

The Clan Gunn 19th International Gathering 2018 – Orkney & Caithness

Day 1 Saturday 21st July

- 15.30 We will meet at John O’Groats to catch the 4.00pm Ferry to Orkney. This is an unscheduled crossing which has been specially laid on for Clan Gunn and doesn’t hang about for stragglers!
- 16.30 – 18.30 Orkney registration will be held in the foyer of the Orkney Hotel, Kirkwall.
- 19.00 Supper will be at the Orkney Hotel which will be followed at around 8.30pm by an illustrated talk on Clan Gunn history in an Orkney context. Drinks are not included with the dinner, but can be purchased separately.

Day 2 Sunday 22nd July

- 11.00 We will meet at St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall for the Sunday service followed by a brief dedication (laying of wreaths) to St. Magnus and St. Rogvald from both of whom the Clan claim descent.
- Lunch – You will be left to find your own lunch at one of Kirkwall’s many cafes, bistros, hotels or restaurants, a great number of which are just a short walk from the cathedral.
- 14.00 – 18.30 Afternoon Trip – Coaches leave from outside of St Magnus Cathedral and please be prompt as there is a lot to see and we can’t wait for stragglers.
- Option 1**, The Mainland tour will include visits to **Skara Brae**, one of the best preserved Neolithic settlements in the world and for those that have never been to Orkney before, this is a “must see”. We will also visit the **Brough of Birsay**, an uninhabited tidal island off the north-west coast of the Mainland of Orkney, which features the remains of Pictish and Norse settlements. This was also the original seat of the Earls of Orkney and first burial place of Magnus at whose tomb miracles occurred, enabling him to be made a Saint. All admissions are included in the price.
- Option 2**, A craft trail tour including visits to **Sheila Fleet Jewellery** (one of Scotland’s leading designer-makers of gold and silver jewellery often inspired by her love for nature), **Hoxa Tapestry** (home to Orkney artist Leila Thomson’s unique, large, hand woven tapestries which are inspired by the rhythm of life and landscape of Orkney) & **Fursbreck pottery** (a family business in the town of Harray – often referred to as the original Harray Potter). Again, all admissions are included in the price.

19.30 An Orkney Evening in the Girnol, Kirkwall:

This will include Supper, entertainment from a local story-teller followed by a class in traditional Orkney dancing. The evening ends with a mini-ceilidh where clan members have an opportunity to try out their new dance skills with the help of a caller and local musicians. There will also be a chance to try a traditional Orkney Cog – a unique wooden drinking vessel (not to be confused with a clog) filled with a warm spiced brew mix. Drinks are not included with the dinner, but can be purchased at the bar.

Day 3 Monday 23rd July

09.30 – 18.00 Full day tour to Rousay to include a scenic island drive around what is nicknamed “The Egypt of the North” due to its wealth of archaeological sites.

Multiple stops are optional on this circular tour but should include Midhowe Broch and Cairn and there are optional visits en-route at Blackhammer Chambered Cairn or Taversoe Tuick (both Neolithic monuments). Subject to availability a visit to the gardens at Trumland House may also be possible.

Lunch will be included at either the community centre or a local hotel.

On our return from Rousay we will travel to the Ness of Brodgar to visit this world-renowned archaeological dig site featured recently in several documentaries and in the media.

Free Evening - You will be at liberty to try one of the many excellent restaurants in Kirkwall or if you're feeling worn out by the exertions of the Rousay trip, you can always just have dinner at your hotel/accommodation. If you are staying at a B&B, many of these will offer an evening meal if given a bit of advance warning.

Day 4 Tuesday 24th July

09.30 Coaches leave from outside St Magnus Cathedral for the trip to Burwick where we will catch the 11.30am ferry back to John O'Groats in Caithness. We will aim to stop at the Italian Chapel on the little island of Lamb Holm on the way to the ferry. The chapel was constructed by Italian POWs during the Second World War and is a testament to ingenuity and what can be achieved with virtually no resources. It also features some amazing trompe l'oeil artwork.

13.00 On arriving at John O'Groats, coaches will meet us and take us to the Seaview Hotel for a soup and sandwich lunch

- 14.30 After lunch, there is a short drive to Lambaborg and Freswick castles, the former of which was said to be Sweyn Asleifsson's Caithness home, before returning to Wick (approx. 16.00pm) to settle in to your Caithness accommodation.
- 18.00 – 19.00 For those that have joined the Gathering in Caithness, there will be a Caithness Registration at Mackay's Hotel, Wick.
- 19.00 A buffet Supper will be served at Mackay's Hotel followed by an illustrated lecture on Caithness past and present. Drinks are not included with the dinner but can be purchased at the bar.

Day 5 Wednesday 25th July

- 09.30 – 14.30 Coaches will depart from outside of Mackay's & the Norseman hotels for a tour of Wick and its surroundings. The tour will include a visit to the Wick Heritage Centre, the Old Pulteney distillery, the Renewables Centre in Wick harbour followed by a cold buffet lunch in Staxigoe hall.

