

THE ARD COILLE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AMERICAN CLAN
GREGOR SOCIETY

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FROM THE EDITOR

BY ADRIENNE TOMKINS

Introducing the *Ard Coille* with an apology is beginning to become something of a habit, but life simply keeps *happening!* *This particular issue is, indeed, incomplete, but there's a story.*

This story is pertinent to us, as a society and as clansmen. As you know, MacGregor means "Son of Gregor". We are a family, and I am sure that you all understand - family comes first.

You see, just as I was sitting down to put it together, at 10 am on a Thursday, I learned that my father was going in for emergency surgery. As Daughter of Bill, my life stopped in that moment. I was on a flight from San Francisco to Virginia by 2 pm, and every single responsibility I thought I had was suddenly waylaid by this looming disaster.

As I write this several days later, I am in the Food Court at the hospital where my father is still recovering, but is not "out of the woods" quite yet. Thus, I implore you to wait patiently for the Spring issue in April, which will contain all the goodies I had intended for this Winter issue.

As always, please remember that *The Ard Coille* is only as good as the submissions we receive, and this is *your* newsletter. Please send or [email](mailto:newsletter@acgsus.org) any and all news, photos, information, etc to me for inclusion in the next issue!



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For more information on our Society, visit our
website at:
<http://www.acgsus.org>

*The views and opinions expressed
in any of the articles within this
publication are not necessarily the
views or opinions of the ACGS.*

FROM THE CHIEFTAIN'S DESK

BY RANDOLPH WALKER

The recently completed 109th Annual Mini - Gathering in Atlanta, Georgia, September 28-29, 2018 has now come and gone.

Even though it was a Mini-Gathering it was still a whirlwind affair for those responsible for putting the event on. As with all Gatherings there is a tremendous amount of work required by the Assistant Chieftain, the Treasurer, and the local ACGS Member hosts. In this instance the Assistant Chieftain, Kathy Whyte and the Treasurer, Dr. Bruce Whyte were also members of the local host committee. Yes, they had double duty. They were assisted in their efforts by local hosts John and Beth Wassell, Steve and Martha Smith and Jenna Sorat.

Participants began arriving at the host hotel in Atlanta on Thursday afternoon. Within hours old friends were greeting one another at the bar, in the hotel lobby, the restaurant and almost any place where they could sit down, have a wee dram and visit.

On Friday afternoon the ACGS Council met to receive the various reports submitted by Officers and Committee Chairs. The agenda was a full one and the members of Council worked hard to provide good input and serious discussion about the various items on the agenda.

On Friday evening the gathering participants enjoyed a Chieftain's Reception and Ceilidh. After welcoming the guests, I turned the entire affair over to those attending. The Chieftain's Reception is primarily a "meet and greet" where old friends come together in Clanship after another year and new members and first-time attendees are welcomed and taken under the wing of the "old hands." I encouraged everyone to "work the room like a politician" and they did just that.

A Ceilidh was added to the Chieftain's Reception this year. The ACGS Piper, Matt Kuldell performed an extraordinary program of MacGregor music for the bagpipe. The tunes were taken from a MacGregor Music Collection presented to ACGS by Sir Malcolm several years ago. Preceding each tune, Matt spoke about the technicalities of each piece of music and the history behind the music. Everyone in attendance enjoyed themselves and some said they were sad the evening had to end.

The Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday morning beginning with a solemn Memorial Service lead by the ACGS Chaplain, the Rev. Thad Osborne. White flowers were placed on a ceremonial wreath as the names of Society members who had passed away during the year were read by the Chaplain. Piper Matt Kuldell played the traditional Flowers of The Forest.

FROM THE CHIEFTAIN'S DESK

After the Annual General Meeting, participants gathered for the Saturday Luncheon Banquet. As usual, attendees donned their very best Scottish attire. The women were lovely, the men handsome and the children were all beautiful and well behaved.

The guest speaker was noted Gaelic Scholar, Dr. Michael Newton. He gave an outstanding presentation on the history of the Gaelic language and peoples, incorporating the story of Clan Gregor, their music, their poetry and writings into that Highland history. He even sang several of the old Gaelic tunes a cappella.

