

# HEATHER BELL

NEWSLETTER OF THE CALEDONIAN & ST. ANDREWS SOCIETY OF SEATTLE

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[www.caledonians.com](http://www.caledonians.com)

May 2010

## ENTERTAINMENT

Our entertainment this month will be the Northwest Junior Pipe Band. The band is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year, and are raising money for their 2011 trip to Scotland to compete in the Worlds. The Northwest Junior Pipe Band is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides an alternative music experience for kids up to age 18. The band is based in the city of Shoreline and is open to any young person in the Puget Sound region interested in Scottish piping or drumming. The NWJPB is a competition and performance-oriented pipe band, traveling each summer to Scottish Highland Games, competing against other bands and playing for the thousands of people who attend these events. In August, 2008, the Northwest Junior Pipe Band was the first youth pipe band from Washington State to travel to Scotland since 1969. The band wears traditional, civilian-style Scottish uniforms with MacKenzie tartan kilts - a very impressive sight. And, our own Paul Vegors is a member!

The NWJPB was founded by Charlie McNeill, a Scottish emigrant with a deep love for the bagpipes and for teaching kids. Starting a youth pipe band was a lifelong dream for Charlie and before he passed away he saw that dream realized. The Northwest Junior Pipe Band completed a very successful 1999 year, competing at several area highland games. The band wears the MacKenzie tartan. By chance, this happens

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## NEXT GATHERING

**MAY 14<sup>TH</sup>**

**SET-UP - 6:30 PM,  
MEETING - 7:30 PM,  
ENTERTAINMENT - 8:00 PM  
TEA - 8:45 PM**

## A Letter from our President Bill McFadden

The May Gathering will include a vote for one half of the Society's Board positions. Please refer to other articles in this Heather Bell for information on the Nominating Committee's selection of candidates. Prior to the vote, nominations will also be called for from the floor (those attending). If you, or if you know of someone who, would be interested and willing to serve on the Board, please offer their name for the election. The Nominating Committee will put together a ballot and we will vote for the new board members that evening. New board members will be installed at the June Gathering. I wish to thank Don Moore, Allan Patten, and Diana Smith for their hard work on the Board and especially their work to put this slate together. It is not always easy to find people willing to serve.

I understand that \$30 tickets (dinner not included) are still available at the door for the Northwest Junior Pipe Band's Ceilidh and concert on Saturday evening, May 8th. We Caledonians need to support this fine young group. This is a fundraiser toward their 2011 return to Scotland and the World Pipe Band Championships. For information, contact Kathy Bowie at 206-547-1112 or Annette and Jim Mentzer at 206-789-6104.

Summer is fast approaching and that means the Highland Games in our area are about to begin. My own first Games of the season are in Victoria, B.C. at the end of this month. Clan MacLaren will hold its AGM at these Games.

We Caledonians will host a society tent at the Pacific Northwest Highland Games at Enumclaw just as we have in years past. We will need people to help at the tent for about a two-hour shift. Sharon Ritelis and her Pacific Northwest Highland Games group do a great job—the phrase that comes to my mind is “The Biggest and Best in the Pacific Northwest”. Actually, they are about the best in the whole USA, I think. I've been to quite a few other Games around the country and ours stacks right up there with the best.

*continued on page 2*

## A Letter from the Editor Diana Smith

We certainly had a great time at our last gathering. The NW Scottish Fiddlers were wonderful – all those fiddles playing together were exciting and Calum MacKinnon is such a grand leader for this group. I sure hope we can get them back again some time. If you missed them, or want to see them again, they will be at the Skagit Highland Games, July 10-11 at Mt. Vernon. They will also be playing at Folklife at the Seattle Center at 4:00 on Monday, May 31, in the Center House Theatre.

This month we are pleased to present the Northwest Junior Pipe Band, playing pipes and drums, under the leadership of Kevin Auld. The band will have recently hosted their annual benefit ceilidh to raise money to go to Scotland in 2011 to compete in the World championships. It will be fun having them back as they have not entertained for us for awhile.

We have a lot of summer events coming up in which I hope you will join us. We will be at the Enumclaw Games (and will need help in the booth), and our annual picnic in August (details will be finalized before next month). Plus there are a number of games where we don't have a booth, but several of our members will be there with their clan booths and I'm sure they would appreciate members stopping by to give them a break. They will have Caledonian information and applications with them, and will probably get questions about our society. Bill McFadden, Don Moore, and Allan Patten will definitely be at most of the other games.

