Genealogy: When it's time to throw in the towel and hire a professional researcher
by Marcey Hunter

Like me, many of you have spent years on researching your family’s roots. It is exhausting yet thrilling, productive yet frustrating, addictive yet absurdly time consuming. Many of us enjoy solving mysteries, sleuthing around in graveyards or vital statistic repositories. "Digging up bones" as it has been called is a wonderful and meaningful way of connecting with our ancestors, Scottish and otherwise. How did they live? Whom did they marry? What challenges did they face?

In a perfect world, it would be as easy as opening an old bible or joining Ancestry.com. And if you’re lucky enough to be researching ancestors who lived in the local area, hands-on research is a little easier. But since so many of us ended up in Hampton Roads because of the Navy or some other reason, easy access to court documents, etc., becomes more of a challenge.

But sooner or later, we hit the proverbial brick wall, and it then becomes a personal conflict as to whether we persevere on our own, hoping for a miracle, or throw in the towel and hire a professional.

I am at such an impasse myself. I can and have done much research online and at the library, but without having my boots on the ground in some of the key geographic areas where my ancestors lived (Nova Scotia, Scotland, Ireland) there is only so much I can do.

For many of us the challenge is not only geographic. There may be personal reasons why we prefer to have the information here and now – a special gift for someone, the passing of time and the realization that none of us is getting any younger.

So I started looking in to professional genealogy research options, and thought I’d share them with you. (By the way - I haven’t taken the plunge yet, but I just might!)

First, some questions to ask yourself:

♦ Do I have time to devote to this research?
♦ Am I limited in my research resources because I don’t own or don’t know how to use a computer?
♦ Are the bulk of my ancestors written records (land grants, deeds, wills, etc.) physically located where I cannot access them easily and economically?
♦ Do I need help writing, editing or publishing my genealogy research?
♦ Do I want on-site photographs and/or oral histories of distant relatives?
♦ Do I want to join a lineage society such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and need help getting concrete and well-sourced information?
♦ Am I trying to track down living family members?
♦ Am I dealing with adoption/birth parent issues that are more challenging?
♦ Am I researching an ethnic group where records are more scarce (Native Americans, for example)?
♦ Have I hit a brick wall that I think is insurmountable?

So, interested in hiring a professional? Some basics...

What Can I Expect?

There are no guarantees. Consider the fact that we all have 16 great-grandparents, and they all have families whose branches go every which way. Therefore, it would not be easy to predict how
The Scottish Society of Tidewater exists to promote the preservation and study of Scottish culture, including music, language, art, history, folklore, dance, literature, athletics, and all other things distinctively Scottish among interested persons in the Hampton Roads, Virginia area and to cooperate with like-minded persons, groups and organizations here and abroad.

A meeting is held on the first Wednesday of each month at the Church of Ascension Community Center, 4853 Princess Anne Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23462-4446. Social time begins at 7:00pm, and the meeting starts at 7:30pm. Anyone interested in Scottish culture and history is invited to attend.

P.O. Box 3733, Norfolk, VA 23514-3733
www.tidewaterscots.org

About the Scottish Society of Tidewater, Inc.

A Few Words from the President

Dear SST Members,

Since our last newsletter we've had two (2) general meetings of SST members. At each meeting our goal is to have an informative, and hopefully enjoyable, presentation on Scottish culture, customs, music, or other Scottish related events. We have a good schedule of programs through the beginning of next year. We're into the dog days of summer, so there is every good reason come out in the evening and enjoy the monthly programs. Remember we have an excellent web site with the program schedule.

In May we were treated to a an excellent presentation by Charles (CG) Miller and his wife Nancy on "The Great Kilt", its history and its tradition. CG came in full regalia and demonstrated how to wear the great kilt. He also discussed the history of the Clan Tartans, and how they came to be what they are. I’m sure this latter part surprised most of us.

For the June meeting I’d prepared a presentation that covered the areas in Scotland where I’d vacationed. Although I’ve many good digital photos of those journeys, I’m sorry to say our planned projector, and the primary backup plan, then the second backup plan, fell through. I was left to verbally paint those pictures of glens and mountains and distilleries. A challenge for a poet better than I, but nevertheless we had good feedback and interaction. By the way, since then I’ve acquired the use of a new projector that we should be able to use at all SST functions.

