

# The Sgian Dubh

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Clan Morrison Society of North America

<https://clanmorrison.net/>

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Morrison, Morison, Murison, Gilmore, Gilmour, Brieve, MacBrieve, Judge

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## Chieftain Wins Tartan Day Award

*Andrew Morrison Noted for Promoting Scottish-American Ties*



Photo by Camilla Morrison

Andrew Morrison with the Tartan Day Award at the April reception

# Andrew Morrison: Father knew best, *A life of public service*

By James Morrison

With a twinkle in his eye and a wry smile on his face, Andrew Morrison delivered his acceptance speech as he received the prestigious National Tartan Day Award.

“I know it’s customary at a time like this to thank lots of people and give credit, but I’d like to blame somebody. I’d like to blame my father,” he said.

His audience wasn’t sure how to react to such an opening statement. It soon became clear that the urbane Scotsman raised in London had acquired that distinctive, understated, self-deprecating English sense of humor.

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## ‘Happy, selfish banker’

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Andrew was actually thanking his father for leading him from the life of a “perfectly happy, selfish international banker” to a life of

public service to the Scottish and Scottish-American community.



Camilla Hellman, president of the New York-based American Scottish Foundation, praised Andrew for his “outstanding” dedication, as she presented the Tartan Day award at an April reception in Alexandria, Va., a town founded by Scottish merchants in 1749.

Andrew “devotes untold hours supporting and promoting Scottish-American culture,” she said.

Alasdair Morrison, the hereditary chief of Clan Morrison, sent his congratulations from Scotland.

“It is a great honor for Andrew and for the clan,” the chief said in an email to the Sgian Dubh.

“Thank you for all you do for the clan and other Scots in America.”

Michael Morrison, chairman of the Clan Morrison Society of North America, added, “This is a remarkable achievement given to a remarkable person.”

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## The new viscount

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Along with the title of Viscount Dunrossil, Andrew inherited from his father, John William Morrison, the traditional sense of noblesse oblige – that ancient duty of nobility to serve their communities. However, it was an inheritance thrust upon a reluctant son.

As Andrew described his metamorphosis from bon vivant to patron of Scottish heritage, it started when he visited his father who at the time was the British governor of Bermuda in the 1980s.

His father chided Andrew and the younger generation for its pursuit of money.

“ ‘In my day,’ ” he quoted his father as saying, “ ‘we believed in service, public service.’ ”

Later in London, his father hosted a reception in the House of Lords for a gathering of Clan MacLeod where he met a Texan who boisterously declared he was organizing a Scottish festival in San Antonio.

Andrew recalls, “Dad perked up and said, ‘I have a son in San Antonio who has nothing worthwhile to do. I know he would love to get involved in your Highland games.’ ”

Andrew had moved to the home of the Alamo to represent a British bank and was living a profitable life of making money.

Despite his Scottish heritage, Andrew had never been to a Highland festival; but he agreed to pitch a Morrison clan tent and soon ended up on the board of directors of the San Antonio Scottish games.

That was the first slippery step that led to a new life of volunteerism in the cause of Scottish heritage.

Later, his father did a “really selfish thing ... he died.”

“As a result of ... that, I ended up with a title,” Andrew said.

“Suddenly doors were opened to me, opportunities were presented to me.”

Andrew is now the British consul-general in San Antonio, the U.S. representative of the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs, a member of the advisory board of the Council of Scottish Clans and Associations, an honorary patron of the American Scottish Foundation and chieftain of the Clan Morrison Society of North America. He is also the former chairman of the Society of Scottish Armigers.

“It’s been a very accidental trip up to this point,” he said, “and the extraordinary thing is that it’s been incredibly worthwhile. ... I have to say that dad was right ... .”

Andrew concluded that a purposeful life is one worth living, even if one stumbles along the way toward that goal.

“The secret to a happy life is, amazingly ... , you find something to believe in ... ,” he said. “For me, it’s about strengthening the ties between Scotland and the diaspora ... . It’s also about strengthening the ties among the different organizations in this country.”

The audience in the historic Lyceum in Alexandria’s Old Town included Scottish diplomats from the British Embassy in Washington DC,

the president of the St. Andrew’s Society of Washington, leaders of several national Scottish-American organizations and at least two other Morrisons in their kilts.

