

Remember Those from Whom You Came

Newsletter for The House of MacAlpine

The Worldwide Organization for MacAlpine's



Fourth Quarter 2025 ~ Volume 70



*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
and never brought to mind?*

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
and auld lang syne?*

*For auld lang syne, my jo,
for auld lang syne,
we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.*

*And surely ye'll be your pint-stoup!
and surely I'll be mine!
And we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.*

Robert Burns

Commander's Note



Bliadna Mhath Ur, (pronounced Bleena Vha Oor), Happy New Year.

New Year's celebration is a big event in Scotland, as you will see in Dr. Durie's article in this issue.

As the year closes out, many groups that the MacAlpine's are represented in have their final events of the year, annual meetings of the Scots of Canada, the Council of Scottish Clans and Societies, the Society of Scottish Armigers, the Saint Andrews Society, the Scottish North American Community Conference, the Lord Lyon Society, and others. I would like to thank those who represent us in these various organizations, we really do appreciate the effort that you put in. These bodies exchange best practices, news of upcoming events, and opportunities for learning.

Scotland has officially three languages now, and there is a renewed interest in the Scots language (such as is in Old Lang Syne), and the native Gaelic language. There is a Gaelic saying: tir gun teanga, tir gun anam - A land without a language, a land without a soul. I believe that it is an important part of our Scottish Heritage to keep these languages alive and am encouraged that the Scottish Government has recognized them.

A special thanks to our Sennachie elect Mark S.C. McAlpin, who continues to pour through the old cluster of homesteads in the Kilmartin Glen and surrounding areas, track down records of where we lived, how we lived. Since we kicked off the Homestead Project six years ago, he has done a yeoman's job of mapping out the homesteads and tracking down the records. I believe that on its completion, we will have an impressive record that we will all be proud of.

Beannachdan na blian' ùir oiribh uile!
(New Year Blessings on you all)

Michael T McAlpin
Commander
Name of MacAlpine



Presidents Letter –

Happy New Year! As we say good-bye to a very busy year, we look forward to another busy year ahead.

This past year we awarded our first Art Scholarship to Finley Figueredo, a 13 yo Highland Dancer. We helped her travel to a competition in CA where she represented the SE United States.

We would like to continue helping young people attain and master their Scottish cultural dreams. To that end, we are now accepting 2026 donations for scholarships to fund aspiring Scottish dancers, bagpipers, drummers, fiddlers and other related Scottish cultural pursuits.

We have created a new application form, which is due by March 31, 2026, The House of MacAlpine annual Arts Scholarships. The Scholarship Committee will select the winners to be notified by May 31st.

House Of MacAlpine website [application form](#).

We are dedicated to educating others about our history and encouraging youth to explore their heritage. Your donations help further the dreams of many. When we work together, we can accomplish much. As a 501c3, your donations will be tax deductible.

House Of MacAlpine website donation [PayPal button](#).

In Kinship,

Dale McAlpine
President



The Homestead Project – McAlpine’s at Achnamara

Submitted by
Mark S.C. McAlpin
Sennachie elect

Nestled on the quiet inlets of Loch Sween, about 9 miles south of Kilmartin, Achnamara, meaning “Field by the Sea”, sits within the old lands of Dál Riata — a place where McAlpine families balanced ridge labor with shoreline rhythms. Though direct baptisms are sparse, the crofts here echo with kinship: woodland work, kelp harvests, seasonal grazing, and stories whispered through birch stands.

From 1815 to 1828, we trace a flurry of McAlpine activity:

- 1815: Isabella McAlpine marries John McPhail
- 1816–1819: Baptisms of Gilbert, James, Colin, and Alexander McAlpine
- 1828: James McAlpine emigrates to Canada, carrying a pouch of soil and a farewell letter

Timeline: McAlpine Households (1841–1901)

1841 – Achnamara

- Donald McAlpine (45), crofter
- Margaret McAlpine (42), wife
- Children: Duncan (15), Mary (12), Catherine (10)

1871 – Achnamara

- Archibald McAlpine (30), fisherman
- Ann McAlpine (28), wife
- Children: Margaret (5), John (3)

1901 – Achnamara

- Mary McAlpine (62), widow
- Daughter Flory (28), seamstress

Six decades of crofting continuity across ridge and shore.

Kinship Chart: Stronefield → Achnamara → Canada

Dugald McAlpine Sr (b.~1757, Oib Estate) └─ Dugald Jr (b.~1778, Garoib) └─ James (b.1795, emigrated 1828 → Canada) └─ Margaret (b.1798, stayer → Achnamara household) └─ Duncan (b.1799, stayer → Stronefield Knap croft) └─ Mary (b.1802, stayer → Tayvallich sponsor) └─ Dugald (b.1802, tenant → Achnamara croft)

Kinship forked here: James carried the name to Ontario; Margaret and Duncan kept it rooted in Argyll.

