



# CAPE CALEDONIAN

## NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPE TOWN CALEDONIAN SOCIETY



**CHIEF:** Peter Ross [peter@activpro.co.za](mailto:peter@activpro.co.za)

**EDITOR:** Chieftain Andrew Bosch [Andrew.bosch@uct.ac.za](mailto:Andrew.bosch@uct.ac.za)

## JANUARY 2026

### FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Fellow Caledonians

My apologies for the delay in this edition of the Newsletter. The year has begun more busily than expected, with a Master's thesis to mark, a PhD thesis to review ahead of submission in the coming days, and preparations for the Burns Dinner, which required a bit of brushing up on pipe tunes.

Speaking of the Burns Dinner, as noted in the Chief's report, it was disappointing that more members did not attend. Attendance at St Andrew's was also lower than some years ago. To better understand the reasons behind this, I will shortly be circulating a poll to all members. Your responses will help us identify possible barriers to attendance, such as cost, or concerns about travelling at night, etc and allow us to explore ways to improve participation. One important factor is simply our membership profile. At present, the Society has only 75 members in total. Of these, 18 are over the age of 80, and 39 are over 70. When viewed in this context, an attendance of 25 members at an event actually represents a 44% turnout of members under 80 and a 70% turnout of those under 70, figures that are not insignificant. However, we currently have only 14 members under the age of 55, which raises concerns about the long-term future of the Society. To ensure the future of the Society, we need to attract younger members. Those of you with children or grandchildren are encouraged to invite them to join, and the same applies to other family members and friends. Please spread the word about the Society and help us grow a younger and sustainable membership.

Lang may your lum reek  
Andrew (Chieftain & Editor)

### FROM THE DESK OF THE CHIEF

Dear Caledonians,

Firstly, compliments of the season to you all! We wish all of our members and friends a Happy and Prosperous 2026. May you all be richly blessed and have a year filled with joy, happiness and laughter! And may you all spend many happy hours with your own families and children, the greatest joy of all!

We have just recently held two of the busiest functions in our annual calendars – first was St Andrews Dinner on 29<sup>th</sup> November, followed by Burns Night which we held last Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> January, the day before Rabbie's birthday. Both events were held at Rondebosch Golf Club which we are trying to develop as a regular base for some of our functions as it is centrally located.

Another common thread was that we asked Alderman Ian Neilson to be our guest speaker at both functions. Ian was Cape Town's longest serving Deputy Mayor from May 2009 to October 2021 (12 years). He also acted as Mayor of Cape Town on two brief occasions in 2018. We asked Ian to make his address unique with some new twists. He did a sterling job on both occasions with a delightful touch of humour! We would like to thank him sincerely for his time and efforts.

On the negative side, we really struggled to get better attendance at both functions. The 2 sub-committees put in much effort into their planning and organisation. I believe that the same effort goes into a function with 30 guests as one with 60 or 70. There are many factors which may be contributing to this. Our membership base is growing older (aren't we all?) and attending evening functions just becomes less appealing with the advancing years. We clearly need to attract more younger members to whom this would be less of a concern. The time of the year and the proximity to Christmas and the festive season also plays a major role. Many people refer to "Janu-worry" as the month when finances are low and everyone is on a shoestring budget after the extravagances of Christmas celebrations. Anyway this is a topic which Council will be applying their minds to in the coming months. We will also open this up for discussion at the next AGM in March where you, our members, will be able to make your suggestions and contributions.

As the Chief of your Society, I have made the acquaintance of some interesting folks recently. One of them was a UK historian, Dr Philip Major, who contacted me. He runs a YouTube channel called *Lost History Files*, which focuses on South African history. He wanted to reach out to the Cape Town Caledonian Society to alert us to his new video, on the Scottish influence on South Africa. This has long been one of my favourite subjects. In fact, one of the history books on my shelves is John M Mackenzie's book "The Scots in South Africa" which contains some very interesting stories about the Scots in South Africa. I will ask our editor, Andrew to insert the link elsewhere in this newsletter so that you can view his video.

That's all from me this month. Take care.

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

Take care.

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### **SCOTTISH HISTORY CORNER** (continued from previous editions)

Alexander III's death left Scotland without an adult heir, as all his children had predeceased him. The crown therefore passed to his young granddaughter, Margaret, known to history as the "Maid of Norway," who was only three years old and living abroad. Her status as queen was never fully realised, and her death in 1290 while travelling to Scotland created a dangerous power vacuum. With no clear successor from the royal line, Scotland entered what became known as the Great Cause, during which multiple noble families laid claim to the throne. To avoid civil war, the Scottish guardians invited Edward I of England to arbitrate the dispute—a decision that would have profound consequences. Edward used the opportunity to assert dominance over Scotland, setting the stage for decades of conflict. From this crisis would emerge figures such as John Balliol, William Wallace, and later Robert the Bruce, ushering in the Wars of Independence and one of the most dramatic chapters in Scottish history.