At the July meeting, Randy Dedrickson gave us an update on the Williamsburg Scottish Festival, which is shaping up to be quite an event that you will not want to miss. This was followed by a fascinating presentation by Al Cowan on Scottish Athletics. How fortunate we are to have so many knowledgeable and talented people in our society!

Upcoming Events:

July 14: Celtic Night at the Beach; 17th Street park, 6.30pm to 11pm
This is an event sponsored by the city of Virginia Beach. It’s a family affair with face painting for kids and includes music by Celtica. SST will have Nessie there, and a table with all things Scottish. We'd like to have some volunteers help us at the table, so come out and join us. We may even have some Great Kilt demonstrations.

Aug 4: Wallace Day:
You can’t miss this. On the same night as our regular 1st Wednesday of the month meetings, this is a pot luck dinner (more details to come) combined with a presentation no other than John Wallace. John is busy working on his presentation and is excited to be coming up from NC to see many of his friends here.

Sept 18: Celtic Festival at Murphy’s; 30th and Pacific
September 19: SST Annual Picnic: 1 – 5 pm; Church of the Ascension picnic grounds
Hope to see you at any or all of these events!

Have a wonderful and safe summer.

Yours aye,

John
George Alexander MacRae succumbed to illness June 7, 2010 at the age of 92. Survivors include wife, Gloria; sons, Robert Bruce, Donald Robert (wife Karen); grandsons, Craig (Carrie) and Eric (Patti); great-grandchildren, Nicole, Justin and Megan; and nephews, Bruce, Barry, Rob and Val. He was predeceased by parents, Donald A. and Emmy Elva Paine; daughter, Jennifer Allison; daughter-in-law, Madonna; and brother, Robert G. Born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, he was a survivor of the "Halifax Explosion" and evacuated to Baddeck where several cousins and relatives live today. His father, Col. Donald Alexander MacRae, was wounded in World War I and later moved the family to southern California. George was a track athlete in high school, Glendale Junior College (news accounts referred to his as the "Glendale Greyhound" and was awarded a "golden shoe"), and received a track scholarship to LSU in Baton Rouge, La. He set records at each school and ran (but lost) against Olympic runner Glen Cunningham. He enlisted as a Marine in World War II and transferred to the U.S. Marine Raiders. He spent two years in and out of hospitals after being wounded and losing use of one arm. With help from his mother, he became a "leftie" and found employment with Lockheed, Dumont Aviation and Queen's Medical Center. He was a certified purchasing manager. He lived in Cape Breton Island, Harbor Springs, Mich., Glendale, Catalina Island and Honolulu, retiring to Virginia Beach. He was an amateur photographer, loved sailing and golf. He served as assistant and later curator of the Marine Raider Museum now located at Quantico, and was active in the Raider Association fielding numerous inquiries regarding raiders and their service; former Chieftain of Caledonian Society of Hawaii, member of Clan MacRae of No. America, St. Andrews Society, Disabled American Veterans, Marine Corps League, FRA Branch 99 of Virginia Beach, and Scottish Society of Tidewater. He was a guest speaker and received many awards and citations from military and historical groups. He will be remembered by many for his signature jacket and special hats, and for his ramrod straight Marine posture. A memorial service was conducted Friday at 2 p.m. in St. Aidan's Episcopal Church with Father Mark Wilkinson officiating. Hollomon-Brown Funeral Home, Lynnhaven Chapel, handled the arrangements. Condolences may be offered to the family at www.hollomon-brown.com. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Aidan's Episcopal Church or the Marine Raider Association.

Editors Note: George was a founding member of the Scottish Society of Tidewater. He gave many years of service to the SST, and for that we are forever grateful. He was a true hero, and we are equally thankful for his service to our country. We will miss him deeply.
At the June SST meeting, CG Miller, aided by his able wife Nancy, gave a demonstration on the history of the kilt. At left, Scott MacGregor is outfitted in the Great Kilt, and at right, Geraldine McDowell helps to demonstrate how women should wear a tartan cloak.

