff Wolf

While at the Glasgow Highland Games in Glasgow, KY in June of last year, I had the honor of meeting over 25 MacNicol's who are the descendants of 97 year-old Kenneth Edward MacNicol, born March 11, 1920 in Windbur, PA. The MacNicol family lost their beloved father and grandfather on May 17, 2017 and the members of the Clan MacNicol across the world want to offer our sincere condolences and prayers for his family. Ken and his son Scott both planned to attend the October 2016 International Clan Gathering in St. Augustine. Ken was so excited because he was super proud of his MacNicol and Scottish heritage, and he even went out to buy a new suit for the event.

His parents were John MacNicol born September 14, 1876 in Netherburn, District of Dalserf, South Lanarkshire, Scotland and Robina Hodge Thomas McLean born August 25, 1883 in Victoria




Place, Greenfield, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire, Scotland. Edward and Robina were married on June 14, 1901 at Parrish church of Burnbank. Ken's parents left for USA with their daughter Ellen who was 2 years old at the time, arriving in New York City on October 10, 1904. Ken and his older brothers John born June 8 1905, and Archibald born February 11, 1909 lived in two coal mining camps in Pennsylvania before moving to Windber to attend school in a one room schoolhouse taught by sister Ellen.

The family moved to Detroit, MI in 1928, where Ken met the love of his life, Eleanor Elizabeth McBrien in 1938. Ken and Eleanor were married on June 6, 1942. He joined the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII and went all over the country training to be a B-17 Pilot. Eleanor followed from base to base holding down jobs to help out. Ken's unit was shipped out aboard RMS Queen Elizabeth bound for Scotland. He was assigned to 8th Air Force 384th Bomb Group stationed at Grafton-Underwood England. This was at the tail end of the war. He served one year in occupational forces, returning home in 1946.

Ken joined the Detroit Police in 1949. He was recalled to active duty Air Force in 1951 and stationed at Niagara Falls, New York, assigned to fly the P-51 aircraft. In 1953 he returned to Detroit Police, and retired from the force in 1974. The couple moved to Naples, FL to be near his sister Ellen.

Ken worked for Collier County Public Schools for 10 years retiring in 1984. He worked part time for a golf course and volunteering at the community hospital. Finally, in 1994 with Eleanor they decided to purchase a trailer in Hendersonville, North Carolina and become half backs (people who move to Florida, and then move halfway back), spending May until October in North Carolina each year until Eleanor died in June 2013. Together they had a wonderful life raising 5 boys and 1 girl which lead to 14 grandchildren, 21 great grandchildren, 4 great-great grandchildren. Ken and Eleanor shared 71 years of marriage.

Ken reflecting on his life said this, "I think back to the two mining camps where I was raised. The days of horse and buggies, out houses and Saturday baths in a laundry tub. To the modern conveniences of today I say thank God." 



# 2017 GAMES AND FESTIVALS WITH CLAN MACNICOL REPRESENTATION

by Jeremy Nicholson and Bruce McNichols

**W**E ARE PLEASED TO REPORT THAT our 2017 spring schedule of Highland games and Scottish (and Celtic) festivals is well underway, with the summer and fall cycles quickly approaching.

Our Clan Society is truly fortunate in having a vigorous and dedicated cadre of state and provincial Games Commissioners. Helped by their families and friends, they represent the Clan throughout North America and provide a valuable and effective service for which we are all grateful.

## CALL FOR NEW GAMES COMMISSIONER AND VOLUNTEER HELPERS

Members in the U.S. and Canada who are interested in representing or helping our Clan MacNicol at events this year (or next) should contact either of us—Jeremy Nicholson or Bruce McNichols (for Western Games) at their earliest convenience to discuss the responsibilities and benefits involved. Our contact details are listed on page 2 of this and every issue of our Clan journal.



## REPRESENTATION AT 2017 GAMES AND FESTIVALS

Here is a chronological list of all games and festivals where the Clan was or will be represented at a tent or booth in 2017 (a provisional total of 33 games and festivals in 4 provinces and 16 states—plus 1 games overseas in Scotland.)