As editor of the Heatherbell, I am always open for suggestions for articles. If you have something of interest, please send it. I'll try to get it in, depending on space. I've been writing this for a couple of years now and am always pleased to get comments from the members on how I can improve the newsletter.



PRESIDENT from page 1

Susan Walker, Don Moore, Allan Patten, and I are conveners for our own Clans and many other Caledonians help out at the Games also. I'm sure you will find Harry and Diane McAlister, Gary Cosgro and Frances Crews, Chuck Cook, Walter and Margaret Russell, Jim and Annette Mentzer, Diana Smith, Tom Laursen, Denise Chitwood, Carol Garman, Mike Nelson, and many other Caledonians at our Society tent, or manning a Clan tent, or helping Sharon Ritelis (also a Caledonian) at the Games. If you are not involved and would like to be, contact any one of us and we'll get you connected to the right group.

See you at the Gathering!

Yours, aye, Bill

ENTERTAINMENT from page 1

to be the same tartan as the Highland Light Infantry where Charlie spent time as a military piper, and also the Seattle Pipe Band of which Charlie was the Pipe Major many years ago. The band's instructors are: Kevin Auld - Band Director and Piping Instruction and Marcie MacRae - Tenor and Bass Drum.

The NWJPB band won 1st place at 7 events in a row last year and finished the season ranked 2nd of all the Grade 4 bands in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia. NWJPB is the Washington State Grade 4 Pipe Band Champion for the second year in a row and challenged up to a higher competition grade level for the first time in their history, placing 2nd of 5 in Grade 3 at the Skagit Valley Highland Games, and 4th of 5 in Grade 3 at the Portland Highland Games. Volunteers are now planning their 2011 trip to the World Pipe Band Championships in Scotland. [www.nwjpb.org/](http://www.nwjpb.org/)



# UPCOMING EVENTS

May 14 - Caledonian-St. Andrew's gathering; 7:30; Lake City Presbyterian Church, 3841 NE 123rd St, Seattle, WA, 98125.

May 15 – Eugene Scottish Festival, Peace Presbyterian Church, 3060 River Rd., Eugene, OR, [www.eugenescottishfestival.com](http://www.eugenescottishfestival.com)

May 22 – Comox Valley Highland Games, Lewis Park, Courtenay, B.C.

May 22-23 – Victoria Highland Games, Topaz Park, Victoria, B.C. featuring the World Heavy Events Championship; [www.victoriahighlandgames.com](http://www.victoriahighlandgames.com)

May 23 – Great Kilted Run, Magnuson Park; [http://promotionevents.com/GreatKilted/GKR\\_Intro.htm](http://promotionevents.com/GreatKilted/GKR_Intro.htm)

May 26 – Jamie Laval, 7:30 pm, Traditions Café and World Folk Art, 300 5th Ave SW, Olympia, WA; 360-705-2819; [www.traditionsfairtrade.com](http://www.traditionsfairtrade.com); [www.jamielaval.com](http://www.jamielaval.com)

May 28-31 – NW Folklife at Seattle Center; <http://www.nwfolklife.org/>

May 29 – Clumsy Lover at Tractor Tavern, 9:30 pm; (this is a folk rock/bluegrass/Celtic jam band from B.C.); [www.tractortavern.com](http://www.tractortavern.com); [www.clumsylovers.com](http://www.clumsylovers.com)

June 4 – Jamie Laval, 7:30 pm, Field House, 1400 Roosevelt Ave. E., Enumclaw; [www.plateauartsalive.org](http://www.plateauartsalive.org); [www.jamielaval.com](http://www.jamielaval.com)

June 5 - Jamie Laval, Thumbnail Theater, 1211 4th St., Snohomish, WA; 360-568-9412; [www.thumbnailtheater.com](http://www.thumbnailtheater.com); [www.jamielaval.com](http://www.jamielaval.com)

June 5-6 – Bellingham Highland Games, Hovander Park, Ferndale, WA, [www.bhga.org](http://www.bhga.org)

June 11 - Caledonian-St. Andrew's gathering; 7:30; Lake City Presbyterian Church.

June 12 – Sons of Scotland Highland Games, Delta Sr. Secondary, Delta, B.C.

