

## THE MACFIE CLAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

### REPORT on the CLAN GATHERING in EDINBURGH, MAY, 1981.

GENERAL COMMENTS. I was honoured to be a representative of the Macfie Clan Society of Australia at the Clan Gathering in Edinburgh in May 1981 and I regret that circumstances prevented this Report from appearing in our August Bulletin. The excitement of "homecoming", the pleasure of clan fellowship, the pride in becoming once again an "active" Clan, all underlie the details of this Report; but there are also some uncomfortable misgivings about the future. This is the only regrettable part of the whole exercise. Yet even this should not be allowed to detract from our justifiable pride in the success of the Clan Societies' request to the Lord Lyon for the appointment of a Commander. What the next developments are to be will present true tests of the loyalty, goodwill and capacity for co-operation of the Clansfolk.

SOCIAL AND PERSONAL BACKGROUND. Edinburgh was a centre for greatly appreciated fellowship. The Macfie Booth in Freemasons' Hall, established under the direction of Sheila Duffy, was not only an "official" centre but also a little meeting-place, staffed by "home" and "overseas" clansfolk. Pauline Macfie's home in Midmar Gardens, the McPhie house in Heriot Row, and the streets, parks, theatres and dining-rooms of the City, all shared in generating goodwill; as did functions such as Lord Elgin's Reception at Prestonfields House Hotel and the Fiddlers' Concert at Usher Hall. The whole program of CapitalWeek in Edinburgh provided wonderful moments of clan fellowship and awareness.

Similarly, the tours of the Highlands and Islands multiplied the personal links among the "overseas travellers" and brought to life the many memories and tales of the clan forebears from different parts of Scotland. The goodwill and clan awareness flowing from these activities will certainly survive the inevitable pressures imposed on the Clan since the "dispersal" by distance and naturally-arising local interests and priorities.

THE FORMAL EVENTS. Details of the Formal Events of the Clan Gathering will be available at the Biennial General Meeting, Canberra, January 30, '82. What follows is an account of the results, with some comments.

Monday, May 25. (i) Dr. Earle MacPhee, International Seneschal, chaired a meeting of representatives of Clan Societies and Associations to discuss certain matters - the re-establishment of the Scottish Clan Society, the question of the "name" of the Clan, the forming of a derbhfine to raise a Chief, the appointment of a Commander pro tem. In spite of some confusion, it was agreed, on the motions of De Vane Middleton (USA) seconded by Sylvia MacPhee (Can) and Sandy MacPhee (Aus) that the Lord Lyon be requested to appoint a Commander and that Dr. Earle MacPhee be our nominee.

(ii) The "Meet Your Clan" gathering in the evening was highly successful socially; but the meeting held immediately afterwards to re-establish the Scottish Clan Society was somewhat confused and produced a certain amount of tension, disagreement and pessimism. Nevertheless, it was agreed to re-activate the Society, with Rev. James Duffy as Acting President.

Tuesday, May 26. A delegation (\*) of the Clan Societies was received by Sir Iain Moncrieffe, Albany Herald and Adviser to the Lyon Court, whose advice was that we "petition" the Lord Lyon to appoint a Commander for our Clan. He believed the Lord Lyon would be very sympathetic to our desire to re-activate the Clan and would therefore do what he could to meet our request.

Wednesday, May 27. A delegation (\*\*) of the Clan Societies was received by the Lord Lyon Designate, Malcolm Innes of Edingight. Dr. Earle MacPhee formally requested the appointment of a Clan Commander as an interim, not an hereditary, appointment; the first Commander to be armigerous and, after the first appointment, the Commander to come from any of the Clan Societies.

The Lord Lyon Designate commented that it was desirable that the Clan Societies should have a Commander of their nomination in the first instance; but that he was unable at this stage to comment on any aspects of subsequent appointments.

Sylvia MacPhee thanked the Lord Lyon Designate for his remarks and put to him the unanimous formal nomination from the delegates of Dr. Earle Douglas MacPhee as interim Clan Commander. This was a most effective presentation of our case.