### JANUARY

Central Florida Scottish Highland Games, Winter Springs

**CLIFF AND CLAUDIA WOLF**

January 14-15

### MARCH

Panama City Scottish Festival and Highland Games, Florida

**CLIFF AND CLAUDIA WOLF**

March 4

### APRIL

Rural Hill Scottish Festival and Loch Norman Highland Games, Huntersville, North Carolina

**TOM AND BRENDA NICHOLSON PRITCHARD**

April 7-9

Sacramento Valley Scottish Games & Festival, Woodland, California

**DALE AND MARILYN NICOLL**

April 29-30

### MAY

Texas Scottish Festival and Highland Games, Arlington

**LYNN AND SHEROLYN NICHOLS**

May 5-7

*A Melbourne, FL family making a visit to the Central Florida Highland Games in Orlando. Pictured are Catherine Davis, Noemi Gaspard, Cliff Wolf, Alex Gaspard and their son Eric, Emily Garrett (friend of the clan), Victoria Davis and Rob Bennett. They are related to our Clan DNA expert, Ron Nichols!*

*(Continues on next page)*



Smoky Mountain Scottish Festival and Games,  
Maryville, Tennessee  
**TOM AND BRENDA NICHOLSON PRITCHARD  
WITH DOUG AND ROBIN HARRILL**  
May 19-21

Victoria Highland Games and Celtic Festival,  
Vancouver Island, British Columbia  
**DEB NICOL WITH ALLAN AND  
CHRISTINA MADDOCK**  
May 20-21

Greater Greenville Scottish Games and Highland  
Festival, South Carolina  
**JAMES AND ANITA NICKELSON**  
May 26-27

Alma Highlands Festival and Games, Michigan  
(tentative)  
**BRUCE GOODBURNE**  
May 27-28

**JUNE**  
Old Orchard Beach Scottish Festival, Maine  
**BILL E. NICHOLSON**  
June 3

Mother Lode Highland Games, Plymouth, California  
**DALE AND MARILYN NICOLL**  
June 10-11

Chicago Scots Scottish Festival and Highland Games,  
Itasca, Illinois  
**JANE NICOLL STOVER AND CARL STOVER**  
June 16-17

Red Deer Highland Games, Alberta (tentative)  
**MARY LOU NICOLSON KLIMEK**  
June 17

**JULY**  
Cambridge Scottish Festival, Ontario (tentative)  
**KIM SIMPSON WITH STEWART AND MARIE  
NICHOLSON**  
July 14-15

Elizabeth Celtic Festival, Colorado  
**JACY AND FLOYD MORRIS**  
July 15-16

Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival,  
Northampton, Massachusetts  
**BILL E. NICHOLSON**  
July 15

Dufftown and District Highland Games,  
Moray, Scotland  
**WITH JEREMY NICHOLSON  
AS BARON OF BALVENIE**  
July 29

**AUGUST**  
Glengarry Highland Games, Maxville, Ontario  
**JACQUES MCNICOLL**  
August 4-5

Montreal Highland Games, Verdun, Québec  
**JACQUES MCNICOLL**  
August 6

*Steve Nicholson and his family with Cliff Wolf at the Central Florida Highland Games in Orlando.*



*New member Kimberly Brunson exploring her Nichols side of the family at the Central Florida Highland Games in Orlando, pictured with her cousin who is a member of Clan Hume. Not pictured is Kimberly's sister, Sherri Nichols, also a new member who joined on Sunday.*



Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games, Ontario  
**KIM SIMPSON WITH STEWART AND MARIE NICHOLSON**  
August 11-13

Maine Highland and Scottish Festival, Topsham  
**BILL E. NICHOLSON**  
August 19

Bitterroot Scottish Irish Festival, Hamilton, Montana (tentative)  
**TOM AND MARY NICHOLS**  
August 19