The Homestead Project – McAlpine's at Achnamara (continued)

What Was Happening in the Area (1800s)

- **Castle Sween**, just south of Achnamara, stood as a weathered sentinel of clan memory. Though its military role had faded, it remained a symbol of ancestral land claims and Gaelic poetry. The 1647 burning by Alasdair MacColla was still remembered in local laments.
- **Keills Chapel**, with its carved crosses and burial slabs, remained a sacred site. Families from Achnamara walked chapel routes for worship and burial, tying croft life to spiritual tradition.
- **North Knapdale Parish** was a hub of crofting, kelp harvesting, and woodland labor. Poor law appeals from the 1840s–1870s show hardship and resilience, with McAlpine-linked households requesting relief during harsh winters.
- **Gaelic culture thrived**: oral storytelling, selkie legends, and seasonal songs were passed down in birch groves and at hearths. Aithbhreac Inghean Coirceadal, wrote a tribute to her late husband Niall Òg Mac Nèill (Neil MacNeill the younger) in 1470, the earliest Gaelic Poem written by a woman.

It begins:

“A Phaidrin do dhuaisg mo dhear, ionmhain mear do bhitheadh ort; ionmhain cridhe failteach fial 'ga raibhe riamh gus a nochd”.

“O Padrin, who has awakened my heart, you would have had a quick love; a loving, generous, welcoming heart, which I have always had until now.”

No. 21.		My Collection		
List of Names as written in the Plot	Variety number of Spelling the same Names	Authority for those modes of Spelling	Situation	Descriptive Remarks, or other General Observations which may be considered of Interest
<i>Chenopodium</i>	<i>Chenopodium</i>	Dr. Poir. Dr. Roel. Dr. High. Swartz. Dr. Cavanagh. Dr. Kunz.	17 June 1	As a weed, it is not common in the form of a single plant, but from some common weedy plants the property of John Mendenhall, Esq.
<i>Barnegad</i>	<i>Barnegad</i>	Same as above		1 June. Same as above, the property of John Mendenhall, Esq. of Philadelphia.
<i>Barnegad</i>	<i>Barnegad</i>	Same as above		1 November. Same, bearing the same flowers, out of the soil of a garden, 1/2 and falling into the soil, where it is the result of Chenopodium.
<i>Spice-Drum</i>	<i>Spice-Drum</i>	Dr. Poir. Dr. Roel. Dr. High. Swartz.		1 June. Same as above, the property of John Mendenhall, Esq. of Philadelphia.
<i>Spice-Drum</i>	<i>Spice-Drum</i>	Same as above		1 June. Same as above, the property of John Mendenhall, Esq. of Philadelphia.



The Homestead Project – McAlpine's at Achnamara (continued)



The Homestead Project – McAlpine's at Barbae Dounie and Barbae Ross

Submitted by
Mark S.C. McAlpin
Sennachie elect

Folklore and the Land: Echoes of Barbae and Danna

About 4 miles west of Kilmartin, in the quiet reaches of North Knapdale, the land itself seems to breathe with memory. Mist curls over the lochs, stones stand weathered against centuries of wind, and seabirds cry in tones that echo like voices from another world. For the families of the MacAlpine name, these landscapes were not only home but also sacred ground, woven with story and ritual.

The Whispering Stones of Danna

On the tidal island of Danna, a scattered ring of ancient standing stones rises from the earth. Known in local lore as the *Whispering Stones*, they are said to murmur with the voices of the departed. Crofters once claimed that on fog-laced mornings, faint utterances could be heard—names, laments, or warnings carried on the wind. Records show that MacAlpine families were settled at Barbae Dounie and Barbae Ross, within sight of Danna's tidal flats. Oral tradition suggests that members of these households would have walked the shoreline, tended cattle and fished the waters, while carrying with them the belief that the stones marked a threshold between worlds.

Barbae Ross and the Fires of the Seasons

Further inland, the crofting site of Barbae Ross was remembered not only for its families but for its rites. During the turning of the seasons—especially Samhain and Beltane—crofters gathered on the promontory to light fires. Herbs, milk, and bread were offered to the spirits of wind and land. Among those crofters were MacAlpines of Barbae Ross, whose names appear in 18th- and 19th-century parish records. The eldest women of the family were said to lead the rites, casting offerings into the flames and singing the old songs. Smoke from the fires curled toward the loch and the stones, carrying prayers to the unseen.

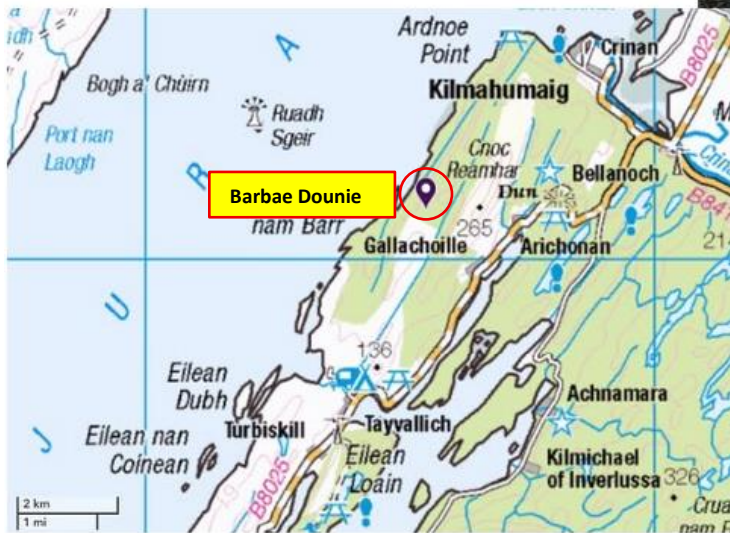
Loch Mhaoldnuich and the Voices of the Mist