What an interesting and informative evening, thanks CG & Nancy!

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Ceud Mile Fiaitie!
“One Hundred Thousand Welcomes”
to New & Returning Members!

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Clan Stewart
This and That...

♦ At the Christopher Newport University Honors Convocation in May 2010, former SST President Dr. Edward Brash was announced as the recipient of the 2010 Alumni Association Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching and Mentoring. There is a $2,500 stipend that goes with the award.

Gle mhath, ma tha!

♦ Skip Hunter’s nephew, Ian Hunter, recently graduated from Carnegie Mellon wearing the Hunter Tartan kilt that Christine Lawler made for him. Congratulations, Ian! And thanks to Christine for sharing your talents with so many SST members and extended family.

♦ Skip Hunter returned from deployment in early July. He rotates to shore duty, and will be stationed at Little Creek. So we should be seeing him at more SST functions, for sure!

♦ Charlie & Shelby Haines recently celebrated the birth of their first child, Lance Daniel Haines. Lance is the grandson of Grace & Frank Brown. Clan Lamont’s getting a wee bit bigger!

♦ It was wedding bells in beautiful “Napoli” as Megan Amorosi and Patrick Baker exchanged vows on May 1. Congratulations, and many happy years of wedded bliss!

Do you have news to share? Please contact Marcey Hunter at marcey9@cox.net or 480-4217.
The Newport News Police Pipes and Drums continues to grow under the tutelage of Pipe Major Brendan Konouck. The band once again paraded in the City of Washington, D.C. during Police Week 2010 in May and made their first appearance at the Ocean View St. Patrick’s Day Parade. Some events coming up will be the Williamsburg Scottish Festival, Williamsburg Grand Illumination, Virginia Beach Veterans’ Day Parade, Hampton Holly Dazzle Parade and we are trying to get to NYC for the Tartan Day Parade in April 2011.

The band has added two more “homegrown” bagpipers into the circle, as well as two more drummers. The band is a 501(c)(3) organization and continues to support the local community with monetary donations to charitable causes. Recently the band raised over $2000 for the Sentara Nightingale Air Ambulance at a fundraiser held at Murphy’s in May.

One of the most exciting things happening is that the band is moving on to more complicated tunes. The band is adding harmony parts or seconds into our stable of tunes. We are working on a dance set that includes The Keel Row, The Orange and Blue, and Jock Wilson’s Ball. The first two tunes are strathspeys, a 4/4 setting that is uniquely Scottish and the last is a reel set to 2/2 time. The band is also adding The Atholl Highlanders (with four parts), MacCrae Meadow and Lord Lovett’s Lament.

With good news there must be some bad. We have lost three members in as many months. The band’s Drum Major Leonard Myles Hudson, affectionately known as Doc, passed away in late April from complications received during a fall. Doc was the band’s first Drum Major and will be sorely missed. In honor of Doc the band voted to establish a drumming scholarship in his memory. The scholarship will help any prospective drummer with a $250 annual scholarship to be used for instruction, instrument and/or uniform. Dave Grebos a retired professor and charter member of the Carnegie Mellon Pipes and Drums passed away suddenly in May from an apparent heart attack. Dave helped train drummers and write drum scores for the police band. Dave was also instrumental in the band being chosen as the host band for Police Week 2008. Lastly the band’s first bass drummer, Steve Daily, passed away after a courageous battle with cancer. I remember when the band first started practicing, Steve learned to play bass on a corrugated cardboard box. He named his practice drum “Cora” for corrugated. They will be greatly missed but they have inspired the band to move on to bigger and better things.

