



CLAN MACLAREN SOCIETY

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2026



Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, July 2025

Kinsmen,

This year, following our Highland Games, I shall be formally invested as Chief of Clan Labhran. My father appointed me his tanist and successor to the chiefship and spent years preparing me for the role despite it coming far too soon. My right to the chiefship is not being challenged although I had hoped to matriculate my arms before proceeding with the investiture. Unfortunately, that process has proved rather more protracted than hoped, and we will delay no longer.

I am also deeply honoured to have been invited to serve as Chieftain of the Games at Lochearnhead this year. It is a privilege to follow in my father's footsteps, and I look forward immensely to taking part in what promises to be a memorable occasion. Attending this year we have Linda McLaren (Chairman of our Australian Society), Cathy Botkin Galloway (Chairman of our American Society), Jacqueline McLaren (Lord Provost of Glasgow), our friends from Germany and many more clansmen from Scotland and all over the world. We will also be bringing the Claymore of Donald MacLaren of Invernenty to the Games this year which is splendid. This has been on loan at Culloden Museum and I have just signed a new loan agreement to keep it on display at the museum for years to come.

In my previous newsletter we had just begun work on restoring the Old Kirk and I am pleased to announce these works are finally complete. After over a decade of hard work and determination from Hugh Crawford, the works are now done and to a very high standard by the Corstophine Roofing and Building Company who also did a great job repairing the cairn on Creag An Tuirc. It is a great sadness that Hugh passed away earlier this year but he saw the works finished and it is a great testament to the man he was that so many paid their respects at his funeral in Edinburgh, he was a true Duine uasal. We owe him a huge debt of gratitude as Hugh did so much for the Clan and Society over the years, a commitment that his wife, Catherine, continues to uphold.

I want to say a heartfelt thank you on behalf of my family and the Clan as a whole for Inna Gudavadze's hugely generous donation in my father's memory which contributed greatly to my father's headstone and the restoring of the Old Kirk.

A special thank you goes to Peggi Rogers (MLitt, BA, Fellow – SAScot Eachdraiche Clann Labhrainn Aimeireagaidh a Tuath/Historian - Clan MacLaren Society of North America) for the tireless and scholarly work she does researching and protecting our clan history and congratulations on being officially voted in as a full member of the Royal Historical Society.

I also want to say congratulations to Cathy Maclaren who has been a long time supporter of the Clan and Society and who turned 90 last December.

Last year I travelled to America for only the third time in my life (though certainly not the last) to serve as Chieftain at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in North Carolina. It was an extraordinary experience, made all the more special by the tremendous turnout from our clansfolk. The few days spent in the mountains were truly memorable, and it was a pleasure to meet so many of our American kinsmen, hear their stories, and strengthen the bonds that unite us across the Atlantic.

During the Games, I was pleased to formally appoint David Quillin as Clan Piper. David played at our late Chief's funeral and many times with him while he was still alive. He possesses not only exceptional musical talent but also a profound understanding of the spirit and traditions of our clan. He is what my old friend Magi called a Spiritual Piper. There is no one more fitting to carry this responsibility.

I do have to apologise for the tardiness of this year's newsletter and my failure to send out a hard copy last year. This is no fault of our excellent Newsletter Editor, Marina, who has been doing brilliant work despite having a very busy and demanding job. The fault is mine, but I will do better.

Many people have offered invaluable support over the past several years, and none more so than Steve Quillin. A close friend and trusted confidant of my father, Steve has extended the same friendship and counsel to me. He, my father and I shared many 'big talks' and I look forward to many more in the future. It therefore gives me great pleasure to announce that Steve has accepted the position of Seanchaidh to Clan MacLaren. This ancient office, happily seeing a revival in recent years, encompasses the preservation of clan traditions and oral history, while also serving in an advisory role to the Chief.