### **LOST HISTORY FILES**

The Chief recently received an email from historian Dr Philip Major who runs a YouTube channel called *Lost History Files*. He has a new video (link below), on the Scottish influence on South Africa which is well worth watching:

[The Scots Who Helped Shape South Africa](#)

### **INTERESTING SCOTTISH FACTS**

- Edinburgh Castle is built on extinct volcano. There are no active volcanos in Scotland today, but many features in Scotland's landscape were formed by volcanoes millions of years ago.
- Scotland is home to the oldest tree in Europe: The Yew in Fortingall churchyard, Perthshire is estimated to be 3000 to 5000 years old.
- Many important inventions come from Scotland, such as the telephone, television, raincoat, penicillin, and of course, Golf
- The walls of Maeshowe burial chamber on mainland Orkney bear over 30 runic inscriptions, left by Vikings who broke into the chamber in the 12th century

- Edinburgh was the first city to have its own fire brigade

## **HISTORY OF THE CLANS**

The clan I highlight this month, is Clan Campbell.

Clan Campbell is among the most prominent and influential clans in Scottish history, with its power base centred in Argyll and roots extending back to the early medieval period. The name is traditionally derived from *Caimbeul*, meaning “crooked mouth,” and the family rose steadily through close association with the Scottish Crown. From the 15th century onward, the Campbells held the titles of Lords, Earls, and eventually Dukes of Argyll, becoming one of the most powerful noble families in Scotland. Their influence expanded through royal service, strategic marriages, and loyalty during key periods such as the Wars of Independence and the Stewart era.

The Campbells were strong supporters of the Protestant Reformation and played a major role in Scotland’s political and military affairs during the 16th and 17th centuries. Their prominence placed them at the heart of Highland politics, where rivalries with other clans often reflected broader national conflicts rather than purely local clan feuds. The Massacre of Glencoe in 1692, frequently attributed to clan rivalry, was in reality the result of government policy, carried out by a military unit of the Earl of Argyll, it was acting under orders authorised by King William III after the MacDonalds of Glencoe failed to submit a timely oath of allegiance.

During the Jacobite rising of 1745, Clan Campbell firmly supported the Hanoverian government, consistent with its long-standing allegiance to the Crown and opposition to the Stuart cause. Campbell forces were active in opposing Jacobite advances in western Scotland and helped deny Charles Edward Stuart access to Argyll, a strategically important region. At the Battle of Culloden in 1746, members of Clan Campbell served in government regiments within the Duke of Cumberland’s army, contributing to the decisive defeat of the Jacobite forces. In the aftermath, the Campbells continued to play a role in enforcing government authority in the Highlands. Though their loyalty ensured political survival and influence, it also reinforced their complex reputation within Highland history, where allegiance to the state often placed them at odds with other clans.

## **BURNS NICHT**

The Burns Nicht celebration was recently held at the Rondebosch Golf Club, the same venue as our St Andrew’s dinner. The evening opened with the piping-in of the dignitaries, followed by the customary toasts. This was followed by Highland dancing and then the piping-in of the haggis and an outstanding “Address to a Haggis” delivered by Ian Stevenson. Having heard the Address performed some 35 times over the years, I can say without hesitation that Ian sets the benchmark every time. There is no “put-on” accent”; it is the real deal. And never a falter in the words, the pauses and emphasis all perfectly judged, bringing Burns’s poem vividly to life.

After dinner came the traditional toasts to the lassies and the laddies, a short solo piping recital, and readings of Burns poems.

As always, the centrepieces of any Burns supper are the “Address to the Haggis” and the “Immortal Memory”. The latter was delivered by Alderman Ian Neilson, who, like Ian Stevenson with the “Address”, did full justice to his role. His approach offered a slightly different angle, with interesting nuances and a touch of humour, making for a thoroughly engaging tribute. Both of these key contributors could deliver their performances at any Burns supper in Scotland and would be applauded for jobs exceptionally well done.

The evening concluded with Burns songs and, of course, “Auld Lang Syne”, bringing a most enjoyable and memorable event to a close.

## **NEWS OF MEMBERS**

Alas, again, no news this month. As I have asked before, send me stuff about what you have been doing....visits to Scotland, family in Scotland, etc.

## **PIPE BAND**

If anyone has a yearn 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 one Saturday each month outside Mitchells Scottish 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.

## **KILT MAKER**

If you need a new kilt, or repairs to a kilt, contact Kathy. I can highly recommend her work. She can be contacted on 076 342 5371.

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

Nothing submitted this month

## **ENTERTAINMENT & DATES TO DIARISE**

1. **AGM:** This has been postponed from 7 February to 14 March. We apologise for the inconvenience; more details re time, venue, etc later

**Editor: Andrew Bosch**  
+27 (0)81 7423706  
email: [Andrew.bosch@uct.ac.za](mailto:Andrew.bosch@uct.ac.za)

**Sub Editor: Stuart Munro**  
+27 (0)84 028 2402  
email: [samunro@iafrica.com](mailto:samunro@iafrica.com)