



Crest Badge of a Member of Clan Hunter

hunters' halloo

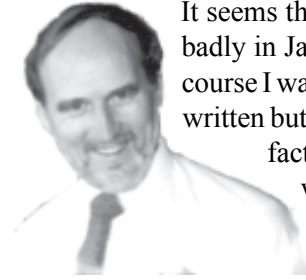
Newsletter of the Clan Hunter Association, Canada

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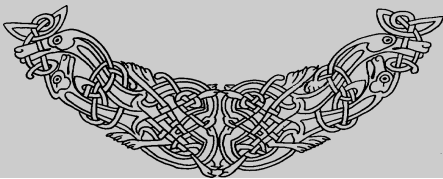
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It seems that this year is the year for late newsletters. I started off badly in January and it seems that I just can't seem to recover. Of course I was in Scotland at the time this newsletter should have been written but still a week has gone and I am only starting it. I think the fact that my camera malfunctioned while I was in Scotland without me realizing it, has had some influence on my enthusiasm. Only when I tried to develop the film did I discover that I had no photographs. So this newsletter will not have the abundance of photos I had hoped for and I am requesting that all the Canadians who were at the gathering at Hunterston send me their best photos. I can get some photos from our good friends in the UK and US but the photos I grieve for are the ones I took of the Canadian contingent. Hopefully with everyone's help I can have a good showing for the next newsletter. We had a very good turn out of Canadians at the Gathering with 25 people making the journey to Bonnie Scotland. The Canadian shirts with the Hunterston logo were a big hit and orders have been taken for customers in the US and New Zealand. Had we been willing to part with the ones we were wearing there would have been some transported in the luggage of the group from Argentina. Unfortunately we couldn't find anyone willing to give his or hers up. As usual the re-enactment group, "Gadgedlar", put on a great show and were on site the whole weekend. The meals were first class and I must say quite decadent. I found myself for the most part bouncing from pillar to post as I tried to visit with all the folks I hadn't seen in a while as well as some new Canadian members whom I hadn't yet had the chance to meet. It was lovely to meet Frances Knowles and Erma Gibson, sisters from New Brunswick and Joan Hunter and husband Simon Reeve with Joan's parents John and Sally Hunter. Joan was telling me that her family line is connected to the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless line. I haven't forgotten that family tree I promised you Joan, I am still trying to work out how to get it down to mailing size. Unfortunately we did have an unfortunate accident at the gathering. Father Roger Hall chaplain to the US Association fell while viewing the castle and broke his leg. Poor Roger spent the whole of the weekend in hospital and arrived back at the castle in time only to say a quick hello and goodbye to all the folks he hadn't been able to meet with. I do hope you are recovering well Roger and that you will soon be up and about again. Just stay away from those old castles OK? Talking of the castle, the restoration to the Pele Tower looked very good indeed and was duly unveiled by Madam Pauline Hunter of Hunterston on Friday night accompanied by the Canadian and US Clan Pipers playing from the battlements. During the weekend the UK group discovered that they had an extremely talented young piper of their own in the form of one Scott (Hunter), nephew of the UK Clan Officer Robert Hunter. It took but moments to install him as the official clan piper for the UK. Scott also played at the ceilidh and blew me away with something he called "kitchen music". It was absolutely stunning to watch his fingers fly and hear the wonderfully complicated rhythms. I'm afraid I just can't understand those that do not appreciate the sound of the bagpipes. Perhaps it is in the blood

Tom



Hunterston

I thought I would just put pen to paper and write a few thoughts on Hunterston and the Clan Gathering. Tom and I arrived late Friday afternoon and booked in – we were staying at a Bed and Breakfast in Largs, so we were only about ten minutes drive away from the Castle. It always surprises me how little the people in Largs (a generalization I know) know about Hunterston. Oh they know about the Power Station, but we have met quite a few people who don't know that there is a castle there at all. Anyway – we were in time to visit with some people that we hadn't seen in a few years, and also to meet up with many new people. It was nice to catch up with Brian Hunter, Genealogist - who e-mails my husband from England all the time, and to meet for the first time Richard Kearney, the Clan Officer for New Zealand, to get reacquainted with Bert Hunter from Australia and Richard Hunter from the U.S.A. and to finally meet some new Canadian members. This was a very special time for both Tom and I as we got to know two sisters (Erma and Frances) who had just joined the clan, and had made the effort to get to the Gathering, and a new family (Joan and Simon, with Joan's Mum and Dad, Sally and John) – all the way from Ottawa. When we sat down to dinner on Friday night I thought we were going to run out of food, but it didn't happen. There always seemed to be more to put on the table. Yes, the weekend progressed well and the meals were lovely – especially dinner on Saturday Night. This is sort of the highlight of the weekend – and I did enjoy the venison. The Ceilidh afterwards was very low key – but a lot of fun for those who joined in. Nadine and her friend Anne were having a great time with the Scottish Country Dances – and putting the rest of us to shame with their abilities. I'm sure Crystal will remember 'Strip the Willow' for a long time to come. In fact we may call on her to demonstrate at the Clan Meeting in Fergus in August.