June 19 – Prosser Scottish Fest, [www.prosserchamber.org](http://www.prosserchamber.org)

June 19 – BC Legion Highland Games, Douglas Park, Langley, B.C., [www.highlandgathering.ca](http://www.highlandgathering.ca)

June 26 – Tacoma Highland Games, Graham, WA, [www.tacomagames.org](http://www.tacomagames.org)

June 26 – BC Highland Games, Percy Perry Stadium, Coquitlam, B.C.

July 9 – Tannahill Weavers, free concert, Edgewater Park, Mt. Vernon, WA

July 10-11 – Skagit Valley Highland Games, Edgewater Park, Mt. Vernon, WA

July 10-11 – Athena Caledonian Games, Athena, OR, [www.athenacaledoniangames.org](http://www.athenacaledoniangames.org)

July 17 – Natalie MacMaster, Chateau St. Michelle Amphitheatre, Redmond, WA; [www.ste-michelle.com](http://www.ste-michelle.com); [www.nataliemacmaster.com](http://www.nataliemacmaster.com)

July 17-18 – Portland Highland Games, Mt. Hood Community College, Gresham, OR, [www.phga.com](http://www.phga.com)

July 31- Aug. 1 – Pacific NW Highland Games, (SSHGA), Enumclaw Expo Center, Enumclaw, WA

Aug. 7 – Spokane Highland Games, Spokane Country Fairgrounds, Spokane, WA, [www.spokanehighlandgames.org](http://www.spokanehighlandgames.org)

Aug. 14 – Whidbey Island Highland Games, Greenbank, WA, [www.wihg.org/](http://www.wihg.org/)

Aug. 14 – Douglas County (Oregon) Scottish Highland Games, Winston, OR

Aug. 14 – World Pipe Band Championships, Glasgow Green, Scotland

Aug. 28 - Eastern Oregon Celtic Festival and Highland Games, Baker, OR; [www.bakerhighlanders.com](http://www.bakerhighlanders.com)

Aug. 28 – Cowal Championships, Cowal, Scotland

Sept. 11-12 – Kelso Highland Games, Tam O' Shanter Park, Kelso, WA, <http://highlander.kelso.gov/>

Sept. 25 – Treasure Valley Celtic Festival and Highland Games, Boise, ID, [www.idahoscots.org](http://www.idahoscots.org)

Oct. 16 – 19th annual Celtic Fling, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Seattle; [www.saintandrewsseattle.org](http://www.saintandrewsseattle.org)

Oct. 17 – Church Service and the Kirkin' of the Tartan, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Seattle; [www.saintandrewsseattle.org](http://www.saintandrewsseattle.org)

Nov. 6 – 47th annual Heather Tartan Ball and silent auction; Northgate Community Center, Seattle, WA; [www.sshga.org](http://www.sshga.org)

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Caledonian and St. Andrew's Society's bylaws specify that one half of the Society's officers be elected to two year terms each year at the May Gathering. This year's open offices and proposed candidates are:

President – Don Moore  
Second Vice-President – Victoria Johnson  
Secretary – Susan Walker  
Social Director – Bill McFadden  
Trustee – Allen Patten

This slate is only a starting point to ensure that each office can be filled. Further nominations will be solicited, even encouraged, from the members present.

Be sure to be present at the business meeting portion of the next Gathering. Express your preference for the Society's leadership. Offer yourself as a candidate for one of these open positions.

# SCOTTISH NEWS

**THE ILLUSIONIST** – A new animated movie will be the big draw for the Edinburgh International Film Festival. It was a labor of love for more than four years for the Oscar-nominated animator who chose Scotland's capital to inspire his new film. Now Sylvain Chomet, the Frenchman who has masterminded Scotland's biggest movie production ever, is set to see it take pride of place as the opener of Edinburgh's annual film festival in June. **THE ILLUSIONIST** – mostly set in 1950s Scotland – will become the first film to get the red-carpet treatment at the event's flagship new venue for galas, the Festival Theatre. **THE ILLUSIONIST** is about an old-fashioned music hall entertainer struggling to survive in the fading days of vaudeville, who quits Paris, first for London and then for Edinburgh. Chomet adapted an unproduced screenplay by the late Gallic comic writer Jacques Tati, but moved most of the story from Prague to Scotland. It sees the likes of Arthur's Seat, Jenners, and Waverley Station beautifully animated in old-style 2D, as well as the islands of Mull and Iona. Chomet said he was particularly excited to be staging the premiere at the Festival Theatre. "It's the old Empire Palace Theatre, where the great illusionist, Lafayette, famously died when it went on fire while he was on stage (in 1911)," said Chomet. "He was one of the greatest entertainers of his day, along with Houdini, so it's brilliant that the film will be opening the festival there."

