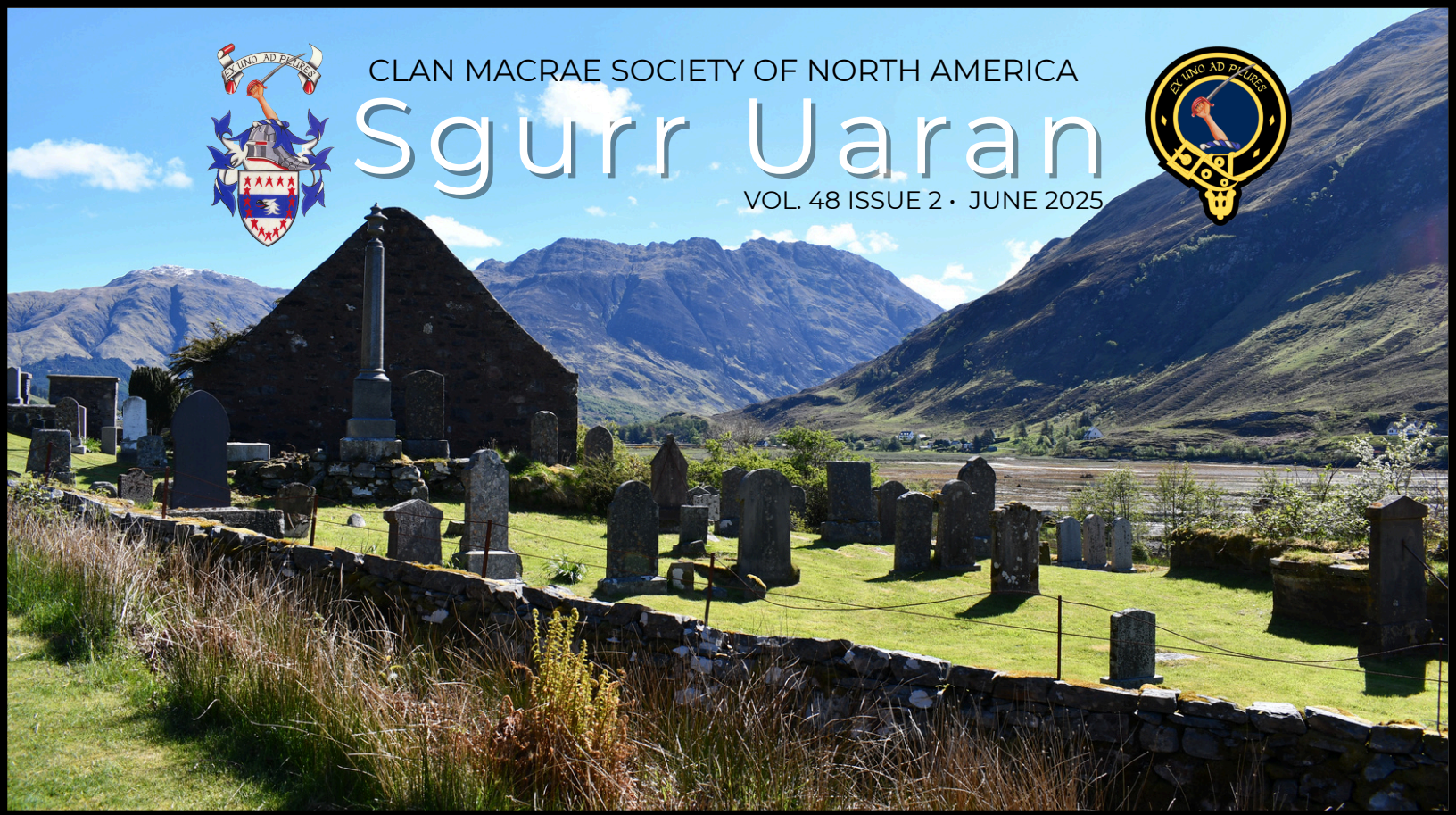




CLAN MACRAE SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

Sgurr Uaran

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CLAN MACRAE SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

OFFICERS & APPOINTEES

Bruce W. McRae, President
6842 U.S. Hwy 160
La Veta, CO 81055
brucewaynemcrae@gmail.com

Ebby Darden, Vice-President
ebbydarden@msn.com

Valerie R. See, Secretary

Sheila Schmidt, Treasurer
9830 N Western Fork Trail
Tucson, AZ 85742-8711
schmidtshela05@gmail.com

Rhonda Cummons, Membership
rhondamcraecummons@gmail.com

Bethany McCoy, Editor
bethany.mccoy23@gmail.com
Michael McRae, Editor
mmcrae08@hotmail.com

Bruce W. McRae, Genealogist
brucewaynemcrae@gmail.com

Alice Fairhurst, DNA Project
alicefairhurst@gmail.com

Clachan Duich: An Ancient Burial Ground

Just southeast of Eilean Donan Castle you will find Clachan Duich, the ancient burial ground for Clan MacRae.

