



# CAPE CALEDONIAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPE TOWN CALEDONIAN SOCIETY



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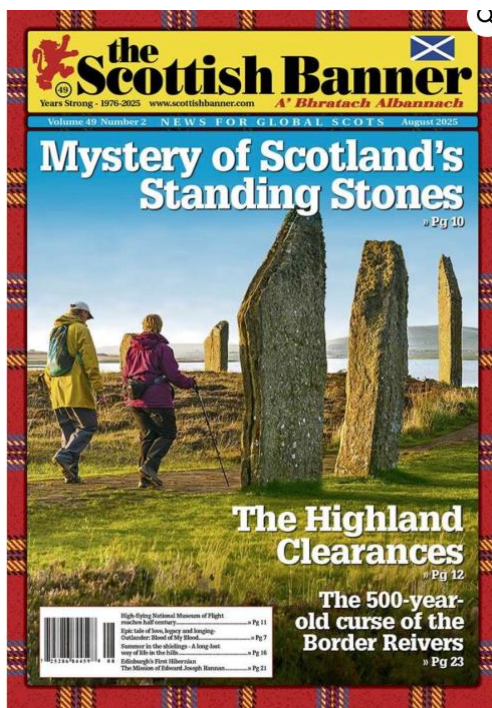
### FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Fellow Caledonians

Welcome to the third edition of our Newsletter. I'm delighted to report that the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with most members telling us they enjoy reading it and want more. Only one member felt it was a bit long — if anyone else shares that view, please let me know.

Our new website isn't quite live yet, but progress is being made. The committee has been gathering material, and we've met with the web designer and builder, so the project is moving forward — slowly but surely. In the meantime, thanks to the efforts and expertise of Alison Stevenson, we now have a WhatsApp group for all members. This will allow us to share updates about events and other news quickly and easily.

If you've been enjoying the Scottish-themed features in this Newsletter, you may also like a monthly publication called *The Scottish Banner*. The cover of the current issue is shown below, and you can subscribe at [www.scottishbanner.com/subscribe](http://www.scottishbanner.com/subscribe). The August edition includes articles on the evacuation of St Kilda, wartime Glasgow, Whigham's Inn and its Burns connection, information on the sequel to *Outlander*, the mystery of Scotland's standing stones, and the Highland Clearances.



## FROM THE DESK OF THE CHIEF

Dear Caledonians

I see that we already have a fairly “newsy” newsletter this month so my contribution will be brief.

After being retrenched by a large listed corporate (who shall remain nameless) in my early fifties and not finding any other employer willing to employ someone with some grey hairs, I started my own business in 2005. I remember being told that it would take at least three years to become established. Well to be more accurate, it actually took almost seven years in my case. I soon discovered that as a small business owner, it was very encouraging to join an association of other small businesses to share ideas quite frequently to get referrals to new clients. It did not take me long to join the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce as a member. I have been an active member of the Chamber ever since and have been involved as both a Board Member and Honorary Treasurer over the years. The underlying message to Chamber members was always – “Being a Chamber member is not sufficient; it is what you put into your membership”. I have found that adage to be very true over the years. **And to some large extent I believe it is what applies equally to our Society.** One of our members resigned recently because she felt that she was not getting anything out of the Society. But looking back, the same person had never attended any of our functions, not one. So, my message to Callies members this month is – if you want to get the most from being a member of the Society, remember it is what you put into the Society. And that includes attending and participating in our events.

Well, that is my sermon for this month, we hope to see you soon!

*“May yer blessings outnumber the thistles that grow and may trouble avoid ye wherever ye go.”*

Yours aye,

Chief Peter Ross

## SCOTTISH HISTORY CORNER (continued from previous editions)

After Kenneth MacAlpin’s death around 858 AD, his descendants continued to rule the emerging Kingdom of Alba. His son, Constantine I, succeeded him and faced ongoing threats from Norse invasions, which would remain a major force in Scottish politics for centuries. Over time, the kingdom gradually expanded its influence north and south, often through conflict and strategic alliances. In the 10th century, King Constantine II further solidified the monarchy's power and is notable for being one of the first rulers to refer to himself explicitly as “King of Alba.” By the reign of Malcolm II in the early 11th century, the foundations of a unified Scottish kingdom—both in territory and identity—were more firmly established. Malcolm’s grandson, Duncan I, and later Macbeth, made famous by Shakespeare, would continue to shape the turbulent but defining years of medieval Scotland.