**Steppe forward: the Ukrainian buying up Edinburgh's Charlotte Square** - A little-known Ukrainian property tycoon is the mystery figure behind a string of big-money purchases in the capital's Charlotte Square. It has emerged that Yury Lopatinsky, a leading figure in Moscow's financial scene since the mid-1990s, is the key player behind three deals, including the purchase of the National Trust for Scotland's flagship headquarters. His investment fund has snapped up two other major chunks of Charlotte Square, which is also home of Bute House, official residence of First Minister Alex Salmond.

**Tom Fleming dies, aged 82** - The man who was the voice of the Edinburgh Tattoo and whose resonant Scottish accent was heard by millions across the world, has died.

Broadcaster and actor Tom Fleming entertained and informed millions and provided the commentary for consecutive Tattoos from 1966 until 2009. His distinctive voice described major royal and state occasions, including the Queen's coronation, Diana's funeral and the opening of the Scottish Parliament. First Minister Alex Salmond said Fleming was "a great Scot who will be much missed". As well as his acting, Fleming was acclaimed for his work as a director and poet. His services to the arts in Scotland were rewarded with an OBE in 1980, and he became a

doctor of Heriot-Watt University in 1984 and a fellow of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in 1986. Born in Edinburgh in 1927, Fleming, the actor, played the lead in the first full-length televised drama production from Scotland, *The Black Eye*, in 1952. The following year, he co-founded Edinburgh's Gateway Theatre and joined the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1962. Three years later, he became director of the new Royal Lyceum Theatre and was director of the Scottish Theatre Company between 1982 and 1987. In a distinguished career, Fleming commented not only on the 1953 coronation, but also the Queen's silver jubilee, two royal weddings and ten funerals, and the enthronement of two popes.

**Tay Bridge disaster to get permanent memorial** - After 130 years victims of the Tay Bridge disaster will get a permanent memorial. It was one of the worst civilian catastrophes of Victorian times, but, until now, the Tay Bridge disaster has only been commemorated in the verse of William Topaz McGonagall – the "poet and tragedian" often ridiculed as the world's worst wordsmith. Now a permanent memorial is to be built to the 75 men, women and children who died when the storm-lashed rail bridge over the Tay collapsed in December 1879. A memorial fund group chaired by Fife aristocrat Stuart Morris, the son of the Laird of Balgonie, whose great-great-great grandmother died in the tragedy, has been established to raise money for the project. The Tay Bridge was the world's longest rail bridge when its central spans collapsed as a train, with six carriages and carrying 75 passengers and crew, neared Dundee from the south. The two-mile bridge collapsed less than two years after it opened. The disaster shocked Victorian Britain and ruined the reputation of the bridge's designer, Sir Thomas Bouch, who was knighted shortly before the disaster. He died a broken man. The replacement bridge, still in use today, was completed in 1885. Over the years various theories have been put forward to explain why the bridge collapsed. But perhaps McGonagall put it best in the final verse of his poem:

"Oh! ill-fated Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay,  
"I must now conclude my lay  
"By telling the world fearlessly without the least dismay,  
"That your central girders would not have given way,  
"At least many sensible men do say,  
"Had they been supported on each side with buttresses,  
"At least many sensible men confesses,  
"For the stronger we our houses do build,  
"The less chance we have of being killed."

**Sir James Black passes away aged 85** - Sir James Black, the Nobel laureate and an alumnus of the University of St Andrews, has died at the age of 85 after a long illness. Sir James is credited with the invention of beta-blockers, a milestone in pharmacology which has saved and transformed the lives of millions. Born in Lanarkshire and educated at Beath High School in

Cowdenbeath, he won a scholarship to study Medicine at St Andrews, graduating from the University in 1946. Sir James's discovery of the drugs propranolol and pronethalol – which work by blocking the body's own response to stress hormones – in the early 1960s, revolutionized the way doctors helped heart patients. Although he is best known for his work on drugs which regulate the heart, Sir James also made significant discoveries in the development of drugs to treat heartburn and ulcers. He was awarded a Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1988 for his work on drug development. Sir James was knighted in 1981 and in 2000 was appointed to the order of Merit. He was awarded an Honorary Degree by St Andrews in 1985.