West of Barbae Dounie lies Loch Mhaoldnuich, a place steeped in spectral reputation. Locals spoke of water spirits dwelling in its depths, surfacing in the cries of seabirds. On certain mornings, when the loch lay still and heavy with mist, the calls of gulls and oystercatchers were said to mimic human voices. For the MacAlpines of Barbae Dounie, the loch was part of daily life—its waters used for fishing, its shores for grazing. Yet it was also a place of reverence. Elders believed the cries were souls of kin lost to the sea, calling out to be remembered. In this way, the loch became both sustenance and sanctuary, a mirror of grief and continuity.

A Tapestry of Memory

Together, these tales form a tapestry of ancestral presence and ritual. The MacAlpines of Barbae Ross and Barbae Dounie did not simply live beside nature—they lived within its mythic pulse. Stones, mist, fire, and wings were not mere elements of the landscape but voices in a chorus of belonging. To walk these places today is to step into a dialogue with the past, where folklore and family memory entwine.

The Homestead Project – McAlpine's at Barbae Dounie and Barbae Ross (continued)



Christmas in Scotland: From Yule to Hogmanay

When we think of Christmas in Scotland today—roaring fires, shortbread, and carols—it's easy to forget that for much of history, the holiday was not celebrated at all. Christmas was banned in Scotland in 1640 by the Presbyterian Kirk, which viewed it as too closely tied to Catholic ritual. For nearly 400 years, December 25th was treated as an ordinary workday, and only in 1958 was Christmas Day officially recognized as a public holiday. This long absence explains why Hogmanay, Scotland's exuberant New Year celebration, became the centerpiece of winter festivities.

Yet Scotland's Christmas roots run deep. Long before the ban, ancient Celts and Vikings marked the winter solstice with Yule feasts, greenery, and fire rituals. Druids lit Yule logs to banish darkness, while Norse settlers brought “Jól,” a midwinter festival of feasting and storytelling. These echoes of Yule still shape Scottish Christmas traditions today.

Traditions Old and New

- **Yule Bread:** Families baked circular loaves, sometimes hiding a trinket inside. The lucky finder was promised good fortune for the year.
- **Greenery & Holly:** Ancient Celts decorated homes with mistletoe and holly, symbols of life and protection against winter spirits.
- **Rowan Twigs:** Burning rowan branches was believed to clear away conflict and bring harmony.
- **First-Footing:** Though more associated with Hogmanay, the ritual of welcoming the first visitor after midnight—with gifts of coal, whisky, salt, and bread—embodies the Scottish emphasis on luck, warmth, and community.

Modern Scottish Christmases now include familiar global customs—decorated trees, turkey dinners, and gift-giving—but often with a local twist. Shortbread and cloutie dumpling appear alongside mince pies, and whisky or mulled “gløgg” warms the winter night.

A Season of Storytelling and Community

For Scots, Christmas is not just about feasting but about storytelling, music, and togetherness. Carols are sung, ceilidhs are danced, and families gather around fires to share tales both old and new. In rural communities, traditions like setting out a “Julenek” (a sheaf of oats for birds, borrowed from Scandinavian neighbors) remind us of Scotland's ties to wider northern Europe.

Christmas in Scotland is more than a holiday—it is a reflection of the nation's history. From pagan Yule to Presbyterian bans, from Viking feasts to modern family gatherings, the season shows how Scots have continually adapted, blending heritage with renewal. Today, Christmas and Hogmanay together form a uniquely Scottish winter arc: one of resilience, joy, and community spirit.

Sidebar Timeline: *Christmas in Scotland*



Pre-Christian Era

Celts and Norse settlers mark the winter solstice with Yule feasts, fire rituals, and greenery.



Medieval Scotland

Christmas observed with church services, communal meals, and folk customs tied to Yule.



1640

The Scottish Parliament bans Christmas under Presbyterian influence, viewing it as “superstitious.”



17th–19th Centuries

December 25th treated as a normal workday. *Hogmanay* (New Year) becomes Scotland's main winter festival.



Late 1800s–Early 1900s

Industrialization and cultural exchange slowly reintroduce Christmas customs, though not officially recognized.



1958

Christmas Day declared a public holiday in Scotland, restoring its

53rd Stone Mountain Highland Games



stone mountain highland games

and scottish festival

October 17-19, 2025



For over 50 years, Scotland has been coming to Georgia with the Stone Mountain Highland Games and Scottish Festival! The Stone Mountain Games are one of the largest Games in North America, with nearly one hundred clans in attendance, the Stone Mountain Games were once again a great event.