## INTERESTING SCOTTISH FACTS

### **Abandoned Scottish mansion once home of head of Tennent's reclaimed by nature**

The following is an interesting article on an abandoned Scottish mansion, from the “Daily Record”, written by Alexander Smail & Elizabeth Hunter. I have shortened it a bit for inclusion here, together with some modifications and additions to personalise it to us “Callies”.

Dunalastair House is situated in the southern Highlands, 30km West of Pitlochry. I have added the map below, on which I show its location, relative to Pitlochry, which just happens to be one of my favourite Highland towns. I have ventured on a number of occasions into the areas depicted of Loch Tummell, Loch Rannoch, Rannoch Station and Loch Ericht. Loch Tummell is of course home to the Queen’s View, a famous lookout offering stunning views across the loch to Schiehallion, one of Scotland’s iconic mountains. Loch Rannoch is a more remote and wilder loch than Tummel, less developed and quieter. The village of Kinloch Rannoch lies at the eastern end. I always find this area and Rannoch moor particularly isolated, giving a sense of true Highland wilderness. Sadly, though, this has changed in the last 20 years, with more and more tourists flooding into the area. When I first ventured there in the early 90s, mine was the only car around; about 4 years ago, it was like a national highway! Those of

you who remember the Scottish singer “Andy Stewart”, will remember his song “Road to the Isles”, in which he sings of “by Loch Tummell and Loch Rannoch and Lochaber we will go”.



Dunalastair House is shown (above) in relation to Pitlochry (the red circles in the photo)

Enough “rambling”.....on with the article: The property was built in 1859 by local architect Andrew Heiton. It was originally the home of General Sir John Macdonald, who commanded land forces in Scotland. In the early 1880s, Sir John's son Alastair sold the property to Hugh Tennent—the great-great-grandson of the Wellpark Brewery founder of the same name. Now known as Tennent's Brewery, it produces the best-selling beer in Scotland.

Tennent owned the mansion for just nine years, before he died at age 27. During World War Two, Dunalastair House was used as a school for the children of Polish refugees. The photo below shows what it looked like at that time.



Dunalastair House in its glory years

However, the property experienced a catastrophic fire and fell into disuse by 1952, before its contents were sold at auction two years after. The abandoned Dunalastair House later became a hotspot for vandals in the 1960s. When thieves stole the lead from the roof, the building quickly fell into a state of decay. After this, deer fences were constructed around the property to keep potential trespassers out. Today, the imposing structure has been taken over by trees, nettles, and bracken.



Dunalastair today

Many proposals to restore the mansion have been made. However, none have succeeded because of the price and extent of the repairs needed.

## HISTORY OF THE CLANS

In this section, I'll be highlighting a different clan each month, beginning with those that played the most prominent roles in Scottish history. These include Clan Donald (MacDonald), Clan Stewart, Clan Campbell, Clan MacGregor, Clan Chattan, Clan Cameron, Clan Fraser, Clan Mackenzie, Clan Douglas, and Clan Gordon. These clans are well known for their historical significance—whether through their influence on politics, control of territory, association with castles and seats of power, or their involvement in key events, including clan conflicts and battles against England (a personal favourite topic of mine!).

Of course, one could make a strong case for other clans as well, but this is the selection I've chosen to begin with. Starting next month, I'll kick off the series with **Clan Donald**, followed by the others in the months to come.

## NEWS OF MEMBERS

One of our members, David Wallace, recently visited Scotland and wrote the following account of his trip:

I was 2½ when our small family of four Wallace's (my sister, "the alien", was born a few years later, in Somerset West) left Scotland for what was meant to be "a short stay in a sunnier clime", arriving in Cape Town in September 1969 – just days before "the great earthquake" in Tulbagh – what a shaky start we had to our great African adventure (that and the howling South-Easter). Well, except for a brief discussion by my parents of possibly returning to Scotland in the mid-1980's, our family never looked back and we became "Africans" in almost every sense of the word.....except, we never forgot our Scottish roots or relatives and were very fortunate in being able to visit them every few years or so.