Located near the banks of Loch Duich, Clachan Duich has been in existence for 1,000+ years and probably was in use three centuries earlier. There once was a church there that was destroyed by the same warships responsible for the destruction of Eilean Donan Castle in 1719.

Surrounding the ruins of the old church lie our MacRae ancestors in graves marked and unmarked, some our clan heroes and war dead, some the simple folk of the Highlands. Among the graves are those of Lt. Col John MacRae-Gilstrap and his wife Isabella.

Without John's vision and passion, Eilean Donan Castle might not exist today apart from being a ruin.

Overlooking Clachan Duich is the World War I Clan MacRae monument of a sorrowful soldier with bowed head, standing amidst mountain, sea and glen. Crafted from granite in Glasgow and erected in 1922 it honors the WWI war dead, some of whom are buried at Clachan Duich.

The old church contains fascinating memorial plaques detailing important moments and events in the Clan's history. It was originally dedicated to St Duthac in 1050 AD, though the site was in use some centuries earlier.

THIS ISSUE

NOTES & CORRESPONDENCE
PRESIDENT'S LETTER
EVENTS, HAPPENINGS & MORE
IN MEMORIAM

FEATURE ARTICLES
THE GUARDIAN THISTLE
LADY JANE MACRAE
ONE WEEK IN SCOTLAND

FINAL THOUGHTS
WOULD YOU SAY YES?

President's Letter

BY BRUCE W. MCRAE

Greetings Fellow MacRaes,

June is here and we are having a late spring in southern Colorado. Everything is green, the bears are out of hibernation, but there is still a dusting of snow on the peaks.

Now why am I sharing all this? Well, consider this an invitation to come visit us in southeast Colorado!

We love having visitors and in September, La Veta hosts the Spanish Peaks International Celtic Music Fest which has a world-renowned reputation. It's just a more hidden place of natural beauty to be discovered here where we live.

On a more personal note, I received word from my doctor that my thumb is healing nicely because the blood flow has caused the bone at the end of my thumb to come back to life. I will be seeing the surgeon soon, but I believe there is no amputation needed nor screws to hold it in place.

We give God the glory for it is very much an answer to prayer!

Judy and I are looking forward to going to the Grandfather Mountain Games during the second weekend in July.

Lady Jane MacRae will be visiting the games from Scotland and she will be competing in the bagpipe competitions.

You can read about Lady Jane later in this newsletter playing her pipes for King Charles. A "little bird told me" she is having a tune written especially for Clan MacRae.

We are looking forward to seeing her again and hope to see many of you there as well.

We are excited to see a couple of MacRaes who have stepped forward and volunteered to host tents for us in Texas and Wyoming.

Please welcome Sarah Ponce from Helotes, TX and Nathaniel McRae of Hawk Springs, WY to the Clan MacRae team as new Commissioners. See their announcements later in this newsletter.

But we need other MacRaes who want to step up and volunteer as well.

We need folks to write articles for our Sgurr Uaran newsletter. We really need more genealogical articles related to our members' family lines. Also, articles on Scottish and MacRae history.

We need someone to manage our Facebook site as well as other important tasks. In fact, you may know of something that Clan MacRae should be doing. Let me know and we will get it going!

Many thanks to member Tina Thorson who has volunteered and will be maintaining our Events Calendar for all the festivals where we are hosting Clan MacRae tents.

On a sad note for Clan MacRae, we just received word of the passing of our Commissioner David Ray. David and his wife Carol did an awesome job hosting our Clan MacRae tent at the Stone Mountain Games in Georgia. David will be sorely missed at Clan MacRae.

Please keep his wife Carol and family in your prayers.

Are you a gifted communicator?

Love to research family lines?

Is Social Media for you?

Where can you volunteer with Clan MacRae?

In closing, I wish every member a wonderful summer to visit with family and friends.

Go out and have some fun and do something you thought you would never do. You could even host a Clan MacRae tent at your local Scottish festival which is one of the best ways to have fun and meet other MacRaes!

As aye,

Bruce W. McRae

Bruce W. McRae, President
Clan MacRae Society of North America
brucewaynemcrae@gmail.com



FIND US ONLINE AT WWW.MACRAE.ORG OR FIND US ON FACEBOOK!