When Tom had his Clan Officers meeting on Saturday afternoon, I wondered what on earth I would do with myself for a couple of hours. Well the time just slipped away, chatting with Betty and Claire, two other Clan Officers wives, and finding out about life in their part of the world. They had traveled a long way from home and had made a holiday of just the getting to Hunterston, stopping for two or three days in quite a few ports of call en route.

The Foot and Mouth Disease unfortunately restricted our ability to move about the grounds this year. We missed our walk (puff, puff) up Goldenberry hill. Actually, truth to tell, (and just between you and me) I have never made it to the top of the hill yet. Ah well, next Gathering is in 2004 – I'm sure I'll make it then!

Christine Hunter

Here is a sampling of photographs borrowed from our UK friends Clan Gathering at Hunterston June 2001



Above: Here are some of the Canadian Contingent getting ready for the Ceilidh

Below: Canadian and US clan pipers chat with Pauline



Right: Pauline, dressed for the occasion



Madam Pauline Hunter of Hunterston, poses by the new castle restoration.

A Journey into Ross Country

As a clan, the Hunters are very lucky. We have never lost our castle in battle. Our castle was never destroyed, and even with ever mounting financial burdens, we are still able to hold on to this piece of history as a meeting place for Hunters worldwide. Not many clans can say this. In fact, many clans have had to sell their castles to private owners because the cost was just too great. This is the case with the Ross clan.

Being a first generation Canadian, I was brought up very aware of my Scottish heritage. I went to Disney World for the first time at the age of 24 because family vacations always took us back “home” to Scotland. My family have been singing Scottish folk music together longer than I’ve been alive, and my father became clan officer of the Hunter clan several years ago. So, when I met and married my husband (part Irish, part French, part English and a very small part Scottish), he suddenly became much more interested in his Scottish roots.

My husband’s name is Andrew ROSS Thibodeau. The Ross comes from his grandmother’s maiden name. Her mother was born in Scotland. So my husband’s clan connection is the Ross clan. When we got married, I came down the aisle wearing the Hunter tartan sash. During the service, we exchanged my tartan for his, and I left wearing the Ross tartan sash.

Last year, while visiting the Montreal Highland games with my parents, about three tents down from ours was the Ross clan. Andrew was formerly unaware that there was a Ross clan in Canada. He was extremely excited and joined on the spot. He bought a book on the clan history and eagerly started sharing with us about his clan.



Balnagown Castle Ancient Seat of Clan Ross

The Rosses are a much larger clan than the Hunters. There is an area of Scotland called Ross and Cromarty where the Rosses were the powerful house. Their castle is still there to this day; however, the last Ross laird to live in Balnagown Castle was Sir Charles Ross. He died in 1942. His wife inherited the castle from him since he had no legitimate children. His wife remarried and they kept the castle by running it as a sporting venture. She died in 1957 and her husband in 1964. His family continued to live in part of the castle, but the rest of it was falling into deep disrepair. Finally, in 1972, Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed bought the castle and has spent millions of pounds to restore it.

When Andrew and I decided last year that we would like to go to Scotland this summer for our vacation, Andrew started dreaming about how nice it would be to see “his” castle. He had seen ours at the last Hunter gathering in 1997 and was absolutely enthralled by it. It seemed rather far-fetched, but my dad wrote to the Ross estates and told them about our clan and how much we enjoy visiting Hunterston. He then added that his son-in-law has Ross heritage and would love to be able to see any part of that history. Low and behold, we received a letter back saying that they would be

pleased to have us on the grounds! We were all very excited and started planning a trip north from Edinburgh to a town called Tain.