53rd Stone Mountain Highland Games (continued)



Thanks to all the volunteers that make this event special!

Charleston Scottish Games – 2025

Charles McAlpine
Commissioner – Coastal Carolina, Georgia

Traditionally, one of the final highland games in the fall season is held in beautiful Charleston, South Carolina in Riverfront Park on the banks of the historic Cooper River. This year they were held on November 1st, 2025 and hosted by Charles McAlpine. Mike and Mike McAlpin traveled over from Atlanta to help. It is always an honor to have them and I appreciate their company, expertise, and camaraderie.

The area was perfectly laid out with clan tents surrounding the athletic field. Everyone had a great view of the games. This was our 3rd time hosting a tent at these games, and we were fortunate to have the same spot as before. From our tent, you could see the vast expanse of the river from one side, and the games on the other side. The weather cooperated nicely! It was a gloriously sunny day with temperatures in the mid-70s. Perfect weather!

Our tent was well decorated, and very well attended. I can honestly say that every highland game we have a tent in the lineup, ours is one of the *most popular* and this was no different. All day long we had guests filling our tent to the max, and the crowd spilling out to the walkway. Many of our friends from the Low Country (even from other clans) stopped by for long visits and exchanging stories. Many of our friends from The Savannah Pipes and Drum band 'adopted' our tent just to hang out for the day, and even performing some tunes in our tent. We even were honored with the VMI Pipe Band stopping by for a while.

One of the biggest highlights of the day was during the Clan Parade of Tartans during the opening ceremony. Our friend Kenyon Cox (Savannah Pipes and Drums) provided a *personal escort* for us as we marched around the field. It announced that House of MacAlpine is a 'special clan.' It was a high honor and a very special moment for us.

If you have never hosted a tent at a highland game, I encourage you to do so. Not only is it a lot of fun, but you can make a lot of new friends with a common purpose and help promote our name in your area. You will not be disappointed. If you want more info, please reach out.

McAlpine2000@yahoo.com



Charleston Scottish Games – 2025 (continued)



Call for Volunteers - House of MacAlpine at the Highland Games

Submitted by Charels McAlpine

As proud bearers of the MacAlpine name, we share a rich heritage deeply rooted in the traditions and culture of Scotland. Our participation in the Highland Games has long been a meaningful way to celebrate that heritage, strengthen our community, and introduce others to the legacy of our ancient MacAlpine name.

In recent years, we have seen the positive impact of our presence at these gatherings—through conversations, shared stories, and warm hospitality at our clan tent. To continue and expand this tradition, we are calling on more members to step forward and take an active role. There are many opportunities across the country in spring, summer, and fall.

We invite you to volunteer in one or more of the following ways:

- Host or help set up a House of MacAlpine tent at your local Highland Games. We will provide you with a full kit to get you started. (See photos for ideas.)
- Volunteer time during the event to greet visitors, answer questions, and share our history. You do *not* need to be an expert to host.
- Assist with planning and outreach in the lead-up to upcoming festivals
- Donate materials such as photos, books, family trees, or refreshments for the tent

Whether you have a few hours or can take the lead on a full event, your contribution is valuable. Your presence not only honors our ancestors but also inspires future generations to take pride in their roots.

If you are interested or would like more information about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities, please reach out directly at **mc Alpine2000@yahoo.com**, or **robinlmc Alpine@yahoo.com**, or **m_mcalpin@hotmail.com**. We are happy to help!

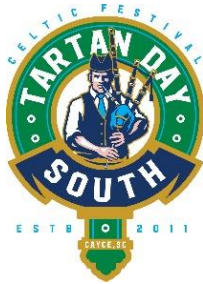
If you aren't sure where the closest games are near you, I have attached a website address with a national directory of all major games by each state. Find one near you. Step forward and have fun!

<https://highlandgamesandfestivals.com/>

Let us stand together with pride, in tartan and in spirit, and continue to make the House of MacAlpine known and remembered.

UPCOMING HIGHLAND GAMES

**Mark your calendar &
Look for the MacAlpine Tent**



**Join us at the Tartan Day South
March 28 & 29, 2026
2001 Charleston Hwy,
Cayce, South Carolina**



**Join us at the Savannah Highland Games
May 2, 2026
Bethesda Academy
9570 Ferguson Ave.
Savannah, GA 31406**



**Join us at the Fair Hill Scottish Games
May 16, 2026
Fair Hill Fairgrounds
4640 Telegraph Rd
Elkton, Maryland**



**Join us at the Greenville Scottish Games
May 23, 2026
3300 Poinsett Highway
Greenville, SC 29613**

Robert McAlpin

ROBERT MCALPIN, inventor and manufacturer, was born in Cokensie, Edinburgh, Scotland, March 4, 1837. His father and other ancestors had lived in the vicinity of Edinburgh for many generations, having come there from the Highlands, descendants of the old MacAlpine line.

He came to America in 1853 and began his career as a paper manufacturer at Lee, in the Berkshire Hills, Massachusetts.