Festival Celtique de Québec, Québec City  
**JEAN MCNICOLL**  
August 19-22  
*These are tentative dates which will need to be confirmed.*

### SEPTEMBER

Calgary Highland Games, Alberta  
**MARY LOU NICOLSON KLIMEK WITH JEAN AND JENN NICOLSON-CHURCH**  
September 2

San Francisco Scottish Highland Gathering and Games, Pleasanton, California  
**DALE AND MARILYN NICOLL**  
September 2-3

Canmore Highland Games, Alberta  
**MARY LOU NICOLSON KLIMEK AND JENN AND JEAN NICOLSON-CHURCH**  
September 2-3

Longs Peak Scottish/Irish Highland Games, Colorado (tentative)  
**JACY AND FLOYD MORRIS WITH KAREN AND BLAKE NICHOLSON**  
September 8-10

New Hampshire Highland Games, Loon Mountain, Lincoln  
**BILL E. NICHOLSON**  
September 15-17

Celtic Harvest Festival Edgewater, Colorado (tentative)  
**JACY AND FLOYD MORRIS**  
September 16-17

Dandridge Scots-Irish Festival, Tennessee  
**TOM AND BRENDA NICHOLSON PRITCHARD**  
September 30

### OCTOBER

Stone Mountain Highland Games, Georgia  
**R. BURKE NICHOLSON WITH JEREMY NICHOLSON**  
October 21-22  
*Jeremy will host a regional reunion dinner after the games on Saturday, October 21.*

### NOVEMBER

Scots on the Rocks Moab Celtic Festival, Utah (tentative)  
**JACY AND FLOYD MORRIS**  
November 4-6

Tucson Celtic Festival and Scottish Highland Games, Arizona  
**BRUCE MCNICHOLS**  
November 5-6

Salado Scottish Gathering and Highland Games, Texas (tentative)  
**LYNN AND SHEROLYN NICHOLS**  
November 10-12

*New members Alec & Katrina Ribbink with Alec's mom and dad, Gary & Troylee Ribbink Cliff Wolf at the Central Florida Highland Games in Orlando.*



*Melanie King-Atkinson exploring her Nichols roots with Cliff Wolf at the Central Florida Highland Games in Orlando*



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# MEMBERSHIP REPORT

## JUNE 2017

### Dale Nicoll and Jacques McNicoll

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During the past six months, your Clan Society has received with gratitude a total of 14 new memberships: 1 from 1 Canadian province, and 13 from 9 U.S. states.

We welcome our new members and look forward to many years of a mutually satisfying and productive association.

This report is shorter than usual for a simple though exceptional reason: we received few renewals because the December 2016 issue of *Scorrybreac* by choice did not contain a renewal form. We were still recovering from Dick Nicoll's passing and the consequential restructuring of our membership databases. Therefore it seemed premature to request renewals at that time.

Twenty-five members whose names are noted in this report took the most welcome initiative to renew without prompting, and we are most grateful to them.

### NEW LIFETIME CLAN MEMBERSHIPS

We have received with much appreciation two new lifetime memberships from existing members: Elizabeth McNichols of Winston-Salem, North Carolina in honor of her late husband Jerry; and Michael and Mary Jean Nicolson of North York, Ontario. To them and to all our other lifetime members, a continuous and heartfelt thanks.

### RECENT FRIENDS OF SCORRYBREAC LANDS DONATIONS

We would like to specially recognize those members who have made donations during the past four and a half months as Friends of Scorrybreac Lands:

Mary Lou Nicolson Klimek  
*Cochrane, Alberta (1 year)*

In Memory of Burke Nicholson of Balvenie  
*(5 years)*

Jeremy D. Nicholson  
*Atlanta, Georgia (5 years)*

William E. and Ann Nicholson  
*Natick, Massachusetts (1 year)*  
Forrester and Judith Nicolson

*Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts (1 year)*  
Michael and Mary Jean Nicolson  
*North York, Ontario (1 year)*

Twenty-four members whose names are noted in this report took the most welcome initiative to renew without prompting, and we are most grateful to them.

