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# THE GUNN HERALD

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*THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE CLAN GUNN SOCIETY*

Published tri-annually in February, June and October  
Volume no. 91: October 2013



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## EDITORIAL

Afternoon all,

For those of you who don't know already I will be attempting to fill some very big boots left by Dave Taylor in the role of Editor of the *Herald*. For the more regular attendees of clan events my face may be a rather distant memory as it has been a few years since my last Clan Gunn Gathering. Three years at University and a good few summer jaunts to distant sunspots always seemed to coincide with festivities in the North and it is with regret that I must inform you I am no longer 4ft tall, wear t-shirts proclaiming my status as "big sister" and dance at ceilidhs with reckless abandon (although after a few glasses of wine I might be persuaded to retract that last statement). However, with my recent graduation and a subsequent move to London, I hope to partake in many clan activities and meet more of our wonderful members.

My father, John Gunn, is the current President and my Grandparents are Iain and Bunty who undoubtedly need no introduction, so it is fair to say that I have grown up with the importance of the Clan society made very clear to me from an early age. That said, as a child gatherings held memories of probably a rather different kind to most of you. They are filled with scattered recollections of helping Grandma set up endless name tags on tables; kneeling on thick, plush patterned carpets in the Ayre hotel, rainy bus journeys and feeling queasy on boats as we hung over the railings (that one might be more relatable!). My favourite times were the ceilidhs, when we were allowed to stay up late and be treated like adults but I will always hold fond memories of Badbea, Castle May and Walligo Steps, although I'm not sure the clan has ever visited the latter; with over 300 steps it might be a bit of a challenge for some of our...less athletic members.

It is fair to say that having lived in Scotland from when I was six I rather dismissed the importance of my roots and, if

anything, lamented living so far from London's flagship Topshop. However, when I was 18 and moved down to Exeter to go to University I was part of only 7 people whom I ever met there who were Scottish. People looked at me in amazement when I told them where I was from, incredulous that anyone would travel so far. Or indeed, disbelieving that anyone who was not a gravy-loving cretin could exist north of the border. I began to be at first defensive of my heritage and then proud, I loved that I was part of such a minority, that people asked me questions about life in Edinburgh as if I'd just stashed my loincloth and crawled out deepest, darkest Peru. It made me feel for the first time that my heritage was rather important and I realized that my ancestry is a big part of what makes me who I am.

This edition of the magazine features a wonderful article by Ian Colin Gunn in which he explores a surprising discovery about his heritage. I would like to try something new and introduce potential topics for debate. I encourage our readers to write in with their thoughts and opinions and we can display as many as possible in the following issue.

*The Editor is always pleased to receive articles, letters, pictures and any other items for inclusion in the Herald. The deadlines for the February, June and October issues are respectively: 31 December, 30 April and 31 August.*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What a wonderful summer we've had, the best for quite some time. In fact, today was the first day that I've had to put the central heating on and then, only momentarily. I've just returned from a business trip to Caithness and Sutherland and yes, it was even sunny up there although quite windy. I find a trip to the homelands very therapeutic and my batteries always seem to get a good charging. Admittedly, I have the draw that my parents live there and I of course tie in any business trip with a stay at Swiney House where I am thoroughly spoilt by both parents and plied with all my favourite childhood food dishes.

While I have visited Caithness every year of my life, my trips only generally happen bi-annually and as such I find that any changes to the topography or the local community become far more apparent than if I lived there all year round. One such change that I noticed this year was the major overhaul that John O'Groats has just undergone. Those of you that have attended an International Gathering in the past can no doubt remember assembling in what can only be described as a glorified car park surrounded by semi-derelict 50's and 60's style properties as we have waited for the ferry to take us to Orkney. Oh and of course the rather grim gift shop whose merchandise would not be best described as the most tasteful or useful.