“It’s particularly gratifying to receive an award like this with all of you here,” he said.

“You are my community. You are my family. You are my clan. ... You get the value of heritage.”

If that heritage is Scottish, he added, that puts you in a “very fortunate minority in this country.”



**Andrew receiving the Tartan Day award in San Antonio this year**

# The Morrison mark on Tartan Day

By James Morrison

As an old newspaperman, I rarely write about myself; but I am making an exception to report on the Morrison role in establishing National Tartan Day.

I often say that this annual celebration of Scottish-American heritage got started on the second floor of an Italian restaurant in Old Town Alexandria, Va. in 1997. That was from my perspective. National Scottish-American organizations were already working quietly on the project, however I had not heard a single word of that effort.

Within two years, I would be joined by Peter Morrison (who wrote about the Morrison tartans in the last newsletter and has an article about our two clan badges in this one), Michael Morrison, a photographer for the State Department, and Stuart Morrison Stone, a librarian for the Library of Congress who designed the National Tartan Day logo. This Northern Virginia contingent of Morrisons helped shape Tartan Day.

That was in the future. In 1997, I was attending a meeting of a local Scottish social society where a woman named Joanne Phipps presented an ambitious plan to create a national holiday to recognize the contributions of Scots and

Scottish-Americans to the development of the United States.

The idea was to establish April 6 as National Tartan Day to commemorate the signing on April 6, 1320, of the Declaration of Arbroath. <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/Declaration> That document is often called the Scottish declaration of independence, and some historians claimed that Arbroath influenced the signers of the American Declaration of Independence. <https://rb.gy/gup6u5>

I was a journalist, not a scholar. I had no proof of a connection between Arbroath and the American Declaration. That didn't stop me.

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## Brigadoon to Sean Connery

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By the time I finished, I ended up defending Tartan Day in a radio interview with a skeptical reporter from BBC Scotland, who accused us Americans of prancing around in kilts like characters from Brigadoon. I encouraged British ambassadors to hold Tartan Day receptions, and I helped get Sir Sean Connery involved in celebrations in Washington and New York.



**Sir Sean Connery, my wife Suzanne, and me at a 2001 Tartan Day reception at the British Embassy in Washington.**

Joanne Phipps worked with Sen. Trent Lott of her home state of Mississippi to get the Tartan Day resolution through the U.S. Senate in 1998. Mr. Lott was the powerful Senate majority leader at the time.

A year later, I decided we needed to hold a local Tartan Day festival and symposium on Scottish independence as Scotland was preparing to hold the first elections to a Scottish Parliament in nearly 300 years. I audaciously invited Scotland's political parties – Conservative, Labor, Liberal and the

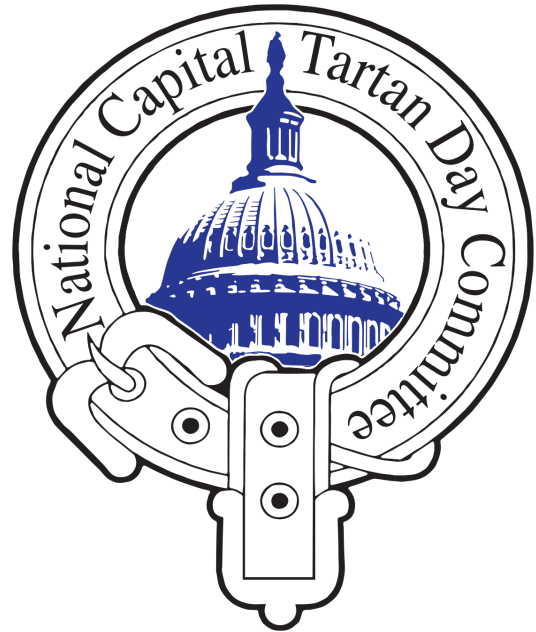
Scottish National Party – to send representatives to Alexandria for a holiday they had never heard of. The Conservatives sent Struan Stevenson, who would win an election to the European Parliament, while the other three sent local representatives. I was eager to get the SNP involved because Sir Sean was the most prominent member of the independence party.