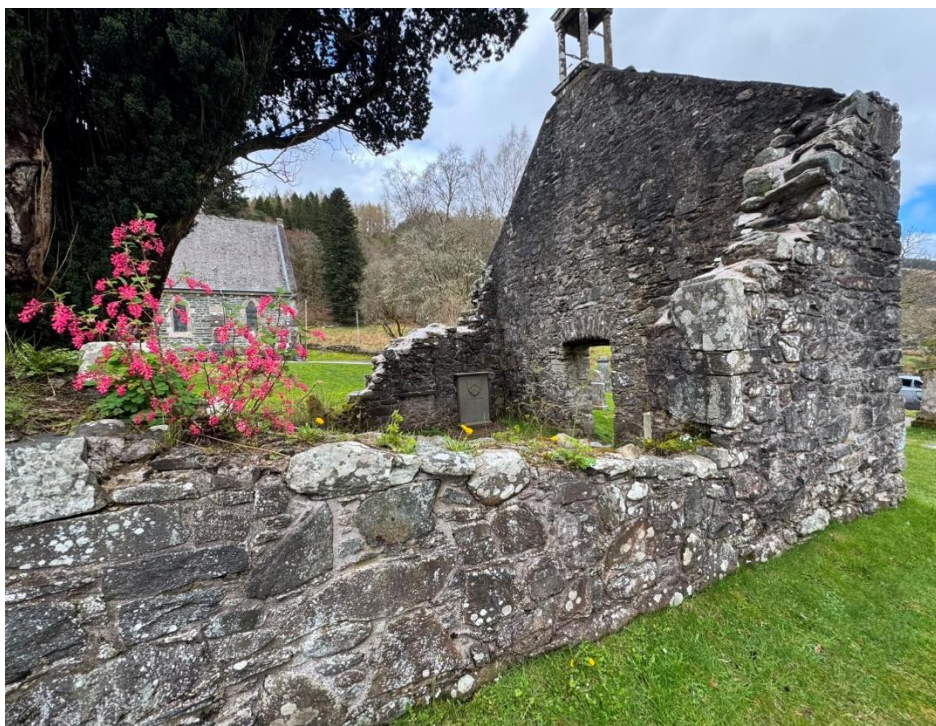
For the second time, we held our Annual General Meeting via Zoom this year. Despite a few initial technical challenges (which my brother Louis valiantly overcame!), it proved a great success, allowing participation from members across North America, Australasia, and beyond. The strong attendance demonstrated once again the vitality and reach of our clan community. We intend to hold this year's meeting in the same format. As part of the AGM process, all council and office-bearer positions will be vacated and opened for election. Should any member wish to stand for a role or contribute more directly to the running of the Society, I would be delighted to hear from you.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Games and, afterwards, for the clan supper and my investiture at 19:00 in the Balquhiddy Village Hall on the 25th of July (details on our website).

Florian MacLaren of MacLaren

Late Chief's Headstone

Our late Chief Donald MacLaren of MacLaren's headstone was carved and installed by Jack Suthers of Suthers Stonemasonry and made possible through the generous support of the family's dear friend, Inna Gudavadze.



Repairs to the Old Kirk, Balquhiddar

In something of a saga, spread over several years, the repair work at the Old Kirk was finally completed in July 2025. The description of work and drawings were all approved by Historic Environment Scotland who have control over scheduled monuments. It was vital to preserve the substance of the Old Kirk and all it means to the community. Tenders were sought from several contractors and when weather allowed, work began in June 2025 and finished in July. Hugh Crawford, Chartered Architect and Planning Consultant, oversaw the works and was glad to see it all coming to a conclusion. The works involved picking and pointing the walls and checking out stonework and securing where necessary. The bellcote, although looking fragile, was in good condition. Vegetation has been removed and is kept under control by Florian MacLaren. While the Old Kirk is not now a place of worship, it has been and is the final resting place of Chiefs of the Clan MacLaren, notably Chief Donal MacLaren who died in 2023 and is greatly missed.

The Old Kirk, its setting and its history are so much of the Balquhiddar experience, an experience which draws people from all over the world and shares with the Isle of Iona, the description of being “a very thin place between Earth and Heaven”. The minister appointed to the newly built charge in 1631, the Reverend Robert Kirk had a keen feeling for the supernatural and the existence of spiritual orders both good and bad, as he described “of a middle nature betwixt man and angels”.

