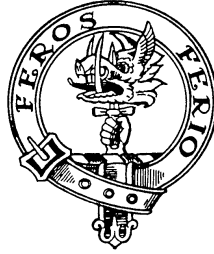
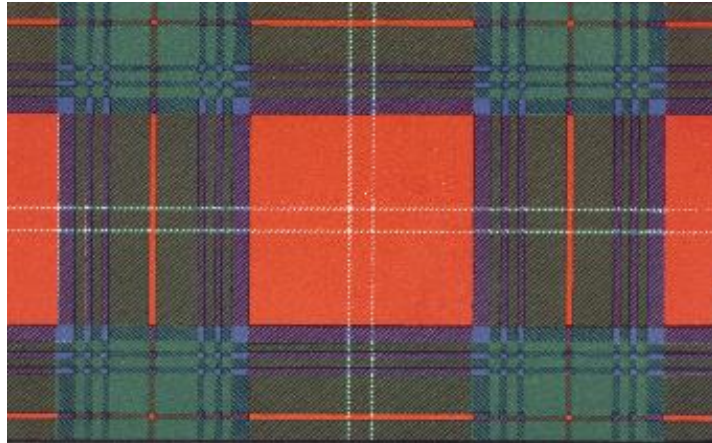


**CLAN CHISHOLM SOCIETY
UK BRANCH**



An Cirean
Cean Cinnidh



Welcome to Issue No 77 -UK Branch Newsletter

Dear UK Branch members.

My apologies for the lateness of this August newsletter. Even though our International Gathering was some weeks ago there are still administrative duties for your secretary/treasurer to perform. Additionally, I am still working full time so sometimes that paid job must take precedence!

I can tell you that the Gathering week went extremely well, we have had so many wonderful messages from those who attended. Over 75 Chisholm's attended events overall across the week. They hailed from many countries including Scotland, England, Norway, America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

These clansfolk have been encouraged to post their photographs of the gathering week in a shared environment – it is so good to be able to view all these. I was very busy during the week so had limited time for taking my own pictures. I am truly grateful to my eldest niece Danu for her solid support over the week. It was so helpful to have another pair of hands to assist with organising folk and answering their queries.

We all felt a very strong feeling of clanship during the gathering and have made many new friends and reconnected with old ones. The whole atmosphere was friendly and convivial, and everything went almost like clockwork due to the desire of everyone to have a great time.

A short account of our gathering with pictures of some of the events is shown in this newsletter.

Other items have been sent to me by Ben and Juliette Chisholm-Broomfield and Norman and Christina Chisholm. I thank them for these snippets of Highland news. Don't forget if you have any family news of your own Chisholm family or other items of general interest, I would be very happy to include them in our next Newsletter due in November/December.

Yours in clanship
Susan

CLAN CHISHOLM INTERNATIONAL GATHERING JULY 2024

Our booking-in evening on Monday 8th July at the Glen Mhor Hotel, Ness Bank, Inverness started from 5:30pm Christina Chisholm and husband Norman had set out a range of hand-woven items including of course Chisholm tartan scarves and cushion covers. These and the other colourful designs proved to be very popular purchases as they easily fit into a suitcase for the journey back home. Christina had set up a spinning wheel to demonstrate that part of the production of their completely hand-made items.

Danu greeted folk and checked them in ensuring we knew which events during the week each would attend as well as capturing their contact telephone numbers and any special dietary requests which we could share with the various caterers across the week. Each person was given a welcome pack of a folder containing many items including pens and notebook. We then had time to chat before sitting down for Dr Margaret Collins presentation on Borders Chisholm history. The talk was fascinating and showed the immense amount of research that Margaret has been doing over the past few years. Questions on the research followed which provoked good discussion within the room. Margaret is hoping to bring the research together into a book for the Society. Before that can be completed, she must obtain rights to use various documents and images, that is why she was unable to share her presentation with us and asked that we did not take photographs of it.

Bright and early on Tuesday 9th July our coach arrived for the trip to Fort George. We were able to stand down one 57 seater coach as although over the week we saw almost eighty clansfolk they did not attend all events. Our coach driver Gordon looked after us well during the week.

We spent about two and a half hours exploring the vast Fort George site and still didn't manage to see everything. The weather was bright, sunny and warm which was a blessing as we could enjoy walking around and looking out across the Moray Firth. The museum was very popular as were other buildings such as prisoners' cells and the regimental chapel.