In closing, the band has become the model of a police/citizen endeavor. We have cops, firefighters, educators, government workers, veterans, active duty and retired military in our ranks. We our proud of our diversity as well. A group of fine individuals who have come together for a common cause, To Honor The Fallen.

www.newportnewspipesanddrums.org
NEW SCOTTISH BOOKS AND AUDIOVISUALS
At the Virginia Beach Public Library

ADULT NON-FICTION BOOKS:


ADULT FICTION:


- Submitted by Nancy Miller, MSLS, Virginia Beach Public Library

MUSIC

Newport News Police Pipe & Drum Corps
Tom Crouch waylon23703@aol.com
http://newportnewspolicepipe.homestead.com

Pipers For Hire
Rob Lockwood piobmor@juno.com
http://www.roblockwood.com

Harper
Rita Hamilton celticharp@cox.net

Scottish Gaelic Song Performances
Edward Brash brash99@hotmail.com

CELTIC DANCE

Scottish Highland Dancing
Scottish Ceilidh (Social) Dancing, & Scottish Step Dancing
Lynnette Fitch Brash lfitch.brash@gmail.com
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MISC.

Kilts, Alterations
Christine Lawler vakilter@juno.com

Photography - British Isles
Manny Willis robinandmanny@cox.net

Photography - Scotland
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Scottish Gaelic Lessons
Scots Gaelic Society of Tidewater Marcey Hunter marcey9@cox.net

Travel in Scotland
Highland Ways
Arthur & Anne Korff 757-596-6063

Scotch Whisky Tasting
Mike Lawler william.lawler@verizon.net
many hours of research will be required on any of your lines, or that they can find your ancestors quickly. No ethical professional genealogist will guarantee to find your ancestors either. When you hire a professional genealogist you are paying for his or her time and expertise, not for positive results of a search. It’s very important to understand this.

Still, a reputable genealogist will have expertise and the ability to access information that many amateurs can’t even fathom.

And what’s more—there are “expert” researchers in just about any area you can imagine. Consider this: you can hire someone to research not only for a geographical location, but perhaps specifically the Civil War, or the Gold Rush, or American Indian tribes. Many possibilities!

Is it affordable?

Most professional genealogists charge an hourly rate for research. Under some circumstances, however, the researcher may quote you a flat rate for your project.

Hourly rates vary widely depending on scope of work, average industry wages, and business expenses such as licensing, insurance, and general overhead. In addition to hourly rates, many types of genealogical work incur associated fees such as travel expenses, copy or microfilm reproduction charges, and postage. Ask your professional to explain all charges and establish a project budget. But you can expect to pay about $40-$50 per hour. This may seem pricey, but consider the many hours you’ve already spent tracking down the golden egg of family lore.

What if the researcher “fibbs” or falsifies information?

What a nightmare scenario. You spend good money and have high hopes of some valuable information, and then you get a report that seems too good to be true. So how do you know?

If you are careful to hire a researcher who is accredited, for example with the Association of Professional Genealogists, then you can be assured that they adhere to a very strict Code of Ethics. That’s some peace of mind.

OK, I’ll take the plunge. Now what?

You will of course need to find a good, accredited researcher in the field you’re most interested in. A good place to start is the Association of Professional Genealogists. Their website is www.apgen.org, and their phone is 303-465-6980. Of course, there are many other similar organizations that you can find with any online search engine. But the information found on their website is comprehensive, helpful and easy to follow. In addition, it was established in 1979, so that would indicate many years of genealogy research experience, which is what you’re looking for. So the APG is a good place to start.

If your research challenges jump the pond, there is also the Association of Scottish Genealogists & Researchers in Archives, which was founded in 1981 under the patronage of the Lord Lyon King of Arms. They have nearly a dozen researchers in Scotland. Their website is www.asgra.co.uk.

Once you have obtained names of professional who work in the area or category in which you need assistance, you may wish to contact several to find the one who best meets your needs and who has the time to accept the commission. Let the researcher know what you want and agree upon time limit, costs and when reports will be provided.

IMPORTANT: Ask for a letter of agreement between you and the researcher before any money is exchanged or work is performed.

If you decide to do this, and you have some “success stories,” please let me know, as many SST members would be interested.

Good luck!

Sources:
Genealogy.com
Association of Professional Genealogists
FamilyStoryLines.com
First, David and I were deeply saddened recently to have lost a friend and fellow Nova Scotian, George MacRae. His e-mails were always full of truths and wisdom. Needless to say, he was a great patriot. We used to watch the Veterans' Day Parade in the same location. Even when George was weakened with age, he was the first one standing tall and proud each time the flag passed by. We learned much from this great man who contributed so quietly in many different ways. He served long and well. We miss him.