Well I am pleased to report a massive change (for the better). Yes, the gift shop is still there (some things will never change) but the old John O'Groats hotel has been completely renovated and added on too to create some extremely smart self-catering apartments. In addition, the company behind the renovation has also built a number of very well appointed luxury eco huts resplendent with turf roofs. There is still room for improvement, but what was always a slightly disappointing start or finish to numerous charity walks/cycles (and of course the usual starting venue for our own

International Gathering) now has an air of respectability about it. I bet you can't wait until 2015. While on the subject of repairs and redecoration, I should also like to report that the Claran Gunn Heritage Centre has also undergone a face-lift with repairs to its windows and a new paint job. It looks magnificent.

Every summer, when we don't have the international gathering, we hold a mini-gathering and this year it was held around the Ashbourne Games in Derbyshire. This proved successful with a good number of our members converging for dinners, the AGM and of course, the games and I would like to thank my vice president, Gordon Nelson for all of his help in organising such an enjoyable weekend. Next year we intend to revert back to Caithness for the mini-gathering and the International Gathering will follow the year after. While the latter is just under 2 years away, work has already begun on the organization of same with various reconnaissance trips to Orkney having been carried out to check out some upgraded hotel accommodation and some new venues. The council are also hard at work finding a suitable venue for the St Donan's Day dinner in April next year. Keeping with tradition where we try to host this event alternatively North and South of the border, we will be looking for a southern venue in 2014, details of which will be available on the website and in the next edition of the Herald.

Finally, I would like to welcome the new editor of the Herald, my daughter, Charlotte into a role, which can sometimes be a bit of a labour of love. She certainly has a very high standard to maintain, following on from Dave Taylor but I'm sure she will bring her own "spark" to the role and I wish her well. In this respect, one of the main things an editor needs is content and if any clan members have some interesting stories or anecdotes about members of their family (past or present) then I know Charlotte would be delighted to receive them for

potential publication in future editions of the Herald.

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## The First Clan Gunn Magazine October 1961

Bunty Gunn

The very first Clan magazine was circulated to membership in October 1961. The Editor was Mrs. Joan Pullinger and it was typed and “roneod” and then put together with staples. It was a “kitchen table job” in that all the pages were laid out (and there were 23 double sided ones) and volunteers – mostly Joan’s family – circled round, gathering up the pages in order, attaching a front and back cover and that was the forerunner to the *Herald*. How easy, in comparison, it must seem to prepare the current offering. (*Hmm-CG*)

At the second meeting of the Clan Gunn Society, held in Edinburgh, the then Lord Lyon king of Arms, Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, spoke on the purpose of a clan society.

“Sir Thomas said that he was particularly pleased to be present as his wife, Lady Lucy Innes of Learney, was a daughter of the House of Caithness and

If a society were to be of real weight and importance it must be confined to the people and purposes for which it was devised, and not try to include everybody in every purpose. Otherwise the thing was not much worth belonging to and no-one had much interest in its doings. Some had tended to reach the stage at which they had become collectors of subscriptions from anyone who was prepared to pay up, and it sounded a little bit like getting members for a nightclub. Sir Thomas added that the clan was still, as had been admitted reluctantly by the Justiciary, an entity recognised in law. If we had not maintained the clan spirit and

his own family had historical links with the county of Caithness. He welcomed the formation of the new society and wished it every success.”

The Lord Lyon described the functions of a clan society, praising the exposition of the duties and functions which were set out in the new constitution of the Clan Gunn Society, a document which he considered to be a most useful and exceedingly interesting one.

Lyon said that the clan had a greater function in modern life than many people imagined. It was a vital element in checking the ‘de-tribalisation’, which had been described as one of the great disharmonies in the life of today. In other words, in controlling the minimisation of family organisation. The clan society was not the clan, as Lord Jamieson had pointed out in the Court of Sessions, because the clan was a very large body of people. The clan society was a much smaller body, but it was the nucleus which would really put the ‘go’ into the rest of the clan. Consequently the clan society was a most important body of clansfolk. It gave the clan reality and provided its machinery and its economics. sentiment as part of the still functioning law of Scotland, everything connected with Scottish organisations

could have been completely swamped by our well-meaning Sassenach neighbours. Fortunately we had so far maintained those sentiments as to inspire those of Scottish descent all over the world and to bring back many of them to the old homeland of Scotland. We had consequently a profound interest in and benefit from the clan spirit and organisation, from such as the present clan society. The Clan was the most

outstanding feature among the people of Scotland the world over.

