



1ST MARQUIS OF MONTROSE SOCIETY

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

AGM Update

*The Onfall of Alyth,
Graeme Cruikshank* 2

*2012 Quatercentenary
Celebrations* 3

Charitable Status 4

Autumn Field Trip 4

- EVENTS
- DATES
- CONTACTS
- COMMUNICATION

SOCIETY AGM 2010

Society members and friends met at St Giles Cathedral on 22 May for the annual dedication at the Montrose Memorial, followed by the AGM.

After a few words at the memorial by the chairman, the group stood in silence for a few moments and then made its way to the nearby Parliament hall, where Montrose had been led in 1650 to hear his pronouncement of death.

This fine hall, although somewhat altered internally over the years, still retains its wonderful hammer beam ceiling under which Montrose heard his sentence read. It is said that during the sentence Montrose raised his eyes to the ceiling and the view which would have met his gaze that day would have been the same as that which met ours.

After this the group walked out into the sunshine to see the nearby market cross, and also to view the position of the old tollbooth (now demolished) in which Montrose was held

captive prior to his execution.

Taking advantage of the beautiful summer weather the majority of members walked down to the Royal Scots Club in the New Town where the AGM was to be held.

Once again we were treated splendidly at the Royal Scots Club and the AGM was followed by an excellent buffet lunch.

Much discussion was had at the meeting, particularly on the subjects of the 2012 commemorations and charitable status for the society, and more about this can be read in this newsletter.

Following the AGM the group was delighted to welcome to the meeting Graeme Cruikshank, from The Old Edinburgh Club, who gave a talk on 'The Onfall of Alyth', a subject about which very few of us knew anything.

This fascinating talk, more about which can be read in the pages following, brought to an end an interesting and informative day.



The Chairman leads the group in homage at the Montrose memorial, St Giles Cathedral.

'The Onfall of Alyth'

The society was extremely privileged to welcome to the AGM Graeme Cruikshank, from 'The Old Edinburgh Club', who gave a fascinating talk on 'The Onfall of Alyth'.

The Old Edinburgh Club is a prestigious local history society, formed in 1908, which concerns itself with all aspects of the history and development of Edinburgh. The society is famous for its publishing of 'The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club' which is renowned as a source of well authenticated information on all aspects of Edinburgh's history.

Graeme's talk to us on this occasion was not about Edinburgh but rather about an event which occurred on 28 August 1651 in the Perthshire town of Alyth and which effectively snuffed out Scottish home rule for 10 years.

To set the scene Graeme explained that when Charles 1st was executed by the English Parliament in 1649 the Scots infuriated their southerly neighbours by immediately proclaiming Charles 2nd King, not just of Scotland, but of England as well. As a result of this the English Parliament ordered the invasion of Scotland under Oliver Cromwell.

Following the subsequent disastrous defeat of the Scottish forces at the battle of Dunbar (3 Sept 1650) the Committee of the Estates, the effective ruling government of Scotland, had been on the run as region after region of Scotland fell under English control. In a desperate move the Scots invaded England in August 1651 and, although Cromwell followed with the bulk of his army, he left behind a strong force under the command of Lieutenant General George Monck.

Monck continued to harry the Committee of Estates and they were forced to flee Stirling and then Dundee as the

English approached.

It was whilst he was besieging Dundee that Monck learned that the Estates had fled to Alyth, about 16 miles from Dundee, and were assembling a force to march to the relief of Dundee.

Seizing his chance, Monck dispatched Colonel Matthew Alured with 800 troopers to seek to disrupt the Estates preparations.

The surprise was almost complete when, despite the fact that the Scots had gathered a force of around 4000 troops, Alured fell upon the Committee and captured them almost to a man. The Scots force had been billeted and dispersed around Alyth and as a result of this no defence of any kind was mounted. The coup was almost bloodless and chief amongst the captives was the Scots general Alexander Leslie, Earl of Leven, effectively Commander in Chief of the Scottish forces. He was joined by no less than 12 nobles; 17 gentlemen of quality, 9 ministers and 2 ranking soldiers.

Thus the Scottish Government was, in one swift action, extinguished. Six days later the Scottish army was routed at Worcester. This effectively ended Scotland's military opposition of England and Scotland was virtually reduced to an English province.

Why the 'Onfall of Alyth' ? Well it was recorded as such by a local town clerk to reflect the manner in which the English had fallen swiftly upon the Scots forces.

Graeme concluded by saying that whilst the Onfall of Alyth was a brief event, and one which does not feature in most Scottish history books, it should never the less be remembered as a dark day in Scotland's history, and one which had a considerable effect upon the fate of the Scottish nation.



Graeme delivers his address at the AGM.