The Lord Lyon Designate complimented Sylvia on her presentation and the delegates on their preparations and final unanimity. In accepting the idea of the nomination, he made the points that

- i. An initial Commander did not have to be a resident Scot but should be armigerous.
- ii. The position of Commander would not have hereditary rights but in all other respects the Commander of the Clan would have the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a Chief.
- iii. The appointment of a Commander would imply recognition of the Clan as no longer a "broken clan" but an "honourable community" in search of a person eligible to be a Chief in the full sense.
- iv. The Clan and its Societies would be able to propose a successor for consideration when the position of Commander becomes vacant.
- v. The machinery of the formal proposal would have to be worked out in keeping with traditional and legal concepts and would require a petition to the Lyon Court from seven armigerous clansmen. As he was aware of the existence of such a situation, the document could be prepared for signatures and submission and an installation could probably be arranged for 6 November 1981.

Wednesday, May 27. The "Clan Parliament" The proposed program, as printed and given to arriving clansfolk, provided for the proclamation of and a subsequent session of a "Clan Parliament" at 7.30 pm on Wednesday, 27.05.81. The proposals, as shown in our August Bulletin, were quite detailed and precise. Confusion, however, supervened to a certain extent, because of a number of unforeseen circumstances and oversights. Nevertheless, it was finally resolved that "a Parliament of Clan Societies be organised as from 27 May 1981" and, as a result, some significant information, reports and proposals were able to be received.

Delegates, associates and friends present were informed officially of the successful request for the appointment of a Commander and the nomination of Dr. Earle MacPhee. The Agenda was then varied to hear from the Commander-designate about future developments, particularly with regard to the Clan, as distinct from the Clan Societies', organisation.

Parts of the Agenda were then dealt with and all other matters either judged no longer relevant or left for later discussion and decision by the Commander when appointed. Keerie McPhee would be Keeper of the Records; De Vane Middleton would be Treasurer; Keerie McPhee, Duncan MacPhee, Ralph MacPhee, Ulf Macfie Hagman and Charles MacPhee would be Directors of Clan Macfie Associates Ltd., any three to be a quorum; the Agenda Resolution No. 4 concerning the "Cathies" was adopted; and Reports were received from delegates from Sweden, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, the Keeper of the Records, and the Co-ordinator of the International Gathering Committee, Sheila Duffy. All reports were from time to time interrupted by filming procedures, as had been the case with other activities of the evening. Uncertainty persisted about the relationship of "clan" and "clan society" areas of activity.

In concluding the meeting, the Commander-designate spoke again of his hopes for future developments and announced that the next Parliament would be convened in Nova Scotia in 1983.

Thursday, May 28. The Scottish International Gathering Trust, as a mark of esteem of the work of Miss Sylvia MacPhee with the Clans and Scottish Societies in Canada and of the progress of the Macfie Clan Societies towards the re-activation of the Clan, arranged for Sylvia, who is Chairman of the Clans and Scottish Societies of Canada and Seneschal (Canada) of the MacPhee Clan Society, to take the salute at the Beating of the Retreat on the Esplanade at Edinburgh Castle on Thursday, May 28, at 2000 hours. This was a splendid occasion and Sylvia "did us proud" !

Friday, May 29. A formal Clan Luncheon was held at the Caledonian Hotel. Sylvia MacPhee spoke on the past and future of the Clan and the wide range of talents, from tinkers to alchemists, encompassed by its members; and Alexander Lachlan MacPhee, in making a presentation to Sheila Duffy, spoke succinctly and sincerely of the debt owed to her for her efforts in preparing a structure of entertainment and business for the clansfolk in Edinburgh.

A general Banquet and Ball were held on Friday evening at the Assembly Rooms. Lord Elgin, Chairman of the Scottish International Gathering Trust Ltd., set the seal on the resurgence of the Macfies by having their representatives with his party at the Official Table and giving public recognition to the success of their endeavours. The Ball set the tone for the successful "tours of the homelands" by many Clans.