Fifty-two years later, Sir Thomas's words still ring true. The Clan certainly

benefits from the membership which has allowed the establishment of the Clan Centre which itself gives focus to kinship and fellowship.

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### **The Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Kildonan Clearances**

We have been commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Kildonan Clearances in Helmsdale and in the Strath of Kildonan this year culminating in a two-week-long Translocation Festival arranged by Timespan Heritage and Arts Centre in August.

The large scale removal of the people of the Strath of Kildonan, which had been the home of the Chiefs and many of the Clan for over 350 years, changed the lives of the local inhabitants and the landscape of the area for ever. The land was cleared by the Duke and Duchess of

Sutherland to make way for the establishment of large sheep farms as part of their improvement policy. The displaced people, not all of whom were Gunns, were burned out of their homes and moved to the coast to seek a bare subsistence from fishing, tilling small plots of land, coal mining and brick making in the newly formed village of Brora. Some sought employment in Glasgow and Edinburgh and many emigrated across the sea to North America and particularly to the Red River Settlement in Winnipeg.

The Clan visited Kildonan last year during the International Gathering guided by Jacquie Aitken, the Archivist at Timespan, to see the sites of some Pre-Clearance settlements and the places where a number of significant events took place during the Clearing of the Strath which started in 1812. This year Timespan arranged a full programme from January to August commemorating the main events of 1813: the main year of the Clearances from Kildonan, which culminated in a group of some 90

inhabitants of the Strath sailing to Churchill on Hudson's Bay under the auspices of Lord Selkirk who had rights to a large tract of land in Canada which he wished to develop. The party arrived in Churchill on 13 August 1813 several hundred miles short of York Factory, their intended first destination. Here they built log huts to accommodate themselves until they could make the journey to York



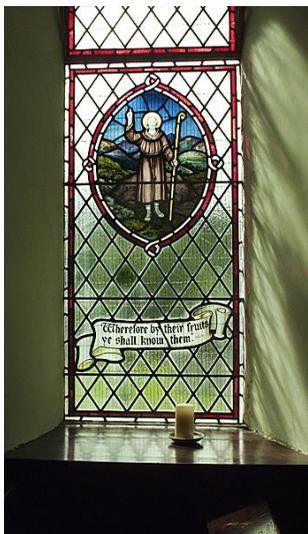
Factory. After a horrendous journey the first party finally arrived at Red River in May 1814 where they established a new settlement which they named Kildonan.

Over 20 Canadian descendants of the early settlers came to Helmsdale for the Translocation Festival for a programme of various activities, lectures and ceilidhs ending with the Helmsdale Highland Games. The highlight of the festival was, however, the service in Kildonan Church on 11 August to commemorate the the 200th anniversary of the

Kildonan settlers arrival at Churchill. The service was arranged by the Friends of Kildonan Church which was set up by the Clan Gunn Heritage Trust and Timespan Heritage Centre to maintain the church in memory of the people of the Strath and the Gunn association with Kildonan which is

illustrated in a series of panels which the Clan Gunn Heritage Trust presented to the church.

The moving service was conducted by the Rev Dr John Sterrett, the Minister of the Parish of Golspie, assisted by the Rev Alex Macdonald, the Free Church Minister of the Buccleuch



Street Church in Edinburgh, who was born and brought up at Borrobol in the Strath. The Church was full of visitors joining the local population to celebrate the anniversary. The Lairg and Melvich Gaelic Choirs sang two unaccompanied Gaelic psalms during the service, a mesmerising experience.

Following the service the Friends of Kildonan Church invited the congregation to tea at the Kildonan Community Hall after which the Lairg and Melvich Gaelic Choirs and Alex Macdonald provided a programme of Gaelic and Scottish songs. It was a truly memorable day and a fitting commemoration of our courageous ancestors.