We then headed to the nearby Culloden exhibition centre and battlefield where Caitlin Greig had provided lunch in a private room for our party. Following that we were given an extended guided tour through the battlefield. Our expert guide Gavin had an extensive knowledge of the lead up to the battle, the aftermath and of the Chisholm part in it. His talk was both informative and emotive.

At 4pm it was back on the coach to return to Inverness to get ready for the evening Ceilidh which was to start at 6:30pm.

The tables were beautifully set out and the ballroom glittered with pretty lights. The Glen Mhor provided a delicious meal and we gave everyone a voucher for their first drink. Our three musicians headed by Tom Cruickshank set up and played a few tunes to get us in the mood for dancing. A Scottish Country dance troupe headed by Irene Whyte then demonstrated dances and explained the steps before getting us up to join in with them. During a short break in the music and dancing Hamish our chief called out the winning raffle tickets and folk chose from the prizes displayed on a table. A most enjoyable evening.



left. Fergus Atkinson-O'Sullivan wife Vicky and their children Arthur & Max visiting from Connecticut, proud grandmother Jenni & her brother Rob Atkinson.

right. Susan Chisholm of Chisholm with Fay Chisholm from New Zealand.

On Wednesday 10th July our bus arrived at 09:30 for the hour-long journey to Newtonmore. Here Lucy Mackintosh operations manager at the Highland Folk Museum welcomed us. We were given a talk on the history and development of the 80 acre site which has at least 35 reconstructed historic buildings. We were shown into The Shelter which houses over 12,000 historical artefacts. There was so much material on the two floors that we could not see it all before lunch. There were examples of old farming machinery and household machinery across the ages as well as smaller items from past Highland Life. Many of us recognised things that our grandparents and even parents would have used. Lunch was arranged for us in the Am Fasgadh building before we were able to roam the site and visit the reconstructed buildings. The 17th century village was a highlight with guides explaining how the people would have lived. There was also an exhibition of spinning and weaving with a demonstration of the process of dyeing wool using the plants and minerals found locally.



A few of us met later at the Town House in Inverness. We hoped to get some good photographs of the Chisholm related swords which are in display in the main hall. This proved quite difficult as the swords are fixed fairly high up on the wall. We were given access to the old council chamber and Duncan Chisholm delivered a talk on the building as well as the Chisholm connection.



Left - Duncan describes the building. Right - The Chisholm boars head stained-glass window.

Thursday 11th July and two coaches brought the clansfolk from Inverness to Marydale Church Hall at Cannich where we met others who had travelled from elsewhere. Packed lunches were delivered to Marydale and these could be eaten on the coach or in the Hall. Our coaches set off along the ten miles up Glen Cannich to Loch Mullardoch. Many Chisholm families around the world would have originated from parts of Glen Cannich.



It is said that the Chisholm chief in olden times would address the clans-folk from a large rock – now usually covered in water due to the flooding of the glen.

Left. Plaque at the cairn overlooking Loch Mullardoch

A cairn was begun in 1959 by Miss Miriam Chisholm (Australia) to mark the area and our 2024 gathering assembled by the cairn to hear Tony Morrison Chairman of Australia branch talk of this history.

Back in Cannich the Strathglass Heritage Association had set up an exhibition of historical material covering the Highland Clearances and the Chisholm history of the area, and we were able to spend time looking over these records and talking to the knowledgeable team on hand. Some of our party went to the nearby Clachan Comar burial ground where many Chisholm's lie and Peter MacDonald of SHA gave us a history of the site.



Part of Clachan Comar Catholic burial ground.



Erchless Castle

Our coaches then took us the few miles to Erchless Castle where the chief and his family were staying. An excellent tea was provided on the lawns and we were well looked after by the Muir of Ord caterers Red Poppy. Andrew Whitelaw, a member of the Society now living in Norway gave extra atmosphere to the occasion by playing the pipes. The weather stayed good thankfully and a great time was had by all.

On Friday 12th July we held the Annual General Meeting of your International Society. Again at the Glen Mhor Hotel where a buffet lunch followed. Minutes of the meeting will be circulated separately from this newsletter.