Member Happenings

San Antonio & Sherman Texas Highland Games



Photo on left: San Antonio Games
New Commissioner Sarah Ponce and her teenagers
Kinsley and Dylan hosted a Clan MacRae tent!



Photo on right : San Antonio Games
Dylan had quite the surprise when
the Star Wars Stormtroopers
invaded Clan MacRae.



Photo on left: Sherman Texas Highland Games
Commissioner Paul Jarnigan helping visitors at
the Clan MacRae tent.

Send your Member Happenings to Bethany McCoy,
bethany.mccoy23@gmail.com or Michael McRae,
mmcrae08@hotmail.com

IN MEMORIAM DAVID HAROLD RAY MAY 8, 1958 - MAY 25, 2025

David Ray, a man of wisdom, warmth, and quiet strength, passed away too soon at the age of 67. David had a way of drawing people in – whether through easy conversation over a glass of wine or shared laughter with friends on the porch. He lived fully and generously, traveling the world with his beloved wife, Carol, savoring new experiences and honoring the deep roots of his Scottish heritage. David was a proud and devoted father to five children who adored him and will carry his legacy in the ways they live and love. He was also a grandfather to seven grandchildren, who brought him endless pride and joy.



David Harold Ray

David and Carol were active in the Stone Mountain Highland Games and are Patron supporters of the Games. David was a Commissioner for the Clan MacRae Society of North America and he and Carol graciously hosted the Clan MacRae tent at the Stone Mountain Games for several years. David's presence will be missed profoundly, but his spirit remains alive in the hearts and stories of those he touched.

GEORGE WILLIAM "BILL" MCCRAW JULY 21, 1930 - APRIL 2, 2025



George William "Bill" McCraw of Gracey, KY passed away at the age of 94 on April 2. Bill was the father of our member Scott McCraw of Grant Park, IL and was a strong believer in Jesus. Bill had polio when he was 5 and his son Scott says, "he knows he's happy now to be dancing around on both feet with a big grin on his face". Bill owned his own Auto Repair Business from 1957-1989 before retiring at which time his two oldest sons, Scott and Jeff, took over the business until their retirement in January 2023. Bill and his wife Marci spent six months in Pau Pau New Guinea as missionaries with Wycliffe Associates in 2000 and then served another six months in Sudan as missionaries.

Bill was also an active member of the U.S. McCraw Association. He loved his family and his church family and enjoyed working from home. Bill's famous quote was "If I Can't Fix it, it Ain't Broke."

UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY - NOVEMBER

July 10-13, 2025

Grandfather Mountain Highland Games
Linville, NC www.gmhg.org
Contact: Bruce McRae - brucewaynemcrae@gmail.com

August 30-31, 2025

Caledonian Club Scottish Highland Games
Pleasanton, CA www.thescottishgames.com
Contact: James MacRae - macraejames9333@gmail.com

September 5-7, 2025

Longs Peak Scottish Irish Highland Festival
Estes Park, CO www.scotfest.com
Contact: Bruce McRae - brucewaynemcrae@gmail.com

September 6-7, 2025

Middle Tennessee Highland Games
Hendersonville, TN www.smokymountainhighlandgames.org
Contact: Joseph Kerstetter - Joseph.Kerstetter@gmail.com

September 13-14, 2025

Columbus Scottish Festival
Columbus, IN www.scottishfestival.org
Contact: Ray White - channaray@protonmail.com

October 10-12, 2025

Oklahoma Highland Gathering
Choctaw, OK www.unitedscotsok.com/festival
Mark McCraw - quickdraw_m@yahoo.com

October 11, 2025

Indianapolis Scottish Highland Games & Festival
Indianapolis, IN www.indyscotgamesandfest.com
Contact: Ray White - channaray@protonmail.com

October 18, 2025

Houston Highland Games
Humble, TX www.houstonhighlandgames.com
Paul Jarnigan - ask4paul2@hotmail.com

October 17-19, 2025

Stone Mountain Highland Games
Stone Mountain, GA www.smhg.org
Leon Folsom - leon.folsom@prodigy.net

November 1, 2025

Charleston Scottish Games
North Charleston, SC www.charlestonscottishgames.com
Dean McCraw - dean.mccraw1@gmail.com

The Scottish festivals listed will have a Clan MacRae tent hosted by one of our members.

For a list of all Scottish festivals visit:

www.highlandgamesandfestivals.com/u-s-events/

If you want to host a Clan MacRae tent at your local festival, please contact Bruce at brucewaynemcrae@gmail.com.

We'll help you get started!

WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONERS & APPOINTEE



Nathaniel McRae, Commissioner

Nathaniel McRae lives in Hawk Springs, Wyoming with his wife and four children.

