



1ST MARQUIS OF MONTROSE SOCIETY

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SOCIETY AGM 2008

May 24th saw the society gather at St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh for our Annual General Meeting.

In keeping with tradition members assembled at the Montrose Memorial in the Chapman Isle for a short commemoration, led by society chairman Malcolm McVittie.

Despite being severely challenged by the resident choir in practice Malcolm delivered a poignant address in remembrance of The great Marquis.

Pausing only to pose for a photograph on the steps of the Cathedral the group made its way to the nearby Parliament Hall for a visit to the place where the sentence of death was pronounced upon Montrose in 1650. This special visit had been arranged by Malcolm McVittie and access to the Parliament Hall is not

normally granted to members of the public.

We then made our way a short step down the High Street close to the spot where the barbarous execution of Montrose was carried out.

Throughout all this we were expertly ushered by Malcolm McVittie who delivered interesting and informative commentary on the historical events.

We then departed for lunch and the AGM, which this year had been arranged at the premises of the Royal Scots Club in Abercromby Place.

The lunch and accommodation which was provided by the RSC was excellent and this was followed by a wonderful address by historical author, and society honorary member, Ronald Williams.



Members of the society
pose on the steps outside
St Giles Cathedral

RONALD WILLIAMS ADDRESSES THE SOCIETY

It was with immense pleasure that our chairman welcomed to the AGM author and historian, and society honorary member, Ronnie Williams, who had agreed to come to address the society after the AGM. Ronnie was accompanied on this occasion by Mrs Williams, and their friends Mr & Mrs John Finn.

In 1975 Ronnie published his book on the 1st Marquis of Montrose entitled, 'Montrose—Cavalier in Mourning'. The book collection of any self respecting disciple of Montrose would not be complete without this work and it is without doubt one of the best researched and written of all the books on Montrose (and I'm not just saying that because Ronnie signed my original copy)!

Ronnie spoke first of all of the political confusions and unrest of the 17th century which ultimately culminated in open conflict and civil war.

He expressed his admiration for the author C V Wedgwood who, in his opinion, interpreted the events of this period with greatest clarity.

Sir Walter Raleigh, Ronnie informed us, first spoke of the 'Black Swans' of history; those few people who throughout the ages have risen from seeming chaos to make a significant impact on history. It is Ronnie's view that Raleigh would probably have thought of Montrose as one of these swans. (We know that one of Montrose's most cherished possessions was his copy of Raleigh's 'History of the World', and members will recall seeing this very book on our recent visit to Innerpeffray Library).

Of Montrose himself Ronnie considered that he was a man who had tried to walk a path of political moderation. When it became clear however that the moderates view was to be disregarded Montrose realised his military ambition and emerged as one of Scotland's most gifted commanders.

His unique qualities of leadership were such that he, although essentially a lowlander himself, galvanised a highland Gaelic rabble into a formidable fighting force which followed and served him faithfully through the following violent campaign.

Ronnie spoke of the huge social barrier at that time between the Scottish Lowlanders and the Highland 'savages' of the north. He said that the unleashing of the highland and Irish clans upon the lowlands of Scotland was the one thing that the lowlanders could never forgive Montrose for and it was ultimately this which was to seal Montrose's fate when he finally fell into their hands.

Ronnie's talk was enjoyed immensely by those members present and the chairman thanked Ronnie and Mrs Williams for honouring the society with their presence on the day.

As well as 'Montrose—Cavalier in Mourning', Ronnie has written 'The Lords of the Isles' (about the Clan Donald), 'The Heather and the Gale' (about the conflict between Clan Donald and Clan Campbell), and 'Sons of the Wolf' (about the MacGregor and Campbell feud). I have these books in my own collection and I can recommend them most highly. BR

As a postscript to the above I must recount a story I was told some years ago by our own Jean Dundas, from Kirriemuir.

In the early 1970's, when Ronnie was putting together his book on Montrose, he had travelled to the Angus area here in Scotland to spend a few weeks researching. No sooner had he arrived when he realised that he had come without one of his most important reference books, John Buchan's 'Montrose'. Ronnie immediately placed an advert in the local press asking if anyone had a copy of the book which they would be prepared to lend him. Jean had at that time been a long time admirer of Montrose and she responded to the advertisement offering Ronnie her copy of Buchan's book. This offer was quickly accepted and Jean and her husband George travelled one day soon after to meet Ronnie and to present to him her book.

Ronnie didn't forget this kindly act and that's why, in the 'Acknowledgements' in the opening pages of his book, close to the bottom of a long list of people to whom Ronnie offers thanks, you will see the name 'Mrs Jean Dundas'.

Original copies of 'Montrose—Cavalier in Mourning' are hard to come by now but the book has recently been re-printed in paperback. The ISBN number is: 0 214 20087 6. BR

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Autumn Weekend Trip

Aberdeen

Nivon Russell has been hard at work organising the 'autumn weekend', which this year will be based at Aberdeen. The dates of the event will be 5/6/7th September.

Arrangements include a guided tour of the Aberdeen battle site, a visit to Fyvie Castle, a presentation at our hotel on the Saturday evening, and a visit to Montrose Museum on the Sunday morning.

A lot of work goes into organising these society events so do try to support them. They are great social occasions and also a great opportunity to brush up on your history!

There are still places available so if you haven't already booked your place get in touch with the trip organiser Nivon Russell straight away!

We will try to give assistance to anyone requiring assistance with travelling etc.



Ronald Williams delivers a fascinating talk to an appreciative audience at the society AGM.