### 2017 URGENT MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REQUEST DUE BY JULY 15

Members are invited to renew for 2017 by completing the separate renewal form, which has been inserted for all in this issue, with the exception of lifetime members as well as previous multiple year renewal members. Please return it by **JULY 15, 2017** to the indicated address in the U.S. or Canada—as appropriate—with your check made out to "Clan MacNicol Society, Inc."

The fee for 2017 has been set by the Directors at \$35 equally for Canadian and U.S. members (\$30 plus an optional donation of \$5 towards maintenance of the Clan lands on the Isle of Skye in Scotland). This is unchanged from 2017.

### MULTIPLE YEARS CLAN MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS AVAILABLE

Any members who wish to renew for multiple years should complete the appropriate section in the enclosed renewal form, or alternatively contact me directly for the U.S.A.—Dale Nicoll, or for Canada—Jacques McNicoll—to make appropriate arrangements.

### LIFETIME CLAN MEMBERSHIPS AVAILABLE

The lifetime membership program continues to be available based on a two-tier fee schedule: \$350 for members (whether new or renewing) 65 years of age and older, \$525 for those under 65 years of age.

Applications for lifetime memberships can be made on the regular renewal form, or in writing by e-mail or letter to our President, Jeremy Nicholson.

Finally, if you have any question about your membership status (especially if you find any error or omission), contact Dale or Jacques as soon as possible and we will be happy to assist you.

## NEW MEMBERS

(December 2016 through May 2017)

### CANADA

#### Québec

\*#Allen McNicoll..... Longueuil

### U.S.A.

#### California

Eileen Parker..... San Jose

#### Colorado

\*#Gary and Karen Nickell..... Lafayette

#### Florida

Alec Ribbink and Katrina Martin..... Daytona Beach  
Kimberly and Fred Brunson..... Kissimmee  
Sherri Nichols..... Orlando  
Ethan David Mauldin Putman..... Tampa

#### Illinois

\*#Jackie Nichols Chamberlain..... Decatur

#### New Mexico

\*#Bradley Robert and Emily McNichol..... Albuquerque

#### North Carolina

\*#Wilma E. and Max C. Jones, Jr..... Newland

#### South Carolina

\*#John Alexander Nicholson III..... McColl

#### Tennessee

\*#Deborah Nichol Pittman..... Memphis

#### Texas

\*#Steve and Dayna Nichols..... DeKalb  
Andrew David and Shannon Nicholson..... Klein

## RENEWING MEMBERS

(December 2016 through May 2017)

An asterisk \* preceding your name means that you generously donated to the annual upkeep of the Clan Land on Skye, and a crosshatch # in the same position denotes that you made an extra gift to the "Richard S. Nicoll Memorial Fund" beyond your annual dues. Furthermore, when the asterisk and/or the crosshatch is marked in red (\*#), this recognizes your donating an extra amount beyond the basic \$5, for which sincere thanks.

Those renewing members who have gone the extra mile and joined the Friends of Scorrybreac Lands with a five-year commitment of support are gratefully identified by the designation *FoSL* at the end of their listing.

Members who have renewed solely for 2017—the current year—do NOT have a year noted after their name and city/town. However, those members who have renewed during this current reporting period for two years or more, or have renewed for a year in advance, will have those years specified, i.e., (2017-18) or (2018).