His 4th great grandfather, Roderick MacRae, was born in Inverness in 1791 and moved from Scotland to Ontario, Canada in 1803.

Two generations later, his ancestors moved into the U. S. A., with generations living in Illinois, Kentucky, Alabama, and Michigan, where Nathaniel was born and grew up.

Nathaniel and his family enjoy learning about their heritage and attending highland games and festivals whenever possible.

Sarah Ponce will be representing Clan MacRae in the San Antonio Highland Games. She has an interest in genealogy and has thus far traced her Clan MacRae lineage back to Rev. Farquhar (4th of Inverinate).

Sarah lives in Helotes, Texas with her husband, and two children.

She became a member of The Clan MacRae Society of North America after visiting the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games with her family.

One day, she hopes to participate in a Clan MacRae tour of Scotland.



Sarah Ponce, Commissioner



Tina Thorson
Festival Coordinator

Tina Thorson lives in Spokane, WA with her husband Kevin. They have seven adult children, one of whom is actively tracing their MacRae family genealogy, which appears to have come to Washington through Canada in the 1800s.

Tina is a Navy veteran who works at a civil engineering firm as a project coordinator.

In her spare time, she enjoys needlework, reading, and learning about her Scottish heritage.

Tina will be maintaining the Events Calendar for all the Scottish Festivals where our members are hosting tents.

This calendar is both on our website and upcoming events are printed in all newsletters.

THE GUARDIAN THISTLE: NATIONAL FLOWER OF SCOTLAND

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



There are several different legends that tell how the thistle became Scotland's symbol.

Most date from the reign of Alexander, and particularly the events surrounding the Battle of Largs in 1263.

It is often forgotten that for hundreds of years much of Scotland was part of the Kingdom of Norway.

Parts of Scotland, particularly the Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetland islands, were under Norwegian control for several centuries, starting with the Viking Age. This Norse influence was formalized in 1098 when King Edgar of Scotland signed a treaty with Magnus III of Norway, acknowledging Norwegian overlordship over the Hebrides. While other parts of Scotland remained under Scottish rule, Norwegian control over the islands persisted for centuries.

By 1263 however, Norway seems to have lost interest in their former territory. That was until King Alexander III proposed to buy back the Western Isles and Kintyre from the Norse King Haakon IV. The thought of relieving King Alexander of some of his riches and territories appears to have re-kindled Norse interest in Scotland.

Late in the summer of 1263 King Haakon of Norway, now intent on conquering the Scots, set off with a sizeable fleet of longships for the Scottish coast. Gales and fierce storms forced some of the ships onto the beach at Largs in Ayrshire, and a Norwegian force was landed.

Legend has it that at some point during the invasion the Norsemen tried to surprise the sleeping Scottish Clansmen. To move more stealthily under the cover of darkness the Norsemen removed their footwear.

But as they crept barefoot, they came across an area of ground covered in thistles and one of Haakon's men unfortunately stood on one and shrieked out in pain, thus alerting the Clansmen to the advancing Norsemen.

His shout warned the Scots who defeated the Norsemen at the Battle of Largs, thus saving Scotland from invasion. The brave work of the heroic Scottish thistle was recognized and chosen as Scotland's national emblem. The Scottish thistle is the oldest recorded national flower and is featured in the grassy area of the Coat of Arms for Scotland!



LADY JANE MACRAE PLAYING THE PIPES FOR THE KING!

REPRINT OF ARTICLE BY NEIL DRYSDALE

PUBLISHED IN THE P&J (PRESS AND JOURNAL EPAPER) ON JANUARY 17, 2025



Lady Jane MacRae

A quick note: Many of our members met Lady Jane MacRae at the 2015 Clan MacRae Gathering in Scotland. Then in 2017, Bruce and Judy McRae met up with Jane in Norwich, England. Now Lady Jane is coming to the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games this July. She will be competing on her bagpipes, so why not come out to the Grandfather Games this year?

The maths teacher at St Machar Academy in Aberdeen has always loved music but has taken her passion to a new level in recent years. Lady Jane MacRae is playing the bagpipes at the official VE Day 80 commemorations.

Try to picture Margaret Rutherford with a dash of Joyce Grenfell and a sliver of Maggie Smith and you might get close to describing Jane MacRae. Or rather, Lady Jane MacRae. Or, more precisely, Dr Lady Jane MacRae. ("No no, that looks stupid").

Whatever the title, comparisons are futile when it comes to describing this remarkable force of nature who teaches mathematics at St Machar Academy in Aberdeen – even though she could have retired from the classroom years ago.

