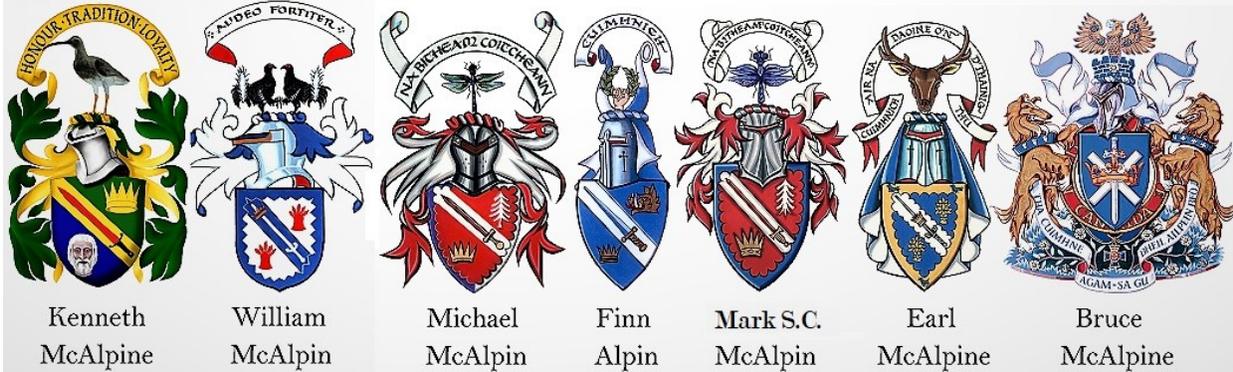


# Remember Those From Whom You Came

## Newsletter Of The Clan MacAlpine Society

The Worldwide Organization For MacAlpines  
4th Quarter 2020 ~ Volume 50



### Commander's News

As the window closes on 2020, many of us will be happy to see it over. Most everything has been cancelled, work, travel, gatherings, many lives have been lost, everyone has been affected. We are all looking forward to a time when we can return to what seems to be times gone by (Auld Lang Syne).

I know of ten of our members that have been afflicted with Covid, I am sure there are more that I am not aware of. My heart goes out to each.

Although physical Scottish Gatherings have been non-existent, we live in a high-tech world, with new ways of connectivity. I have attended the Annual General Meetings of the Council of Scottish Clans and Associations (COSCA), The Atlanta St Andrews Society, The Society of Scottish Armigers, and the Scottish North American Community Conference. All of these meetings were held virtually, and all had a common theme of how organizations, pipe bands, Highland Games and other activities have tried to cope with the impact of Covid. Many of the musicians, and small businesses that depend on these activities for their livelihood have been devastated.

There is an effort called Gaidhlig Dhail Riata being put together by Àdhamh Ó Broin who runs a Gaelic speaking consultancy in Glasgow. This exciting project is compiling known film footage, audio recordings and written transcripts of the last Gaelic speakers from the heart of the Craginsh, Lochaweside, Kilmartin, Kilmichael, Knapdale, area. This would be the dialect of our ancestors. The goal is to preserve and teach the native language of our ancestors. Preserving that part of our heritage would be significant. I have chatted with Àdhamh and look forward to hearing more about this wonderful effort.

Wishing you the best of the season, and New Year's blessings, I hope that we can all take a cup o' kindness yet, for auld lang syne.

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

Michael T McAlpin  
Commander, Name of MacAlpine



**Commander:** Michael T. McAlpin  
**Society Officers:**  
**President:** Earl Dale McAlpine  
**Vice President:** Mark McAlpin  
**Treasurer:** Janet McAlpine  
**Secretary:** Sue Potter  
**Member at Large:** Finn Stavnsbo Alpin  
**Newsletter Editor:** Janet McAlpine

## President's News

This past year has been so crazy. I know many will be celebrating the holidays without family and friends this year. While it is not the best of situations, we must remain positive and hopeful. Instead of focusing on ourselves, let's support our military men and women who often miss holidays at home. They are still standing the watch while we are in our warm houses celebrating the holidays. Pray for their safety abroad and at home. You may not know that we have board members that do so much work behind the scenes. Without them, we would not have a quarterly newsletter. I also offer up many thanks to those of you who write articles and help to keep us moving forward. A reminder to the folks who have been members for a while, and information to the newer members.

If you are anything like me, you miss attending Highland games and other events we usually participate in. I so look forward to getting back to it.

I have volunteered to become an Officer of the [Society of Scottish Armigers \(SSA\)](#) as the Assistant Treasurer. It is my desire to participate in society's outside our own to learn more about our history and support the agencies that in turn supports us as a clan.