**14% of Scots don't know what haggis is** - Almost one in five Scots don't know what a haggis is, and a staggering 20 per cent of Britons believe it is a living, hill-top-dwelling animal, a recent survey showed. Another 15% think it is a Scottish musical instrument while 4% believe haggis is a character from Harry Potter. Of the 1,623 people interviewed, nearly 800 were Scottish and 14% of them did not know what haggis is.

**Gaelic language in Scotland** – The Gaelic language in schools may be tripled under plans to boost the native tongue. The number of dedicated Gaelic schools in Scotland could treble from two to six within two years under plans to increase the number of people speaking the language. This plan is in response to the Scottish Government's calls for radical steps to create a new generation of Gaelic speakers. Among the plans are the recruitment of 50 home visitors to encourage parents to enroll children in Gaelic classes and starting a series of summer language schools for teenagers. Campaigners aim to have Gaelic used “in our schools, shops and streets” by 2020. Scotland's largest local authority has promised to end the stigma that causes Gaelic speakers to “feel self-conscious” about using the language. Glasgow City Council yesterday vowed to reverse “centuries of neglect and disparagement”, with the aim that within a decade the language will be heard “in our streets and in our shops”.

**UK's oldest breeding osprey returns to Dunkeld and has 56th egg in 20 years** - The grand old lady of Scotland's ospreys has astounded wildlife experts by returning to her summer home at a wildlife reserve in Perthshire and producing an egg for a record-breaking 20th consecutive year. The osprey is now 25 – over three times the normal lifespan for the bird, and well beyond the 14 years after which they are normally unable to produce chicks. But any doubts about her fertility vanished yesterday after the bird was spotted protectively hunched over an egg at the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Loch of the Lowes reserve near Dunkeld. It was also revealed yesterday that, after years of mating with a male seven years her junior, she has taken up with a “toy boy” lover who is only ten years old. The female, who is the UK's oldest known breed-

ing osprey, returned to Scotland on 23 March after completing a 3,000-mile migration from West Africa. This is the 56th egg she has produced, and so far 46 chicks have successfully fledged the nest over previous breeding seasons. The osprey faced persecution in the early 20th century and was very nearly driven to extinction by 1916.

**Expats fund bid to save the Scottish wildcat** - A massive conservation project backed by American dollars is to be launched this summer in a bold attempt to bring the Scottish wildcat back from the brink of extinction. Wildlife experts, scientists and volunteers are working on a £750,000 plan that they hope will save the unique creatures that have been mythologised in Highland folklore. Almost hunted to extinction, there are now thought to be fewer than 400 Scottish wildcats left – an alarming statistic that has prompted a rescue bid that will be the UK's largest ever conservation project. Ex-pat Scots living in the United States, who appreciate the wildcats' ancient links with their clans, have contributed tens of thousands of pounds to the project, which could run for ten years.

## SUNSHINE REPORT

Bonnie Munro sent three cards this month – a birthday card to Phil Howard for his 90th birthday, a card of condolence to Tom Laurenson on the death of his father in Scotland, and a card to David Blakemore, who was hospitalized briefly for low blood pressure. Please let Bonnie know of anyone who is ill or in hospital, etc., so she can send a card.

## TEA

Traditionally May is the month for the men to provide tea, in honor of Mother's Day. This month we have Jim Van Zee and Porter (Allan) Patten, and Diana Smith, but if any other men would like to chip in a few treats, I'm sure they'd be more than welcome.

## HIGHLAND GAMES AT ENUMCLAW

The Caledonians plan to have our booth there again this year. We are asking for volunteers for 2 hour time periods on both Saturday and Sunday, July 31 and Aug. 1. We will also need people to walk in with the banner at noon on both days for the opening ceremonies. Susan Walker has kindly agreed to take charge of the booth, so if you can help out, please contact her (425-387-2011; 425-374-2611; susanw12@hotmail.com). This is always a lot of fun, meeting new potential members and talking about our society.