Free Afternoon & Evening – There will be a free afternoon which will hopefully give you a chance to catch up on any washing, shopping or just relaxing. You will again be free to try one of the local restaurants, bistros, hotels in Wick. If you prefer, you can always have dinner in your hotel, but it would be best to let them know in advance that you will be dining.

Day 6 Thursday 26th July

- 10.30 – 22.30 A relatively late start so a chance to have a (much deserved) lie in. Coaches will depart from outside of Mackay's & the Norseman hotels for an all day trip to Kildonan Strath (one of the homes of the Gunns) where we will have a short service at Kildonan church. This will be followed by a light lunch at the Timespan visitor centre and visits to the Clan Gunn Heritage Centre and North Lands Creative Glass.

The Clan Gunn Heritage centre requires little introduction and there will be plenty of time to look at the exhibits and visit the shop. We are also hoping to present the prizes following a competition whereby local primary schools were asked to design exhibition boards for the centre depicting the life of Sweyn Asleifsson and his links with Clan Gunn.

North Lands Creative is a unique studio organisation and gallery in Lybster, whose focus is on contemporary glass with a national importance in developing glass in the UK. North Lands Creative facilitates and supports professional artists to make new art work and we will be granted access to the workshops while we are there.

- 17.00 The coaches will then head to Swiney house where you are invited to a drinks reception hosted by the Chief of Clan Gunn, Iain Gunn of Gunn and his wife Bunty.

18.30 – 22.30 The coaches will then take the clan to Clyth Hall for supper and a local Ceilidh before returning to Wick for 22.30. The Ceilidh will showcase some of the local talent and usually includes singers, Caithness dialect, highland dancing, pipers and dancing (you should be pretty good at this by now). A ceilidh is all about inclusivity and if any of you would like to “do a turn” please let one of the organisers know – we would love to see you.

The day is a full one and you will not have a chance to return to your hotel until late evening. However, the evening’s entertainment is informal so do not feel you have to dress up for the trip.

Day 7 Friday 27th July

09.30 – 17.00 Coaches will depart from outside of Mackay’s and the Norseman hotels for a day trip along the north coast of Caithness to the Dunnet Bay Distillers, makers of Rock Rose Gin & Holy Grass vodka (the former of which is very popular with our family). The tour will also take in nearby Mary-Ann’s cottage, a perfectly preserved and totally original example of a croft (farm) house and a great insight into how life was lived in much of Caithness (and indeed the Highlands in general) from the mid 1850’s until the mid-1900’s (although Mary-Ann Calder lived there until 1990).

13.30 There will be a light buffet lunch at the Northern Sands hotel followed by a visit to Caithness Horizons museum (in Thurso). Caithness Horizons is a fascinating museum that brings to life the history and culture of Caithness and utilises a combination of state of the art technology alongside traditional presentations.

We will be returning to Wick via Dirlot Castle, a 14th century stronghold built on top of a 50 ft plug of rock and believed to have been occupied by the Gunns at various times before its abandonment in the 1660’s.

19.00 The evening offers a Dinner Dance at the Norseman Hotel Wick which includes a delicious three course meal. Dancing will be provided by the excellent Addie Harper’s Band. Wine is not included but there will also be a cash bar. Carriages at 11.00pm.

Day 8 Saturday 28th July

10.00 Coaches will leave from outside of Mackay’s and the Norseman Hotels for the short journey to Halkirk where the AGM will be held at the Ross Institute.

11.00 Annual General Meeting.

12.00 There will be a March to the Halkirk Highland Games Field and all members of Clan Gunn are invited to join in if they wish. Kilts are preferred if possible, but are not mandatory.

12.30 – 15.45 The Halkirk Highland Games is a traditional sporting event started in 1886 and one of the premier sporting events in the North of Scotland. It includes the established heavyweight events of “tossing the sheath”, “weight for distance”, hammer and of course, “tossing the caber”. Also on show are pipers, highland dancers, track and field athletics, cyclists and clay pigeon shooting as well as many side show attractions.

A sandwich lunch is included and will be provided in the Women’s Institute (WI) tent on the games field, you just need to let them know that you are part of the Clan Gunn party. There will also be a Clan Gunn hospitality tent where you can come and have a dram (or a soft drink if you’d prefer) and have a chat with some of the local Gunns.

Coaches will leave from outside of the Ulbster Arms hotel (opposite the Ross Institute and where the march starts from) at 16.00 for the journey back to Wick. Please try to be punctual as due to the number of people attending the Halkirk Games, it is difficult to round people up on the games field.

19.00 – 23.00 The Clan Gunn Formal Dinner will be held at Mackay’s Hotel, Wick and marks the end of the 2018 International Gathering. This is the only black tie/highland dress event of the programme and we would encourage those of you that have brought this to wear it. However, please don’t worry if you don’t have a “black tie outfit” – we do understand that not everyone does and also the limitations of checked in baggage mean that it may be impossible to bring everything with you.

The evening will begin at 7.00pm with a drinks reception followed by a sumptuous dinner with wine included. There will be speeches with coffee and a dram and we would envisage that the evening will finish around 11.00pm.