

The Sgian Dubh

Clan Morrison Society of North America

<https://clanmorrison.net/>

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

Resurrection of a Scottish chief

How the Morrisons got their groove back after 350 years

By James Morrison

On Aug. 28, 1616, the Morrisons of the Isle of Lewis met their doom when James VI, king of Scots, issued “letters of fire and sword” – fanciful names for state-sanctioned murder, arson and theft – against a clan that had been among the most respected hereditary judges in the Scottish Highlands and Islands.

The Morrisons had lost a power struggle to MacLeods and MacKenzies who wanted control of Lewis and appealed to the king for permission to wipe out the clan that stood in their way.

The letters of fire and sword essentially meant that they could kill Morrisons, burn their houses and take their land.

For nearly 350 years, the Morrisons wandered in the wilderness of Scottish history.

Andrew Morrison tells the story about how Clan Morrison reestablished a hereditary chief in 1967 in his new book *The Making of a Scottish Chief: Shakes and the Morrisons of Ruchdi*.

After an extensive genealogical search, Andrew’s great uncle, Dr. John Morrison, was recognized as the new clan chief.

Andrew, himself a hereditary peer who holds the title of Viscount Dunrossil, discusses the process of finding a clan chief and how Dr. John Morrison was chosen. He explains the role of the Lord Lyon King



Dr. John Morrison in his feathered bonnet with his son Ian, who inherited the chieftainship, in a family portrait.

of Arms in recognizing Scottish clans as opposed to groups founded around family names.

Andrew also goes into great detail about heraldry and the issuance of coats of arms, all overseen by the Lord Lyon.

The appointment of a clan chief “raises more questions than it answers,” he wrote.

“Questions like, what’s a clan, what’s the role of a chief today, who is the Lord Lyon and what is his

role, who gets to decide what's a clan and who's a chief, and so on. Even who really cares about this stuff and why?"

In only 137 pages, Andrew, who is also the Clan Morrison chieftain for North America, attempts to answer those questions as he deals with the differences between the Scottish Highlands and Lowlands, recaps the history of clans and chiefs, provides a detailed description of heraldry, and presents a personal view of his own family. He also includes an extremely helpful glossary of terms that should be read first.

Clan Morrison is one of about 135 clans with chiefs who are members of the prestigious Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs. It is an exclusive privilege considering that most "clans" that pitch tents at Scottish festivals are not, in fact, true clans. The U.S.-based Council of Scottish Clans and Associations lists 448 "clans."

Andrew's book is so comprehensive it has been praised by no less and authority that Charles, Lord Bruce, the convenor of the Standing Council.

"Not since Sir Iain Moncrieffe published his encyclopaedic history of the clans of the Scottish Highlands nearly 60 years ago has a writer perhaps come so close to exploring and defining the existential qualities of chiefly leadership," Lord Bruce wrote.

"Drawing on the anthropology of a single clan – its Gaelic origins and worldwide migration – Andrew Morrison gives a compelling account of why no history of Scotland can be credible without understanding the role of its ancient clans and families."

The Making of a Scottish Chief can be ordered at <https://shorturl.at/Md6ON> and <https://shorturl.at/jYHhG>



Scottish leadership on Tartan Day

As the United States prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, Andrew Morrison looked back more than 700 years to explore how Scotland helped shape the idea of independence that Americans will celebrate on the Fourth of July.

Tartan Day commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath on April 6, 1320 and celebrates its influence on America's Declaration of Independence of 1776, more than four centuries later.

Andrew, addressing the annual dinner of the National Capital Tartan Day Committee in Washington, D.C., cited three lessons from Arbroath and how that "letter to a pope, written in Latin" laid the foundation for modern democracy. Those principles are national self-determination, individual liberty and the consent of the people to demand a government to protect those freedoms, he said.

"The Declaration [of Arbroath] has been called the first and seminal national Declaration of Independence, on which all subsequent such declarations and assertions have been based, directly or indirectly. Scotland's great gift that keeps on giving," said the London-born Scotsman now living in Texas.

He added, in his trademark sense of humor, "On behalf of Scotland, let me say, You're welcome, America!"

Arbroath was an appeal by Scottish noblemen to Pope John XXII, urging him to recognize Scottish independence and order the English to stop invading



Scotland. The Pope was so impressed by the arguments that he called on England's King Edward II to make peace with Scotland, then led by King of Scots Robert the Bruce.