The Object and Purpose of the Society of Scottish Armigers (SSA) are as follows:

1. To research, identify, and record Armorial Bearings which have been granted, matriculated, or otherwise recognized by the Scottish heraldic authority, [The Court of The Lord Lyon](#)
2. To publish and disseminate the historical record of said Armorial Bearings along with biographical information regarding the Armigers
3. To educate the public regarding the history and meaning of Armorial Bearings within the Scottish tradition
4. To initiate, promote, and engage in scholarly, educational, and information endeavors, and to preserve and disseminate knowledge regarding Scottish heraldry, and to act as a resource center for those seeking information regarding the same
5. To support and encourage knowledge regarding Scottish history and cultural heritage through leadership and participation in various cultural activities, such as Highland Games, Scottish Country Dancing, Kirkin' of the Tartans, St. Andrew's Society events, and the like

Please stay healthy and as active as you are able.

Happy Holidays and Happy Trails until we meet again!

In kinship,

Dale McAlpine  
President, Clan MacAlpin/e Society



# Blithe Yule—The Christmas Season In Scotland

By Laura McAlpine

**Blithe Yule is Happy Christmas in Scots dialect or in the Gaelic you would say *Nollaig Chridheil* . Raise your hand if you have an ornament in the Gaelic!**

## ***A Wee History***

Celebrating Christmas in Scotland is a relatively new tradition! The Brits have been celebrating Christmas for centuries similarly to the rest of the world, except for a brief period under the Reformation between 1647 and 1686 when Christmas was banned. Oliver Cromwell's reign as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland from 1653 – 1658 held stricter laws that were passed to catch anyone holding or attending a special Christmas church service. Legislation was passed to ensure that every Sunday was strictly observed as a holy day – the Lord's Day. By contrast, however, the shops and markets were told to stay open on December 25<sup>th</sup>, and in London soldiers were ordered to patrol the streets, seizing any food discovered being prepared for Christmas celebrations. You see, Cromwell was a puritan and a leader at the time. Christmas had become a celebration apart from the birth of Christ and the culture was indulging in rituals and excessive behaviors that the Church and Puritan culture worked furiously to prevent. This ordinance was in place until 1660. While Cromwell himself didn't initiate this ban, his part to ensure that Christmas be revered more than celebrated has linked marked him with the belief that Cromwell cancelled Christmas. Nowhere, they argued, had God called upon mankind to celebrate Christ's nativity in such fashion. In 1644, an Act of Parliament effectively banned the festival and in June 1647, the Long Parliament passed an ordinance confirming the abolition of the feast of Christmas.



In 1686, the ban was lifted in England, but the Church of Scotland continued to hold fast to the belief that nowhere in Scripture was the birth of Christ to be celebrated in the ways of the pagan practices that had taken place. So, Christmas continued to be celebrated in the quietest of ways, for nearly 400 years all the way to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1958, Christmas in Scotland finally became a publicly recognized holiday and in 1974, Boxing Day was accepted as a Christmas holiday tradition to this day. This is just a snippet of the history of Christmas in Scotland and 1974 wasn't that long ago! But what about the celebration with food and traditions that we know of?

## ***Santa Who? Mincemeat what?***

Santa Claus and Father Christmas are not the names you'd find referencing Jolly Old St. Nick! Santa in Scotland is strictly Santa. Simple and not overly fussed over, just the way the Scots like to celebrate! One of the interesting tidbits of information I did find is that on Christmas Eve, most often the tradition of leaving something for Santa is none other than Mince Pie and a glass of Brandy or Whisky! In my family, we've had mincemeat pie at Thanksgiving and Christmas for as long as I can remember and it's just not a holiday without it from my perspective. Not all my siblings have taken a liking to it, but I love it and my 91yo Dad also still enjoys mincemeat pie, so it remains to be a tradition for me. I love that this cultural practice has been passed down from when our ancestors traveled from Lochgilphead to Canada and continues today. A gift exchange was not practiced widely and usually done in secret. The children would receive a few small trinkets and the adults didn't always exchange gifts.

Besides Mincemeat pies, the Yule Bread was part of a traditional meal too but had also been banned during the reformation. Yule-tide loaves were baked of unleavened rye flour, or *main bread* was baked with an impression of Jesus or the Virgin. Richly seasoned oat bread was baked in some areas and became a specialty of some bakers. Many locals also found it was a fun and festive way to celebrate with a small trinket being baked into a portion of the bread and who ever found the prize would have a good year ahead, so the folklore goes. Some bakers would bake individual loaves in the shape of a baby to represent new life in the coming year. When the Church leaders turned away from celebrating any holy days except for the Sabbath the baking of Yule Bread was banned in 1583 and bakers were told to turn in any superstitious customers who continued to ask them to supply it

***Continued on page 4***

## *Blithe Yule—The Christmas Season In Scotland . . . continued from page 3*

Along with Yule Bread, Yule Ale was brewed especially for Yule and made from hops, root ginger and molassas. Farmers sometimes went into the byre, or stable on Christmas Eve to read a chapter of the Bible behind their cattle and horses to protect them from harm in the coming year.