Mr. McAlpin took hold with determination to learn the business, working in every department of the paper mill and living on what he could earn and educating himself until he became absolute master of every detail of the paper business. There was not a shaft, bolt, pulley, pump or any piece of machinery with which he was not familiar. He could take a steam engine apart, repair it and then put it together again. He could fire a boiler better than any of his firemen and could run a machine better than the best machine tender. So proficient had he become that he could make a better sheet of paper at less cost than any other mill man in the country. He produced the first sheet of paper from ground wood pulp in the United States and later was able to produce a sheet of news-print paper which could be sold in New York market at half the price for which it had been sold formerly. He is entitled to an enduring place in the history of paper manufacturing.



Mr. McAlpin continued in the manufacture of paper during his whole life, being the inventor and patentee of many of the improvements in papermaking machinery and was the first paper manufacturer to install machines which made paper at the rate of over three hundred feet a minute.

From youth Mr. McAlpin spent his leisure in the study and enjoyment of music and in the reading of ancient Scottish history. He was a lover of the literature of Walter Scott and of Robert Burns.

He married, Harriet Graves, September 26, 1860. They celebrated their golden wedding in 1910. They had seven children, each with families living in different parts of the United States: Charles Walter, Robert Arthur, deceased; Louis A.; Maurice DeWitt; Milo Frederic, and Ellen, deceased. Robert McAlpin died March 1, 1911

The above photo is often cited as Robert in his full-dress MacAlpine garb. However, it is probably a studio photo utilizing studio garb and props taken in about 1880. . it is more likely Campbell of Argyll tartan or perhaps Black Watch, but not MacAlpine.



Commander: Michael T. McAlpin

Society Board Members:

President: Earl Dale McAlpine

Vice President: Mark SC McAlpin

Secretary: Laura McAlpine

Treasurer: Teala Pennel

Membership: Robin McAlpine

Member At Large: Fin Stavnsbo Alpin

Newsletter Editor: Robin McAlpine

The Scottish Languages Act 2025



On St Andrew's Day, the Scottish Parliament passed the Scottish Languages Act, formally recognizing Gaelic and Scots as "official languages" of Scotland. The Gaelic and Scots languages gained official status on Saint Andrews Day, November 30th.

In announcing the passage of the act, Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes said:

"St Andrew's Day is a fitting time to celebrate Scotland's identity by recognizing Gaelic and Scots as official languages. This is a historic milestone which acknowledges the vital place these languages hold in Scotland's culture and heritage. This has been made possible through the Scottish Languages Bill which received unanimous support from MSPs. To support the continued growth of both languages the Scottish Government has already allocated £35.7 million for Gaelic and Scots initiatives this year, ensuring that this milestone translates into meaningful change for communities across the country."

Census statistics show that 130,161 people in Scotland had some Gaelic skills in 2022, an increase of 43,105 from 2011. The census shows that 2,444,659 people in Scotland had some Scots skills in 2022, an increase of 515,215 from 2011.

There are also some 2,200 who speak Gaelic in Nova Scotia, principally in Cape Breton, and another 1600 who speak Gaelic in the U.S.

The Gaelic language had been suppressed in Scotland for years especially after the 1746 Act of Proscription and the 1872 Education Act, which punished children for speaking it in schools for decades, effectively sidelining the language until official revival efforts began in the 20th century.