## CANADA

### British Columbia

\*Richard and Eileen Michael Nicholls..... Victoria

### Ontario

\*#Charles and Joyce Nicholson-Schofield..... Fort Erie *FoSL*

\*#Michael and Mary Jean Nicolson..... North York *Lifetime FoSL*

### Prince Edward Island

\*#Wilfred Lloyd Nicholson..... Montague

\*Sandylee and David Nicholson-MacLure..... Montague

### Québec

\*#Tony McNicoll..... Gatineau

\*Susan and Spike Nichol..... Montréal

## ENGLAND

#Roger and Elizabeth Miket..... Wooler, Northumberland

## ITALY

#Marilena Castenetto..... Cassacco, Udine

## SCOTLAND

#Andrew Nicoll..... Broughty Ferry, Dundee

#Arthur Brown..... Dufftown, Moray

#Robin and Linda MacLennan..... Dufftown, Moray

#Jim Nicol..... Dufftown, Moray

#Esther and Peter Bremner..... Huntly, Aberdeenshire

#Theresa Macleman and Antony Tippin..... Huntly, Aberdeenshire

#Lilian Macleman..... Keith, Moray

## U.S.A.

### California

#Priscilla Reiss..... Fullerton

#Malcolm and Irene Willis..... Westminster

### Florida

\*#Emily E. Garrett..... Satellite Beach

### Illinois

\*#Mark and Cindy Riess..... Schaumburg (2016-18)

### Indiana

\*#Heather and Clint Studebaker..... Nashville

### Kentucky

\*#Ron and Lilia Nichols..... Georgetown (2018)

### Massachusetts

#Carol Nicoll..... Billerica

\*#William E. and Ann Nicholson..... Natick *FoSL*

### North Carolina

\*Elizabeth McNichols..... Winston-Salem *Lifetime*

Zoë Michelle Nicholson..... Archdale

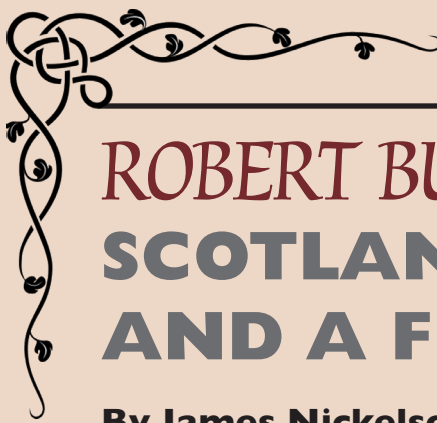
### South Carolina

\*#William R. and Joan Nicol..... Hilton Head Island

### Tennessee

\*Doug and Robin Harrill..... Walland





# ROBERT BURNS AND “AULD LANG SYNE” SCOTLAND’S BARD AND A FESTIVE TRADITION

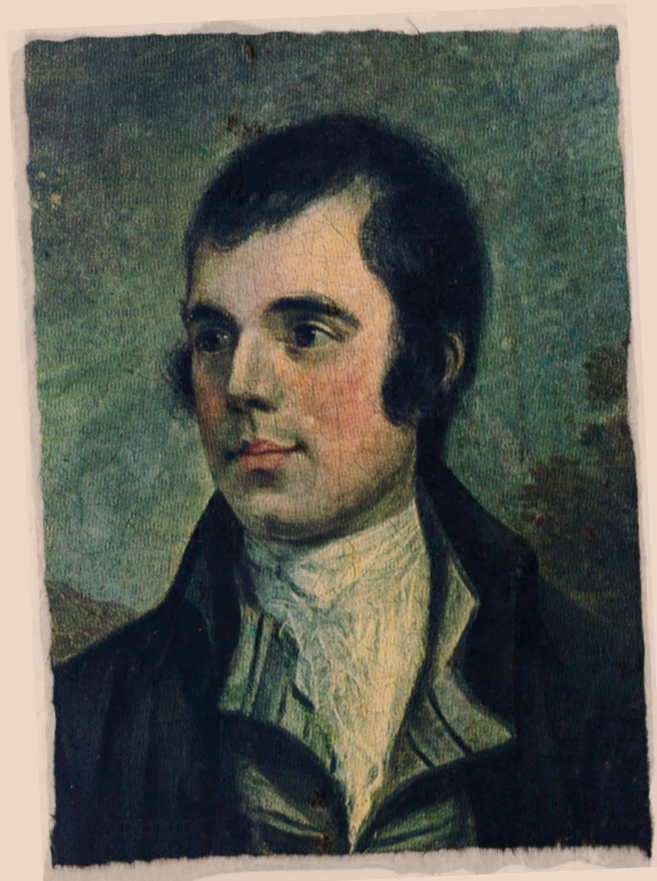
By James Nickelson

with biographical information from [poets.org](http://poets.org)