On Christmas Day the first person to open the door in the morning would prosper the most that year. A table or chair would then be placed in the doorway, covered with a clean cloth and set with cheese and bread, or bannock for visitors. The idea of over-eating has always been part of the festive season and still is. It is interesting to learn that a *Yule*  *hole* is the hole in your belt which allows adjustment to allow you to relax after eating too much at Christmas.

Animals were given a special breakfast on Christmas, too. A sheaf of corn and a sheaf of oats were hung on a rowan tree for the wild birds, and owners of cattle fed them from their own hands on Yule morning. Christmas celebrations are still more traditionally quiet and all eyes and hearts turn toward Hogmanay.

### **Hogmanay – Steep in Traditions!**

#### ***First-Footing***

First-Footing is perhaps the most famous of Hogmanay traditions, harking back to Viking times. Originally it was part of the Christmas morning celebration but became a New Year's tradition long ago and has remained there ever since. The first-footer is the first person to cross into your home after the clock strikes midnight at New Year and is seen as the bringer of good fortune for the coming year. Tradition says that to ensure good vibes for the rest of the year your first-footer should be a dark-haired male (as fair-haired footers weren't particularly popular after the Viking invasion!), but nowadays good-hearted family and friends will suffice.

#### ***Fire Ceremonies***

Fire plays a huge part in traditional Hogmanay customs. For example, our annual Torchlight Procession sees thousands of revellers take to the streets with blazing torches, or, in Stonehaven, people parade through the streets swinging balls of fire over their heads. These Scottish fire ceremonies go way back to before Christianity, with some saying the fireballs signify the sun and that they purify the world by warding off evil spirits!

#### ***Having a Massive Party***

Scotland's world-famous and raucous New Year Celebrations stem from the fact that Christmas in Scotland was banned after the Reformation in 1640. And so, Hogmanay became the biggest celebration of the year! To this day 75,000 people take to the streets of Edinburgh for our epic 6-hour Street Party.

#### ***Ceilidh Dancing***

Traditionally, the word ceilidh means simply 'gathering' or 'party' and was historically another term for a social gathering in a community space, which often featured music, dancing and storytelling. Rooted in togetherness, these community events were particularly popular around Hogmanay. To this day you'll find traditional ceilidhs all over Scotland where people will gather and dance to traditional Scottish music. Now this sounds like a tradition I'd like to be part of!

#### ***Loony Dook***

A more recent tradition, the Loony Dook started in 1986 as a novel way to find a Hogmanay hangover cure. It's now an absolute must-see for any visitor to Edinburgh over New Year, with up to a thousand people in ridiculous costumes throwing themselves into the freezing water of the Firth of Forth.

#### ***Redding the House***

Is there a better feeling than welcoming in the New Year with your house and debts in order? Rather than a Spring clean, Scots have a New Year clean instead! Peace of heart, peace of mind.

***How will you celebrate Christmas and New Year's this December? I'm sure we'll all be looking forward to 2021!***

# Crofting

Submitted by Mark S.C. McAlpin - Sennachie Elect

The Gaelic term duthchas doesn't translate well into English, but it means a sense of belonging to a certain area of land, of being rooted by ancient lineage to a particular place.

Under the system of duthchas, a chief was there to ensure the general well-being of the family. The chief had no legal right to evict, no legal right to appropriate rents, no legal right to do anything but govern in the best interests of the family. He was elected to his position, and if ineffective, could also be removed. This system ensured that the clan was always strongly led and ensured that the chief acted in the best interests of those whose support he depended upon. Families lived on communal farms that had common grazing (shielings) and rotating fertile plots (runrigs).

Duthchas was gradually replaced by a form of feudalism, where chiefship passed from father to son. At that point instead of acting in the best interests of the clan, many began to act in their own best interests, demanding military service and rent from their clansmen, and granting rights and privileges to heirs and direct relatives (Heritors and Tacksmen) who sub-let the land to the ordinary clansmen. They collected the rents from these sub-tenants and then paid their own rent to the clan chief.



As the clan system collapsed, much of the land held by Chiefs was forfeited, other land became owned by landlords in absentia. The landholders realized that by eliminating the Tacksmen they would receive all of the rent paid by those who worked the land directly. Gradually, the landowners replaced the rent collected from their clansmen with cattle grazing, and then sheep.