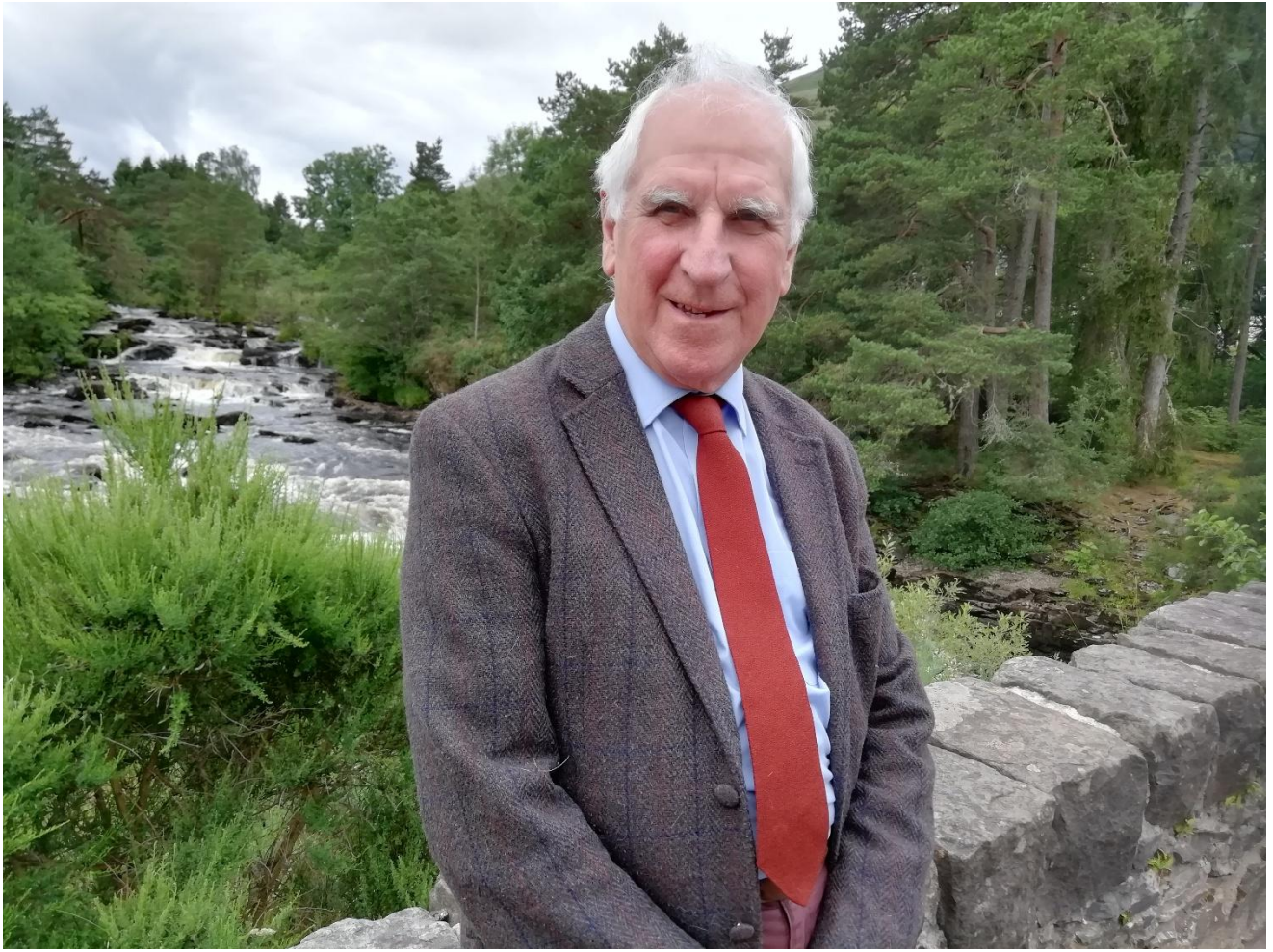
The tranquil appearance belies the stormy nature of its past from early Pictish times, through the coming of Christianity, and establishment of communities and clan feuds; a place where four old regions of Alba met and passages were established through the hills and glens at the heart of what we now call Scotland. Drovers passed by with their cattle to go to the trysts at Crieff and then to Falkirk or beyond, hardy men lodging at Strathyre and at ten mile distances to reach their destinations.