Lady Jane is, quite simply, a formidable character who regards any obstacle in her path as something to be beaten into submission: the one-time Grease and Oliver singer who has danced to her own tune while strolling down the corridors of academia.

If you had suggested a decade ago that she would be playing the bagpipes in front of the King at the official VE Day 80 commemorations at St Paul's Cathedral in May, she would probably have looked at you with a mixture of derision and incredulity.

But here's the thing.

It's happening, this redoubtable individual will take centre stage in the cathedral on May 7 and at the London Eye on May 8 and she told me all about it.

"I was brought up at Carlton Towers in Yorkshire and music was very much part of life because my mother was a very talented pianist. At school, my music teacher tried very hard to persuade me to have my voice trained but, although I sang in many performances of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, I was not interested at that time in singing as a career."

"At no point in my life did I ever even consider playing the bagpipes until one day when a lady I know suggested I should try the chanter, lent me one and taught me the scale. This became a challenge and I'm not somebody to refuse one. I started lessons with the local band, but that didn't last long as Covid hit. For several months, I was floundering, not having any real direction and trying to teach myself grace notes and tunes.

But, purely by chance, I was advised to have a lesson with Stuart Liddell MBE and, as you can imagine, I was shaking in my shoes at the thought of doing this with somebody who is, arguably, the greatest piper in the world today. However, that was the start of what has now become an obsession."

Jane & Judy in Norwich, England



LADY JANE MACRAE PLAYING THE PIPES FOR THE KING!

...continued

As somebody based in Monymusk, the mother of two – and grandmother of four – has never been less than competitive. It has inspired her in music, in teaching, in assisting vulnerable children and relentlessly improving her standards.

Maths might be difficult for some people, but not when it comes to Lady Jane. And she smiles when she recounts how it has transformed so many lives. 'They wrote letters – they still do' She told me: "I have been teaching for many years, and to this day, I love the interaction with the youngsters."

"It has been a very satisfying career with often wild children taking snippets of the many talks we had and remembering them years later and thanking me for helping them become successful people. You tend to think your advice falls on deaf ears, but this is far from the truth with letters – yes, they did exist – and messages being sent from grateful youngsters.

Obviously, all teachers are delighted when their pupils pass exams, especially when they have little confidence in their ability, but these are steppingstones to their careers, and it is the proof you have made a difference to a life that gives the most pleasure."

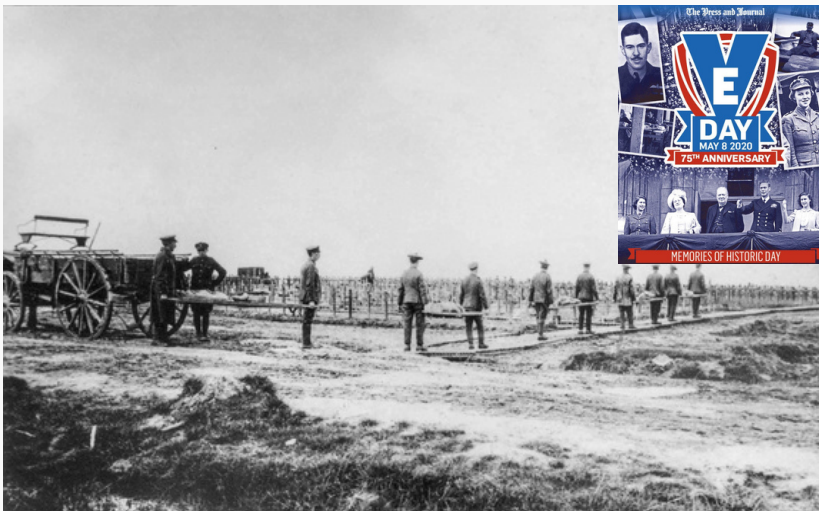


2015 MacRae Gathering in Scotland

"I really must have annoyed the heads of several schools because I would sing at the top of my voice in the corridor at all times of the day, irrespective of lessons going on. Nobody objected, but I'm sure that Iona Reid, the headmistress of St Machar Academy, must heave a sigh of relief that she has not been subjected to this... yet!"

Last summer, as Britain remembered D-Day, Lady Jane participated in a poignant memorial to those involved in the Normandy landings in 1944 by playing the pipes at 10 different Scottish castles, prior to travelling to the Menin Gate in Belgium. She was joined at Inveraray Castle by her mentor in what became an "especially moving" event and will never forget the haunting lament which Mr. Liddell performed at Ypres, one of the towns which suffered the biggest loss of life from 1914 to 1918.