Then ... it was over. Everyone had a great time, visiting with old friends, making some new ones, and reflecting upon this new window that had been opened by Dr. Newton into the shared heritage of the members of the American Clan Gregor Society. The business of the Society had been conducted, important decisions made and yes, we are making plans for the **2019 Gathering October 3-5**. It will be held in Norfolk, Virginia. Please keep your eye on the [ACGS website](#) and our [Facebook Group](#) page for the final plans as they are developed. We hope to see you there.

"The moons on the lake, and the mist's on the brae, and the clan has a name that is nameless by day. Then gather, gather, gather, Gregalach!"



Randy Walker

Chieftain - ACGS



GREGOR ON THE WEB

Found Articles
and
Miscellany for your
Enjoyment



MARKSTHESCOT.COM

Posted by Matthew Newsome 27 March, 2010, at X Marks the Scot. ["Rules" For Wearing Family Tartan](#), page 13.

Many years ago I happened upon a lovely old MacGregor tartan kilt on Ebay that was just my size. It was a vintage kilt, nice heavy weight cloth. I believe the minimum opening bid was something to the effect of \$75. This was before I was making kilts myself, and as someone who wore kilts on a near-daily basis for work, I was looking for a way to inexpensively expand my kilt wardrobe. So I placed the one and only bid on this beauty. And I won a wonderful vintage MacGregor kilt for a pittance!

Problem is.... I'm not a MacGregor. Nor do I claim to be one.

I don't wear this kilt that often any more -- partly because my kilt wardrobe has expanded quite a bit since I learned to make my own. Partly because it is an older kilt and I don't really want to wear it out. And partly, yes, because I'm not a MacGregor and therefore the tartan doesn't have any personal significance to me.

But back when I was starting out, it was a good decent kilt that I found at a price I

could afford. Sure, for the same price I could have gotten a cheap poly-acrylic Asian import, but because I wasn't too picky on the tartan, I was able to have a nice, well made, authentically Scottish kilt to wear.

Anyway, that's how I acquired said kilt. ... Shortly [thereafter] I wore it to the Stone Mountain Highland Games. A gaggle of MacGregors were walking past me and saw me in the kilt. They called me over, and told me they were gathering up for the parade of the clans, and they invited me to march with them. I thanked them and respectfully declined, because, as I told them, I was not actually a MacGregor. I had purchased the kilt second-hand. They didn't blink an eye. In fact, they said they didn't care if I was a MacGregor or not, they wanted all the MacGregor tartan kilts they could find on parade! I still had to decline their offer because I was needed elsewhere. But such was the reaction of a large group of Scottish-American clansmen to someone not of their clan wearing their tartan. (cont. next page)

GREGOR ON THE WEB

Fast forward to the same Highland Games at Stone Mountain, this time in 2008. The honored guest is Capt. Sir Malcolm MacGregor of MacGregor and his wife Fiona MacGregor (nee Armstrong). On this occasion I was wearing my Armstrong kilt, which as I explained earlier in this thread I have maternal ties to. Lady Fiona's maiden name was Armstrong, and when I met the couple that started a conversation on its own.

In any case, the MacGregors were going to be staying in the area for the next week,

and I invited them to come see the Scottish Tartans Museum during their stay. They graciously accepted, and a few days after the Games I had the opportunity to play host to the chief of the MacGregor clan and his wife. What kilt did I wear to welcome them? My old vintage MacGregor kilt!

During his visit we had a rather lengthy conversation about tartans. Sir Malcolm is actually one of the few clan chiefs who has taken the time and effort to study the subject of tartan and has some rather well formed opinions on the tartans of his clan... I admitted to him frankly that I had no blood ties at all to the MacGregors, but that I decided to wear the MacGregor tartan that day in honor of his visit. He had no problem with me wearing it, in fact he was honored.

If you look closely in the ... photo, you may notice that the MacGregor is actually wearing - gasp! - trousers! He had dressed comfortably for the car trip, and actually joked when we were taking the photo that anyone looking at it would assume that of the two of us, I was the clan chief!

Point is that this native Scot, this Highland chief no less!, and one who cares enough about the history and traditions of his own clan tartan to study the matter and form an educated opinion, had no problem at all with this non-clan member wearing the tartan in honor of his visit.



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INTERVIEW: CHIEFTAIN RANDY WALKER

1. We have lots of official Chieftain photos of you - how about a picture of you as a regular guy? Maybe you and Teresa together?

Here is a photo of Teresa and I on a hiking trail in North Carolina. Just being regular folks.

2. Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in a small town of about 3,500 people in South Western Virginia. The original name of the town was Graham, VA, named after the Scottish doctor who established the community. It is now named Bluefield, VA, but there is going to be a referendum soon to rename the town as Graham, VA. This was a community settled by Scots, Scots-Irish, Welsh and English pioneers.

3. Were your parents interested in your Scottish heritage or did you become interested on your own?

While I was growing up I heard my father refer several times to our family being somehow connected to Clan Gregor. I can remember people coming to our house and they would talk to my dad about "all of these old dead people." As you can see I did not pay much attention. Having a Scottish heritage was common place where I grew up. Our neighbors on one side were Buchanans and on the other side they were St.Clairs. If you look through my high school year books it is like looking at a calling of the clans. It was not until my dad passed away in 1971 that I realized that our Scottish heritage was more than I really knew about. I found three items in an old chest that my Scottish ancestor brought from Scotland. One was a small leather bound book that was a diary he kept from sometime in 1731 and ending in the fall of 1733. There was also a New Testament published in Edinburgh

in 1709 and a small piece of Tartan (MacGregor Red & Black). It was moth eaten and I truly did not know what I had. I mean after all it was just an old piece of moth eaten red and black checkered cloth. Our Scottish ancestor who came to this country in 1732 was a man by the name of Thomas Walker. He came from Knapdale, Scotland and his mother, my 7th great-grandmother, was Mary McGregor. She passed away a few months after giving birth to Thomas from complications associated with giving birth. Thomas settled near Orange, VA in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

4. Of your family's personal Christmas traditions, which is your favorite?

My father loved Christmas. It was his favorite holiday and he would decorate to the nines. I do not have that same passion for decorating but like him I love being together with family, the good food, and exchanging gifts.



INTERVIEW: CHIEFTAIN RANDY WALKER

5. What are your hobbies? What do you do when you aren't Chieftain-ing?

What are my hobbies? I don't think I have ever had any hobbies other than reading. I try to read every day for at least an hour and I finally decided along with my wife that if I brought a book into the house another one had to go out. Our bookshelves would not hold any more.

6. Do you have any pets?

We do have a pet. Snickers is her name and she is a 15 year old Calico who is on her last legs. She is suffering from a tumor behind one eye that was removed last month. Now she is a one eyed kitty. We are running a home hospice for the cat and I expect it will not be long before we will have to let our old kitty go.

7. How long have you been a member of ACGS?

22 years.

8. What leadership positions within the society have you held over the years?

Over the years I have had the honor of serving as Scribe, Area Deputy Chieftain for Texas, Ranking Deputy Chieftain and now as Chieftain. When I became a member of the Society I never expected that I would be anything other than a member.

9. What's your favorite part of being Chieftain?

My favorite part of being Chieftain is having the honor of being able to meet so many other people of MacGregor heritage at the various Scottish heritage events that I attend around the country (four states thus far). This gives me the opportunity to "tell our story." The ACGS story and the Clan Gregor story. I think we are indeed fortunate to be able to be part of this never ending story of Clan Gregor. The Clan that refused to die.

10. What's your favorite part of being a convener at Highland Games?

My favorite part of being a convener at Highland Games was like my answer to question 9. The story ... telling the story. What a tragic yet exciting

story and most people have no knowledge of the Clan Gregor story. Many times I meet people who have a MacGregor heritage who really do not have a full understanding of "their story."

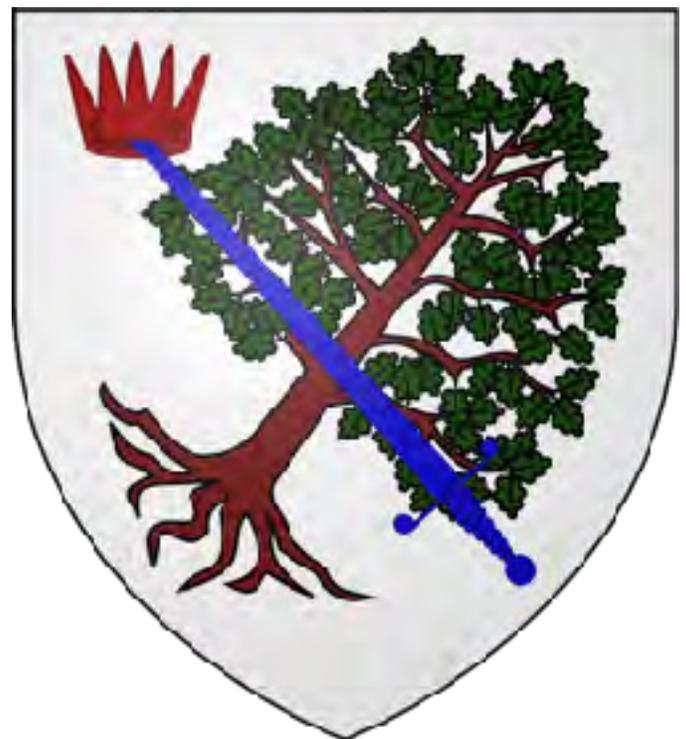
11. Of the various MacGregor tartans, which is your favorite?