**B**ORN IN ALLOWAY, SCOTLAND, on January 25, 1759, Robert Burns was the first of William and Agnes Burnes’ seven children. His father, a tenant farmer, educated his children at home. Burns also attended one year of mathematics schooling and, between 1765 and 1768, he attended an “adventure” school established by his father and John Murdock. His father died in bankruptcy in 1784, and Burns and his brother Gilbert took over the farm. This hard labor later contributed to the heart trouble that Burns suffered as an adult.

At the age of fifteen, he fell in love and shortly thereafter he wrote his first poem. As a young man, Burns pursued both love and poetry with uncommon zeal. In 1785, he fathered the first of his fourteen children. His biographer, DeLancey Ferguson, had said, “it was not so much that he was conspicuously sinful as that he sinned conspicuously.” Between 1784 and 1785, Burns also wrote many of the poems collected in his first book, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, which was printed in 1786 and paid for by subscriptions. This collection was an immediate success and Burns was celebrated throughout England and Scotland as a great “peasant-poet.”

In 1788, he and his wife, Jean Armour, settled in Ellisland, where Burns was given a commission as an excise officer. He also began to assist James Johnson in collecting folk songs for an anthology entitled *The Scots Musical Museum*. Burns spent the final twelve years of his life editing and imitating traditional folk songs for



this volume and for *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs*. These volumes were essential in preserving parts of Scotland’s cultural heritage and include such well-known songs as “My Luvie is Like a Red Red Rose” and “Auld Land Syne.” Robert Burns died from heart disease at the age of thirty-seven. On the day of his death, Jean Armour gave birth to his last son, Maxwell.

Most of Burns’ poems were written in Scots. They document and celebrate traditional Scottish culture, expressions of farm life, and class and religious distinctions. Burns wrote in a variety of forms: epistles to friends, ballads, and songs. His best-known poem is the mock-



heroic *Tam o' Shanter*. He is also well known for the over three hundred songs he wrote which celebrate love, friendship, work, and drink with often hilarious and tender sympathy. Burns died on July 21, 1796, at the age of 37. Even today, he is often referred to as the National Bard of Scotland.

Burns' best known work is the familiar tune of "Auld Lang Syne," which can be heard ringing in the New Year throughout the English-speaking world and beyond. Crowds will join in to sing the words they know well, and despite its popularity, most will likely mumble through and pretend to sing the bulk of the song. Few revelers know all the words and fewer still know the meaning behind them.

In fact, according to the UK Daily Mail a 2011 poll of 2105 adults showed that three quarters of respondents will mime or make up the words they do not know and a full 37 percent do not know a single line. Shockingly one in ten millennials believe that the words were written by Elvis Presley or Paul McCartney!

"Auld Lang Syne" derives from a 1788 poem by Robert Burns who described it as "an old song, of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript until I took it down from an old man." Based on the similarity of the first verse to some lines of the 1711 Scottish ballad "Old Long Syne" by James

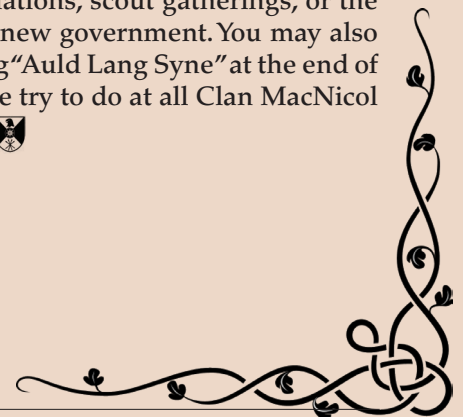
Watson, "Auld Lang Syne" is believed to be a combination of a traditional folk song, with significant additions by Burns himself.

