

## Chief's Message 1 November 2009

My message of 2 August 2009 ended with the statement that you would hear more from us about the events that took place in Edinburgh on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> July when we had collated everything. Those of you, who have received the "Dreadnaugh" summer 2009 edition of the newsletter of the Clan Macnab Society of North America, will have read Lanny McNabb's account of the events, (which is now posted on the clan website).

It is possible to read a great deal about the Gathering and Highland Games held in Holyrood Park on the "Internet". There is therefore no point in going into too much detail here. While there were some shortcomings in some of the facilities in Holyrood Park, I think all are agreed that the Gathering and Games were enjoyable and a great success. It is estimated that it generated £10.4 million to the Scottish economy, the main beneficiary being Edinburgh City at £8 million.

As Lanny states the march up the Royal Mile made those of us, who took part, feel proud. There was however one Macnab who later told me that he was damned if he would pay to walk up a public highway. So he watched the proceedings and cheered everyone on from the pavement (sidewalk). He enjoyed the spectacle!

The least successful of the events was the pageant. I agree with Lanny's comment about the theme being "surreal". We did not really enjoy it. The best part was the massed pipe bands at its conclusion.

The downside of "the Gathering 2009" is that it has made a reported loss of more than £600,000, but it could still go ahead again in the future. The company which put on the events, "The Gathering 2009 Ltd", has been taken over by a joint Public private partnership with the city of Edinburgh called DEMA (Destination Edinburgh Marketing Alliance), who along with the Scottish Government has agreed to meet all of The Gathering 2009 Ltd's commitments. Full details can be seen on the Internet. Nevertheless the event has been described in some quarters as the most successful one-off event to have taken place in Scotland.

To quote Lanny's comment, *"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 emphasized the importance of gathering Clan families together. And, as we all know, (in the USA) it is the main reason we participate in games, to bring our families together."*

This comment demonstrates the difference between the American concept of Highland Games and the traditional games in Highland Scotland, as distinct from Highland Clan gatherings. While some Clan societies put up tents at various games, the Games themselves are local traditional sports events, which is what people come to watch or take part in.

Those Clan Societies, which do put up tents, generally do so at the Games which take place in the district connected with the clan. The Clan would normally hold its "gathering" as a separate event. While 2009 has been special in that it was part of

the year of the “homecoming” celebration the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the poet Robert Burns, of which The Gathering and Games in Edinburgh were part and a success, Gatherings of the Clans held in Edinburgh in the past have not been successful.

The Killin Games have only been going for a few years and the Chief of Clan Gregor was Chieftain of the Games until three years ago. Members of Clan Gregor Society have only attended when he was present.

Lanny also remarked, “...*amazingly, most locals said they knew nothing about the event (ie. the Gathering 2009), until the last few weeks, where we have known about it for two years or more.*”

The only reason any “local” Macnabs turned up in Edinburgh and Killin is because I did a mailshot to about 600 addresses inviting Macnabs to the clan tents in Edinburgh and Killin. (My sporran is now rather light). Until I wrote to them most considered the “Gathering 2009” was just to promote Edinburgh.

I am disappointed that Lanny got so little out of the Clan Convention and concluded that its purpose was to promote tourism. In his defence if I had arrived late off a plane from the USA I would have gone straight to sleep. The Convention took place on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> and was separate from the events on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. It was convened by the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs.

The stated aim of the Convention was to demonstrate that the kinship embodied by the Scottish Clans, Names and Families has a relevance to 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland. It is through the Clan, Names and Families, led by the Chiefs, that the worldwide Scottish community can foster their Scottish identity and maintain links with Scotland.

The Standing Council, while asserting the key role of Chiefs and the Council in building such links, wished to gain input from clan organisations and Scottish societies abroad. I invited David McNab President of the Clan Macnab Society of North America to accompany me and my son Jamie. In the event he was unable to get to Scotland and nominated Lanny to represent him and their society.

The morning session was devoted to the usual welcome and introductory speeches followed by a keynote address by Jim Mather MSP Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism in the Scottish Government. (I suspect Lanny may have missed these).

These were followed by Professor Jim Hunter of the University of the Highlands and Islands and by the Lord Lyon King of Arms. Their subject was “The Global Scottish Community and its Clan and Kinship Links to Scotland”.

The next two speakers were; Bob McWilliam, President Emeritus of the Council of Scottish Clan Associations, and Donald MacLaren of MacLaren, Clan Chief. Their subject was “Clan Chiefs: Linking the Global Community to modern Scotland”.

All these speeches can be read on the internet. They were all quite long, perhaps too long. Some of what was said was not new to me but I found them interesting. I think my son Jamie gained a better insight into clans worldwide. Tourism certainly came into it and rightly so, but it did not dominate the proceedings.

It was a pity that the Breakout Sessions were interrupted for some time by a fire alarm. Jamie and I attended a group, which discussed the role played by St Andrews Societies, Burns Club, etc. and how they are organised in the USA and elsewhere compared with the UK. Into this came the differences in "Trust Law" and "Tax Status" between the different countries. A lot more study of this is required.

To conclude; it is clear that there are differences between what Americans want out of their Scottish origins and what we in Scotland feel about it. Americans, Canadians and others are ethnic Scots, who are citizens of another country, will inevitably be displaying their 'Scottishness' in different ways. If you are a Scot living in your own country you have no need to display it, but you may wish to be part of a clan society, Burns club, etc. or just play that good old Scottish game of golf!

The Clan Convention has been useful. It was never going to "command" or "direct", but I hope it has helped us to understand each other better.

My family and I send you all our very best wishes, wherever you may be.

Guneagal

James Macnab of Macnab