My favorite MacGregor Tartan is the MacGregor Red & Black. Why? Perhaps it goes back to that little moth eaten piece of Tartan that I discovered in 1971.

12. Of all the people who do all three, who is your favorite newsletter editor/ADC/Genealogy Committee Chair?

Of course you are my favorite newsletter editor/ADC/Genealogy Committee Chair (big smile).

MANY THANKS TO RANDY WALKER!



CHRISTMAS AND HOGMANAY IN SCOTLAND

**GUEST CONTRIBUTOR:
MICHAEL MACFARLANE**

It may surprise many people to note that Christmas was not celebrated as a festival and was virtually banned in Scotland for around 400 years, from the end of the 17th century to the 1950s. The reason for this dates back to the years of Protestant Reformation, when the strait-laced Kirk proclaimed Christmas as a Popish or Catholic feast, and as such needed banning.

The actual prohibition didn't last too long. Following the Protestant Reformation, it was introduced by the 1640 Act of Parliament, but was brought back in 1686 - some years after the death of Oliver Cromwell. However, the Church of Scotland – a Presbyterian church - had discouraged 'Yule' celebrations since around 1583. The church believed that there was no basis for celebrating the day as it didn't reflect what was in the bible "keeping the Christ in Christmas". There are even records of some people being arrested over unlawful celebrations during the years it was officially banned.

It was therefore celebrated very quietly in Scotland and this remained the case until the 20th century. It only became a public holiday in 1958, with most of the public going about their daily routine on a day we now associate with the closure of almost every business and public service. Even after it became a holiday, Scots were not afforded the luxury to sleep off their hangovers for another 16 years: Boxing Day became a public holiday in 1974.



New Year, the singing of national poet Robert Burns' "Auld Lang Syne" as soon as those bells cease tolling, and the taking of a "cup o' kindness" —or several—in the hours that follow. Other Scottish customs, such as "people dressing up in the hides of cattle and running around the village whilst being hit by sticks" have, for some reason, died out in all but the highlands and islands. (cont. next page)

WHAT IS HOGMANAY?

Hogmanay (Scots: [ˌhɔɡməˈneː]; English: HOG-mə-NAY) is the Scots word for the last day of the year and is synonymous with the celebration of the New Year in the Scottish manner. It is normally followed by further celebration on the morning of New Year's Day or, in some cases, 2 January—a Scottish bank holiday.

The origins of Hogmanay are unclear, but it may be derived from Norse and Gaelic observances. Customs vary throughout Scotland, and usually include gift-giving and visiting the homes of friends and neighbours, with special attention given to the first-foot, the first guest of the new year.

From [Wikipedia](#)

CHRISTMAS AND HOGMANAY IN SCOTLAND

There are several traditions and superstitions that should be taken care of before midnight on the 31st December: these include cleaning the house and taking out the ashes from the fire, there is also the requirement to clear all your debts before “the bells” sound midnight, the underlying message being to clear out the remains of the old year, have a clean break and welcome in a young, New Year on a happy note.

“First footing” (or the “first foot” in the house after midnight) is still common across Scotland. To ensure good luck for the house the first foot should be a dark male, and he should bring with him symbolic pieces of coal, shortbread, salt, black bun and a wee dram of whisky. The dark male bit is believed to be a throwback to the Viking days, when a big blonde stranger arriving on your door step with a big axe meant big trouble, and probably not a very happy New Year!

by Michael MacFarlane, President of the International Clan MacFarlane Society, and owner of [Celtic Jackalope](#) (You know - the place where you bought your clan T-shirt at the last Highland Games!)