It is an ancient community, a cross roads at the ancient heart of Scotland. The site of the Old Kirk is a focal point of that history where St Angus brought Christianity to Balquhiddar and established his oratory on a site which was already recognised for its pagan origins. In the long history of Balquhiddar we can pick up the trail of many visitors such as William and Dorothy Wordsworth, who visited the Trossachs on Tuesday 13th September 1803, and passed through Balquhiddar. Dorothy afterwards wrote that as they “stepped westward” towards Loch Katrine from Callendar, “I can add nothing to my former description of the Trossachs, except that we departed with our old delightful remembrances endeared and many new ones”.

On 3rd September 1869 Queen Victoria visited Balquhiddar, and the outlook at the steps of the Church inspired her to write “Nothing can surpass the beauty of the spot”. A royal endorsement indeed. A tranquil place, but steeped in history, clan feuds, a thoroughfare of past events; not so much a place in space, but a drama in time.

Hugh W J Crawford, Chartered Architect and Consultant Town Planner 1938 – 2025

Updated by his widow, Catherine. Our visit to the Old Kirk in July 2025 was Hugh's last site visit.





General Articles of Interest

Search for Family Bible [update]

I have not received anything since you kindly entered our request in the CMS magazine but I have recently returned from a holiday to Australia to celebrate my brother's 80th birthday.

During the holiday his family asked if I had, had any success in the request for info about the bible. It must have sparked an urge in my niece because the next day she came up with a name that may have some idea as to the wear about of the bible.

His name is Christopher Hughes and was a nephew of Gladys MacLaren the last known person to have the bible. Gladys's sister Mary was Christopher's mother and I believe she and Gladys were living in the same house in Inverness when Gladys passed away.

Can I ask if it maybe possible to ask if anyone knows Christopher Hughes, I presume he lives in Inverness and if successful would he contact me by email.

On another topic, while in Australia we visited the war memorial in Geraldton in memory of the HMAS Sidney an Australia warship that was lost with all hands in 1941 off the coast of Western Australia. It appears that a German vessel disguised as a Dutch merchant ship was asked to clarify its identity and when it came along side the Sidney, opened fire at point blank range. One of the crew of the Sidney was a Petty Officer Arthur McClaren and my relatives left flowers under his name, the memorial is all the names of the crew laid out in the shape of the Sidney, scaled down of course.

Dave McLaren

[if you would like to contact Dave, please reach out to myself on "newsletter.editor@clanmaclarensociety.com" and I will put you in touch]

American Kinsmen's Trip to Scotland

We received a lovely photo review/travelogue from two kinsmen from the United States, Judy and Jon McLaren, from their trip to Scotland, from California, in August 2025, filled with brilliant photos and humorous accompanying text. Unfortunately, the format isn't compatible with this newsletter, however the full travelogue has been uploaded to the Clan MacLaren website – please do have a look!



David Quillin, Appointed Official Clan MacLaren Piper

David Quillin has been devoted to the art of Scottish bagpiping since the age of 12. He attended St. Andrews Presbyterian College on a bagpiping scholarship, where he earned a bachelor's degree in communication in 2007. During his time at St. Andrews, he competed with the college's pipe band and helped win the Southern Pipe Band Championship twice.

Throughout his piping career, David has achieved distinction both nationally and internationally. He competed at the prestigious World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow, Scotland, with the Grandfather Mountain Highlanders in 2005, earning an eighth-place finish, and again in 2015 with the Worcester Kiltie Pipe Band. His individual accomplishments include being named Piper of the Day at the Stone Mountain Highland Games in Georgia in 2004 and 2008, as well as at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in North Carolina in 2007 and 2012.

David's deep appreciation for his Scottish heritage is reflected not only in his performances but also in his compositions. He composed an original 6/8 march in tribute to Maida MacLaren of MacLaren and was deeply honored to be invited to play at the funeral of The MacLaren of MacLaren in 2023.