In 2001, Sir Sean accepted Mr. Lott's invitation to Washington where he

received a congressional award. The Scottish actor would become a regular visitor to Washington for Tartan Day celebrations and to New York where he would serve as grand marshal for the 2002 Tartan Day parade.

Meanwhile, my fellow Morrisons and I established an ad hoc Tartan Day committee that would evolve formally into The National Capital Tartan Day Committee <https://www.nationalcapitaltartanday.com/nctdc/> , which has been organizing events since 2002.

With our own Andrew Morrison receiving the 2024 Tartan Day award, that just underscores the Morrison mark on Tartan Day.



**The Tartan Day crest designed by Stuart Morrison**

THE SCOTTISH COALITION, USA

PRESENTATION

20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL TARTAN DAY AWARD

HONORING:  
**ANDREW MORRISON,**  
VISCOUNT DUNROSSIL

FOR HIS OUTSTANDING  
CONTRIBUTION AS A LEADER AND  
VOLUNTEER TO OUR SCOTTISH  
AMERICAN COMMUNITY, BOTH  
HERE AND ABROAD.

6 PM  
TUESDAY APRIL 9, 2024  
**THE LYCEUM**  
201 S WASHINGTON ST, ALEXANDRIA, VA

# Message from the Chairman

**By Michael Morrison**

*Chairman, Clan Morrison Society of North America*

I would like to congratulate Andrew Morrison on receiving the National Tartan Day Award in Alexandria, Va., in April.

Andrew is the most recent recipient of this prestigious honor, presented to him for his work to deepen Scottish-American relations and culture as well as his efforts to promote the Scottish heritage of the defenders of the Alamo in his adopted home of San Antonio, Texas.

This is a remarkable achievement given to a remarkable person. It also shines a welcome spotlight on the Clan Morrison Society of North America.

In the first half of 2024, the society board of directors has received numerous requests to attend events all across the nation. Most of them also request Andrew's presence as honored guest. This has become a wonderful opportunity for the society to further its own interests, while Andrew is able to enjoy the rewards of his works.



For those who are not familiar with Andrew, he is the second Viscount Dunrossil and uncle to Clan Chief Alasdair Morrison. He is also Regional Chieftain of Clan Morrison of North America. Andrew is a full-time resident of San Antonio but can



be seen rubbing elbows across the nation at many highlands games events and other notable gatherings promoting and educating the masses about Scotland.

### **AGM set in Colorado**

CMSNA has set its Annual General Meeting for August 3-4 at the Colorado Scottish Festival in Denver, Co. On the agenda we will discuss the many topics that the society has tackled over the last year since the 2023 AGM at the Virginia Scottish Games.

### **The mystery of the Gilmour tartan solved**



A purple plaid marketed online as the Gilmour tartan is a fake. An investigation by Clan members found that the suspect plaid is being sold by a firm based in Pakistan. Tex Gilmore raised the issue in a Chat in June, sending me to track down the company and ask it to stop marketing the fabric as a tartan associated with Clan Morrison. We know that Gilmore is the Scots Gaelic version of Morrison, but there is no Gilmore tartan recognized by the official Scottish Register of Tartans.

We welcome and encourage all who wish to take part to attend this event. As always the society is looking for interested volunteers who may wish to become involved on an executive level.

Without your continued support, the board cannot fulfill its promises that we make to our membership body.



# Dun Eistein or Teaghlach Phabbay

*Why Morrisons have two clan crests*

**By Peter A. Morrison**

In my last article on the two tartans of the Morrison Clan, I touched on that part of the clan that moved in with the McKays when Ay Mac Hormaid (Morrison) married the daughter of the bishop of Caithness, the McKay Clan's bishop. Hence there are two tartans. You may have also noticed that there are two clan emblems used in the pins worn on shoulders or hats. And that is another story completely.

First, this is called the Clan Crest. The basic emblem in the center starts at the bottom, with a depiction of the sea, (in heraldic terms, "Issuant from waves of the sea"), with a diagonal blue & white thin border ("Azure crested Argent"), supporting a green island like mound ("a mount Vert") with a Scottish gray-blue stone castle tower ("battlemented wall Azure masoned Argent"), with an arm holding a dagger upright ("issuing therefrom a cubit arm naked Proper, the hand grasping a dagger hilted"). It is then surrounded by a Scottish belt, with a silver clasp at the eight o'clock position, and the silver covered end of the belt looped to tie at the six o'clock position. Although the position of the clasp and end sometimes varies, they are always included. However, one crest will say "Dun Eistein," while the other says "Teaghlach Phabbay."