Crofting communities developed, replacing the old communal farms. Crofters had no official rights to the land, and until 1886, it was legal to evict any crofter at the landlord's convenience. In many of these clearances, the tenants of inland farms were moved to crofting communities in coastal areas, leaving the land they had left for sheep. This type of clearance was carried out mostly until the 1820s.

Great care was taken to ensure that each unit or croft was too small to feed a household. The crofts created by clearance were not intended to support all the needs of those who lived there. In order to stimulate other economic development great care was taken to ensure that each unit or

croft was too small to feed a household, and consequently were restricted in size to a few acres of arable land with a surrounding shared grazing.

Landlords intended their crofting tenants to work in various industries, such as fishing or kelp. A contemporary estimate was that a crofter needed to carry out 200 days work away from his croft in order to avoid destitution. In the second half of the 19th century, many crofters provided a substantial migrant workforce, especially for lowland farms.

Crofting communities were badly hit by the Highland Potato Famine. The small arable plots had meant that the potato was an essential crop, due to its high productivity. The arrival of potato blight (and the collapse of the kelp industry a few years before) made some crofting communities no longer viable. This gave rise to additional clearances, when many tenants left the Highlands, often emigrating.

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## **Crofting . . . continued from page 5**

The Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act of 1886 affirmed the rights of crofters to their land. It also granted a legal status to crofting towns. It gave security of tenure to the crofters, as long as they worked the croft and paid the rent.

- Crofters had the right to pass down their croft to their descendants.
- Crofters had the right to be paid for land improvements, such as erecting fences and drainage
- A standard of reasonable rent was established and required.
- The first Crofters' Commission was established.
- Crofters had the opportunity to reassess the rent with the Crofters' Commission.

The Act specified eight counties where parishes might be recognised as crofting parishes: Argyll, Caithness, Cromarty, Inverness, Orkney, Ross, Shetland, and Sutherland. Within these counties a crofting parish was a parish where there were year-by-year tenants of land (tenants without leases) who were paying less than £30 a year in rent and who had possessed effective common grazing rights during the 80 years since 24 June 1806.

The Crofters' Commission also was in charge of establishing fair rent and reevaluating rents every seven years. If crofters believed that the rent was too high, they had the opportunity to go to the commission. Quite often the rents were lowered or even removed, if the crofters had already been paying too much.<sup>[10]</sup> The Commission had the power to reform the Act and establish other Acts, as well as grant green land to crofters in order to enlarge small crofts.

Crofters were given the right to purchase their individual crofts in 1976. In 2003, as part of the Land Reform Act, crofting communities were provided with the right to purchase eligible croft land associated with the local crofting community.

The Act was not fully effective in increasing the equality of land distribution in Scotland. By the year 2000, two-thirds of Scotland's land area was still owned by only 1,252 landowners out of a population of 5 million.

Today, crofting is found predominantly in the rural Western and Northern isles and in the coastal fringes of the western and northern Scottish mainland. There are 20,777 crofts entered on the Crofting Commission's register of crofts about 15,000 are rented, the remainder are owned.



### **Flowers of the Forest Dr. John Ruairidh (Ru) Morrison**

We are sad to hear of the passing of Dr. John Ruairidh (Ru) Morrison, Chief of the Name of Morrison. Ru lived in New Hampshire, and is survived by his wife Ann Michelle, and children, Alisdair and Marin.

The Morrison's hail from the Isle of Lewis

## Need to get out? Try Hillwalking!

By Michael McAlpin Jr.

All of us have seen the beautiful pictures of the Scotland. It is truly a magnificent country with natural beauty matching any in the world. I really enjoy the Highlands. The beautiful mountains, the lochs, the green moors, the rugged rocky outcrops and burns. The heather, creating fields of purple in late summer...if you have not seen it in person, you need to! If lucky, perhaps catch the sight of the Red Deer silhouetted against the skyline at the top of a mountain. There is no more authentic sight in Scotland in my opinion than these.



Perhaps it's the link to our ancestral past. Maybe it's the feeling of independence and freedom I have when hillwalking. Over several trips to Scotland, I have found a growing desire to "Hillwalk". What is hill walking? Consider it the Scottish version of hiking. Hill Walking is a national past time in Scotland. There are many Hillwalking clubs and outfitters in Scotland that specialize in planning hill walking trips, including "Bagging Munro's".

I had the opportunity a couple years ago to hill walk and tackle several Munro's. It was truly a grand experience. "Bagging Munro's" is the term used when one climbs mountains in Scotland that are 3000 feet in elevation or higher. There are 284 Munro's, and were named for Sir Hugh Munro, who surveyed and catalogued them back in 1891. The most famous Munro is Ben Nevis, the highest peak in the United Kingdom at 4406 feet. I know, when considering Mount Rainier in Washington State is 14,411 feet, Ben Nevis does not seem to be all that big. Climb it. It's big. Especially if you live in middle Georgia.