**The Northwest Junior Pipeband  
will be entertaining us at our  
May Gathering.**



**THE 39TH ANNUAL  
NORTHWEST  
FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL**

Seattle Center, May 28, 29, 30, 31. There is always a lot of good Celtic music – just glancing through the schedule I see Brandon Vance, Calum MacKinnon, the MacKassons, the RSCDS (Royal Scottish Country Dance Society), and Slighe nan Gaidheal, amongst others. And our own Don Scobie and Paul Vegors will be piping. [www.nwfolklife.org/](http://www.nwfolklife.org/)

**GREAT KILTED RUN**

The Great Kilted Run will take place on Sunday, May 21, at Magnuson Park. This is a 5K walk/run (kilts are recommended but not required). Our own Laird Philip Junkins will be participating. There is a beer garden for spectators (and participants, too). See: [promotionevents.com/GreatKilted/GKR\\_Intro.htm](http://promotionevents.com/GreatKilted/GKR_Intro.htm). If you don't have a kilt, you can rent one for \$5.00.

**BOOK REPORT:  
HOW THE SCOTS  
MADE AMERICA**

by Harry McAlister

I just finished reading this book (230 pages) by Scottish author Michael Fry. The title may seem a little presumptuous (e pluribus unum and all that) but he has a point.

The book somewhat follows in the trail of Duncan Bruce's 'The Mark of the Scot' and 'The Scottish Invention of America, Democracy and Human Rights' by Alexander Klieforth and Robert Munro. There are probably others on the subject which I don't know or don't recall.

I found the book to bog down a little at one point but it was relatively minor. Overall it is a very worthwhile read; interesting and educational! I believe the Scots have made a huge contribution to the World and that certainly includes America, even before it was a United States. This topic should be of interest to Scots and Scottish Americans alike. I recommend its reading.

Despite the Union of the Crowns with a much larger England, in 1603, and the Parliaments in 1707, the author points out that Scotland is still largely recognized in the World as a country, when other small nations have disappeared. I, as a 77 year old Scot, who has spent most of his life in America, have wondered myself why 'Scottishness' still exists to the degree it does. The author closes by saying "In the lessons from that resilience the small, old country may still have something of mutual benefit to offer to the big, new country." I agree - and I think we should all reflect on and look into those possibilities.

On a practical point, Amazon has the book at a very low price at this time (and I know for sure that will be of great interest to Scots and Scottish Americans). When you enter the book's name it will initially come up showing it to be available for about \$7. But it also shows 'Other Editions: Hardcover.' Click on that and there are hardcover copies at less than \$2.00. Don't ask me why. Then the dreaded 'Shipping & Handling' is \$3.99. I still think you will get a good book for about \$7.

I would be interested in your comments on the book.

**HUMOR**

An Irishman and a Scotsman met in a pub one evening and got chatting. "You know that playing the bagpipes is like being a blindfolded javelin thrower?" said the Scotsman. "What do you mean?" asked the Irishman. "Well, you don't have to be that good to get people's attention!"

# CLAN MACTHOMAS

## Back On The Map In Scotland, Branches In US And Canada

Fifty years ago, few people in Scotland and even fewer around the world would have heard of the Clan MacThomas. This was not surprising as the Clan had no Chief and little connection with its ancient clan lands. Today, the situation is quite different. Since 1967, the Clan has a recognized official Chief, the 19th MacThomas of Finegand, and you can not be in Glenshee in eastern Perthshire without being aware of the Clan's connection with that part of Scotland.

So who are the MacThomases and what happened to them? The Clan takes its name from Thomas, a Gaelic speaking highlander, known as Tomaidh Mor (Great Tommy), who was a descendant of the Clan Chattan Mackintoshes. Thomas lived in the 15th century at a time when the Clan Chattan confederation had become large and unmanageable and so he took his kinsmen and followers across the Grampians Mountains from Badenoch to Glenshee. There they settled and flourished on the lush grasslands beside Shee Water becoming known in time by the following variety of names: Combie, MacOmie, McColm MacOmish, McComas Tam, McComb(e), Thom, McCombie, Thoms, McComie, Thomas, McComish, Thomson

