

The Gathering 09'

At the invitation of James Charles Macnab of Macnab, I was privileged to attend a Council of The Standing Chiefs on Friday July 24th at the new Scottish Parliament Building in Edinburgh, Scotland. The building itself is very controversial and difficult to understand, however the Parliament chamber is very impressive. Attending was 100 standing chiefs from all over the world. There was even one from Tasmania, as well as numerous countries outside of Scotland.

The first half of the day was taken with some rather boring speakers who rambled into Scottish history and occasionally touched on the reason for attendance. The afternoon was divided into several "break out" sessions hoping to discuss certain designated subjects. Again, family history and unrelated information. It became apparent to us that the focus for the whole Gathering was to promote tourism and I felt we had been exploited to some degree, however at that point no one, not even the organizers knew what was about to take place. How could they? They had always felt they could not do a Gathering the same way we do it in North America and other places.

There was a nice reception in the afternoon but most attendees had places to go and left rather soon. I had changed in the airport and taxied directly to The Parliament Building and Janie had gone on to our apartment. I took a cab and went over to New Town.

Saturday morning presented questionable weather, as always in Scotland, but never dampened the spirit of 50,000 plus who attended. The grounds of Holyrood Park could not have been better chosen. It was absolutely pristine and well thought out. Each clan had a tent or two (like we do) and various activities were going on continuously. Bottom line is – they had no idea how this type of event could take place. But the real difference and the most important element was – THE CLANS!! Heretofore they had games, and never emphasised the importance of gathering clan families together. And, as we all know, it is the main reason we participate in "games", to bring our families together.

Saturday afternoon saw a parade up the Royal Mile to the Esplanade of Edinburgh Castle for the pageant. The estimated crowd of 20,000 + lined the streets and were amazingly enthusiastic! It made me proud I am Scottish and a Macnab. The pageant left most of us questioning the theme. It was supposed to picture the history of Scotland, but, in my opinion, it was so surreal I must admit, I did not fully understand it. It was still a very impressive event in an impressive venue and had a packed house.

Sunday morning, weather about the same, only slightly less attendance. The amazing thing was the vast number who were from outside the country. Some estimates mention up to 40%. And amazingly, most locals said they knew nothing about the event until the last few weeks, where we have known about it for two years or more.

Local Macnabs were pleasantly surprised at the number of our clan who came to our tent. Over 60 on Saturday and almost 50 on Sunday. Several old friends and plenty of new ones. Our Chief and his son Jamie as well as Joe and I were available to meet and greet and it was a truly wonderful experience.

Killin Games

As some of you know, Killin has their games on Wednesday each year at Breadalbane Park. This year, our Chief was Head of the Games and after the parade from The Falls of Dochart that we lead, James very impressively opened the event with the traditional ceremony. We were provided with a family tent which became a gathering place for additional Macnabs who did not attend The Gathering in Edinburgh. Again, the questionable weather, but no one seemed to notice! I suppose they are used to it.

James, Diana, Jamie, Geoffrey and spouses and daughter Katie as well as 6 (at my best count) grandchildren were there and having great fun. Three 7-8 year olds led us at both events and were an instant hit with the crowd.

We had a short visit with Ethel Dowling at Kinnell House who has always been so kind and gracious to Macnabs. She is a wonderful person and knows how important the house is to our clan. We are eternally grateful to Ethel and her family.

Summation

I have been to Scotland several times and always hate to leave, but this time was very special and meaningful. I feel it has brought our family closer all around the world. And even though Lord Jamie Sempill who did a remarkable job with the whole event, probably considered the tourism angle more than anything else, I think it accomplished much more than that. In my opinion it put a whole new face on Scotland. It connected us once more with our heritage and stressed the importance of a "oneness" that we all share.

I heard one clansman complaining that his Chief was aloof and inaccessible to his clan. I am very proud to say that this is not the case with our Chief. Had you been there or known him as I have for over 30 years, you would have been proud of him as I am. Even though James is an "old school" in many ways, he is a man of exceptional character. His is a very interesting man and represents us very well. I am very proud of him as a friend as well as our Chief.

But an even better aspect of our Chief is his family. Jamie, his oldest son is a wonderful man with an absolutely adorable wife and two children (who I offered to purchase for any amount of money). Geoffrey, his wife and two children, Katie and her family as well as another daughter who could not attend are a wonderful family that are warm and friendly to all Macnabs and related families. So it would seem we have many years of continuation of the leadership we all hope for.

Why is James the man he is? I think he would readily admit – Diana. James's wife is a very remarkable person who is most interesting to be around. Do not ask a

question you do not want a frank answer from with Diana. You always know where you stand with her and she is the jewel who has helped form James over the years. She is a lovely person whom I am proud to call a kinsman.

To us it was a remarkable week. To be as well received both in Edinburgh as well as Killin is heartwarming. It seems as though when you go to Killin they know you are there in a very short time. They know who we are and are always so cordial. If you have not been there, make it a point to plan a trip. You will always remember it.

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