Sunday, June 7. The Macfie "tour of the homelands" culminated at the Carragh Mhic a' Phi on Colonsay, which came at the end of an extended tour of the "Highlands and Islands" which encompassed many of the historical homelands in Scotland of Macfies (of all spellings!) from many different modern nations. After a journey to and an inspection of the ruins of the Priory on Oronsay, the clansfolk returned to Colonsay and the Carragh Mhic a' Phi. Here, under the guidance of Ulf Macfie Hagman, all gathered around and, having been reminded formally of the history of the Stone and of its re-establishment, all dedicated themselves to continuing respect for the Stone as a symbol of the breaking and subsequent re-establishment of the Clan.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS. During the week in Edinburgh and subsequently on the tours, the clansfolk were fortunate in their social and personal activities; fortunate also that a group of their representatives met the Lord Lyon for personal negotiations about Clan developments, which negotiations were reinforced by later personal contact, such as the attendance by Australia's representatives at the Lord Lyon's installation in the High Court, and further meetings between the Lord Lyon and the Commander-designate.

The background of will-to-succeed, good fellowship and good fortune, ensured a permanent result -- the setting in train of the necessary actions to install a Commander and the re-activation of the Clan. Nothing can detract from the significance of this result, achieved in May and confirmed in November, 1981.

Nevertheless, there appear to be warning signs of dangers which could negate this achievement. It seemed that, on the one hand, there was an undue "legalism" in the approach to the structuring of the organisation of both the Clan Societies and the emerging Clan, which was not matched, on the other hand, by a corresponding firmness and precision in managing the balance between "formal" and "informal" activities or the distinction between "clan" and "society" functions; and in keeping clansfolk properly informed as to what steps were in train and why.

The reasons for this dichotomy are many and may be, to a certain extent, speculative; but sectional and personal rivalry among clansfolk's leaders; lack of objectivity in research and conclusions; and either inadvertent or deliberate failure in communication, are possible factors. In the result, ordinary clansfolk will become disenchanted if they come to believe that there is too much "behind the scenes" decision-making or "politicking" which is not made clear to the generality of the Clan.

I am inclined to ask why the Glasgow MacPhees felt slighted or ignored? Why were there no Fort William MacPhees in evidence? How did an Australian come to surprise MacPhees in Dunkeld and MacPhies on Skye with news of the Gathering? Why were long lists of McPhees in the Inverness Telephone Directory apparently unknown to the organisers in Auchterarder and Edinburgh?

It is a matter of concern that the energies of leaders of Clan Societies should be overcommitted to legalistic argument over the form of the name of the reborn Clan when matters of the financial viability of the Clan are pressing; and when it is clear that the strength of the future Clan lies in the emotional attachment, through music, song, ballad, story and physical visitation, to homelands in the Highlands and Islands from which we can all draw inspiration, no matter where we live now nor what we call ourselves. No one really knows how the voices of our distant ancestors sounded in the ears of the scribes who first recorded their names; nor how succeeding generations of clerks, often fearful and semi-literate, transcribed the written words relating to the names and histories of scattered clansfolk. We do know that it is only the coming of the printed word and the proliferation of points of legal nicety that have put a premium on spelling.

Concern is deepened by the fear that all of Dr. Earle MacPhee's endeavours, succesful so far and supported by so many loyal and yet different members of the Clan, will be negated on his death unless goodwill and commonsense supervene quickly to ensure a firm base for the raising of a Chief, the end to which we all aspire.

(\*) Delegation to Sir Iain Moncrieffe

- Dr. Earle D. MacPhee, International Clan Seneschal (Canada).
- Miss Sylvia MacPhee, Canadian Seneschal.
- Darcy MacPhee, British Columbia Society.
- De Vane Middleton, President, MacDuffee Clan of America.
- Ruth MacDuffee Veeder, Secretary, MacDuffee Clan of America.
- Ulf Macfie Hagman, Sec., Thorburn-Macfie Family Union, Sweden.
- Belle McPhee Brew, Convenor, McPhee Clan Society, New Zealand.
- Rev. James Duffy, Acting-President, Macfie Clan Society, Scotland.
- Alex. L. MacPhee, Seneschal, Macfie Clan Society of Australia.

(\*\*) Delegation to Malcolm Innes of Edingight, Lord Lyon Designate

As above, with the addition of

- Keerie McPhee, Keeper of the Records, Scotland.
- Ted Smythe, V/Pres(ACT), Macfie Clan Society of Australia.

*Ted Smythe*