In addition to the bagpipes, David enjoys playing a variety of musical instruments, particularly the guitar and mandolin. He is the son of Stephen and Sylvia Quillin, a proud member of the Clan MacLaren Society of North America, and resides in Durham, North Carolina.

Rosemary Wellon

Additional Point of Interest

Newsletter readers may recall an article in the 2022 issue featuring an Edinburgh-based tree surgeon called Crawford McLaren. Our Chief Florian is also a tree surgeon, based in London but a frequent visitor to his clan homeland of Balquhiddy. To have two M(a)cLaren tree surgeons amongst our number is quite a coincidence. They met at our Clan Winter Dinner in 2022 and seemed to get on well.

First time Dad Crawford has been telling us about his daughter, Bonnie Georgina Grace McLaren, middle names Georgina after her Mum Laura's grandmother and Grace after her Dad's grandmother. Born in April 2025, Bonnie has brought enormous delight to her parents and will grow up proud of her surname.

Membership Secretary's Report

Total membership numbers are up slightly – membership is 669 (585 Life members and 84 annual members) – up 12 from last year. We are still attracting new members each year from all over the world but this number is offset by members who have died or members who have moved and we have lost contact with them.

Email is the most cost-effective way of keeping in touch and distributing the newsletter.

In order to keep our membership records as up to date as possible please contact the membership secretary of CMS, Sheena Maclaren at membership.secretary@clanmaclarensociety.com

if you know of any members who may not have been receiving communications from us recently, and if possible provide updates of their home address and email.

The following is the list of new members and sadly those who have died. We send condolences to their families:-

New Life Members:

Mrs Stephanie Fischer, Germany

Mr Ken Lowrie, Scotland

Ms Meagan Rich, USA

Mr James Maclaren, England

Mr Duncan McLaren, England

Mr John McLaren, England (Upgraded to Life Membership)

Mr Steven Maclaren, Scotland

New Annual Members:

Ms Georgina Day, England

Ms Lorna Day, England

Mr Mikko Saloma, Finland

Ms Linda Uller, Sweden

Mr Matthew Ware, USA

Deaths:

Mr David L Drake, Colorado, USA

Mrs Wendy Favaloro, Denilquin, Australia

Capt. Donn F Foreman, Bellevue, Washington State, USA

Herr Reinhold Hermann, Elsfeld, Germany

Karin Hermann, Elsfeld, Germany

Mr Albert Lawrie, Aberdeen, Scotland

Mats Laurin, Norrköping, Sweden

Prof James Law, Bridge of Allan, Scotland

Mr Richard A Lewis, Holbrook, NY, USA

John Emmett Lowry, California, USA

Mr Alan McLaren, Redrock, Australia

Mr Geoffrey McLaurin, Denilquin, Australia

Mr Michael M McLaren, Pasadena, USA

Mrs Nancy McLaren, Kelso, Scotland

Dr William M Osborne, Texas, USA

Mr Michael Walker, USA

Sheena MacLaren

Membership Secretary

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MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

William McLaren, Catherine Crawford, George Borthwick and Bridget Stevens

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CLAN MACLAREN SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

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Vice-President: Dave Elkin

Membership Secretary: Debbie Patterson

Liaison Officer: Steve Quillin, FSA Scot

National Wood Badge Coordinator : Ted Severe

Quartermaster/Clan Store Manager: OPEN

Webmaster: Nancy Norland

All contact details can be found on the CMSNA website:

www.clanmaclarennna.org

Membership of the Clan MacLaren Society

Subscriptions:

Life Membership £120.00 (US\$154)

Couple Life Membership £170.00 (US\$219)

Annual Membership:

Joining Fee (one off) £20.00 (US\$26)

Annual Membership £12.00 (US\$16)

Annual Subscriptions fall due on 1st January each year and are payable to the CLAN MACLAREN SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP ACCOUNT.

Payments to the UK should be made in Sterling. Annual members are reminded that after seven annual payments Life Membership is offered at the reduced sum of £60 (US\$75) or in other currencies at the current exchange rate.

All questions concerning membership should be addressed to:

In North America: Steven Lowry, 115 Smoky View Lane, Madisonville, TN37354

Email: cmsna2015@salsoft.com

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