## THE CLAN GUNN AT ASHBOURNE – JULY 2013

Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013 saw a small but select party of Clan Gunn attending the Ashbourne Highland Gathering in Derbyshire. This weekend had been chosen as “mini-gathering weekend” since Gordon Nelson, one of our vice-Presidents, is on the Games committee and invited us to celebrate with him and the McNaughton Clan – into which he had married.

Gordon had (almost) moved mountains – after all, it is the Peak District – to find a replacement hotel when the original choice folded in on itself and we were excellently housed in a charming, very laid-back establishment called “The Peveril of the Peak” – after a Walter Scott novel of that name.

Ashbourne is a great centre for walkers and on the Saturday morning our fellow guests turned out to be a healthy lot, breakfasting early, donning anoraks and rucksacks and striding out as we Gunns made our sleepy way to the restaurant. Gordon and his wife Helen had invited us to coffee at their home later that morning. This was a farmhouse deep in the countryside where Helen keeps hens, pigs, sheep and where some guinea fowl young were being cared for under a warm lamp. During our visit a daughter turned up with a couple of Shetland ponies to be housed. And still Helen found the time to make filled rolls for us all for the next day’s lunch on the field.

Saturday afternoon found us assembling formally for the Council meeting and the AGM. The weather was so beautiful and so

warm, that it was decided that we would not dress up for dinner but be comfortable in lighter clothing. Gordon had arranged for us always to have one round table at which we could all sit. Dinner was excellent and afterwards we sat again on the terrace outside the bar while the swallows and bats swooped and dived in the balmy night air.

Gordon’s attention to detail knew no bounds. Tickets and car stickers were awaiting us on the Sunday morning breakfast table and we were advised to arrive at the Games early. I drove down and was guided to a grassy space near the McNaughton tent which we Gunns were sharing. I parked as directed – Hugh Wilson, the Hills and Nevill Swanson had set up our stall in the tent and I was thanking them when a wild man ran into the tent, gesticulating and asking whose car was parked outside. I confessed it was mine and he told me that it would have to be moved because they had to erect a small awning over a table where the prizes were to be displayed. So I moved the car. They set up their table and awning and then another man rushed into the tent to see who owned the car parked outside which “couldn’t stay there – it’s where the bands march in.” So I moved the car again. By this time it was on the edge of a distinctly steep descending bank. When a third man demanded that it be moved, I refused on the grounds that it would roll away. I was given one of those looks and a hand was held out for the key. The car was moved by a minute amount – centimetres, one could say and by that time it was facing down the slope and I just hoped the brakes would hold. I did see the point, though, when every competing band came up the slope, practised outside our tent, marched onto the field and then marched back, missing the car by, well, centimetres.



The afternoon began with the Chieftain's Parade as Mr. Andrew Gentles was marched in with a splendid band. This set the standard for the Gathering because the day is very much about bands. Mostly pipe bands but there was one silver band– the Chesterfield Musketeers Showband - with the players in extravagantly feathered hats – like the Three Musketeers. They were great fun. The other bands compete in Grades – trying to move up each time. Just about the youngest there were the boys and girls of the University of Bedfordshire who did extremely well, facing competition from RAF Waddington, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue and West Midlands Fire Service.



Capes, along with his son Lewis. The Caber Toss was popular with the crowd as was the Hammer Throw and the Putting of the Stone. Just to add some light relief from time to time, the Blackrock Llamas ran races and leaped fences – with just a little help from their trainers.



Gordon and Helen Nelson

What is it, I wonder, about firemen and bagpipes? Not a pairing that immediately suggests itself.

The Heavy Events were supervised by that giant (in every sense) of Eventers, Jeff

There was Folk Music, Highland Dancing, a Tug of War and a Hill Race over a four-mile course which by any standards was challenging, taking in four steep climbs over the peaks. We were rather glad to eat Helen's filled rolls and admire the perspiring and weary winners as they returned to the ring.

Ashbourne Highland Gathering claims to be the biggest gathering

outside of Scotland. It was a splendid day out and our thanks our due to the organisers and, in particular, to Gordon Nelson, for providing Clan Gunn with an excellent programme for the mini-gathering. Friendship is a great thing and Clan friendship even better.

Wha's like the Gunns, eh?

