



The Freens o Reid Harlaw

Notes of Meeting

Monday 24th October 2011 at Inverurie Town Hall (Room F1)

1. Sederunt:

David and Leslie Leslie representing Clan Leslie
Dr Geoff Gill - Chairman of the Garioch Heritage Trust
Jack Hendry – Vice Chairman of the Garioch Heritage Trust
Arthur Taylor – Garioch Heritage Trust & Inverurie Rotary
Lindy Cheyne and Ian Hamilton – Leopard Magazine
Ranald Allan – Editor of Connect Magazine
Neil Baillie – Secretary of Inverurie Events
Albert & Linda Thomson

2. Apologies were received from the following:

Andy Brownlie – Singer / Songwriter based in Birmingham
Sheena Blackhall – Makar for the North East of Scotland
Gordon Casely
Tom Clelland - Singer / Songwriter based in Lanarkshire
Pauline Cordiner - Scottish Storyteller
Alan Currie and Robert Currie - Clan Currie (MacMhuirich) Society
William Douglas - Clan Maclean Heritage Trust
Margaret Dundas
Mike Gibb - Playwright
Nick Hide – Clan Davidson Association
Morag Imlach
George King
William Leslie
Donald McIntosh Clan Chattan Association
John Mackay
Donald MacPherson – Member of the Aberdeen Schiltron Re-enactment Group
Jim McQuiston – American Historian & ballad singer
Stuart Watson

3. Introductions

David Leslie acting as Chairman opened the meeting with Albert Thomson as Secretary.

Everyone was welcomed to the first meeting of the Freens o Reid Harlaw after which general introductions were made.

Albert Thomson explained that there has been considerable interest in the concept of the 'freens' and this was the main reason for the large list of apologies. Many were unable to attend due to distance but show the wider potential of the group.

4. Overview and Aims o the Freens

The Chairman reminded everyone of the idea behind the group was to build upon the positives following the 600th anniversary ceremonies in July. The draft aims and objectives were discussed and initially agreed as follows:

- To hold an annual dinner on a suitable date with an invited speaker on a subject that must be related to the battle;
- To hold a Remembrance Service at the Chapel of Garioch (the site of Leslie's Cross) on the closest Sunday to the 24th July;
- To appeal for the re-instatement the lost cairns' of Harlaw in close proximity to the monument without impacting on the cultivated farm land;
- To consider a project that would increase awareness of the battle amongst children through an annual competition;
- To act as a repository for all things related to the battle, be it books, ballads and music working closely with the Garioch Heritage Society.

5. Annual General Meeting and Constitution

Following discussion it was agreed that a decision on an Annual General Meeting be put on hold until a formal constitution is agreed. In the meantime a draft Constitution would be drawn up for members to comment upon.

Dr Geoff Gill and Neil Baillie are to provide sample Constitution documents.

Action: Dr Geoff Gill & Neil Baillie

Thereafter the Chairman and Secretary will draw up a draft document for circulation and comment;

Action: Chairman & Secretary

6. Annual Battle of Harlaw Dedication Service

After discussion it was agreed that an annual Dedication Service was worthwhile.

Sunday 22nd July 2012 has therefore been identified as the most appropriate date for a service to be held at Chapel of Garioch Church.

The Chairman has already has tentative discussion with Rev Brian Dobby but will now confirm the date.

An early indication of interest would be welcome.

Action: Chairman

7. Annual Freens Dinner

It followed from the discussion regarding item 6 above that the annual dinner should also be held on a date close to the anniversary of the battle. It was agreed therefore that the dinner should be held the previous evening Saturday 21st July 2012.

An early indication of interest would be welcome.

The suggested venue was the Chapel of Garioch Hall and the Chairman is to check whether or not it is available and to confirm numbers.

Action: Chairman

If the venue is free, outside catering would be required and the Secretary is to contact Harry Fraser Catering Services for initial costs etc.

Action: Secretary

8. Membership, fees and other costs (meetings etc)

The issue of membership was discussed including individual, family and corporate membership. International membership would also need to be taken into account in view of the early interest especially from the United States.

It was decided however to put this on hold until a Constitution was agreed.

9. St Andrew's Day Parade 27th November 2011 (Neil Baillie)

Neil Baillie informed the meeting of the aims and objectives of Inverurie Events in particular the forthcoming St Andrews Day Parade on 27th November 2011.

It was agreed that this would be an ideal opportunity for the 'Freens' to participate and signal our arrival on the scene. An invitation is therefore extended to all 'Freens' to participate on the day kilted to march alongside the re-enactment group that Neil is in the process of organising. The theme will be Harlaw Remembered.