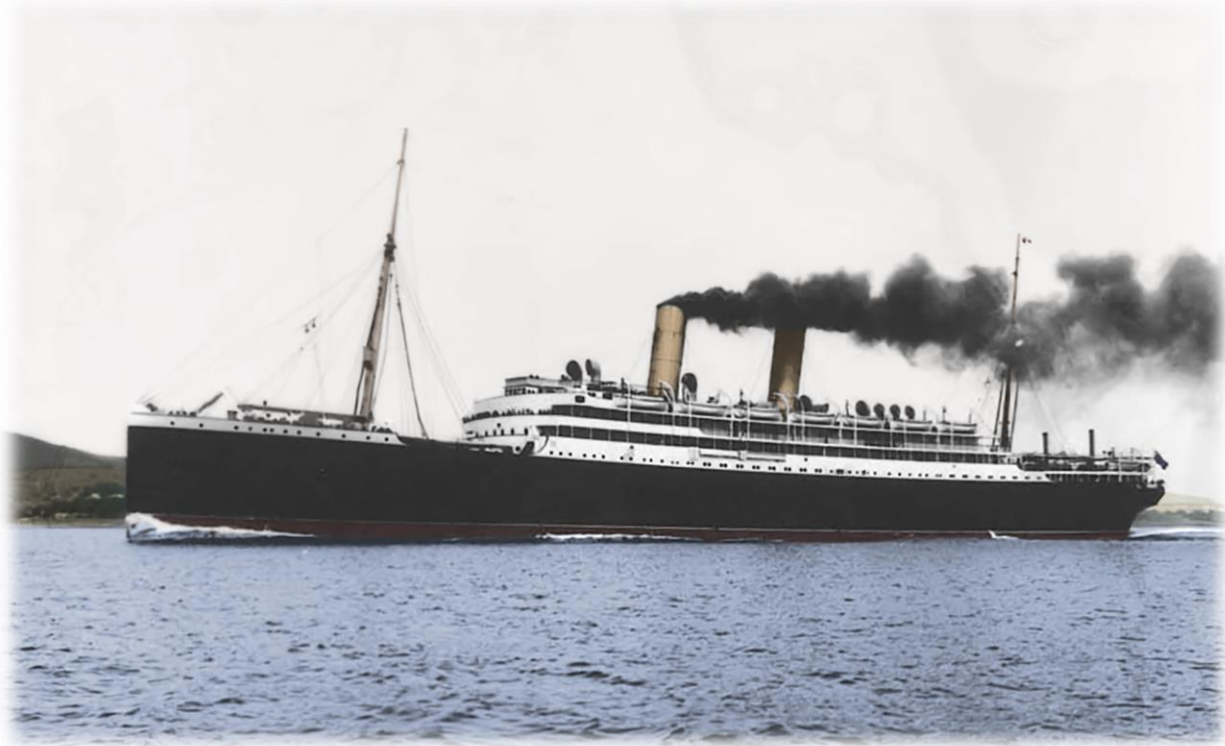
Pipes on Parade tribute at Pearl Harbor

Pipes on Parade, which is a massed pipe band consisting of individual members from across the globe, was in Oahu, Hawaii, around December 7, 2025, to perform in the Pearl Harbor Memorial Opening Ceremony and Parade, and they also performed a tribute on the USS Missouri, which is permanently docked there. Amongst the assembled band members were Pipe Major Graeme Rusbach and Tania McIlroy of MacAlpine's North Canterbury Pipes and Drums from New Zealand.



The Empress of Ireland

Amongst the 1,012 lives that were lost in Canada's worst maritime tragedy was A. L. McAlpine, second class passenger.



RMS Empress of Ireland was a British-built ocean liner that sank near the mouth of the [Saint Lawrence River](#) in Canada following a collision in thick fog with the Norwegian collier Storstad just before 2:00 AM on May 29th 1915, en-route to Liverpool.

Although the ship was equipped with watertight compartments and, in the aftermath of the Titanic disaster two years earlier, carried more than enough lifeboats for all aboard, she foundered in only 14 minutes. Of the 1,477 people on board, 1,012 died, making it the worst peacetime maritime disaster in Canadian history. The Empress had departed Quebec City for Liverpool at 16:30 local time (EST) on the previous day, manned by a crew of 420 and carrying 1,057 passengers, roughly two thirds of her total capacity.

Empress of Ireland sighted the masthead lights of SS Storstad, a Norwegian coal ship on her starboard bow at a distance of several miles. Likewise, Storstad, sighted Empress of Ireland's masthead lights. These first sightings were made in clear weather conditions, but fog soon enveloped the ships. The ships resorted to repeated use of their fog whistles.

At 01:56 local time Storstad crashed into Empress of Ireland's starboard side at around midships. A gaping hole in her side caused the lower decks to flood at an alarming rate.

The Empress of Ireland (continued)

Storstad remained afloat, but she was severely damaged as shown.



Empress of Ireland lurched heavily to starboard and began settling by the stern. She sank so rapidly, there was no time for the crew to shut the waterproof doors. Water poured through open portholes; most passengers and crew located in the lower decks drowned immediately.

About 14 minutes after the collision, the bow rose briefly out of the water, water and the ship sank. Hundreds of people were thrown into the near-freezing water.

There were only 465 survivors: 4 children (of 138), 41 women (of 310), 172 men (of 609), and 248 crew (of 420).

Little is known of A.L. McAlpine, other than he lived in Montreal and had bought passage to Liverpool.

Why Are the Scots Famous for Hogmanay?

If the Martians ever land, it will take them about 20 minutes to realise that tartan + bagpipes + whisky = Scottish. No other nation or culture has such global brand recognition. And if they arrive around the end of December, they'll soon get the picture that the world looks to Scotland for the celebration of New Year.

So why does Scotland have this reputation of celebrating the Old Year's end and the New Year's beginning? One reason is that Scotland has celebrated New Year on the 1st of January since 1600, but for the next 152 years, the rest of Britain and the British Empire started the New Year on 25th of March.

Of course, the celebration of the winter solstice is common to many peoples. The Romans had their Saturnalia from 17th to 23rd December in the Julian calendar (possibly why the early Christian Church chose that time of year to set the birth of Jesus, because there is no biblical authority for it). The Norse celebrated Yule, which later contributed to the "Twelve Days of Christmas", or the "Daft Days" as they were sometimes known in Scotland, and included a ceremony of troll-banning. The Gaelic celebration of Samhain (pronounced Sa-Wain) contributed customs too. In post-Reformation Scotland, we always found Christmas not really suitable for a festival – possibly either "too Papist" or there was a Calvinist dislike of frivolity on the day Our Lord's birth was observed, and "too much fun". Christmas wasn't much observed in Scotland (except by Roman Catholics and Episcopalians) until fairly recently, and wasn't even a public holiday until 1958.