*With great thanks to Iain and Bunty Gunn for their help in compiling reports on these events.*

## The 2013 Summer Festival Circuit

Ted Gunn

The season did not start the way we had planned since I (Ted) developed some minor medical problems that curtailed my activities for a few weeks. During that time, we cancelled our trip to Georgetown, ON for the June 8<sup>th</sup> Highland Games and that was disappointing since we were to go there for the first time after several invitations. We also declined invitations to the Highland Games events on June 15<sup>th</sup> in Cobourg, ON, the July 26-28 weekend in Fredericton, NB. Later, we also declined an invitation to the North Lanark H. G. on August 24<sup>th</sup> in Almonte, ON.



Ted and James in battle gear!

Consequently, our festival season only started on the first weekend of August at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville, ON. Since it held the prospect of a shorter drive, we decided to make that trip; all went well and we had a good time. Our experiences at these events will follow; the sub-header below includes the related website that provides program details.

**The Glengarry Highland Games (GHG) -  
Maxville ON  
August 2 – 3, 2013**

Website: [www.glengarryhighlandgames.com](http://www.glengarryhighlandgames.com)

Our first activity was the Tartan Ball (a dinner/dance) in Maxville on the Thursday evening – always a delightful event and well attended. After a nice dinner and entertainment provided by the local Pipes & Drums Band and Highland dancers, we left the building as the dancing was about to start. We love to dance but the 45-minute drive on a dark highway to our hotel in Cornwall is something we dislike - a sign of aging?

Friday was a nice day and we spent most of it in Maxville, first as tourists seeing the various activities around the fair grounds and then preparing our booth in one of the clan barns to greet visitors. We were not very busy that afternoon but did have visits from a CGSNA member, an American friend and a couple of rather interesting people.

First, James Thompson and his wife Maria dropped by for a chat. James is a native Scot who has lived in Canada for several years and his current home is in nearby Embrun (southeast of Ottawa, ON). He was dressed for battle and he left some of his accessories with us while they visited the fairgrounds. See photo of Ted and James taken by Louise. James told us that he was planning to return to Scotland since his children were already there.

Our other key visitor was Chief Ruairidh (Rory) MacLennan of MacLennan whom we had met at his tent during our morning tour; he lives at The Old Mill, Dores, Inverness, Scotland. While we chatted about my connection to Scotland, he asked us to convey his regards to Commander Iain Gunn and Bunty whom he knows.

The Maxville event always has a great Friday evening show with massed bands and the famous MacCulloch Dancers along with musical entertainers but it ends very late, so we decided against staying around for that since we have seen it several times and we needed to rest for the next day. So, we packed up and left the grounds by late afternoon.



Saturday dawned nice and bright and we were on location in good time to prepare for the day ahead. A few more friends were among the visitors this time and some of the visitors had Gunn connections but not all of those who signed our register included an

Ruairidh and Ted representing the Clan

email address making future communication more complicated than we would like. We

plan to follow up with some of these folks in the hope getting new members.

I (Ted) along with CGSNA member Allen Robinson and a couple of his family members participated in the parade of the clans; this takes place at noon as part of the official ceremonies to open the games. Louise stayed at the booth except for a few minutes to snap photos of the Gunn group – see attachment. There were a few rain showers during the afternoon but we were not affected inside the barn and we may have had a few extra visitors who were seeking shelter.

*Many thanks to Ted and Louise Gunn for their continual support and information from across the pond. We are always interested to know of the goings-on of Gunns across the world.*