It is also hoped that the Clan Associations can send out the 'fiery cross' to their members who live in the Inverurie area inviting them to participate.

As Neil requires numbers in advance for Health & Safety reasons the Secretary will send out an invitation.

Action: Secretary

10. Any other competent business

Jim McQuiston

The meeting was advised that the Secretary had been in regular contact with Jim McQuiston an American historian / singer & songwriter based in Warren Pennsylvania.

Jim has supported the concept of the Freens o Reid Harlaw from the onset and sent though a letter for our first meeting. A copy of Jim's letter is attached for those who were unable to attend.

In addition, the Secretary and Jim have co-authored an article for a US history Magazine 'The Highlander' on the 600th anniversary of the battle and this should be published in February.

Jim has also been active is getting a website up and running and was thanked for his efforts.

Website www.freensoreidharlaw.com

Announcement

The Secretary was please to announce at the meeting that Dr Nelson Ying, Baron of Balquhain had recently appointed David C. Leslie as his Baron Baillie of Balquhain.

The Chairman explained that this office was an appointment made by a Baron in conjunction with the running of a Baronial Court which upheld the law within the baronial territory.

The Court held power of life and death from 'pitt to gallows'

The Baron Baillie's duties as representative of the Baron was to organise arrest warrants and advise the Court of matters pertaining to the law regarding fines and sentences.

From about the early 18th century the powers of the Baronial Courts were gradually cut back and transferred to the Crown and Sheriff Courts. However, many of the formalities of today's Courts originated from the Baronial Courts.

The Chairman was congratulated on his appointment which was rather well timed for the setting up of the Freens o Reid Harlaw.

Office Bearers

The meeting agreed that until a formal Constitution was prepared, that Baron Baillie David Leslie be appointed Chairman with Albert Thomson as Secretary. Both accepted.

Trinity Hall, Aberdeen

The Secretary suggested that it may be worth considering a visit to Trinity Hall in Aberdeen, the home of the Seven Incorporated Trades who have links to the Battle of Harlaw.

There are also three swords on display that are reputed to have been used on the Sair Field o Harlaw.

It was agreed that this was worth considering for the latter part of 2012.

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 28th November 2011.

The venue will be Room F1 at Inverurie Town Hall. Entry from the side entrance.

Dates to Remember

St Andrews Day Parade on 27th November 2011.

Freens o Reid Harlaw Annual Dinner Saturday 21st July 2012.

Battle of Harlaw Dedication Service on Sunday 22nd July 2012.

Letter from Jim McQuiston

Hello to my Freens in Scotland.

The worthiness of preserving Scotland's history, as in the case of the Battle of Red Harlaw, extends far beyond Aberdeen and even Scotland, itself. Though I may be the first and perhaps only American Freen so far, I am just one of many thousands of Americans who cherish their Scottish roots.

The Germans may have their Oktoberfest, and the Irish their St. Patrick's Day, but all over North America, from Nova Scotia to New Mexico, from North Carolina to the Great White North of the Yukon, Scots-blooded freedom lovers quietly honour and remember the role Scotland's people played in the fight for individual freedom.

The very founding documents of the United States of America are undeniably based on the Declaration of Arbroath and the Scottish National Covenant.

I am proud to say that my own ancestor, Robert McCuiston, born in Paisley, Scotland, in 1710, was among the first Americans to raise his family's cherished sword in defiance, on November 11, 1743, in a small church in eastern Pennsylvania, declaring his right to live free.

In 2010, several dozen descendants of those brave Scots were led into that very same church by a piper to ceremoniously raised our swords, once again, and to repeat those words of defiance from so many years ago -

"Some imagine that the sword is drawn for fear of man . . . some pretend that it is drawn in rebellion . . . but the reason of the sword's being drawn is because our renowned ancestors were constrained to draw the sword in the defence of their own freedom. Our drawing of the sword is to testify to the world that we are one in judgment with them, and that we are, this day, willing to maintain the same war in defending ourselves against all opposers thereof, although such defence should cost us our lives."

My wife's family was there, too, back in 1743. She, a Hamilton, Calhoun, and Montgomery descendant, and I, a McDonald, Davidson and Denny descendant, are just two small specks in the crowd of Americans whose eyes tear up at the sound of the pipes, whose heart longs for just one more visit to the homeland, whose spirit lives free because of brave souls like those who fought at Red Harlaw.

Thank you for the good work you are doing, and thank you for allowing me to be a part of it.

Jim McQuiston