And like me, you may have asked, “Why two, what’s the meaning behind the two emblems? Should I only wear one of them, and does it matter?”

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## **A people with a strong local identity**

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So the first, Dun Eistein, which translates roughly to “For the Keep (of the Morrisons,) Eistein”. Eistein was where the origins of the Morrison Clan started from their Viking landings in the northern tip of the Isle of Lewis. It is where the Eistein keep still remains as a historical archeological site in Ness, near the town of Stornoway. Not easy to reach, Eistein is located on a small rocky island, a mound, or sea stack, where the Clan’s goods were kept. These keeps, or “duns,” are very much constructed like those of ninth century Viking and Norse origins. The only real evidence of fortification type architecture similar to a dun is the Viking “trelleborg,” or ring fort. But the parallels to the keep are interesting, as trelleborgs are medieval high-walled keeps used to repel pillagers and other colonizers. Also the trelleborgs were built in almost perfect circles, similar to Dun Eistein but often were much larger. Walls of the trelleborg were either made of massive logs piers, or giant grass hills – the latter is much the way Dun Eistein is constructed. Unlike the trelleborg, however, Dun Eistein had an internal structure – larger than the typical Norse “boathouses,” providing for store rooms and work areas that include a forge and rudimentary furnace. The recent 2005 excavation and archeological records obtained from the University of Glasgow note: “Post-excavation analysis ... demonstrated that the inhabitants of Dùn Èistean were a people with a strong local identity, using their traditional building techniques, adapting to available raw materials and drawing on the resources of the surrounding environment to support and defend the population on the stack in the face of incoming attack.” Hence, why a strong link to those ties made “Dun Eistein” a formidable clan motto and well-understood exclamation in times of good or bad tidings.

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## **Hard times on the rocky tip of Lewis**

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As you’re probably already aware, the Morrisons shared the Isle of Lewis with Clan McLeod, and relations were not always the best between them. Times on the

rocky northern tip of Lewis were hard; and as families grew, they started to look for other lands to farm and cultivate. It's no doubt that part of the clan immigrated south and found the area of Phabbay (or Pabbay). Phabbay (Scottish Gaelic: Pabaigh) is an island in the Barra Isle chain at the southern tip of the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, south of the Isle of Lewis. Bàgh Bàn is the name applied to a large bay situated on the southeast of the small island, where it's likely the first Morrison settlers landed. It was protected from the North and West, which made it ideal for the initial settlers to create a home. But Phabbay was difficult to farm, being mostly rocky headlands, situated on the east coast of the island. The name is said to come from "Papey," which is unsurprisingly Norse for "the island of the papar" (monks). And after most remaining family settlers were lost at sea in a springtime 1897 storm, the island inhabitants start to leave and thereafter - Phabbay became abandoned to the few sheep and migratory birds that nest there today. But the family struggles were never forgotten, and those who lived there were of strong heritage and hearty work ethics. Therefore "Teaghlach Phabbey" or "For the Family of Phabbey" has strong meaning to those who hold it close. (Note, it can be spelled either as "Teaghlach" or "Teighlach.")

So, which to wear – and with which Tartan, the red or the green? Well, it honestly doesn't matter, as both are completely acceptable at any Clan function. Many Morrisons will point that "Dun Eistein" and the red tartan are more historically accurate for that initial period when and where the Morrisons started, while those who wear the green say they are more akin to the "Highlander" Clans who roamed the hillsides of Caithness through Ross with tracements back to one of the sixty families who went with Ay-Mac. And no doubt, some from Phabbay would have intertwined with the families in the highlands. For me, I have little doubt that when either tartan or clan crest was seen, their clansmen were often welcomed and heralded for their heartiness and fortitude, in the face of all they had to endure.