For whatever reason, on the 17th December 1599, King James VI, via an act of the Privy Council, disjoined Scotland from the New Year date of 25th March, as in England, in order that Scotland should come into line with other "weil governit commonwealths". That was far enough from Christian Christmas for the Kirk not to be able to accuse anyone of having a good time only a holy day, so the celebrations of Hogmanay stuck. That didn't stop the Presbyterians disapproving about Hogmanay itself for the next 400 years.

These "weil governit commonwealths" that James VI was referring to included (with date of adoption of 1st January):

- Holy Roman Empire (essentially, Germany except Prussia) 1544
- Spain, Portugal, Poland 1556
- Denmark, Sweden, Prussia 1559
- France (Edict of Roussillon) 1564
- Southern Netherlands 1576
- Lorraine 1579
- Dutch Republic 1583
- Scotland 1600

So, Scotland was quite late, really. But Russia held out until 1725 and Great Britain, Ireland and the British Empire (including America) until the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1752. I have often wondered if James VI was merely enshrining in Scots Law the dates on which his mother and grandmother were used to celebrating the New Year – 1st January ever since the Edict of Roussillon of 1564. Also, the 25th of March was Lady Day (the feast of the Annunciation to Mary that she would have Jesus nine months later), which may also have felt a bit too "Romish" for Presbyterian tastes.

Why are the Scots Famous for Hogmanay? (continued)

The date of New Year was nothing to do with the Gregorian calendar, by the way. Scotland also used the Julian calendar until 1752. But since 1600 until then, there was a disjuncture as to what year we were in between 1st January and 24th March. When you see a date presented like “1619/1620” that indicates it was within those three months, and while still 1619 south of the border, it was 1620 above it in Scotland. This was despite the Union of the Crowns in 1603 and even the Union of Parliaments in 1707.

Incidentally, we still have a hangover of this in the UK tax year which begins on April 6 – which is March 25 plus the 12 “lost days” from the Julian calendrical change-over.

Many Hogmanay customs I remember as a child seem to have fallen by the wayside – first-footing with a be-ribboned herring and a piece of coal (for food and fire); ensuring that a tall, dark man is first across your threshold after the stroke of midnight; giving visitors and well-wishers a dram and a piece of black bun (a sort of rich cake in pastry); serving steak pie as New Year’s Day dinner; “saining” the house by sprinkling water and fumigating by burning juniper branches. Now, people tend to congregate in large-scale organised events such as the massive all-night outdoor celebrations in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Stirling, Inverness and of course Edinburgh, still the venue of the world’s largest Hogmanay party. For some reason, a Viking longship gets burned during Edinburgh’s celebrations, even though Scotland’s capital city has no historical connection whatsoever with the Norse invaders. In Stonehaven the people come out in their thousands to watch 42 people swing fireballs as they process along the town’s High Street.

This year, as usual, we and our neighbours congregated around a bonfire on the beach and watched the fireworks set off at midnight from Edinburgh Castle, 4 miles away. I would show you a picture of that, but my camera hand was quite shaky for some reason.

As for the derivation of the word Hogmanay itself, scholars have been debating since the late-1600s whether it is originally Scots, Norse, Gaelic, French, or Scots via French – although it’s worth noting a Latin record of the word as hagnonayse as early as 1443, in Yorkshire, England. Who knows?

What is clear, is that the Scots introduced the idea of New Year as 1st of January to the English-speaking world, and everyone else since has bought into our love of a good party!

Dr. Bruce DURIE

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Fellow, University of Edinburgh
Academician, Académie Internationale de Généalogie
Right of Audience at the Court of the Lord Lyon
Freeman and Burgess, City of Glasgow



What is Bruce Durie up to today?

Bruce has been instrumental in our quest to seat a Chief. As a genealogist and Shennachie to the Chief of Durie, He is in high demand to help other clans with the same as well as a busy speaking schedule. It is his intention to retire to Sussex and keep bees (surely inspired by Sherlock Holmes). To prepare for his retirement he asked if I would post the following. I do so as a favor to a dear friend of our family

SALE OF THE COMPANY ANCESTRAL SCOTLAND LIMITED Registered in Scotland - Company number SC244818 Ancestral Scotland Ltd. is a Private limited Company incorporated on 28 February 2003.

The two Directors - Dr David John Bruce DURIE and David Donald Alexander James DURIE (Company Secretary) - have decided to sell the Company. There are no debts, and no assets other than a URL domain (see below). However, it represents a unique opportunity for someone to acquire a Scottish interest company, with a related Domain, which could be basis of a tourism, consultancy, informational or merchandising business.