But, sadly, as time marched on, our family-circle grew ever smaller. As both my parents were only-children, we were a small enough "clan" to begin with – first my father passed away in 2018, followed closely by his cousins and then my Mom's two closest cousins in 2023 – and, then, Mom and my brother in 2024.....and, so, this galvanised me into action late last year to begin arranging another trip to Scotland, to meet up with those surviving relatives and to raise a glass to family recently departed. And, most fortunately, as my girlfriend at the time (now my fiancé - Jackie) also has family in Scotland, she was able and happy to join me.

And, thus, on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025 we flew to Edinburgh via London-Heathrow, spending the first night with Jackie's Uncle and Aunt in Dalgety Bay, close to Dunfermline. By now the brilliant spell of warm and dry weather Scotland had been experiencing was over and the next three weeks had all seasons in one day (even snow, albeit on Ben Nevis) – but, that's Scotland for you, so, no complaints. On Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> May we hired a car from

Enterprise Car Rental (cheap – but, shocking service – use Arnold Clark, instead) and headed up to Aberdeen via Pitlochry in the Jeep Compass hybrid we had been given (instead of the Ford Focus I had initially requested) – my first time driving a hybrid and as solo driver in the UK, with Jackie as navigator, and the car giving multiple sensor warnings to add to the stress. Needless to say, we also struggled with the SatNav in the car and the weird UK road system with traffic circles every few miles and constant changes to speed limits. Although, to be fair, we found the Scottish drivers to be extremely patient and courteous – well, most of them (for I am sure there are plenty of English escaping up north for a quieter and more peaceful lifestyle.... 😊).

Pitlochry is stunning and we were very sad to have to cut our visit short (due to being handed over the car very late by Enterprise). Eventually, after a turbulent drive and constantly getting lost in small Scottish villages without clear road signs, or diversions due to roadworks, we arrived at Jackie's cousins in Aberdeen (a stiff drink was needed *post haste* to calm my frayed nerves). There we spent a wonderful few days, catching up with our respective relatives, going for long walks and raising a glass to departed souls.

Jackie was introduced to haggis and black pudding for the first time – although tentative at first, the whisky-infused haggis bom-boms were an instant hit, as was her first taste of black pudding – now, she just can't get enough of either (the same goes for myself). Here we were also introduced to Aberdonian butteries (cross between a roll and a croissant), with the age-old dilemma of “which side is actually up”. In general, we ate really well, besides buying sandwiches from Aldi or Tesco's for light meals and saving on costs at times by bringing with us packets of cup-o-soup, two-minute noodles and sachets of Nestle cappuccinos. However, we did find eating healthily at restaurants or tearooms quite a challenge as everywhere serves chips (French fries) with a meal and obtaining mixed vegetables was almost impossible – so much for Jamie Oliver and Nigella positively influencing Scottish cuisine. And, asking for hot milk with your coffee was received with shocked looks...how dare we wish for our coffee to remain hot, what with it being “freezing” cold outside – the cheek of it (or, that's how we were made to feel.....just weird 😊).

On Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> May we headed out from Aberdeen (now with the SatNav up and working, and all our upcoming destinations firmly programmed – and, most of the warning sensors disabled [we checked and the car was working just fine]) and headed towards Inverness via Lossiemouth in beautiful weather with just the odd spattering of rain. Lossiemouth was lovely, but we didn't manage to see any RAF or other jets – and, certainly none of my favourite planes, Spitfires. We arrived at my ex-colleague and friend's home in Inverness late afternoon and enjoyed a refreshing evening walk along the banks of the River Ness, and venison (deer meat) pizza – and beer (we took a liking to Innis and Gunn, Tennent's Lager, McEwan's 80 Shilling and Bass Pale Ale, and a number of ciders). On Monday afternoon, after another relaxing walk around the centre of Inverness, I was given my first lesson in navigating single-track roads, down the south side of Loch Ness (a harrowing, but most necessary experience for our upcoming stay on Mull). The weather was awful, but we survived and enjoyed watching the lochs in operation at Fort Augustus – then, it was back to Inverness via the motorway.