*Hillwalking to see Old Man of Storr on the Trotternish Ridge, Isle of Skye. Elevation approximately 2300feet. Pictures 1 and 2: Michael McAlpin Jr and Sr. Picture 3: My father, Commander Michael McAlpin and I on top of Ben Cheathaich, 3074 feet.*

Smaller mountains have names too. Corbetts are 2500-3000 feet in height, there are 220 of them. Grahams are hills 2000-2500 feet, named for Fiona Graham who in 1992 published the list of them numbering 224.

You may have heard there are no trespass laws in Scotland. Not entirely true, but the Land Reform Act of 2003 make access to land very easy and gives the "right to roam". The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) provides guidance on the public's right to access land. The right of public access is more than mere passage and includes the right to be on the land for certain specified purposes such as education and recreation. The SOAC allows people to walk on, pass through, and even pitch tents on public and private land. However, you must stay away from animals, crops, buildings, or gardens.

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## Hillwalking . . . Continued from Page 7

The great news is there is a significant amount of open land in Scotland to explore. So if you are able, I encourage you to spend time "Hillwalking". Listen to what the countryside tells you. You will see Scotland in another way after, and you will love it...as did Robert Burns in his poem "My Heart's in The Highlands", written in 1789

My Heart's In The Highlands by Robert Burns (1789)

Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,  
The birth-place of Valour, the country of Worth;  
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,  
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;  
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;  
A-chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,  
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.

Farewell to the mountains high covered with snow;  
Farewell to the straths and green valleys below;  
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods;  
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;  
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;  
A-chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,  
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.



## The Horse Tax

In the second half of the 18th century Britain was involved in wars in North America and in Europe, and these had become a considerable drain on the finances of the country. As a consequence of this, from 1748 until the end of the 18th century, the people, including those living in Scotland who had some money, were subjected to a series of assessed taxes.

One of the most useful taxes during the years 1797-1799, however, is the Farm Horse Tax, which was a separate tax in 1797 and 1798, but was included in the Consolidated Assessed Taxes of 1799. Apart from Midlothian, where this tax continued until 1812, there are no post-1799 farm horse tax records for other parts of Scotland.

The farm horse tax is invaluable in identifying tenant farmers, the specific names of their farms, and the number of horses, large and small, which they owned.

This then gives a good indication of their relative prosperity and the size of their landholding. Even in more populated areas it should be remembered that people may have had land which they farmed on the edge of town, and would still have required horses to work the land.

Examples of this tax follow:

| Date of Assessment. | Masters and Mistresses Names and Designations. | Actual No. of Horses. | Hares liable in Duty 22, 24, for Nine Months. | Horses not liable. | DUTY. |    |    | 20 p <sup>ts</sup> Cent. p. 37 Geo. III. |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------|---|--------------------|-------|----|----|--|
|                     |  |                       |   |                    | L.    | s. | d. |  |
| 1797                | Kilmartin Col. Stewart                         | 44                    | 28  | 16                 | 3     | 3  | -  | 127 2                                    |
| 1797                | Arch <sup>d</sup> Gillies & Sons               | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | John Gillies                                   | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | Gillies & Sons                                 | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | John MacCallum & Sons                          | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | John MacAlpin                                  | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | John MacAlpin                                  | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | Arch <sup>d</sup> Campbell                     | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |

The above shows Duncan MacAlpin, living at Glencarn in Kilmartin with 2 horses, one subject to farm duty for nine months of the year, the other not. Farm horses subject to tax were valued at 2 shillings 3 penny (twenty seven penny) a tax of twenty percent was levied amounting to 5.4 penny.

| Date of Assessment. | Masters and Mistresses Names and Designations. | Actual No. of Horses. | Hares liable in Duty 22, 24, for Nine Months. | Horses not liable. | DUTY. |    |    | 20 p <sup>ts</sup> Cent. p. 37 Geo. III. |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------|---|--------------------|-------|----|----|--|
|                     |  |                       |   |                    | L.    | s. | d. |  |
| 1797                | Kilmartin                                      |                       |   |                    |       |    |    |  |
| 1797                | Arch <sup>d</sup> Campbell                     | 4                     | 4   |                    |       |    |    | 8  |
|                     | John MacAlpin                                  | 2                     | 2   |                    |       |    |    | 4  |
|                     | Arch <sup>d</sup> Campbell                     | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | John MacAlpin                                  | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | John MacAlpin                                  | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | John MacAlpin                                  | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |

Above shows Archibald MacAlpin, in Kilmartin at Culcruch with 2 horses.

| Date of Assessment. | Masters and Mistresses Names and Designations. | Actual No. of Horses. | Hares liable in Duty 22, 24, for Nine Months. | Horses not liable. | DUTY. |    |    | 20 p <sup>ts</sup> Cent. p. 37 Geo. III. |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------|---|--------------------|-------|----|----|--|
|                     |  |                       |   |                    | L.    | s. | d. |  |
|                     | John MacAlpin                                  | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | Arch <sup>d</sup> Campbell                     | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | John MacAlpin                                  | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |
|                     | John MacAlpin                                  | 2                     | 1   | 1                  | 2     | 3  |    | 5 4                                      |

John MacAlpin at Ballymore in Kilmichael Glassary with 2 horses.

