

Chief's Message and Report – 2 August 2009

We are slowly returning to normal life after all the excitements in Edinburgh and the Killin Highland Games.

The International Gathering of the Clans and Highland Games in Holyrood Park held on Saturday and Sunday 25th and 26th July are judged to have been a success. Preliminary estimates are that 47,000 people from 40 countries attended the Games. (see website. <thegathering2009.com>).

HRH Prince Charles, Patron of the Gathering, and HRH the Duchess of Cornwall attended the Games in the morning on Saturday. The Games were hosted by the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs. The Chiefs were lined up to be presented as their Royal Highnesses entered the park from the grounds of Holyrood House. The Duchess of Cornwall is descended from Sir Allan Napier Macnab of Dundurn, Prime Minister of Upper Canada 1854-56 and she is President of Scotland's Gardens Scheme, of which my wife Diana is a Vice President. In our brief conversation she told me that she hoped very much to be able to visit "Dundurn" in Hamilton Ontario if they visit Canada next year. (For those who don't know, "Dundurn" in Hamilton is named after Dundurn near St Fillans in Perthshire).

There was a good turnout of Macnabs and their descendants at the Holyrood Games, about a hundred of whom, but not all, signed the Visitor's Book in the Clan Tent. Over half of these were from Scotland; others were from England (which included my sister-in-law and her daughter and grandson), Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Belgium. Jamie and I were greatly encouraged by this turn out and we very much hope that the enthusiasm shown can be turned into some form of resuscitated "Clan Association" in the UK. To this end it is gratifying that we now have e-mail as well as postal addresses!

Perhaps the highlight for those who took part was the March of the Clans up the Royal Mile from Holyrood to the esplanade at Edinburgh Castle. This started at 7pm and ended at about 9.30pm in the evening on Saturday 25th. Some 8,000 clansmen of all ages marched in groups of clans each led by different pipe bands. They were cheered on by an estimated 20,000 spectators, who lined the pavements up the Royal Mile. Clan Macnab was led by our three grandsons, James, Finlay and Francis Macnab who took it in turns to carry the Chief's banner and milked the applause of the crowd! It was all a very jolly affair enhanced by the closeness of the spectators along what is a rather narrow street. This meant that there was a great deal of repartee between marchers and spectators.

The Killin Games on Wednesday 29th were an equally if not more enjoyable event. These Games are run by volunteers in a village where everybody knows each other. For Diana and myself it was like a "homecoming", perhaps even more so for Jamie, Geoffrey and Katie who grew up there. They were there with their children, six in all, and Geoffrey's wife Catriona. Jamie's wife Janie and Katie's husband Christopher Cox were unable to be there due to work.

We were also joined by my cousin Patrick Elsmie, Managing Director of Gleneagles Hotel with his wife Pat and son Simon together with about fifteen other clansmen and women mainly from Scotland and the USA.

We had a small Clan Tent near the entrance to the park, where we all met up after the parade and march from the Dochart Bridge to the Breadalbane Park. As Chieftain of the Games I, together with Diana and Charlie Grant, Chairman of the Games (whom we have known since he was a boy), led the parade behind the Comrie Pipe Band. Our tent was a good meeting place and a welcome refuge during two sharp showers! – altogether a happy day!

Jamie and I would like to thank all those who helped in the Clan Tents in Edinburgh and Killin. In particular I would mention Lanny and Janie McNabb and Joseph McNabb, all from Tennessee. Lanny and Joseph are founder members of the American Clan Society. Janie took endless photographs which we look forward to seeing! Finally we wish to thank my granddaughter Daisy aged 10, who did stalwart work in both tents selling the Clan History booklets. The proceeds of these sales will go to the Macnab Memorial Trust for the upkeep of Inchbuie the Clan burial island at Killin.

It was also nice to have Albert and Margaret Somerville with us in Edinburgh. Margaret is a former President of the Clan Society. She and her brother John and his wife, who were with us in Edinburgh and Killin, have been loyal supporters of the old Clan Society and clan events for many years. Their father Duncan was President of the Clan Society when my great uncle was Chief. Their great grandfather was a shepherd at the head of Glen Lochay. John now lives at Tighnabruich in Argyll. His sister and Albert moved to Northumberland a few years ago.

This message and report comes with Diana's, Jamies's and my own very best wishes to all Macnab clansmen and descendants. When Jamie and I have collated everything we have gathered over the last two weeks you will hear more from us.

Guneagal

James Macnab of Macnab