## Walter Scott and Russia - a Cultural Invasion.

Dairmid Gunn

At a literary gathering in Edinburgh in the 1980s the ambassador of the USSR declared that Robert Burns as a poet belonged to Russia. There is some truth in this somewhat extravagant remark; the poems of Burns were indeed popular in the USSR not only for their literary merit but also for two other good reasons. Firstly, some of the ideas expressed in the poems fitted in nicely with Soviet ideology: the emphasis on equality and the virtues of the common man and woman. Secondly, the USSR was extremely fortunate in that it housed an extremely talented translator, Samuel Marshak; who was able to capture their essence without losing their music, metre and rhythm. Marshak was not only a wonderful translator of Burns but also a man whose rendering of Shakespeare's Sonnets in the Russian language could only be described as miraculous. Perhaps what the Soviet Ambassador had forgotten, quite conveniently, was that the adulation of Burns in literary circles in his country was mainly a phenomenon of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first great cultural impact on Russian literary taste by Scottish poets and novelists was made in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, the poetry of Ossian (James MacPherson) and Byron (half Scots) was enthusiastically consumed by the Russian literary public, with the latter becoming a sort of literary celebrity. However, the writer who made the most lasting impression on educated Russians was the famous Scottish novelist, Sir Walter Scott. His novels beginning with *Waverley* in 1814 were not only a source of delight but also an influence on Russian writers of that time, including Russia's greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin. In a sense Pushkin was the founder of Russian literature and the superb exponent of the use of the Russian language in both the genres of poetry and novels. To understand Scott's extraordinary popularity it is necessary to look at the life of Pushkin.



Alexander Pushkin

Born into an aristocratic family in 1799 Pushkin enjoyed an excellent education at a school for privileged young men selected for their potential to occupy important positions in the Russian Empire. The lingua franca for cultured Europe at that time was French, a language Pushkin spoke fluently. But he was to declare that he spoke and wrote in French but dreamt in Russian. Much of his intimate knowledge of Russian folklore and simple peasant speech came from his childhood nanny, whom he adored. The Russian language, which had been enriched in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by a fusing of everyday language with the language used for Orthodox Church ritual, was waiting to be exploited. To use this newly developed language as a vehicle for serious literature was a task eagerly accepted by the young Pushkin. The depth of his creative talent was fathomless, and his poetry soon took the nation by storm. He was a popular figure but one whom the authorities viewed with suspicion. His criticism of these authorities, his liberal views and his philandering led in 1824 to a lengthy period of exile in his mother's estate situated near Pskov far to the north of the capital, St Petersburg. Whilst there, he had to rely for mental stimulation on his correspondence with friends. His letters, although serious, were frequently punctuated by requests for various supplies, both literary and mundane. One such request was, "Scott's novels and Limburg cheese, Fouché's memoirs and pickles, the works of Schiller and a corkscrew." It may be worthy of note that Scott's novels came top of the shopping list.

Scott's novels in French translation fired Pushkin's imagination and were to influence (after a long period of gestation) some of Pushkin's most famous prose works such as *The Captain's Daughter* and *Tales of Belkin* – both written in the 1830s. The former is a novella set against the background of the famous Pugachev Rebellion in 1773 against the regime of Catherine the Great.

There are distinct similarities between the swashbuckling Pugachev and the Highland freebooter, Rob Roy, and the ways in which they make their entrance into the narratives. There are huge differences between the two men, of course, but clearly the Highland psyche as portrayed in *Rob Roy* appealed to Pushkin and could have influenced his pen portrait of Pugachev. In the same novella Pushkin has Masha, the Captain's daughter, go all the way from her late father's remote outpost to St Petersburg to plea for the life of her lover unjustly accused of colluding with Pugachev. In her plea for mercy, Masha is clearly following in the footsteps of the Scottish heroine, Jeannie Deans, in Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*, who goes all the way from Edinburgh to London to plead for her sister's life before Queen Caroline. Both young ladies meet with success.



Until 1827 Scott attempted to conceal his identity as the author of his novels and was referred to in British literary circles as 'the Great Unknown'. (His attempts to achieve literary disguise were unsuccessful on the Continent where Scott at an early stage was revealed as the author of the *Waverley* novels.) In his attempts to conceal his identity in Great Britain, Scott resorted to devices to put a supposed narrator between himself and the reader. The best-known example of this is in the series of novels that go under the title of *Tales of my Landlord*; the series includes such famous novels as *Old Mortality* (1816) and *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). For these books a certain Jedediah Cleishbottom introduces the books supposedly based on stories told by the landlord of a country inn. Pushkin unashamedly uses the same device for his *Tales of Belkin*, where he places a country gentleman, Belkin, between himself and the reader.