Details can be found at Companies House: <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC244818> URL and Domain: ancestralscots.com is registered with Easyspace (www.easyspace.com) until 17/03/2026 ICANN Registration data lookup - <https://lookup.icann.org/en/lookup>

There is currently a holding page at <http://www.ancestralscots.com/> which diverts to <http://www.brucedurie.co.uk/> which will be removed on sale. There are also active email addresses, which will be relinquished on sale. The Company and URL/Domain will be sold according to the preferred offer received by 1 March 2026 (this may not be the highest bidder). The buyer will need a Scottish or UK Solicitor to manage the purchase and transfer. Offers by email to: bd@brucedurie.co.uk before 28 February 2026

**Check our Facebook page for upcoming games and all things
House of MacAlpine related**



Scan QR code with your phone

Flowers of the Forest

Mark D. Dennis, Esquire, BA, JD, LL M (Cantab.), FSA Scot, FHSS, Advocate, Ormond Pursuivant of Arms



Mr. Dennis Passed on November 29th, 2025

He was born in California in 1950 with dual citizenship in the US and the UK, he was an Immigration Judge & Mental Health Convener in Scotland, Chairman of the Heraldry Society of Scotland, President of the Permanent Bureau of the *Congresses Internationaux de la Sciences Genealogique et Heraldique*, a very distinguished Scots heraldist and artist, Member of the Royal Scottish Pipers Society and Trustee of the St. Andrews Preservation Trust. He was appointed to the post of Ormond Pursuivant in 2009.

The Ormond Pursuivant is one of the officers of arms who assist the Lord Lyon in jurisdiction over heraldic matters in Scotland as well as on ceremonial occasions. The Ormond Pursuivant takes his name from the Castle of Ormond.

Although the position of Ormond was probably created around 1475 when King James III of Scotland made his second son, James, Marquess of Ormond, the first mention of an Ormond Pursuivant doesn't occur until 1488.

Mr. Denis was the Courts representative at the MacAlpine Convention in 2016. He filed his response to the Court writing in part:

"I was duly impressed with the uniform responses that they felt themselves a family, shared now a commonality of identity and wished to be recognized in it. The creation of the Society had risen out of a desire, a very human one, to identify and to belong. Over the years members had in some instances found they actually were directly and relatively recently related. Others felt they had acquired through the Society a broader sense of relationship, though still intense, with those with whom they shared only that shadow of distant blood in a common surname. The reciprocal commitment, one with another and with all, even if based on this alone, had matured into a collective identity and pride. They viewed themselves as family, tears were shed on the point, and in my humble submission your Lordship honours them in this recognition and they your ancient and noble office in seeking it.

As noted above, the Convention was properly convened on adequate and sufficient notice of the issues to be addressed. All participants were clear in their commitment to a common bond of collective identity, inter-relationship and cultural kinship; they see themselves as family. At the same time they are equally clear they make no pretence of a shared, common descent from King Kenneth MacAlpin, to be *Sìol Alpin* or to be the present representers of an historic, coherent, functioning and recognised clan in the past. In this respect, too, on consultation the participants selected and agreed, from the several options open to them, to request they be recognised, designated and styled "The House of MacAlpine" rather than 'clan' or 'family' or 'kinship'. In my considered view this is proper and consistent with both their past and present inclusive aims and the lack of evidence, whether DNA or narrative/historical, of a single common ancestor."

The MacAlpines have a deep and enduring respect for Mr. Mark Dennis, Ormond Pursuivant, Rest in Peace.

Flowers of the Forest

Calvin L. McAlpine

Calvin L. McAlpine, age 88, passed on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at Inspira Hospital in Mullica Hill, NJ. Born in Philadelphia to parents, Calvin and Dorothy McAlpine, Calvin went to work at a young age before joining the United States Marine Corp to serve his country.

Calvin retired from a career working as a welder for DuPont. He enjoyed spending his time with family, woodworking, and in his younger years he liked going fishing.

Calvin is survived by his children, Calvin McAlpine & his wife, Lisa of Mantua, Mark McAlpine & his wife, Alyssa of Mandeville, LA, and Van McAlpine of Oak Valley; also by seven grandchildren, Ryan McAlpine & his wife, Christina, Kate Campbell & her husband, Bryan, Ian, Brody, Sean, Eddie, & Andrew McAlpine; great granddaughters, Juliette and Dani Rhett; his sister, Karen Wagner; and several loving nieces & nephews.

Predeceased by his loving wife, Loretta J. (nee Pandola); son, Edward and his wife, Patricia; and his parents, Calvin and Dorothy (nee Richardson) McAlpine.



Flowers of the Forest

Norman C. McCain

Norman McCain was born July 5, 1930 in Pueblo, Colorado and passed from this earth on Nov 16, 2025. He descends from the mid-Argyle Scots.

He served in the 24th Infantry Division, 34th regiment, George Company, stationed in Japan during the Korean War.

Bud leaves behind a legacy of love, kindness, laughter and service. He is survived by the love of his life, his wife, Judy (Barry) McCain, his five children, Melodee (Kendall) Lacy, Starla (Richard) Kull, Brad (Ali) McCain, Robin (Earl) McAlpine, and Barry (Barbara) McCain, as well as twenty grandkids, thirty-four great grands and one great, great grandchild.

Thank you for indulging me a final farewell to my Daddy!

Robin McAlpine
Newsletter editor