The most famous line from the declaration is: "It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honors that we are fighting, but for freedom alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself."

Andrew cited that phrase as the source of Patrick Henry's famous declaration in 1775: "Give me liberty, or give me death." He also pointed out that Henry's father was an immigrant from Scotland.

"These ideas of self-determination and individual liberty have long been ingrained in Scottish thinking and are both prominent in [Robert] Burns's great song, *Scots Wha Hae*, which was the inspiration for the Alamo defenders in 1836," said Andrew, a San Antonio resident who annually celebrates the Scottish heritage of the fighters for Texas independence.

Andrew cited one of his "favorite statistics": About three-quarters of American presidents had Scottish roots, including Donald Trump, whose mother was a Gaelic-speaking MacLeod from the Isle of Lewis, and Barack Obama, whose mother according to some genealogical research descended from Scotland's 12th century King William the Lion.

"Scots continue to show leadership in many ways. They contribute to the life and health of this country – physical, economic, intellectual, spiritual, and, yes, political," he told the dinner guests.

"To you in this room, thank you all for what you do, for your leadership you show and for the many contributions you have made and continue to make.

"And here's to the next 250 years of the same!"



A Scotsman from the British Food Shop on delivery in Times Square. <https://www.britishfoodshop.com/>

Check it out: Here are some links to websites you might like.

British and Irish food: Ackroyds Bakery ackroydsbakery.com; British Food Shop britishfoodshop.com;

The British Shoppe thebritishshoppe.com; BritSuper Store britsuperstore.com/uk

Parker's parkersbi.com

Celtic lifestyle: Celtic Life International celticlifeintl.com

Scottish clothing and accessories: Art Pewter artpewter.co.uk

Scottish music: radio stations in Scotland radio-uk.co.uk/radio/scotland

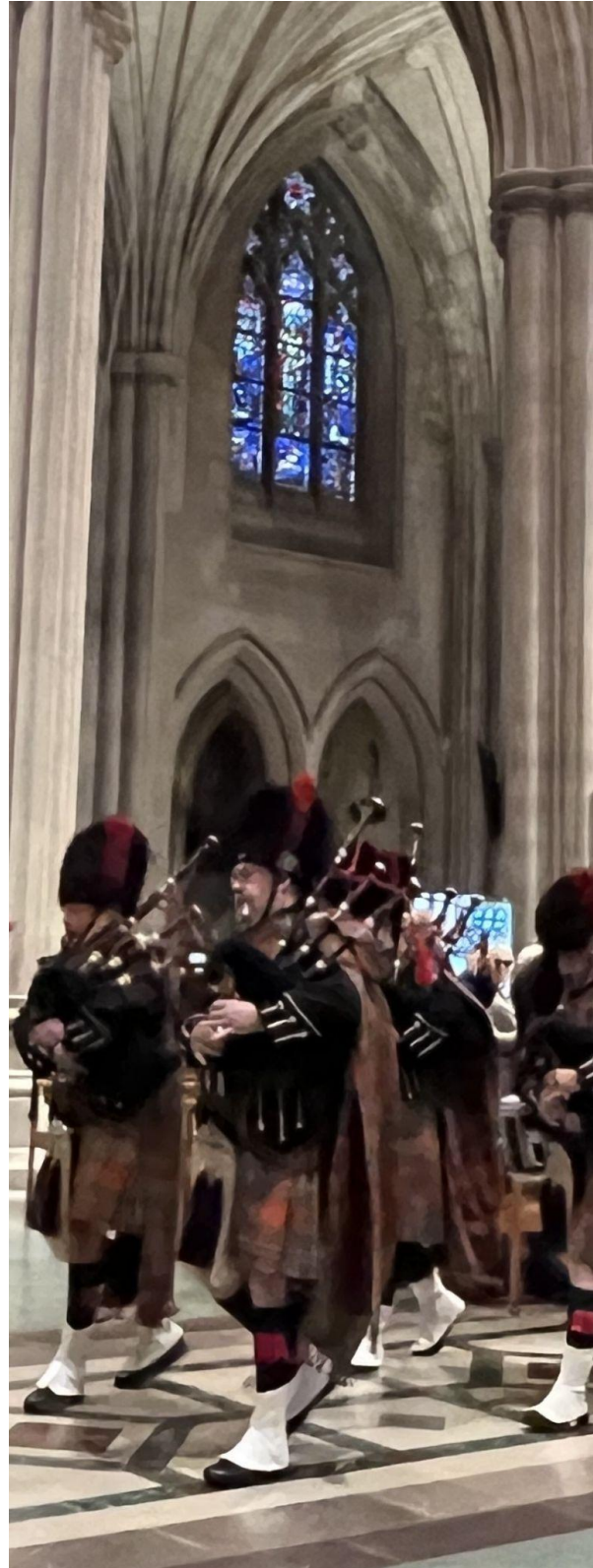
Scottish news: The Scottish Banner scottishbanner.com