Scott's influence on Russian's greatest literary genius, Alexander Pushkin, helped to make him widely known in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia. Tolstoy was inspired by *Tales of Belkin* when thinking of writing *Anna Karenina*. In his book *Youth*, Tolstoy alludes to Scott in a description of a family reading of novels at a friend's home. For many a household evening readings of Scott's novels became a common form of entertainment. Their popularity only began to wane with the appearance of novels by such great Russian novelists as Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. Their popularity as a form of entertainment may have diminished, but their value in the realm of education remained constant. A distinguished Soviet scholar was to write,

"The novels of Scott are really most necessary for our children – necessary as ideal initiatory texts, which possessing fragments of myths, stories, traditions and legends can inculcate the correct notions of world structure, teach the basic human values and act as a first course in historical thinking."

Perhaps the most important attribute the Soviet scholar gives to Scott's work concerns historical thinking. In this context it is interesting to note that the secondary title for *Waverley* is 'Tis Sixty Years Since, a link between the author's time and the 1745 Uprising 60 years before. Pushkin wrote *The Captain's Daughter* about 60 years after the Pugachev Rebellion and Tolstoy his *War and Peace* about 60 years after Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Scott's concept of the historical novel had clearly entered the creative thinking of two of Russia's greatest writers. A well-known Russian sociologist now living in Scotland states that in the school curriculum of her day *Waverley* and *Rob Roy* were recommended



reading and that the 1715 and the 1745 uprisings still fascinate Russian readers today.

To end this short article on a lighter note, mention must be made of Scott's entry into the world of fashion. Stemming from Scott's visit to Paris in 1826, there was an explosion of interest on the part of dress designers in Scottish dress. Walter Scott, who had done well to persuade George IV to don a kilt during his visit to Edinburgh in 1822, was amazed by the French couturiers' fascination with Scottish dress and their interpretation of it in fashion design. He was even more amazed at what he saw at a soirée organised by the fashionable Russian Princess Galitzin. In his Journal he writes, 'In the evening to Princess Galitzin where a whole covey of princesses of Russia arrayed in tartan with music and singing to boot.' The tartan conquest of Europe à la Scott had begun.

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### What's in a name?

Ian Colin Gunn

I have lived with the certainty for most of my life that my name is Ian Colin Gunn and for a long time too that I was of the Clan Gunn. There is a well-documented history of the clan. It is a Viking name, the forebears came from Norway settled in Orkney and eventually moved south to Sutherland and Caithness. My grandfather and his known forbears were born there so there was no doubt that I was a genuine Gunn. George IV in Scottish dress

And yet, early last year I came upon an article about DNA testing which could establish a man's paternal lineage through history. My first shadow of doubt arose from an article in the Clan Gunn magazine from a member who had the test and discovered to his surprise that his origin was Celt and not Viking. Curious I decided to sign up for the test and posted the saliva sample off.

Some weeks later the assessment returned and there on the front page in capital letters was the word VIKING Result! However, closer inspection showed an anomaly. My marker S68 had me as a Hebridian Viking. Now, there is no indication in the clan history of Gunns ever living in the Hebrides. And there was more. Almost half of all men with the surname MacLeod carry this marker. It is most common on the Isle of Lewis where 5% of men have it, on Orkney it is only 1% and in Eastern Scotland only 0.1%.

From this information the clear hypothesis is that I am a MacLeod and not a Gunn. What a calamity! Would I have to throw away my ties, tartan trews, place mats, key rings, bonnet and other miscellaneous Clan Gunn memorabilia? Further investigation was necessary.

There is a plausible explanation from the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century. The story starts with the Sutherlands wishing to eliminate the Robson Gunns of Braemore a lawless set of cattle and horse thieves. The Sutherland chief persuaded the Earl of Caithness (a Sinclair) to join in this venture by offering him the hand of the sister of the Earl of Huntly in marriage. The proposed proscription was then escalated to include the Gunns of Strathy and Reay country. The Earl of Caithness was always uneasy about this venture, and through a third party warned the Gunns who moved to Ben Griam with their families and cattle for safety. It was agreed that the Sutherlands and the Sinclairs would move off together on the same day to put the Gunns to the sword. However the Sutherlands were diverted when they came across a body of MacKays stealing cattle from a dependant of theirs and spent the day chasing them and recovering some of the booty. This left the Sinclairs exposed and when they came

into sight the Gunns, although fewer in number, decided to attack them and with the advantage of their position on the hill put them to flight wounding many and killing 150.