On Tuesday morning we headed out bright and early for Fort William. I struggled with the self-service petrol pump and to check the tyre pressure (no car manual or sticker inside the driver's door), but again, found the Scots to be most helpful and patient. The drive to Fort William was amazing, with breathtaking sea lochs on one side and rolling hills on the other. It was raining by the time we reached Fort William, but it soon cleared enough to ensure the train journey to Mallaig on the Jacobite Steam Train was spectacular. After almost being arrested for sharing a beer in public in Mallaig (I thought drinking in public was a national past-time in Scotland), we returned to Fort William and spent the night in a comfortable guesthouse on the grounds of the magnificent Inverlochy Castle (only the very wealthy can afford a night's stay in the actual castle).

The next morning, we travelled to Oban to catch the CalMac ferry to Mull – I was a little nervous about the experience, but the staff were exceptionally helpful and friendly. After a smooth and scenic crossing, we disembarked at Craignure and headed up the coast via Tobermory to the inland village of Dervaig (I was extremely grateful for the lesson in single-track driving, as the roads were very narrow and windy – and, not all drivers were cautious – again, I suspect many were English). We constantly searched for otters and white-tailed sea eagles (alas, we didn't see any – but we did encounter golden eagles soaring high above the hills overlooking Dervaig). The

Ardbeg Guesthouse in Dervaig was reminiscent of Faulty Towers, but the owners, Brian and Ionna, were delightful hosts and treated us and their other guests like royalty. And the breakfasts were indeed fit for royalty – full Scottish breakfast with haggis and black pudding – we could barely stagger up the stairs, afterwards.

I had booked us on Staffa Wildlife Tours to visit Staffa and Lunga, part of the Treshnish islands group, to view puffins and other Scottish wildlife on our first full day on Mull (Thursday the 29<sup>th</sup>), just in case the weather turned against us – and, indeed it did – so much so that the tour was postponed until the next day (with a full refund for those who couldn't make it) - but, we still enjoyed visiting the quaint shops and eateries in Tobermory and the white sands of Calgary Beach later in the afternoon, once the weather cleared.

Friday was perfect and we set out on a calm and sun-kissed sea (I even got sunburnt – silly me for forgetting my suntan lotion in my suitcase....). We saw pilot whales, and later, bottlenose dolphins – but no sea eagles. Lunga was alive with sea birds and the slippery pathway up the slopes to view their nesting sites had to be climbed with care – but was well-worth it. Puffins, shags and razor-bills were everywhere (that's puffins now ticked off my bucket-list 😊). Staffa (with Fingall's Cave), was off-limits due to upgrade construction to the landing site, but we still managed awesome views offshore from the boat. The rest of our stay on Mull was spent drinking and eating at the local pub of the Bellachroy Hotel in Dervaig, sitting on the shores of lochs looking for otters (didn't see any) and just relaxing in general. We were very sad to leave and can't wait to return.

On Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> June we arrived back in Dalgety Bay after a most relaxing and scenic drive through the centre of Scotland (even saw a red squirrel crossing the road...the chicken was in Spain on holiday 😊). Jackie's Uncle and Aunt, and her cousin Gordon, kindly hosted us for the next week and we visited Edinburgh, St Andrews, Falkirk (The Wheel and Kelpies) and Glasgow. After gratefully handing back the Jeep to Enterprise without any scratches or dents, we became experts at using the inter-city busses and had a few "unexpected adventures" 😊. But Glasgow was the undeniably the highlight of the week. I took Jackie to Mount Florida in southern Glasgow, where both my parents grew up – Mount Florida was looking just the same as I remember it from my previous visits, and we even bought Aberdeen Angus meat pies from the same butcher my grandmother used to buy from over 40 years ago. After enjoying a drink at the newly established Tartan Coo pub (and, chatting with the bartender whose partner's father lives in Edgemoor, Cape Town [he may just join the Callies]), I took Jackie along the road to Queen's Park where I used to visit as a student (and, probably close to where my father proposed to my mother) – and, that's where I proposed to her (and, she said YES 😊 😊 😊)

We completed our day in Glasgow after window-shopping in St Enoch Centre, Princess Square Shopping Centre and Argyll Arcade (all were amazing) – and all too soon our Scotland trip came to an end – but, we have vowed to return as soon as possible 😊 .