## Dunadd in the 8th Century

Dunadd (Fortress on the Add River) rises proudly from Moine Mhor – the ‘great moss’ – an expanse of peat bog fourteen feet thick that carpets the southern end of Kilmartin Glen.



It is a complex fortification, defended by four lines of walling on different levels. These fortifications were constructed between 500 and 1,000 AD. The main approach to the fort is up a rocky defile to the lowest terrace which has a well-defined wall. Near the north end is a solidly built wall. Above this level the walls are now in a more ruinous state. Entry was through a natural cleft in the rock sealed by wooden gates.

It was home to a fort 2,000 years ago, and a royal power centre of Gaelic kings in the 500s to 800s AD. To the right is a depiction of the bustling Fort in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century.



Dunadd in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Re-imagining by Aaron Watson

## The Kildalton Cross

The Kildalton Cross is a Celtic cross in the churchyard of the former parish church of Kildalton on the island of Islay in the Inner Hebrides, Scotland. It was carved probably in the second half of the 8th century AD, and is closely related to crosses of similar date on Iona. The High Cross of Kildalton and the Old Parish Church of Kildalton can be found approx. 10km (7 miles) from Port Ellen towards Ardtalla passing the distilleries of Laphroaig, Lagavulin and Ardbeg.

Kildalton comes from the Scots Gaelic Cill Daltain, "Church of the Foster Son" (i.e. St John the Evangelist).

Dugald MacAlpine was the schoolmaster at Kildalton in the early 1800's. He and his wife Ann and their seven children lived in nearby Laphroaig when the distillery was established.



## The Coracle (from the Gaelic Crannghail)

The coracle (or curach) is a small boat of leather and wicker that was once much in use in Western Scotland on the lochs and rivers and even the open sea.

Thanks to the good work of Jane Wilkinson, Peter Ananin, and Hamish Lamley, the coracle has been brought back to life at The Scottish Crannog Centre in Aylth.



*Hamish Lamely admiring a coracle*



*The Crannog Center in Aylth*



*Versatile crafts have been used by our ancestors for millenia*



*Willow branches are driven into the ground, and soaked willows are woven to provide a strong gunnel.*



*The frames are bent over and forced into the weave making sure that the bends are the same for a smooth bottom.*



*The joints are then lashed together with a rawhide.*



*Cowhide is stretched across the frame*

**For further information see**

<https://www.pictavialeather.co.uk/about>

**or**

<https://www.crannog.co.uk>

# The Ensign James McAlpin Affair

*Submitted by Alexander Cain*

James McAlpin was the only son of New York loyalists Daniel and Mary McAlpin. In May of 1774 his father purchased approximately one thousand acres of land located on the west side of Saratoga Lake and immediately proceeded to improve upon it. The McAlpin family moved to their new home in 1775.

At the outbreak of the American Revolution, the McAlpin family was firmly in support of the British Crown. As a result, the family was subjected to a series of escalating hostile acts at the hands of local rebel organizations known as the "Tory Committees".

In February, 1777, after rejecting repeated overtures to join the American cause, a mob appeared at the McAlpin home. James' father was forced to flee without his family and hide in nearby woods for over two weeks. When local officials discovered that Daniel McAlpin was recruiting loyalist soldiers and attempting to send them to Canada, a bounty of \$100 was set for his capture.

Captain Tyrannis Collins of the Albany County Militia was ordered to arrest McAlpin and "carry [those] who were supposed to be disaffected to the country, as prisoners to Albany." Realizing he had been exposed, Daniel McAlpin was forced to flee without his family. McAlpin remained in hiding until Burgoyne's army arrived at Fort Edward in August, 1777.

Shortly after his escape, Daniel McAlpin's property was seized and his wife and family were arrested. Mary McAlpin described her family's treatment at the hands of the rebels in vivid language. "From the day her husband left to the day she was forced from her home the Captain's house was never without parties of the Rebels present. They lived at their discretion and sometimes in very large numbers. They destroyed what they could not consume. Shortly after the capture of the fleeing loyalists a group of armed Rebels with blackened faces broke into the McAlpin's dwelling house. They threatened Mary and her children with violence and menace of instant death. They confined them to the kitchen while they stripped every valuable from the home. A few days after this, by an order of the Albany Committee, a detachment of Rebel Forces came and seized upon the remainder of McAlpin's estate both real and personal." Mary McAlpin and her children were taken to an unheated hut located in Stillwater and locked inside "without fire, table, chairs or any other convenience."