I hope you enjoyed a bit of the storytelling that I've imbibed in these explanations of the two tartans and the two clan crests, and that it enables you to better explain and share those bonds of Clan traditions with others new to the Clan. And should you have comments, suggestions or questions, please reach out to me at [rollieindc@gmail.com](mailto:rollieindc@gmail.com) – as I look forward to hearing from each and every one of you, and until I do - wish you the very best of health in Gaelic - "Slàinte Mhath" (pronounced boldly as "Say-lan-cha VaH!")

# Send us a Sign

*Volunteers clean up Morrison cemetery*



Dozens of Morrisons in North Carolina have spent weekends cleaning up a historic Morrison cemetery founded on a land grant awarded to a Scotsman who fought in the American Revolution.

Alexander Morrison Jr. was born in the Scottish highlands in 1750. His family immigrated to Harnett County in central North Carolina where, unlike many other Scottish immigrants who remained loyal to the British crown, he joined the Patriot cause. He was awarded a 1,000-acre land grant for his service in the war. Many of his descendants are buried in

the Morrison cemetery, one of many family burial sites being cleaned up by volunteers recruited by Harnett County resident Steve Koontz.



# Outside the box

*Our genealogist takes a look at cousins*

**By Buddy Morrison**

What defines a cousin? Mine were considered the companions of my childhood adventures and, at times, were confidants in childhood secrets. They played a unique role in my life in Connecticut and Maine. I was the youngest child by eight to 16 years to my three siblings; my cousins were close to my age and thus were a big part of my life. As I dig deeper into genealogy, the landscape of my cousin's relationship undergoes a new meaning. Perhaps it is the reshaping of a growing relationship with my cousins or just a fresh look at the tools and insights provided by the field of family history, research and the recent involvement in the use of DNA.

Cousins will always share a common ancestor, typically beyond our immediate siblings. Their relationship is established through the generations, creating a diverse network of kinship that branches out across our family tree. Traditional family structures have placed many cousins on the same level as our daily lives. Still, genealogy is always challenging and redefining these boundaries.

Genealogy, the study of family history and the tracing of lineages has experienced a digital renaissance in recent years. Online platforms, DNA testing services, and collaborative family tree databases have made it much easier for family researchers to explore and connect their family roots. As a result, cousins are no longer distant relatives confined to family reunions; they are active participants in our journey of discovery.

One of the significant ways modern genealogy methods have helped to shape the role of cousins is by helping us rediscover our distant shared ancestry. Through detailed family trees and historical records, cousins can help us uncover common roots at roadblocks and help us gain a deeper understanding of our heritage. This shared connection fosters a sense of unity and shared identity, transcending the physical distances on a map.

Several Genealogical online sites can help facilitate virtual reunions and collaborations among cousins separated by distances and health constraints. Online platforms dedicated to family history enable our cousins to exchange information, share stories and collaborate on building our family trees. The result is that cousins work together to piece together the puzzle of our collective past



Photo by Crystal Morrison

**Buddy Morrison, in the blue shirt, with his cousins.**

Advancements in DNA testing have added a fascinating dimension to our distant cousin relationships. Cousins can confirm their genetic connections, uncover hidden family ties, and identify previously unknown relatives. This research approach to genealogy provides a tangible link between distant cousins, reinforcing the importance of shared genes in understanding family bonds.

In the age of digital connectivity and genealogical exploration, cousins are emerging from distant relations to become an integral role in the collective story of our family. Genealogy, which can bridge gaps and uncover tangled roots, is reshaping the role of cousins, transforming them into active participants in preserving and celebrating our family history. As we dig deep, we discover the secrets of our family's past; cousins will undoubtedly play an increasingly significant role in shaping the narrative.

To learn how I can help you dig "outside the box" and find your story that can be shared for many generations, contact me at [SouthernShoresGenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:SouthernShoresGenealogy@gmail.com).

# Out and About

*Clan members at festivals, parades, wedding*



**A Patriots' son:** Rich Morrison (left) in June received three new certificates from the Sons of the American Revolution in Georgia, confirming that even more of his ancestors fought for American independence. He already had three certified patriots among his ancestors. The life member of the Clan Morrison society is a former convener of the Morrison tent at the Stone Mountain Highland Games in Atlanta.