And then, news from John Cutmore is that he has been in Austria, Slovakia and Bulgaria since the beginning of June, and will be returning to SA in early September. He says "we have been enjoying temperatures in the low thirties to low forties Celsius and swimming daily while you have had a cold wet winter in SA".

### **INTERNATIONAL FOLDANCE EVENING: A brief report**

This event, which was advertised in the previous Newsletter, took place on 23rd August at Panorama Primary School. I had the pleasure of serving as the piper, leading our Country Dancers onto the floor and performing a short recital when they had completed their dance routine. The program also featured dance displays from Portugal and South Africa, including a remarkable performance with a whip, by one of the young South African Volkspeler dancers. The whip's tip exceeds the speed of sound, producing a mini-sonic boom — a truly awe-inspiring crack. Below are some photos from the event:



Top left: Some of the Country Dancers who performed  
Top right: In action  
Bottom left: Marching off  
Bottom right: Recital in progress

## **PIPE BAND**

If anyone wants to learn the bagpipes and join a band, contact Pipe Major Grant Scheffel of the Nelson Mandela Artillery Pipes & Drums (Grant can be contacted by clicking the link: [grant@bagpipes.co.za](mailto:grant@bagpipes.co.za))

The band plays every Saturday outside Mitchells Ale House at the Waterfront, at 4PM.

## **HIGHLAND DANCING**

The following are three Highland Dance studios that can be contacted for anyone who might be wanting to try out Highland Dancing:

1. Celtic Dance Tapestry: Contact Hayley 083 2852825 (they often perform at our events)
2. Claddagh Irish & Highland Dancing: 083 564 6717 (Heather)
3. Lucas Highland Dance Studio: Contact Lesley 082 448 6335

## **COUNTRY DANCING**

Anyone interested can contact Heather Hodgson ([info@scd.za.net](mailto:info@scd.za.net)) for dancing in the Fish Hoek area (Wednesday nights at 7:45PM, at St Margaret's Anglican Church in 5th Avenue).

Dancing also at Lynfrae Scottish Dancing Club (Wednesday nights at 7:30PM, at the Congregational Church Hall, Main Road, Claremont). Anyone interested can contact Hilary Kerr ([hilary@kerr.za.net](mailto:hilary@kerr.za.net)).

## **PIPER FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS & EVENTS**

If anyone requires a piper for a wedding, funeral, or other event, please contact me via email ([Andrew.bosch@uct.ac.za](mailto:Andrew.bosch@uct.ac.za)) or 081 742 3706 to discuss your needs.

## **ITEMS FOR SALE/ WANTED: Callies Scottish Marketplace**

I'd like to introduce a new section where members can buy and sell Scottish items — anything from clothing eg a kilt, Prince Charlie Jacket, etc to memorabilia. If you're looking for something in particular, you can also post a request here. Since this is within our own community of friends, it provides a safe and trusted platform where you don't need to worry about scams. Email me your "advert" or item request and I will include it in the following Newsletter.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

### Members Birthdays for September

Claire Rodger  
Chris Alston  
Caireen Alston  
Ronnie Adams  
Andrew Bosch  
Karen Henderson

Happy birthday to all

## **ENTERTAINMENT & DATES TO DIARISE**

1. Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo: A video of the 2024 event will be shown on 30<sup>th</sup> August, at Vista Nova School. A fish and chips supper will be provided. If you would like to attend, please respond to the emails sent out. It promises to be a "guid Scottish evening", with the Edinburgh Tattoo being an event billed as, "An experience like no other, our Show brings together the best of British Military with international performances from a global cast. Presenting emotionally charged entertainment featuring cutting edge lighting, sound and military precision". All shown to you on a big screen!

2. Battle of Britain Memorial service, SA Naval Museum Chapel, Simons Town, Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September (wear tartan)
3. Scottish Heritage Evening: We are planning this for the 27<sup>th</sup> September (dependent on availability of venue, artistes, etc). The programme is a work in progress based on availability of entertainers, but we hope to have a mix of piping, a Scottish singer, Highland dance, whisky tasting, etc. More detail next month
4. Remembrance Day service at Gardens Presbyterian 16 Nov 2025
5. Cape Town Highlanders are putting on a concert on 5<sup>th</sup> December at Simons Restaurant in Groot Constantia

**Yours aye**

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