While a full translation and pronunciation guide follows, translations of the song rarely tackle the phrase "auld lang syne," and if they do it is usually to "old long syne." In standard English it should most likely translate to "old long since," but we are best served with a more colloquial translation like "long, long ago," or "for the sake of old times." In the context of the song itself, it is helpful to think that the song is asking the rhetorical question "Is it right that old time be forgotten?"

"Auld Lang Syne" is typically sung to the tune of a traditional folk song (#6294 in the Roud Folk Song Index) which was probably originally a dance with a much quicker tempo (an example of which is the version performed by the "bagrock" group Red Hot Chilli Pipers). Revelers will typically form a circle around the dance floor and join hands while singing, crossing their arm over their chests and gripping the hand of the person to their left with their own right hand and the hand to their right with their left hand. This is usually done from the beginning of the song except in Scotland where the tradition is to only cross arms and clasp hands at the beginning of the last verse when the song calls "And there's a hand, my trusty fiere! and gie's a hand o' thine!"



The theme of "Auld Lang Syne" is calling for the preservation of our oldest and dearest friendships. Though Burns may never have intended for it to act as a farewell to the old year, its sentiment has made it a staple of New Year's and Hogmanay celebrations. It is also common at other events which celebrate endings or beginnings such as weddings, funerals, graduations, scout gatherings, or the election of a new government. You may also have the song "Auld Lang Syne" at the end of a *cèilidh* as we try to do at all Clan MacNicol gatherings. ❖





## BURNS' ORIGINAL SCOTS VERSE

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
and never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
and auld lang syne?

### CHORUS:

For auld lang syne, my jo,  
for auld lang syne,  
we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stoup!  
and surely I'll be mine!  
And we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.

### CHORUS

We twa hae run about the braes,  
and pou'd the gowans fine;  
But we've wander'd mony a weary fit,  
sin' auld lang syne.

### CHORUS

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,  
frae morning sun till dine;  
But seas between us braid hae roar'd  
sin' auld lang syne.

### CHORUS

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!  
and gie's a hand o' thine!  
And we'll tak' a right gude-willie waught,  
for auld lang syne.

### CHORUS



## SCOTS PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Shid ald akwentans bee firgot,  
an nivir brocht ti mynd?  
Shid ald akwentans bee firgot,  
an ald lang syn?

### CHORUS:

Fir ald lang syn, ma jo,  
fir ald lang syn,  
wil tak a cup o kyndnes yet,  
fir ald lang syn.

An sheerly yil bee yur pynt-staup!  
an sheerly al bee myn!  
An will tak a cup o kyndnes yet,  
fir ald lang syn.

### CHORUS

We twa hay rin aboot the braes,  
an pood the gowans fyn;  
Bit weev wandert monae a weery fet,  
sin ald lang syn.

### CHORUS

We twa hay pedilt in the burn,  
fray mornin sun til dyn;  
But seas between us bred hay roard  
sin ald lang syn.

### CHORUS

An thers a han, my trustee feer!  
an gees a han o thyn!  
And we'll tak a richt gude-willie-waucht,  
fir ald lang syn.

### CHORUS



## MINIMALIST ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Should old acquaintance be forgot,  
and never brought to mind?  
Should old acquaintance be forgot,  
and old lang syne?

### CHORUS:

For auld lang syne, my dear,  
for auld lang syne,  
we'll take a cup of kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.

And surely you'll buy your pint cup!  
and surely I'll buy mine!  
And we'll take a cup o' kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.

### CHORUS

We two have run about the slopes,  
and picked the daisies fine;  
But we've wandered many a weary foot,  
since auld lang syne.

### CHORUS

We two have paddled in the stream,  
from morning sun till dine;  
But seas between us broad have roared  
since auld lang syne.

### CHORUS

And there's a hand my trusty friend!  
And give me a hand o' thine!  
And we'll take a right good-will draught,  
for auld lang syne.

### CHORUS