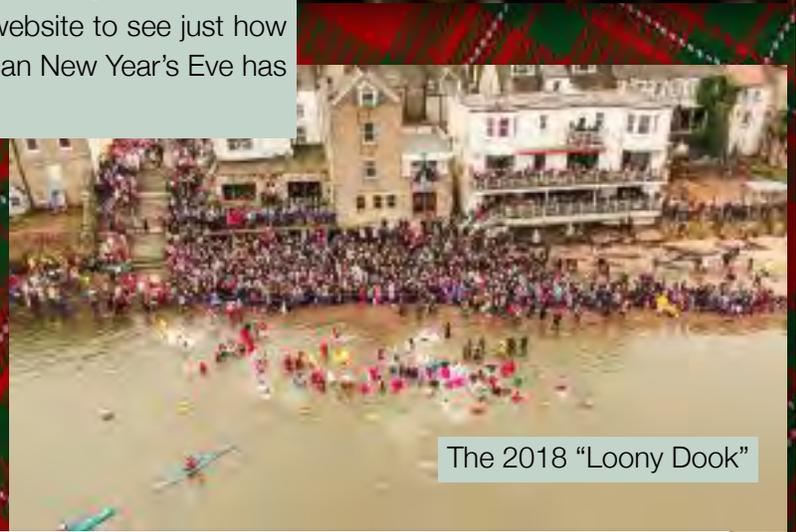
Ceilidh Under the Castle



The 2018 Torchlight Procession



Photos retrieved from [Edinburgh's Hogmanay](#).
Editor's note: Check out the website to see just how crazy this festival gets. American New Year's Eve has nothing on Hogmanay!



The 2018 “Loony Dook”

From [Wikipedia](#): An example of a local Hogmanay custom is the fireball swinging that takes place in Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire, in northeast Scotland. This involves local people making up "balls" of chicken wire filled with old newspaper, sticks, rags, and other dry flammable material up to a diameter of 2 feet, each attached to about 3 feet of wire, chain or nonflammable rope. As the Old Town House bell sounds to mark the new year, the balls are set alight and the swingers set off up the High Street from the Mercat Cross to the Cannon and back, swinging the burning balls around their heads as they go. At the end of the ceremony, any fireballs that are still burning are cast into the harbour.

AREA DEPUTY CHIEFTAIN REPORTS

STEVEN ARGYLE, ADC UTAH

The ACGS represented the clan at the Scots on the Rocks Moab Celtic Festival in Moab, Utah on November 2, 3, & 4. The weather was brisk and sunny this year, no tempestuous winds blowing tents around like last year. We see lots of folks from Arizona and Colorado at this festival. Brian Gregg Sheldon, a MacGregor piper with the Pikes Peak Highlanders pipe band, won 3rd place in the solo pibroch competition. Clansman Luke Garlitz (Lois Ann's grandson) also competed with the Utah Pipe Band.

The scenery is always so breathtaking at this festival! For a newer festival (this was its fifth year) it is quite a hopping place. The Wicked Tinkers even come to play the main entertainment stage. Another entertainment treat was a band called the Knockabouts, comprised of John McGregor and his family.

It was a great success all around. If you're ever in this neck of the woods around the first weekend in November, it is a wonderful experience.



MISCELLANY

VOLUNTEER NEEDED

The Editor would like an assistant to help collect and assemble articles and content for the Ard Coille. NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED, but familiarity with web and email is necessary. Please contact the Editor at californian@acgsus.org.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED

Are you interested, as an ACGS Member, to become the next Area Deputy Chieftain (ADC) in SC? I will donate to you the tent banners, flags with poles & stands, Clan Gregor Tartan 8-foot table cloths, Roll-up banner, handouts, etc.
Contact: michaelallenmcgregor@gmail.com.

DID YE KEN? (DID YOU KNOW?)

Did you know that Pict does not mean painted? According to Dr. Bruce Durie in his excellent book *Your Scottish American Ancestry* the word Pict never did mean painted except in the fevered imagination of Eumenius, a Gracco-Roman orator and writer in the middle of Gaul about 300 AD.

QUARTERLY BOOK REPORT BY RANDY WALKER

THE HIGHLAND CLANS

By Alistair Moffat

By Randy Walker - Chieftain

This book traces the history of the highland clans from their Celtic origin to the present day. Mr. Moffat is an expert on the clans of Scotland and anyone who has an interest in Scotland and the Highland Clans will be interested in reading this book. Available on Amazon.





“ARDOILLE”
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