Out and about

James R. Morrison of Rogers, AR, with a Harris hawk at Sky Falconry, about 50 minutes outside San Diego, where he and his son, James, visited in May.

Tom Morrison, right, with the Washington Scottish Pipe Band marching past the soaring arches of the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, at the annual Kirkin' of the Tartan. The ceremony is sponsored by the St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC.





Morrison's in Savannah

The Clan Morrison tent on the far right among a row of clan tents under the Spanish moss of a live oak tree at the Savannah, GA, games in May. Here is a website to other Scottish games and festivals throughout the United States and Canada. <https://shorturl.at/4KWoz>



Dressed to Kilt: Jeff Perry, a Gilmore, modeling the great kilt in the weathered Morrison green at the Dressed to Kilt fashion show in New York City for Tartan Day.

Membership Report

Annual USA	72
Annual Foreign	6
Life USA	351
Life Foreign	13
Total Membership	442

New Members

Emma Catherine Allmond	Washington, DC
Bart Forbes	Surfside Beach, TX Life Upgrade
James C. Gilmore	Dunsmuir, CA
Tiffany Bethal Killian	Metairie, LA
Judith Cleaves Morrison	Woodbine, MD Life Member
Timothy Evan Morrison	Waterford, CT

Deceased Members

Allen Kent Bridges	Pasadena, CA Life Member (2008)
William Jackson Cavender	Eton, GA Life Member (2019)
Elsie Claypole	Thunder Bay, Canada Life Member (2024)
Roger J. Dale	Cumberland, MD Life Member (2016)
Mrs. Claire Morison Dixon	Warner Robins, GA Life Member (2013)
Charles S. Faulkner, II	Hanover, NH Life Member (2025)
H. Lois Fitzpatrick	Confluence, PA Life Member (2016)
Herman Lee Gilmore	Pulaski, TN Life Member (2009)
Robert Bruce Gilmour	Lakewood, CO Life Member (2014)
Annette Sadie Harris	Norfolk, VA Life Member (2017)
Clinton Ray Miller	Cedar City, UT Life Member (2013)
Angus Hugh Morrison	Fremont, CA Life Member (2023)
Dick Ferrier Morrison	St. Paul, MN Life Member (2015)
Douglas Philip Morrison	Plainville, CT Life Member (2016)
George M. Morrison	Wichita, KS Life Member (2024)
H. Robert Morrison	Falls Church, VA Life Member (2009)
James Ray Morrison	Gibson Island, MD Life Member (2024)
Mack Wilborn Morrison	Midland, NC Life Member (2008)
Mark Warren Morrison	Goldsboro, NC Life Member (2021)
Murdo Morrison	Wishaw, Scotland Life Member (2025)
Ralph Morrison	Billerica, MA Life Member (2008)
Ronald Lee Morrison	Lebanon, PA 2026
Collin Alonzo Myers	Munroe Falls, OH Life Member (2025)

The Following Members Generously Donated to the Society

Leslie M. Morey	Mt. Juliet, TN
Gary W. Morrison	Sugar Land, TX
Brenda Lee Robinette	Chuckey, TN



CMSNA Executive Leadership

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

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Michael S. Morrison

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Vacant

Treasurer:

(Michael S. Morrison, acting)

Membership:

William Broome

Secretary:

Rachel Morrison

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Edmund Potter, PhD

Chaplain:

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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: William Broome, Arthur Morrison, Buddy Morrison

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



The Clan Morrison Society of North America needs volunteers to help run the organization.

Presently, we need a Vice-Chairman, treasurer, Chaplain, members-at-large, and games day tent conveners

If interested, please contact our Chairman, Michael Morrison, or visit our website and express your interest @
<https://clanmorrison.net/volunteer>