After long months of waiting, the trip finally arrived, and we drove north from Edinburgh, through Inverness, over the Cromarty forth and eventually to Tain, a beautiful small town. Andrew was thrilled! There were Rosses everywhere: the shop names, the street names, and the names on gravestones. He was constantly wondering if any were related to his great-grandmother.

We got up the next morning and drove to Balnagown, all of us expecting a quick “how-do-you-do?”, here’s what the castle looks like from the outside, these are the gardens, please drive safely. However, that was not what we got. A young man by the name of Alistair met us at the huge iron gates when we arrived. He drove us to the castle itself and led us through another huge set of iron gates. The castle was just gorgeous and the grounds were lovely. Alistair pointed out the two tree houses that Mr. Al Fayed had for his children, immediately reminding us how lucky we were to even be able to set foot on this property. We stood outside the castle for quite a while as Alistair pointed to windows and explained what was on each floor. We were just about ready to say thank you and head on our way

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Lizz & Andrew Thibodeau outside Balnagown Estate Gates

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when he added, "Well, let's head inside then, and I'll show you around." We were all flabbergasted.

Before being hired by Mr. Al Fayed, Alistair had worked in the British armed forces for fourteen years, a trait that seemed in common with all of the 23 full-time staff. He warned us as we started our tour that his job was as a security officer, not a tour guide, so forgive him if he didn't know very much about the history. Well, he certainly proved himself wrong over the next two hours as he took us through room after room telling us all about the rooms, what they were originally, where all the artifacts were from, etc.

Every room was incredible as Mr. Al Fayed has tried very hard to keep them in the Ross style with thousands of Ross artifacts and very tasteful Ross tartan décor in several rooms. The room that sticks out most in my mind, however, is the music, or piano, room. The room is actually shaped like a piano and was used by generations for musical enjoyment. It's one of the smallest rooms in the castle but what sticks out in my mind was the artwork. As we were looking around and Alistair was telling us what he knew, a large tapestry on the wall caught my attention. It depicted a meeting of two groups of people. The people on the left looked like they were a group of Englishmen or Government soldiers. The group on the right was of Scotsmen. In between, sat a noble woman on a horse. As I looked at the picture wondering what battle this was after, or what treaty they were discussing, I started looking more closely at the Scottish side. It was obviously a gathering of several clans because three or four of them were carrying banners. One of the banners had three hunting horns on it! I called my dad's attention to it and we both examined it with curiosity. Was there some ancient connection between the Rosses and the Hunters? Perhaps

this tapestry has nothing to do with the Rosses, but it seems certain that it has something to do with the Hunters. Unfortunately, Alistair was unable to tell us anything about that particular tapestry.

We enjoyed a wonderful morning at Balnagown Castle and at the end of our tour, Alistair gave Andrew a large book on the history of Balnagown with many beautiful photographs.

The Rosses are very lucky that Mr. Al Fayed has put so much work into restoring Balnagown and into keeping it as a Ross estate. It is his own private house and he has every right to decorate it in the style that pleases him. Since tours are rare, he has no real reason to keep so much memory of the Rosses in the castle, except out of his own respect for the piece of history that he bought.

As Hunters, our castle may be smaller, our lands much fewer than the 23 000 acres of Balnagown; however, we should be very grateful that we are all able to visit Hunterston whenever we wish. It is very rare in this day and age for a clan to still own its castle and lands. Most have been bought by private owners such as Mr. Al Fayed, or sold to Heritage estates such as the National Trust of Scotland. We have a connection to history that very few people can experience. It was a great honour to be invited into Balnagown but it made me appreciate Hunterston even more.

Lizz Thibodeau

Send your submissions for the Newsletter to Tom Hunter
61 Downing Crescent
London, Ontario
N6C 3C7
Fax/Tel (519) 681-4101
e-mail thunter01@home.com
WEB Page :
www.clanhuntercanada.com



Fergus Highland Games & Annual Clan Meeting

We enthusiastically invite all clan members to join us at the Fergus Highland Games on Saturday 11 August and be a part of the **Clan Parade at 12.20p.m.** It is always great to have a good turn out so please come and join us and support your Clan.

The annual Clan Meeting will again be held at the Wellington County Museum on Sunday 12 August. The museum is located just outside Fergus on the road to Elora. The room will be available from 12.30p.m. and a light lunch will be served at 1.00p.m. with the meeting to follow.