Photo by Sherry Morrison

**Grandfather of the bride:** Hal Morrison won't let anything stop him, especially when given the chance to show off his Prince Charlie and red Morrison kilt. Hal, the prolific poster of photos of Scotland on Facebook, is seen here with Christy Morrison, his daughter-in-law and mother of the bride, at his granddaughter's wedding in June in New Market, TN. His wife Sherry, who took the photo, said Hal always "maintains a smile," despite health problems that require him to use a walker or his electric wheelchair.



**Kirkin' at the Cathedral:** Lisa and James Morrison (left) and Tom Morrison, a piper with the St. Andrew's Society of Washington DC, at the Kirkin' O' the Tartan at the Washington National Cathedral in April



**Rain on their parades:** Piper Tom Morrison (left) again out and about. This time at the stormy Memorial Day Parade in DC with the Washington Monument in the background. Michael Morrison and Micha Bressla (right) of Arlington, VA., at the New York City Tartan Day Parade in April.

# The Games Have Begun

*To find Scottish games and festivals near you, look here.*

<https://highlandgamesandfestivals.com/u-s-events/>

<https://highlandgamesandfestivals.com/events-in-canada/>



Photo by Samuel Morrison

**Gina Morrison waves from the Morrison tent at the rainy, muddy Milwaukee Highland Games in June. Despite the weather, they had a great time. Samuel and Gina are preparing for the Wisconsin Highland Games in September.**



**The Morrison tent at the Chicago Scottish Festival and Highland Games in June. Mike Morrison invites folks into the tent to take a Morrison quiz.**

# New Clan Society Members

*We welcome those who joined and mourn those who passed*

## **New Life Members:**

Wayne S. Morrison                      Canaan, NH

## **New Annual Members:**

Brenda S. Campbell	Matthews, NC
Tessa Siobhan Gilmore	Dublin, OH
Jean MacInnis Harnois	Hull, MA
Jerry Wayne Morris, Jr.	Plantersville, TX
Dalice R. Steffen	Oklahoma City, OK

## **Flowers of the Forest:**

Lt. Col. Leonard W. Morrison	Lawrenceville, GA
Richard E. Morrison	Bristol, TN
Robert K. Morrison	Woodruff, SC

## **Membership Report as of June 2, 2024:**

Life USA: 389

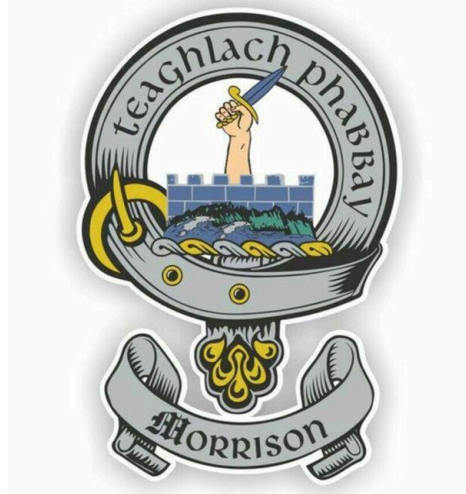
Annual USA: 69

Life Foreign: 15

Annual Foreign: 6

Total Members: 479

Loss of 111 members is due to non-payment of annual members who have been dropped from the roster.



## CMSNA Executive Leadership

**The Chief of Clan Morrison:** R. Alasdair Morrison of Ruchi

**Chairman:**

Michael S. Morrison  
Acting)

**Vice Chairman:**

Vacant

**Treasurer:**

(Michael S. Morrison,

**Membership:**

William Broome

**Secretary:**

Bob Morrison, M.D.

**Historian:**

Edmund Potter, PhD

**Chaplain:**

Vacant

**Newsletter Editor:**

James Morrison

**Scholarship Director:**

Robert S. Morrison

**Past Chieftain:**

Anne M. Morrison

**Webmaster:**

William Broome

**Past Chairmen:** Anne Morrison, Chris Gillmore, Arthur Morrison, Edwin F. Holcombe Jr., Jim Morrison, Gerald B. Morrison, Jeffrey Moore, David H. Blain, David R. Gilmour

**Members at Large:** Jan Tremblay, William Hal Morrison Jr.

**Chairman's Advisory Committee:** Edwin Holcombe Jr., Jim Morrison, Robert "Bob" Morrison, David R. Gilmour, Chris Gillmore, Jennifer Wolcott

