

The Three Feathers



News and views from the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs

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Events

Central Florida Scottish Games 13-15 January 2012

Donald Maclaren of Maclaren will be Chief of the Central Florida Scottish Games.

Sarasota Highland Games

4 February 2012, Sarasota

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Scottish chiefs are proud of the past and passionate about the future



The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs (SCSC) is growing in energy and influence. Almost sixty years old the SCSC was established as an informal 'club' where chiefs could compare notes about a host of issues, from protecting family estates to starting clan societies. Over the years this has changed. For the past five years it has been evolving and now it is emerging as a Council with a mission. Deeply proud of our past we are now looking keenly ahead. We are building on the involvement of the many millions of scots who live outside Scotland. It is absolutely true that the further you live from Scotland the prouder the scot you are. The SCSC is committed to providing a focus and a voice for this community.

It is as important to understand what the SCSC does not do as it is to understand what it does. First and foremost we are not a pressure group or politically motivated in any way. We are not, I am glad to say, about to raise the clans and storm the English Parliament, exciting as that image may be to some. We do not comment on government policy or divisive issues such as the proliferation of wind farms or Scottish independence. We do not interfere in any way with how a clan chief conducts his business with his or her clan, nor do we exert influence on clan chiefs.

What the SCSC does do is built on the common 'standard' – in modern language, brand – of a chief; the three (golden eagle) feathers.

We see this as a mark of quality – a mark that has been respected and looked up to for countless generations, a mark that has raised armies and negotiated peace. This symbol of a deep-rooted authority allows us to achieve much for Scotland and its people, wherever they live.

For this reason the SCSC is in an excellent position to provide a 'quality mark' for a range of events, publications and products that are Scottish.

The Homecoming in 2014 is a high profile event and there will be an avalanche of publicity nearer the time there are other, smaller but no less important events that the chiefs are involved in. Scottish Games in North America are more numerous and larger than anything we see in our native country and this is a source of pride for us. We should not forget other countries – Australia and New Zealand has a Scottish community that any country would be proud of and Alexander Brodie, chief of clan Brodie was lucky enough to be the Chief Guest at the Scottish Heritage Week in Australia.

It is important to realise how difficult it is keeping the alliances and links alive from here in Scotland and we are enormously grateful – and lucky – to have many strong links with people and organisations around the world that we are proud to work with. Of course, the whole clan system should be enormously grateful for the support, leadership and guidance of such bodies as COSCA in North America and the Scots Heritage Society in Australia. We are truly a global community of scots.

In 2013 another famous, perhaps infamous battle will be remembered. At the battle of Flodden fourteen clans lost their chiefs in a muddy, bloody ditch as they tried to stop the English advance.

The SCSC is made up of chiefs of a great many clans and families. This gives us a tremendous amount of influence in government, tourism and commerce. We are developing our channels of communication, upgrading our clan chiefs web site

(www.clanchiefs.org) to keep people up to date with what the chiefs are doing, with forthcoming events, and with a wealth of information and links on clans and families.

Sir Malcolm Macgregor of Macgregor

Harlaw Commemoration New model for Clan Societies?

When the Leslie Clan Society was established in 1979, it had two main objectives. The first was to help Leslies research their history and ancestry. The second was to provide a way for Leslies to meet and build a network of kinsmen to share history and stories and a common past.

The internet changed all that.

Research could be done from home, you could communicate with anyone, anywhere from home and the whole point of Clan Societies was thrown into question.

Almost universally clan societies went into decline. Ideas to re-invigorate them were presented, discussed, tried and thrown out.

And then I witnessed something truly remarkable.

William Leslie, our Commissioner in North America thought that the Leslies who fell at the Battle of Harlaw should be remembered. The original monument to them had vanished and 2011 is the 600th anniversary of the battle. He also thought that raising money for something specific would provide a focus for Leslies – a cause round which to rally.

He was absolutely right. I am proud to have witnessed such amazing support, from every part of the world – from the UK and Europe, from North America and from Australia and New Zealand.

The monument that now stands outside the Chapel of the Garioch is, to me, more than a lasting memorial to those Leslies who fell in the battle 600 years ago, it is a monument to the generosity, support and respect that Leslies feel towards their past and their history.

The Honourable Alexander Leslie

A Trip Down Under

From the 24th June to the 4th July I had the honour and the pleasure to be Chief Guest for Scottish Heritage Week in New South Wales, Australia. These events were organised by the Scottish Australian Heritage Council whose members do an excellent job promoting and encouraging Scottish culture, tradition and heritage throughout Australia.



Alexander Brodie on parade

Scottish Heritage Week started off with the Grand Bannockburn Ball in Sydney.

Later I joined His Excellency Mr Michael Bryce, husband of the Australian Governor General, at the Aberdeen Highland Games in to Hunter valley, New South Wales. I found the standard of competition, in the bands, the heavies and the tug of war to be first class, but I was most impressed with the warmth and friendliness of the locals from Aberdeen. After the games we all met up in the pub and, as the schooners of beer began to flow, the pipers and drummers pulled out their instruments and we were treated to an impromptu competition and display of talent.

Throughout Scottish week in Sydney several lectures on the ancient Picts, the Dál Riata, and

the Vikings were given by Dr Alex Woolf. Dr Woolf, also a guest of Scottish Heritage Week, is professor of Scottish medieval at St. Andrews University. His passion for ancient Scottish history was contagious and his lectures were some of the highlights of these events. As a Scottish historian myself, I was struck by the degree of interest and the intelligence of the questions by the audience in these lectures.

There was a Kirkin'O'the Tartan in the sandstone Presbyterian church of Annandale, Sydney, and a Kirkin'O'the Tartan in the old wooden church of Aberdeen NSW. The parishioners brought their tartan and banners to be blessed and the churches were draped in tartan scarves, rugs and even the odd tie, and with further clan banners lined up around the altar, the whole ceremony made for some of the most colourful services I have attended.

With the assistance of the Mayor of Mosman, Anne Connon, I inspected the Scotland Australian Cairn in Mossman and found it to be in good shape. Set in spectacular surroundings, overlooking the Sydney bay, this monument is made from a patchwork of different types of stones individually sent from all the parishes of Scotland. Other events included a lunch at the Sydney Parliament House, a luncheon at the Tattersalls Club with an informal Clan Brodie get together, and a cèilidh after the Aberdeen Highland games. One thing was for sure, the Australians knew how to enjoy themselves.

I was pleasantly surprised to find the Scottish spirit so strong in Australia with a passionate clan felling, and I found the Scottish Australian Heritage Council to be superb organisers of a fantastic series of events; one was even suspicious that they were responsible for the good weather throughout. However, there is some sad news to report: Valery Smith officially announced her retirement as director of the Scottish Australian Heritage Council. Valery is well known throughout Scotland, its clan community and diaspora and we hope that, while she may be retiring from her official duties, she will continue to grace us with her presence and personality at future Scottish events.

Alexander Brodie of Brodie