On a happier note, we are having a good Nova Scotia summer and have just returned from a wild scene of whitecaps and whipping sand at our beach. It is 48 F. here this mid-June afternoon, with 45 mph winds. Summer has been slightly delayed. The wildlife keeps putting on an almost-daily show for us. Last evening a fox and her five kits romped and performed for a half hour or so. Before that Mr. Skunk came ambling up to investigate our front yard. Raccoons make their nightly forays into our animal-resistant trash container; and earlier today we spied a beautiful little fawn among the regular deer sightings. Mother Nature keeps us well entertained, and it beats weeding.

Some of you know that the Ship Hector left Loch Broom, Scotland, in 1773 and disembarked the surviving 189 passengers at Pictou, Nova Scotia, led by their kilted piper. They prevailed despite food and water shortages, storms, disease, and death on the crossing. Deep, forbidding forests on a cold September day greeted them. This was the beginning of a great influx of Scots to the area, as well as to other parts of what is now Canada, and also the U.S. Today, many of the descendants of those hardy Hector passengers named Fraser, Cameron, Macdonald, Ross, Sutherland, Munroe, Murray, MacLean, Campbell and others, still till the land cleared by their ancestors.

About twenty years ago a replica of Ship Hector was built and it is now tied up at the Pictou Quay. Both the Hector and its interpretive center were in danger of not opening this year due to financial difficulties. David and I attended a sold-out Hector fundraiser recently, and almost $25,000 was raised through ticket sales, silent auction, live auction and a 50-50 draw. Sylvia Macdonald’s small hand-hooked rug depicting the Ship Hector raised $2,500, and ten fiddle lessons donated by Fleur Mainville fetched $2,000. Two local pipe bands, many Celtic singers and fiddlers and highland dancers volunteered their talents to a great toe-stepping evening. As the night came to a close the performers and audience joined in singing Alastair Macdonald’s “Bless the Ship Hector.” We are now more hopeful the Ship Hector will be filled with locals and tourists this summer.

Because there are so many people of Scottish descent in this area I think we sometimes take our heritage for granted. There are at least three highland games scheduled during the summer so we don’t forget who we are and where we come from. Pugwash celebrates its Gathering of the Clans on Canada Day, July 1. Antigonish Highland Games, the oldest in North America, will be held July 4–11, and the New Glasgow Festival of the Tartans follows on August 5-8.

We hope our house is finished a-building in Fredericksburg by mid September. After the moving boxes are emptied we plan to be at some of the Games in the area and hope to meet some of our SST friends there.
33rd Annual Williamsburg Scottish Festival - UPDATE
by Tricia Young
Vice President, Williamsburg Scottish Festival

WHEN AND WHERE
Friday Evening Oct 1 and Saturday Oct 2
Rockahock Campgrounds Lanexa, Virginia 23089

2010 heralds the 33rd Anniversary for Williamsburg Scottish Festival (WSF)! Since 1977, we have provided Williamsburg, Richmond and Tidewater surrounding area residents with fun and safe venues and activities in which to experience Scottish culture and history. Festival dates are Friday, October 1 - Saturday, October 2nd. WSF 2010 promises to be even more extraordinary than in previous years:

♦ The 2010 Honored Clan is Clan Hamilton!
♦ Friday night Festival reception.
♦ Festival Special Guest, world-renowned Scottish fiddler Bonnie Rideout, will be in attendance on Friday and Saturday.
♦ New home for the East Coast Regional and U.S. National Scottish Fiddling Championship!
♦ Home of the first East Coast Scottish Country Dancing Competition!
♦ First annual Scottish Country Dancing Ball on Saturday night from 6 – 10 P.M.!
♦ More competitions than any other festival: Piping & Drumming, Highland Dancing, Harp, and Virginia State Tug-of-War and Virginia State Military Highland Athletic Championship!
♦ More workshops than any other festival: Fiddle, Harp, Tin Whistle, Bodhran, Hammer Dulcimer, Highland Pipes, Uillean Pipes and Scottish Country Dancing!
♦ Friday and Saturday night Ceilidhs that will run 'til 11PM and 12 midnight respectively.
♦ Completely covered Main stage that also covers the audience – The New ROCKADOME!
♦ A new Celtic Heritage Village nestled in the middle of Vendor village to draw more foot traffic.
♦ Three special locations for vendors: (1) Clan Row (10x10 or 15x15 tents only); (2) Vendor Village next to Clan and Parade Field or (3) Main Stage Area. Your choice! Can stay open at night or only stay open during day.
♦ Ticket Raffle ($10 each): Tour Package for two to Scotland or Ireland (winner’s choice). Tickets are on sale now, and will be until the drawing at the closing of the Festival on Saturday. Only 3,900 will be sold.
♦ More food vendors; improved location for vendors.
♦ Bus service from Festival hotel to Rockahock Campground. Bus reservations required.
♦ Dedicated golf cart food service to clans and societies (only).
♦ Expanded entertainment line-up to include 12-piece Celtic Harp Orchestra, world renowned Scottish Fiddler John Turner, and Scottish Talespinner, Hugh Allison. Celtic rock and tribal bands.
♦ Stream-lined entry process.
♦ Blessing of the Tartans at 8:45AM on Saturday morning.
♦ Consolidated Opening Ceremony, Mini-tattoo and Parade of the Clans.

Please check the website often for more information...www.wsfonline.org. We’re looking forward to seeing everyone there!
Gaels have long complained that they don't get the best reception from Scottish officialdom.

Now, at least, that reception will be in their own tongue.

The Scottish Government yesterday announced that the front-of-house staff in its buildings – its receptionists and commissionaires – are to be taught a smattering of Gaelic.

Culture and External Affairs Minister Fiona Hyslop yesterday said the move, along with a range of other measures, were "about increasing the visibility of the language in everyday life and motivating people to learn and use it".

The Government, as part of a Gaelic Plan published yesterday, has also promised to put up bilingual "welcome" signs in all its foyers by August and to include a Gaelic-language logo on all its emails, business cards and letterheads by June of next year.

Officials were yesterday unable to say exactly how much the measures, which will include a headcount of Gaelic speakers, would cost. An official spokesman said the scheme would be paid for from existing departmental budgets.

Sources, however, stressed they expected the price of extra Gaelic awareness training and signage to be negligible, especially compared with the official annual bill for promoting the language of some £25 million.

Arthur Cormack, the chairman of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the Government body set up to promote the language, yesterday admitted he currently greets receptionists in public buildings in English.

He said: "They would give me a funny look if I didn't".

But he stressed that having front-of-house staff who had at least a rudimentary grasp of the language would be more than a psychological boost for the nation's 58,000 speakers.

Cormack said: "We are trying to increase the prestige and status of the language. A lot of the things we are talking about come at pretty minimal cost but do a lot to raise awareness."

The SNP administration has produced its Gaelic Plan under 2005 legislation, backed by all major parties, to boost the language. A dozen other public bodies, including Glasgow City Council, home to more Gaelic speakers than any other authority, have already published similar schemes for helping the tongue.

Cormack yesterday admitted that supporters of Gaelic would have to be creative about finding cheap ways of promoting the language as the public-sector braces itself for historic cuts.

"There are people who might see Gaelic as a luxury or a soft touch," he admitted.

Conservative Ted Brocklebank yesterday gave a cautious welcome to the plan. His party's culture spokesman, Brocklebank has a bit of Gaelic, including, he jokes, "the usual swear words".

Asked whether receptionists should be taught some too, he said: "I can't see how that would do any harm. I am of the view that we should be trying to do all we can to promote Gaelic. I don't believe trying to save one of our native languages from extinction is a waste of money."

But he had a warning too. "We are going to have to be careful about how we fund the language at a time when there are children in our schools from abroad who don't even speak English."

Alasdair Allan, the Nationalist MSP who represents the Western Isles, said he believed the plan would make life easier for some of his constituents.

The Scottish Government, for example, has pledged to reply in Gaelic to letters and emails sent to it in the language.