To the Government in Edinburgh, they were known as MacThomas, and this remains the official name of the Clan to this day, notwithstanding the fact that most unusually in Scotland few of its members have ever actually been named MacThomas. The early Chiefs of the Clan MacThomas were seated at the Thom near the Spittal of Glenshee but in 1600, when the 4th Chief, Robert McComie of the Thom was murdered, the Chiefship passed to his brother, John McComie of Finegand, about three miles down the glen and Finegand remains the seat of the chiefs to this day. The 7th Chief was John McComie of Finegand (Iain Mor) and his deeds passed into the folklore of Perthshire & Angus, where he is generally known as 'McComie Mor'. The legends surrounding this Highland hero abound: he puts to flight some tax collectors in defense of a poor widow single handed; he kills the Earl of Atholl's champion swordsman; he slays the man who insulted his wife; he fights his son in disguise to test his courage; he overcomes a ferocious bull with his bare hands; and he is even familiar with the supernatural. Today, the Clan MacThomas Gathering Ground "The Cockstane" in Glenshee stands as an everlasting memorial to McComie Mor. In 1644, Iain Mor fought for the King's cause in the British Civil War but after the defeat at Philiphaugh, he withdrew from the struggle and devoted his energies to cattle raising during which time he extended the clan lands when he purchased the Barony of Forter in Glenisla. The Government of Cromwell won Iain Mor's admi-

ration for the prosperity it brought Scotland but this soured his relationship with the Royalists and on the restoration of Charles II in 1660, he found himself in trouble with Parliament. A fine, feud and a crippling law suit that followed ruined the MacThomases, and following Iain Mor's death, his sons were forced to sell their lands.

The Clan MacThomas started to drift apart with some going south to Tayside. The 10th Chief, Angus, who took the surname Thomas and later Thoms, settled in Northern Fife where his family thrived as successful farmers until they moved to Dundee and became prosperous merchants purchasing, at the end of the 18th century, the estate of Aberlemno near Forfar. Others moved north into Aberdeenshire, where the principal MacThomas family were the McCombies of Easterskene, who were descendants of the youngest of Iain Mor's sons, and it is one of their party, William McCombie of Tillyfour, MP for South Aberdeenshire at the end of the last century, who is to-day regarded as the father of the world famous Aberdeen-Angus breed of cattle. Patrick Hunter Thoms of Aberlemno, 15th Chief, was Provost of Dundee from 1847 to 1853, while his heir, George Hunter MacThomas Thoms, became Sheriff of Caithness, Orkney and Shetland in 1870, donating during his lifetime large sums to St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh and, upon his death, in 1903, his vast fortune (the equivalent of £4.3 million today) to St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, together with the family estate. Having lost Aberlemno, the chiefly family assumed the surname MacThomas and in 1967, the latter's great-nephew was once again officially recognized by the Lyon Court by the historic designation 'The MacThomas of Finegand'. In 1941, Patrick MacThomas of Finegand, 18th Chief, married Elizabeth Clayhills-Henderson of Invergowrie, a 3rd cousin of Her Majesty the Queen and it was during his lifetime in 1954 that the Clan MacThomas Society was founded. He died in 1970, being succeeded by his only son, Andrew, the present Chief.

Today, the Clan once again owns its legendary Gathering Place, has a bridge over Glen Shee named after it, has active branches around the world and every three years descendants of the Clan MacThomas gather to recall, with pride, the role played in the history of Scotland by the children of 'Great Tommy'. Also, the present Chief has been guest of honor at various Scottish events overseas in Australia (1982) Canada, South Africa and the USA between 1975 and 1995.

## TRIVIA

The cat with the world record for catching mice, Towser, caught 28,899 mice from 1963-1987, while working for the Glenturret Distillery in Scotland.



A fellowship founded in  
Seattle in 1902 to foster  
a love of Scotland, her  
people and her heritage.

**Mailing Address:**

P.O. Box 27278  
Seattle WA 98165-1778

**Dancing:**

Mondays, 7 p.m. at The  
Phinney Ridge Community  
Center. For information  
contact [fraser509@gmail](mailto:fraser509@gmail)

**Gatherings:**

When - Second Friday of each month except  
July, August and September.

Where - Lake City Presbyterian Church  
3841 N.E. 123<sup>rd</sup> St. Seattle WA.

Directions - From Lake City Way proceed east on 123<sup>rd</sup>  
to 40<sup>th</sup>. Park in the Church parking lot.

Time - Set-up at 6.30 p.m.  
Social Hour at 7:00 p.m.  
Business meeting at 7:30 p.m.  
Entertainment and raffle at 8:00 p.m.

Visit us on the Web: [www.caledonians.com](http://www.caledonians.com)

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**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

Dates of upcoming Caledonian gatherings for 2010:

June 11                      October 8  
November 12              December 10

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