War affected every family. She recalled: "My grandfather served in the First World War. When he returned home, he was unrecognizable and was told by the butler to use the tradesmen's entrance. Obviously, this was soon rectified, but the very fact he was in such a state that his own wife didn't recognize him, has always resonated with me. I suppose he was lucky being able to return home because so many didn't, both in the camps and fighting on the front. My mother was in the Signals Regiment during the Second World War and lost friends during those dreadful times."



Most of those who served their country in the two conflicts are gone now and that is why the 80th anniversary of VE Day will be a closing salute to the remaining few.

In which light, it's hardly surprising that Lady Jane has a mixture of emotions about being asked to fulfill such a pivotal role in these climactic commemorations.

"I'm still reeling from the shock of being invited to play at St Paul's Cathedral for the Blessing of the Lamp Light of Peace and at the London Eye for the Lighting of the Principal Beacon.

LADY JANE MACRAE PLAYING THE PIPES FOR THE KING!

continued...

This is a great honour and I am very aware of its significance. My first thought must be to practice the two tunes as much as possible to do the occasion justice. I could have no better teacher than Stuart who, I'm sure, will crack the whip if he doesn't think I'm working hard enough. But there is little chance of that happening as I will practice as much as possible to perfect the tunes for the events."

Scotland and its Pipers lead the Nation in the 80 Day Countdown to VE Day 80

On acceptance of the invitation from Burns Peak CVO OBE OPR - Pipe Major of VE Day 80, for Scotland to lead the UK, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man in the 80 day countdown to VE Day 80, 8th May 2025, I have the honour of leading the 20 Scottish Pipers in our country's unique tribute to the fall of the Second World War, starting at 12 noon on 18th February 2025, culminating at 12 noon on the 8th May as part of these unique celebrations/commemorations. The twenty pipers will be playing all over Scotland, including locations such as Craigh, Inverness, Edinburgh, Falkland, Stone, Eilean Donnan, Blair, Ardreck, Castle of May, Delegate, Lochranza on Arran, Caerfennock and many more.

Many of the pipers have very personal reasons for playing while others are playing purely as a tribute to the men and women who sacrificed their lives for the freedom we all enjoy today. Both my parents served during WWII and it is of them that I will be thinking during my first rendition of "CELEBRATE", the tune especially written for this historic, 80th anniversary of VE Day, by the world's most famous piper, Stuart Liddell MBE. Stuart, Sabine and their son will make up three of the twenty pipers playing for this historic occasion.

Lady Macrae
Pipe Major Lady Jane Macrae
Burns Peak Pipes and Drums



"There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Stuart is the single, most important reason I have continued my love of the bagpipes and music in general. Many people think of him as being the greatest piper of his time and the Pipe Major of the World Champion Pipe Band, Inveraray and District, but he is far more than that.

He is a consummate musician, plays many instruments, his knowledge of all genres is astonishing, and his ability to teach and motivate both young and old is incredible." Stuart Liddell wrote Diu Regnare to mark 70 years of the Queen on the throne. "The man's a genius and it is an honour to have him as a teacher. My only worry is just how big a stick will be needed to bring my playing up to the standard required." One suspects both will be equal to the task. After all, nothing else has held them back.

And it is shaping up to be a busy year for Lady Jane who is being awarded the Order of the Scottish Samurai in March for her work with disadvantaged children. But that's a story for another day. Or maybe a book. When we're talking about Lady Jane MacRae, this is somebody with sufficient stories and achievements that she can leave any blowing for the pipes.

CLAN MACRAE ANCIENT HUNTING & DRESS WHITE TARTAN FABRIC

We now have the washable lightweight Clan MacRae tartan fabric available!

We ordered 30 yards in MacRae Dress White and 30 yards in MacRae Ancient Hunting that can be made into skirts, shawls, etc. They won't last long!

It is a new lighter weight washable poly-viscose fabric, and they are both stunning

to look at! The fabric is 60" wide and has a 12-ounce weight. This fabric is available only to our members and sells for \$60 a yard.

Pictures below are of the actual fabric swatches.



There are professional seamstresses available, so if you are interested in ordering fabric or having something made, please contact Judy at judymcrae777@gmail.com.



ONE WEEK IN SCOTLAND - A MEANINGFUL TRIP

BY KAYLEE GAHAGAN

If you're anything like me, your social media is filled with photos and videos about traveling to Scotland, you look at travel books at the bookstore and always search for unique places to go in Scotland. Just thinking about traveling to Scotland feels like a full-time passion, and as soon as you return from a trip, you're right back to planning.

Ever since connecting with my Scottish ancestry, I felt even more drawn to visit. Like an invisible string, the land that we all came from connects us and when making that trek, you truly want to honor and experience that connection. I like to travel like a local. So, I have compiled my own recommendations that worked for me, that will help to make your trip to Scotland feel meaningful and special.