In the afternoon Anne Fraser of the Inverness Archive Centre arranged a guided tour of the archive. We were fascinated by the expert restoration and conservation work being carried out of some old leather-bound ledgers in one of the workshops. Many Chisholm documents had been laid out on tables for us to view, these included the 15th and 16th century papers rediscovered in 2015.



Carrie describes the process of restoring a ledger.

Saturday 13th and Susan, Danu and Duncan set up the Chisholm tables in the Clan Village tent at the City of Inverness Highland Games. The Games were very well attended, and we had many visitors. The weather stayed fine all day and was very different from 2023. My niece Katrina and her husband Colin came along later to help us man the table as did Duncan Chisholm junior. Some of our junior Chisholm's even took part in the boys running races – a fun day and a great end to our gathering week.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

The BBC programme “Who Do You Think You Are?” researches parts of the genealogy of various usually well-known people such as actors and musicians. The episode screened on Thursday 29th August featured the former Spice Girl singer and songwriter **Melanie Chisholm**. Melanie, 50, was born and raised in Merseyside. Her parents Alan and Joan Chisholm separated when Melanie was four years old. The programme briefly touched on her memories of her grandfather Thomas Chisholm and then followed the ancestry of her paternal grandmother before exploring her Irish roots. Unfortunately we did not learn anything new about her Chisholm ancestry or of Scottish history.

NEW PUBLICATION – THE CHISHOLM LETTERS.

Kim Polley, Tasmania – secretary of the Australia Branch and Vice President of the Clan Chisholm Society has researched and produced this interesting book based on the letters of Colin Chisholm. He was born in Dingwall, in the Scottish Highlands in 1803 and for most of his life he lived in Nairn, near Inverness.

The pages lay bare his struggles, worries and friendships as a poor working-class family man whose job placed him at the bottom of the social ladder. Fortunes and misfortunes unravel through letters between Colin and his siblings who relocated to various parts of the globe.

Their lives are richly painted through the harsh reality of the social conditions of the time, and are further illustrated with maps, photos, paintings and historic references. After Colin's death in 1868, through an assortment of notes, the reader follows the lives of Colin's children and his siblings in the UK, Canada and Australia up to the early 1900s.

See our website for details on how to purchase a copy.

BEAVERS IN THE HIGHLANDS

Controversial plans are being made to potentially introduce beavers to Glen Affric in Strathglass.

The Inverness Courier and *Scottish Daily Mail* have recently carried articles covering the discussions around the proposal.

Beavers have not lived in Scotland for over 400 years when they were hunted to extinction for their valuable pelts.

A small group of Eurasian beavers was introduced in a controlled way at Aigas in 2006. Aigas is near to Beaulieu and about 12 miles from the village of Cannich – the entrance to Glen Affric. The Aigas Field Centre includes an eight-acre loch where the beavers thrive.

The mainly nocturnal animals and the evidence of their activities may be viewed from the Kingdom Hide on the estate. The hide was named for Johnny Kingdom the wildlife filmmaker and nature lover who created the television programme 'A Year on Exmoor' in 2006. He came up to Aigas and was interested in the conservation work of Sir John Lister-Kaye and built the hide in 2007.

See www.aigas.co.uk for more information.



Images from Aigas

Beavers have been present in Tayside for at least 16 years. Many who currently work the productive farmland bordering the Spey remind themselves that these animals were relocated to the Cairngorms from Tayside not simply because of their magical powers of environmental restitution but because of the trail of destruction they left in their wake.

Farmers and crofters point to reports of hundreds of trees felled or gnawed beyond use on farms bordering the River Tay and its tributaries, acres of ruined crops and flooded fields from collapsed riverbanks and a succession of dams blocking waterways and filling them with debris. They look at the damage – sometimes costing six figures to repair – caused by a rapidly expanding beaver population and fear that their land will be next.

Such anxiety is shared by the people of Strathglass, whose farms border the wildernesses of Glen Affric in the northwest Highlands, which is next in the rewilders' sights. There, officials at the Scottish Government's tree-planting agency have decided to press ahead with plans for a beaver release in a community bitterly divided by the proposal. Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) intends to apply this autumn for a licence to introduce beavers

on its Glen Affric estate. If the application is allowed by the government's wildlife agency NatureScot, it could see yet more beavers translocated from troublesome Tayside, this time to FLS land at the Loch Beinn a' Mheadhoin.