And Allan, who now speaks it fluently, has no problems with Gaelic logos being added to stationery. "My business cards are already in Gaelic," he said. "I have an English translation on the back."
SST Annual Picnic Scheduled

Get ready for the annual SST picnic, which will be held on Sunday, September 19, 1pm-5pm at the Church of the Ascension, located on Princess Anne Road in Virginia Beach.

As usual, it will be a “pot luck” affair, with the SST providing hot dogs & hamburgers, and beverages. Please bring a dish to share. You may also bring along your favorite adult libation if you are so inclined. If you’ve not been to one of our picnics before, be sure to come hungry and you won’t be disappointed.

If you would like to help, please contact John McGlynn at johnmcglynn@cox.net

Remember, the SST monthly meetings are now held on the first Wednesday of the month at the Church of the Ascension Community Center
4853 Princess Anne Road
Virginia Beach VA

Editors Note

I’ll be taking a wee summer break from the newsletter, so there won’t be another newsletter until fall, most likely right after the Williamsburg Scottish Festival.

A special “thanks” goes out to all the contributors of the Thistledown this past year. I’m always looking for a good ideas for newsletter articles, and it’s gratifying to know that people want to contribute. THANK YOU!

I hope to see you around the games and other upcoming events, including the Wallace Day Commemoration, the SST picnic in September, and the Williamsburg Scottish Festival.

Have a wonderful and safe summer!

- Marcey Hunter, Editor
5th Annual Wallace Day Celebration

Please join us for the 5th Annual William Wallace Day, commemorating his bravery and heroism in the cause of Scottish independence. The event will take place on our normal first Wednesday meeting, August 4, and it will be a pot luck supper. So please bring a tasty dish to share! Social time begins at 7 pm, and the program and dinner will follow from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm. Capt. John Wallace, longtime SST member and former SST Vice President, will be the keynote speaker. We can expect a fabulous and relevant presentation from John.

The evening’s program will also include excerpts from the “Walk for Wallace” featuring author/historian the late Sir David R. Ross as he traced the steps of William Wallace from Robroyston to London. You won’t want to miss this exciting event!
THE harshest winter in Scotland for 30 years may have affected people across the country, but it appears to have had little impact on one hardy but unloved resident – the midge.

It was hoped that the prolonged spells of heavy snow and sub-zero temperatures would have been too much for the biting insects, which bring so much misery to tourists.

But the pests are set to offer their usual “hundred thousand welcomes” to visitors and residents alike, with experts saying the swarms show no signs of being reduced.

Dr Alison Blackwell, an internationally recognised authority on biting insect biology, particularly midges, said: "Midge populations this year are no different from previous years, so there has not been a big impact from the cold winter."

A female midge normally lays eggs in moist soil, often beside water. The larvae midge emerges within a day or two and burrows into the ground.

Dr Blackwell, who set up the Edinburgh-based company Advanced Pest Solutions, said: "I've studied midges for 20 years and in all that time we've never had such a cold winter. Midge larvae live just a few centimetres below the surface, so the thinking was that perhaps the hard ground frost could have killed off a proportion of them.

"But maybe they went deeper, or maybe they are more resilient to extreme conditions. What we have proved is that midge larvae can hang out in the soil for seven months in very extreme conditions – which is good for them, but not good for tourists."

Midges have a wingspan of just 1-2mm, but have a deadly reputation. It is estimated they cost Scotland's tourist sector more than £250 million every year in lost revenue.

There are nearly 40 species of biting midge in Scotland, but only five are thought to feed regularly on people. Of these, the Highland midge, Culicoides impunctatus – or Meanbh-chuileag (tiny fly in Gaelic) – is the species responsible for most bites of people.

Midges are most active at temperatures between 15C and 30C [Ed. Note: 60-70 F], with August seeing the biters at their most ferocious.

They target their victims by sensing carbon dioxide in exhaled breath and other odours. While they cause irritation to people, certain species also carry debilitating diseases which can affect horses and sheep.