2012 Celebrations

Readers of the newsletter will recall the article in the last newsletter relating the opportunity to celebrate in 2012, the quatercentenary of the birth of the first Marquis of Montrose. The general framework of the celebrations remains the same. Much work has been done but, as yet, little has been achieved. We still hope to have a documentary broadcast early in 2012 made by the BBC. The BBC has yet to make a decision. If they say no, other companies might be interested. The Service in St Giles is likely to go ahead and it is hoped that the Scottish Government will host it. A decision on that is awaited.

So far, we have failed to find a suitable site for an exhibition in Edinburgh but there are still a number of venues to be investigated. We have a number of exhibits already earmarked and loans of several items have been agreed. Our Patron is also offering his support. Fiona Hyslop, the minister for culture and external affairs, has offered a number of documents from the National Archives and I shall be viewing those next week. We do however have a venue in Stirling, thanks to the encouragement of Fergus Wood, a local member and Provost of Stirling. Dr Elspeth King, the curator at the Smith's Art Gallery and Museum, is an enthusiast for Montrose, which is enormously helpful. We are also hoping to persuade Angus Council that a further Montrose Exhibition in an anniversary year will be worthwhile.

The Minister of St Giles is looking for a suitable date in May 2012 at or about the time of the General Assembly for a service of commemoration/remembrance/celebration. It is hoped that the Scottish Government will host the service to give the service a higher national profile. The aim would be to invite a core of guests, the descendents of those concerned on both sides, representatives of the main Scottish cities and burghs concerned as well as society members. There would also be tickets for the public. There may or may not be some sort of refreshments for invited guests after the service.

The producer of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo has pencilled in an item about Montrose for the 2012 Tattoo. Alastair Hutton, a new member of the society, has agreed to prepare a 'script' for such an item. The society could also offer battlefield tours in conjunction with a travel agent. There are a number of travel agents who are active in this field and this may prove popular with the Clan Graham Society of North America as well as other groups of the Scottish diaspora.

Many have expressed concern that these plans are too ambitious and that we should settle for something less. I would be over the moon if we managed to achieve all of this. If we only achieve one exhibition then we will have achieved more than we usually do each year. I do urge you to support what we are trying to do and if you have any relevant expertise please let me know how you can help.

Malcolm McVittie

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MONTROSE SOCIETY

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Charitable Status —

M. McVittie.

It is a great pity that there were not more members of the Society at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) this year as we discussed some important issues. In particular, the Society decided that it should proceed and seek charitable status. A previous attempt at seeking charitable status prior to the establishment of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) was abandoned because it seemed to be an extraordinarily complex business. However, the society made a preliminary approach to OSCR who agreed that the Society was a suitable candidate for charity status subject to modest amendments to the Constitution. The Society agreed those amendments at the AGM and their effect is that in the event of the Society ceasing to be a charity or being wound up the assets of the Society should pass to another charitable body with similar aims.

The purpose of charitable status is to make the raising of such funds as may be necessary for our celebrations in 2012 very much easier. Grant making trusts and public bodies are much more likely to make grants to another charitable trust with a Scottish Charity number to verify their status. Similarly, the Society would be able to make use of 'gift aid' in the case of any donations. Unsolicited donations have been made before and it may be that the Society would wish to solicit donations from individuals as part of our fundraising effort for 2012.

Including in the programme for 2012, described elsewhere, is the possibility of running some battlefield tours. Clearly, there would be some costs involved for those taking part and the Society should be able to charge non-members who participate a fee. As such, the Society would be trading and hoping to make a profit. There may be elements in these costs which would not have a strictly charitable application and therefore should be dealt with separately from the charity. This can best be achieved by forming a trading company linked to the charity, which could spend and earn freely. At the end of each trading period any profit can then be donated to the charity free of tax. The decision on whether to form a trading company need not be taken for some time and is relatively easily achieved at very modest cost. If any member wishes to become a director of the trading company in due course please let me know. The company would be a private company limited by guarantee with each director bearing a liability of £1 each should the company fail.

It is not our intention to turn the society into a commercial enterprise and it is not our intention to change the character of the society. However, these changes should put us in a much better position to benefit from the opportunities that the events of 2012 might offer us.

Carbisdale / Ardvreck Weekend—Autumn 2010

Arrangements are now well in hand for the Autumn gathering at Carbisdale and Ardvreck in September.

A minibus will run from Edinburgh and members will meet at Culloden visitor centre on the afternoon of Friday 3 September. 2 nights accommodation has been booked, firstly at Dingwall and then Ullapool.

The battlefield address will be conducted at Carbisdale by Malcolm McVittie and this promises to be both an enjoyable and an informative weekend.

It is not too late to come on the tour but, if you haven't done so already, do get in touch with the secretary **WITHOUT DELAY!** These are always great social weekends; make sure you don't miss it!