When planning, you need to answer these questions: how long will I stay, where will I go, how will I get around, and what will I do? I like to plan my trips like a sandwich, my point of entry and exit the same, are my bread. Then I find a home away from home to be the meat of my sandwich. This allows me to take day trips from a central location, adding all the toppings I want without getting too chaotic or stressful. Stay in two locations for a week and you will see tourist attractions, use public transportation, allow for spontaneous, off the beaten path moments and feel like a local!

The first step is transportation and a flight in and out of the country is your best bet.

The views of land and sea around Scotland are a breathtaking start to a magical stay. We flew in from Ireland, and I immediately commented to my travel companions, who agreed, "Why do they call Ireland the Emerald Isle when Scotland is SO green!"



The Royal Mile

For the middle 4 days, I recommend the highlands, just outside of Inverness.

After flying into Edinburgh airport, we taxied into the city.

Remember, taxis are a great time to ask local drivers about their favorite places to eat, where you can get the most authentic experience, etc.

No shade to Ireland but seeing Scotland from the sky will really blow you away with just how beautifully green she is

Now, if you are flying directly into Scotland, my perfect Scottish stay starts and ends in Edinburgh. Other than Edinburgh being a beautiful and fascinating city, the feeling of starting and ending in the same place is not only convenient, but it makes you feel like a pro!

Once you get your sea legs in a new city at the start, returning there at the end feels like coming home. You'll know the roads; you may have a pub you'd like to return to and it's a great way to feel more like a local.

I enjoyed two days in Edinburgh at the start and one at the end.

When it comes to accommodation type, I can't stress enough that the best way to really feel like a local is to stay in an Airbnb!

Not only do your accommodation payments go to the locals who own your Airbnb, but since you're in the city, you are often staying in a flat where locals live. This adds an extra layer of authenticity and helps you as a traveler feel grounded and connected in a new place.

I do not recommend a hotel if you're seeking this kind of trip!

If you choose an Airbnb, there is an affordable, secure luggage drop service called Bounce that holds your luggage until check-in so you can explore the city hands-free.

ONE WEEK IN SCOTLAND - A MEANINGFUL TRIP

continued...

In Edinburgh, we found a lovely Airbnb on Victoria St. It cost a bit extra, but I can't recommend enough staying on Victoria St. You are in the heart of everything, it's walkable without killing your feet, and waking up to a foggy morning view is something you will never forget, it feels like you time traveled!

While in Edinburgh, I recommend a stroll around Princes Street Gardens, taking in the Scott Monument and stopping in at the lovely (and free!) National Gallery of Scotland.

A short walk away is Victoria St. and the Royal Mile. Now, this is very touristy, but it is a great place to do some shopping at reasonable prices.

Dedicate an afternoon to Edinburgh Castle and Greyfriars Kirkyard, then head over to the National Museum of Scotland and take the elevator to the top for an incredible view of the city!

Go a bit off the beaten path to find authentic food and hit some local pubs. We enjoyed the Brass Monkey and then found lots of locals/students playing music at The Last Drop! That was an incredible moment for stumbling upon these moments are what make you feel connected to the culture! From Edinburgh, we took the train to Inverness.

We rode through the highlands with large windows looking out over the beautiful scenery. This is another great time to chat with locals! At this point, I recommend renting a car for the 4-day stay. Another great experience, as there was absolutely nothing like driving the roads through the highlands!

During our highland stay, we found the most perfect wee cottage, outside of Inverness in North Kessock, where Loch Ness dumps into Inverness Firth. This was the perfect place to stay as the area had a small-town feel, peaceful water views, plus an amazing local restaurant where we ate most our meals. All this just a few minutes' drive from downtown Inverness and all the wonderful things to explore there!

Once again, this creates less of a "go, go, go!" travel feel, and more of a home-y atmosphere- you don't have to keep lugging suitcases and checking in to new places to see lots of sights!

Being in the highlands was important to me, as it would be for many of you, as that is where much of our ancestral story takes place! I recommend doing some significant ancestry research before your trip, so you can have a reference on your phone of names and places. Sometimes you'll end up in locations that may be where someone else in your tree has stood before you!



Edinburgh Castle



Eilean Donan Castle

Locations like Eilean Donan Castle, which is the MacRae family's heritage site. I can't recommend this stop enough for it's an iconic castle for many, but for us it feels like an extra special place. Set aside some time to really wander its halls, to read documents and ask questions. Their docents are helpful; let them know you are a descendant, and they will offer any knowledge and insight that they can!