One farmer in Aberfeldy, Perthshire has reportedly lost £25,000 worth of crops due to the activities of beavers causing flood damage. Other farmers complain that they are spending money on a problem not of their making and that they have no control over. The Scottish Government made beavers a protected species in 2019 and NatureScot has a 23 year plan to actively expand the population to new catchments. With no natural predators and lethal control used as a last resort, beaver numbers are likely to increase in translocation areas. Other farmers in Perthshire have seen benefits with one stating that he has saved on farm track repairs as they do not get flooded anymore. He suggests pulling farming back from the water's edge.

In Cannich village many are supportive of the proposals for release of beavers to Loch Benevean, however dozens of local farmers remain opposed. Sheena Thomson who farms 500 acres in Strathglass fears the beaver population will expand and damage the banks of the River Glass that protect her fields from flooding which would mean loss of hay, silage and grazing. Sheena points out that the cost of any damage would be borne by the local farmers who she feels are not being listened to. Karl Falconer farms 60 acres near Cannich where he runs an alpaca trekking company. He pointed out that erosion of the River Glass was already an issue because of rapid fluctuations in water levels caused by the nearby hydro-electricity station. He fears that if beavers create change to the banks of the river these holes will fill with water each time the power station lets water through from Benevean. He also feels that he is not being listened to by FLS and points out that mitigation intended to lessen the concerns does not include financial recompense. Their case is being taken up by Fergus Ewing the MSP for Inverness and Nairn. He said the public bodies were "keen on putting beavers into Scotland but none seemed prepared to put their hands in their pockets to pay for the cost of damage". The National Farmers Union Scotland remains opposed to beaver translocations but accepts natural expansion into areas away from productive agricultural land.



Loch Beinn a' Mheadhoin in Glen Affric

EARLY BRONZE AGE BURIAL IN CAITHNESS

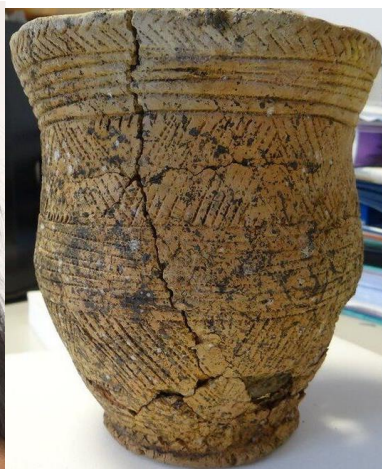
In 1987 the bones of a woman were found buried in a grave cut into solid bedrock at Achavanich, Caithness near to the A9 between Latheran and Thurso during a quarrying operation. The woman was aged between 18 and 25 when she died. She was buried in an unmarked rock-cut grave rather than underneath a cairn or grave dug into soil more common in the Copper and Early Bronze Ages. A decorated beaker was found in the burial which close examination shows was made using at least three different tools. The contents when analysed found pollen from trees common in the area in the early Bronze Age such as birch, pine, hazel and alder as well as grasses, meadowsweet and St John's wort. The last two are considered to have medicinal properties so their inclusion may have significance. The way the young woman was buried suggests great effort implying she was well respected and cared for. The current landscape has little natural woodland but this part of Scotland would have had a mixture of heathland and woodland 4,000 years ago.

Unfortunately the plans made of the site thirty years ago when it was discovered have been lost and local authority archaeologists are trying to recreate them and interpret the position the burial was in. The remains and other items found in the grave are held at Caithness Horizons Museum in Thurso. In recent years further analysis of the remains has been possible including stable isotope analysis, radiocarbon dating and DNA testing. These analyses show she was eating freshwater fish and cattle and was from the west or south of her burial site. There was no indication she was consuming marine foods although the sea would have been a two to three hours walk away. Archaeologist Maya Hoole said "She was a healthy young woman who was likely involved in physical labour". The cause of death is not known. Radiocarbon dating suggests she lived some 4,100 years ago. Ancient DNA research shows that she was descended from European migrants who arrived in Britain a few generations before her birth. She would have had straight dark hair and brown eyes. Her skull has an abnormal shape and some have suggested it may be the result of deliberate binding. A facial reconstruction has been made to suggest what the young woman may have looked like. See below.

The young woman has been given the name 'Ava' reflecting the place she was found buried, Achavanich.



Left – facial reconstruction.



Middle – the beaker.



Right – the burial site.



Photos by Maya Hoole. Achavanich in Caithness where the finds were made

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