Hoping that the hardship would eventually break Mrs. McAlpin and induce her to beg her husband to honorably surrender, the rebels kept Mary and her children in captivity for several weeks. Mary McAlpin refused to comply and instead responded her husband "had already established his honour by a faithful service to his King and country." Enraged, rebels seized Mary and her oldest daughter and "carted" both of them through Albany. According to one witness Mrs. McAlpin was brought down to Albany "in a very scandalous manner so much that the Americans themselves cried out about it." A second account stated "when Mrs. McAlpin was brought from the hut to Albany as a prisoner with her daughter . . . they neither of them had a rag of cloths to shift themselves."

On May 27, 1777 General Gates condemned the actions of local militiamen who raided the McAlpin home. However, Gates did little to prevent McAlpin's property from being sold to support the American war effort.

At some point during the Burgoyne invasion, the McAlpin family was released from rebel custody and joined their father. While Mary and her daughters fled to Canada, James remained behind and joined his father's unit, The American Volunteers.

In October, 1777 at the mere age of twelve, James McAlpin was appointed to the rank of ensign. It is unknown what combat or service experience, if any, James had in the final days or aftermath of the Burgoyne Campaign. Nevertheless, James remained on the American Volunteers muster rolls as an ensign for the next three years.

On July 22, 1780, Daniel McAlpin succumbed to a long illness and passed away. In the aftermath of his death, many loyalist officers directed their attention towards James. It is possible that while alive, James' father either failed to ensure his son received proper training as an officer or covered his son's gross incompetence.

***Continued on page 12***

## **The Ensign James McAlpin . . . Continued from page 11**

Major John Nairne, who succeeded Daniel McAlpin as commander of the American Volunteers, suggested that the young officer was completely out of his element. “[His] time is quite lost while he stays here & I beg you may contrive as much business for him as possible, only (as he is young) that he may not be exposed to much fatigue, or to be lost in the woods.” As a result, Nairne advised Lieutenant William Fraser that McAlpin would be transferred out of the American Volunteers to a loyalist post at Vereche “to be employed on some Military Duty, and also in Writing and accompting.”

On December 1, 1780, James McAlpin was commissioned a second lieutenant in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the King’s Royal Regiment. He was posted to the prison island of Coteau du Lac and was placed under the command of Captain Joseph Anderson. McAlpin oversaw thirty soldiers, a block house and an unknown number of American prisoners of war.

While stationed at Coteau du Lac, McAlpin discovered that several of the American prisoners under his care were involved in the plundering of his family home and abuse of his mother and sisters.

In February, 1782, an intoxicated McAlpin had the offending prisoners “strung up” and tortured. Upon sober reflection, the young officer realized his mistake and begged forgiveness from the prisoners. Nevertheless, American prisoners under McAlpin’s care continued to be treated quite poorly.

In the early summer of 1782, five American prisoners escaped from Coteau du Lac. On June 10<sup>th</sup>, two of the escapees were apprehended by German soldiers. The poor physical and mental condition of the Americans was immediately apparent. When interviewed, the prisoners recounted to German officers their treatment at the hands of McAlpin. Specifically, the men described a lack of how McAlpin deprived them of soap, proper food, clothing, shoes, tobacco and other provisions.

On July 15, 1782, general orders noted that McAlpin was to be subject to a court martial due to the “most barbarous and inhumane treatment of prisoners.” In turn, Major Gray and four captains were dispatched to Coteau du Lac to investigate the claims. Both soldiers and prisoners reported to Gray that McAlpin was often intoxicated and treated the American prisoners poorly. Although in his report Gray noted many of the prisoners were insolent, the ensign was quickly arrested.

During the hearing, American prisoners testified how food provided to them was crawling with vermin, blankets and straw were intentionally withheld and many were deprived of the simple necessity of water.

The court quickly ruled that Ensign McAlpin was “guilty of the crime laid to his charge in breach of the twenty-third article of the fifteenth section of the articles of war.” He was immediately sentenced “to be Dismst his Majestyes Service.” James McAlpin’s military career ended at the age of seventeen.

Why McAlpin abused the prisoners under his charge is somewhat unknown. One potential motivating factor was likely his family’s treatment at the hands of the Americans back in New York. Another possible cause was his father’s failing health and ultimate death, both of which were likely caused by Daniel McAlpin being forced to hide in caves and woods from patriot forces. Given his young age, McAlpin also could have been easily influenced by the soldiers under his command. Finally, a lack of proper training and guidance from his superiors may have contributed to his actions.