Dr Blackwell said that, due to the density of the Scottish midge population, any reduction in numbers would have to be extremely large to be discernible. However, they were likely to thrive in the warm and wet summers that scientists are predicting will be more common in Scotland in future.

"They would have to be reduced to quite a large extent to be noticeable. But if we continue to see nice, warm, damp summers we will see an increase. So no respite yet."

To help people to avoid the worst areas, a midge forecast has been running for five years, showing levels of the pests on a scale of 1-5, negligible to nuisance levels.

On a recent day, most of Scotland was showing level 1 or 2, but parts of Wester Ross were up at 3 (moderate) and Glencoe had reached 4 (high). As part of the forecast, an iPhone midge app was launched last month by Advanced Pest Solution, giving users information direct to their phones on how bad and where the midges are.
A Taste of Whisky
Enjoying the Uisege Beatha, the “Water of Life”

Various and Sundry Whisky News

FRIENDS OF LAPHROAIG CELEBRATE 400,000 MEMBERS

The Friends of Laphroaig, an on and off-line community that links and rewards fans of the number one Islay malt whisky, has reached a record 400,000 members worldwide.

First established in 1994, the Friends of Laphroaig has resonated with the brand’s fervent fan base across the globe and now includes members from 161 countries, with the supporting website available in eight languages. More than 121,000 members are from the UK.

Friends are each given a square foot of land on Islay and invited to the distillery to collect their rent—a dram of Laphroaig. They are kept informed with regular newsletters from distillery manager John Campbell, who ensures they are the first to know about new bottlings and events. They have exclusive access to special Laphroaig Càirdeas editions, Càirdeas meaning ‘friends’ in Gaelic. Friends are also offered a 10% discount in Laphroaig’s online shop on their birthday.

The multi-award winning Laphroaig, distributed in the UK by Maxxium UK, is the number one selling Islay single malt Scotch whisky globally and the fourth largest malt in the UK on-trade. It is currently outperforming the category in the UK off trade with 9% volume and 12% value growth year on year*.

Maxxium UK’s Marketing Manager for Scotch Bob Dalrymple says: “The Friends of Laphroaig has grown to become a phenomenal success by creating an exclusive network of like-minded whisky connoisseurs.

"The Friends of Laphroaig is a fantastic marketing tool as it allows us to communicate directly with a large number of target consumers while encouraging word of mouth among potential new drinkers.

"Its success is due to the nature of the scheme which offers members genuine benefits and allows them to feel close to the brand and those that create it without ever being overt or intrusive.”

Laphroaig is loved by connoisseurs for its challenging taste profile, known for its unmistakable peat-smoke flavours delivered by burning local Islay peat.

SCOTCH WHISKY SALES BOOMING

The Scottish whisky industry is booming again with investment pouring in to boost capacity as distillers defy the recession and the current sluggish recovery with an eye on the fast growing markets of Asia.

Leading the charge is the single malt whisky market boasting names such as The Glenlivet, Glenmorangie and Macallan which may only account for a fraction of the industry, but is growing faster than the much larger blended scotch market.

Over the last three years, the Scottish whisky industry has invested 600 million pounds ($898 million) in malt and grain distilleries, warehousing and bottling and despite the downturn none of these expansion plans have been cancelled or delayed.

Optimism is fuelled by markets like as China which rose from a mere 1 million pounds in 2000 to worth 80 million pounds in 2009 and in an industry which exports 90 percent of production worth an annual 3.13 billion pounds to the Scottish economy.

Single malts come from Scotland's 102 malt distilleries scattered mainly across its highlands and islands, while the much large blended brands such as Johnnie Walker, Dewar's and Ballantine's are made up of around one third malt and two thirds industrially produced grain whisky.

"We are going to need all the extra whisky in 10 years time. There is a growing demand for the future with single malts outperforming the industry and Glenmorangie outperforming the single malt market,” said the distillery's whisky creator and master distiller Rachel Barrie.

Sources:
Reuters.com
TalkingRetail.com
Scottish Society of Tidewater, Inc.
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www.tidewaterscots.org

“Pip” Hunter’s bagpipe impression.

http://www.tarzans-treeservice.com/

Jeff Kuti, owner & SST member