If you read my previous article, you'd see that one of their docents helped me compare notes with a family tree they had preserved. The grounds are beautiful and when we went, it was a foggy and rainy morning, so there really is no bad time to visit.

ONE WEEK IN SCOTLAND - A MEANINGFUL TRIP continued...

Clava Cairns- Stone Circle



It's a short but beautiful hike up to some of the most interesting sites and greenest grass I've ever seen. It's truly an other-worldly experience.

Other notable places are The Old Man of Storr and the Fairy Pools. In the area, there are lots of highland coos and sheep that will walk right up to you, or block in your car. The route into and out of Skye is perfect for pulling over and checking out unique places, you never know what great coffee you might try or what ruins you'll stumble across.

Other notable highlands experiences include a chilly plunge with some "wild swimming"! With a bit of research, we found a loch and took a dip! This was one of our favorite experiences as we got to see tons of heather on our walk and the loch itself was so peaceful. Experiences like this, along with Fairy Glen, really make you feel connected to the land.

I also recommend exploring Inverness, including the nearby site of the Battle of Culloden and the stone circles and burial mounds of the Clava Cairns. Both are easy to do in a few short hours but worthwhile stops. The battleground is another great place to have done some research to see if you can follow an ancestor here. In Inverness, I recommend stopping by Johnny Foxes to try their incredible Haggis Burger

in an old-style pub right on the River Ness!
Take the train back to Edinburgh and stay in a different part of the city for your final day.

Order Now: Clan MacRae North American Tartan Fabric Available

"In our Society Tartan, the MacRae "Sett" is used, of course, as the basis of construction. The colours used were not randomly chosen, but have significance, viz.: The Base colour is the light blue with a white stripe as in the Saltire Flag. There is a somewhat darker blue/grey that symbolizes the Ocean crossed by "The scattered children of Kintail". Then we have the Stronger blue that, in combination with the Red and White stripes, symbolizes the colours of "The Stars and Stripes" of our American Flag. Finally, the White Stripe is supported on each side by a lining of Gold. This represents the "Golden Opportunity" that this country has represented to its vast number of immigrants who came seeking a better and more prosperous life."

The 13-ounce worsted wool is double width at 59", so only four yards are needed for a kilt. The fabric is \$70 a yard plus a shipping cost (no tax). You may order any length which makes it ideal for scarves, crafts, etc. We also have access to professional kilt-makers. If you are interested in ordering fabric or having something made, please contact Judy at judymcrae777@gmail.com.

The castle also has food and coffee, as well as an incredible gift shop full of Macrae gifts!

I knew this was our ancestral home, but it was also the Mackenzie's seat, so I was blown away by how much history and merchandise was about the MacRaes!

It was an emotional and happy surprise to not only see that recognition, but to walk where our ancestors did and feel that connection.

From Eilean Donan Castle, it's an easy ride over to the Isle of Skye. While on Skye, I can't recommend the Fairy Glen enough!

Isle of Skye- Fairy Glen



Wild Swimming



It's Official! Fabric Available now!

This is a great time to wander into some coffee shops, antique and bookstores, which have great ideas for unique souvenirs. There are lots of cool experiences to try in Edinburgh, so if you missed something, you can try it on the back end.

Before you return to reality, take a moment to soak in the amazing place where you came from.

WOULD YOU SAY YES?

by Judy McRae



What if someone approached you to do a talk about Clan MacRae? Let's say a 20-minute talk where you could also show pictures or charts.

Would you be able to do that?

Well, this exact scenario happened to Bethany McCoy, one of our Editors, who lives in Cleveland, TN. Cleveland's Museum and Cultural Center was celebrating Tartan Day this past April with a dinner, clan lecture and dancing. She called to see if there was a member in her area that would be able to give the talk. However, she also said she was willing to do the talk but would need help in putting it together. That was the scenario we chose.

So, we came up with nine Clan MacRae topics and wrote a brief synopsis on each that could be shortened down to bullet points. Plus, we came up with almost 30 pictures that could be part of a slide show during her talk. Here are the topics:

- Origins of Clan MacRae
- The Battle of Sheriffmuir
- Destruction of Eilean Donan Castle
- Affair of the Wild MacRaes
- Immigration of MacRaes to North America
- Restoration of Eilean Donan Castle
- MacRae Meadows in North Carolina
- Clan MacRae Society of North America
- In Closing – Fortitude!

Bethany reported that the talk went very well. She had bought some MacRae tartan fabric and a friend sewed an outfit for her.

There was even a man in the audience from Scotland! All we can say is GOOD JOB Bethany! So now, are YOU willing to say YES when the opportunity arises?



SGURR UARAN!