Shortly after his conviction, James McAlpin, as well as his four sisters and mother, left Montreal and sailed for England.

None of the McAlpins ever returned to America. Instead, the family took up initial residence in London. In her Loyalist Petition claim, Mary McAlpin makes little to no reference of her son or his military career. Instead, she focuses on the hardships of her husband, daughters and herself. It appears that James never submitted his own claim to the English government.

## The Scottish Wildcat

There are only 65 of them left on earth. They are threatened by hybridization (cross-mating with domestic cats), habitat loss and persecution, and their population is shrinking year after year.

The Scottish wildcat population has declined drastically since the turn of the 20th century. It is listed as Critically Endangered in the United Kingdom and is primarily threatened by hybridization with domestic cats.

The Scottish wildcat evolved from a population of European wildcats which became isolated by the English Channel over 9000 years ago. They are the largest of the wildcat family and can be double the size of a domestic pet cat and infinitely more ferocious. They live solitary lives in the most remote corners of the Scottish West Highlands. The wildcat is active mostly at dawn and dusk.

The fur of the Scottish wildcat is a great deal thicker than that of a domestic cat. It displays very distinctive solid black and brown stripes. Spots, broken stripes or white fur are all indications of hybridization (cross-mating) with domestic cats. Another notable feature is their thick banded tail, perfectly ringed with no dorsal stripe running off of the spine. Imperfect rings or dorsal markings are further signs of hybridization.



Like all cats they have superb hearing, retractable claws, exceptional night vision and a powerful body conducive to sprinting and pouncing.

Scottish wildcats epitomize the solitary, independent super-predator and the mysterious and wild spirit of the Highlands in a way that no other animal can.

Wildcats live until around 7 years of age in the wild, and up to 15 years old in captivity. Predators such as eagles and foxes are a threat to unguarded kittens but will avoid confrontations with adult cats.

An organization called Wildcat Haven works to identify wildcats across the Highlands and protect them by neutering domestic cats and working with landowners to increase forest habitats, creating vast safe havens for wildcats stretching over hundreds of square miles. Their fundraising efforts include “adopting” a Scottish Wildcat. The Clan MacAlpine Society supports their efforts and has adopted a Wildcat.



**Further information can  
be obtained at  
[https://  
www.wildcathaven.com](https://www.wildcathaven.com)**

## Clan MacAlpine Information

We invite you to learn more about Clan MacAlpine Society by going to our website [www.macalpineclan.com](http://www.macalpineclan.com) and reviewing the wealth of information found there.

We hope you enjoy receiving your quarterly issues of this newsletter, *Remember Those From Whom You Claim*, that contains articles of interest and activities our members participate in. For those of you on Facebook, check us out. We have many contributors to that site.

On our website you will find the store where you can order the clan items shown on this page, get membership information, find information on the Clan MacAlpine DNA project, and a variety of other sections about MacAlpine history and the history of Clan MacAlpine Society.

Also on the website you have the opportunity to support your Society by checking out the page on "Funding Projects" to discover ways you can make a donation to Clan MacAlpine Society. It is through your donations that we are able to participate in or support heritage activities. You can earmark your donation for:

- ◆ General Society Operations
- ◆ Society Clan Tent Fund
- ◆ Kilmartin Museum Fund
- ◆ Pipe and Drum Band Fund
- ◆ Scottish Dancing Fund

Be sure to watch for Highland Games in your locale. Look for a Clan MacAlpine Society tent and celebrate your heritage by meeting fellow MacAlpines.



***A Wee MacAlpine Warrior***

### Clan MacAlpine Challenge Coin



\$20.00 + 4.95 Shipping  
Available in store on Society website at [www.macalpineclan.com](http://www.macalpineclan.com)  
Contact [drscotmac@yahoo.com](mailto:drscotmac@yahoo.com) for further information

### Clan MacAlpine Lapel Pin



\$10.00 + 4.95 Shipping  
Available in store on Society website at [www.macalpineclan.com](http://www.macalpineclan.com)  
Contact [drscotmac@yahoo.com](mailto:drscotmac@yahoo.com) for further information

### Clan MacAlpine Society Kilt Pin



Custom designed by Mark McAlpin, incorporating elements of the boar's head, pine tree, crown, and sword, all of which are linked to the MacAlpines, and appear prominently in MacAlpine Heraldry.

The pins are made of silver weighing approximately 1 ounce - Dimensions are 4"x 1 1/8"

\$75 USD payable by PayPal or check  
Please contact

[NotCommonKiltPins@outlook.com](mailto:NotCommonKiltPins@outlook.com) for questions or purchase

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