Sadly this proved to be a pyrrhic victory. The aggressors recorded a formal document duly signed and sealed setting out how they would complete what they had previously planned. Again forewarned the Gunns fled westward only to be caught by the Aberach MacKays and the MacLeods of Assynt who were at that point allies of the Sinclairs. 32 Gunns were slain. The surviving Gunns extended their flight south to Glenelg on the mainland close to Skye where they were well received and enjoyed the hospitality of the local MacLeods who were at war with their kinsmen in Assynt.

Now here is my conjecture. The Gunns were much reduced in numbers and the dead would be all men. What if on their return to Sutherland one of the newly widowed women was carrying the consequence of a highland fling with a lusty MacLeod. If so her son could be the key to my S68 marker.

Does it matter whether I'm a Gunn or a MacLeod? I don't think so. You may well conclude as I do that the following words of Mr William Shakespeare are particularly appropriate to my situation. He wrote,

*"What's in a name? that which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet."*

*Following on from my Editorial, I would like to encourage our readers to write in on this matter with their own opinions. To what extent does genetic make-up define our heritage? I am only a quarter Scottish but would think of myself as more Scottish than English, why so? How does the nature vs nurture debate relate to our pride of being Scottish? -CG*

## Membership Report

I would like to begin this report by paying tribute to my predecessor, Fiona, who has done a sterling job as Membership Secretary and has handed everything over to me in a very good order.

We welcome the following New Members to the Society and hope to meet them at future events:

- Chris Jamieson, 2/132 Wells Street, East Gosford, NSW, 2250, Australia
- Jane Barling, 3 Newlands Avenue, Eccles, Manchester, M30 7GJ UK
- Julie Fearn, Black House Farm, Osmaston, DE6 1NA, UK
- Gary Swain, 80 Shire Ridge, Walsall Woods, Walsall, WS9 9RB
- Darren Booker, Croft House, 8 Croft Lane, Bassingham, Lincoln, LNS 9CB
- Susan Gardiner, Samphire Cottage, 4 St. Peter's Terrace, Elkins Hill, Brixham, Devon, TQ5 9SY
- Per Kjaer, Kolbjørnbakken 18, N-2080 EIDSVOLI, Norway
- Ben Williamson, c/o Anna Kroll, Chausseestrasse
- Kevin Gunn, 96 West Farm Wynd, Longbenton, Newcastle-Upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE12 8UH
- Warren McComas, 1 Comanche Trail, Denville, NJ 07834, USA
- Maria Haight, 1709 Chateau Circle, Sanford, NC 27332, USA
- Michael Wilson, 17 Flinders Way, Albany Creek, Brisbane, Queensland 4035, Australia
- Gregory Maness, 1180 Braircliff Circle, Apt. B, Atlanta, GA 303229 USA
- ECD Robson, 283 Exhall Close, Church Hill, Redditch, Worcestershire B989JD

Change of Address:

Duncan Wilson  
18 Sandmartin Crescent  
Colchester  
Essex  
CO3 8WQ

Obituary:

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Joel Gunn, Commissioner for Clan Gunn in Georgia, USA. Our deep sympathy goes out to his family.

According to the database, the current Membership is **304**, of whom **72** are Life Members, **70** pay by Standing Order, **83** pay through Paypal and the remainder by cheque or money transfer. There are just a few people who are in arrears with their subscriptions- if you are one of them, perhaps this report will jog your memory!

*Helen Hill*

*I hope my first edition of the Herald is to everyone's liking. I'd love to hear your opinions on the new look and feel and hopefully in response to the heritage debate as well. If you have any articles or suggestions please let me know, I'm hoping to expand the Herald's content somewhat, maybe even a Scottish fusion food column one day! -CG*