

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

By Ken McNaughton

The annual general meetings of the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide up to 2019 were held at Highland Games, where members could also meet one another and explore the surrounding countryside. With the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 and some perceived advantages of electronic meetings, in-person AGMs may become less frequent.

In 2020, the Annual General Meeting of the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide was held electronically for the first time, by Zoom, with twenty-six attendees. Previously it had always been combined with a Highland Games gathering somewhere in the USA. An electronic meeting can easily be attended by members all over the USA, United Kingdom, Australia and elsewhere. I attended four of the last five in-person AGMs 2015-2019, and published my experiences in *The Red Banner* and in the Articles section of our website. Details of the Highland Games and the AGMs were always fully reported in *The Red Banner* by the convenors and the Chairman. My articles included geographic details of the area and described some of the touring I was able to do either side of the meeting. Members can still attend the Highland Games and explore the countryside in these areas. For each of the four meetings featured here, I have included some brief extracts from the relevant article, which can be read fully on the website.

2015: LOON MOUNTAIN SKI RESORT, LINCOLN, NEW HAMPSHIRE

After shuffling slowly through separate lines waiting to pay by cash or credit card, I found the Clan Macnachtan tent immediately [1]. We were the Honored Clan at this Games, which meant we were to lead the Parade of Clans and would be singled out for special mention. Our 20 x 20 ft (6 x 6 m) tent was right near the entrance and I was able to greet our chairman, Peter McNaughton, and to meet some other members of the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide who I had read about but had never met.



**Macnachtans, the Honored Clan on the parade ground,
Loon Mountain, 20 September 2015.**

We were ushered to the front of the line, Peter in front with our standard, the rest of us four abreast, with two of our young children helping to carry our banner in front. A bagpipe band led the way and the other clans followed us. It was a glorious sunny day with a clear blue sky. We were surrounded by green mountains. People gathered either side to take photographs as we

marched off. We entered the large parade ground, surrounded by bleachers and happy spectators. I waved frequently and tried to focus on some people in the crowd. Sometimes whole sections of the crowd waved back. The band turned left to march across the center of the ground toward the reviewing stand and then turned right.

The Macnachtan Clan followed but turned left to remain by the stand. The other clans lined up in the center of the field, two ranks facing each other, each clan with a standard bearer up front. The master of ceremonies announced over the public address system “I have just been informed that the clans have gathered.” A wave of emotion swept over me. So this is what it must have been like in Scotland. A crisis had arisen. The word got around. Clans marched for miles through the glens and over the mountains until they reached this lush valley surrounded by hills. I started to cry. A young woman who was the British Consul brought greetings on behalf of all the nations of the United Kingdom. The master of ceremonies gave special mention to the Macnachtan Clan and we all shouted the clan motto on cue. Then, as each of the other clans was mentioned, the clan standard was raised and the war-cry was shouted.

Back at the tent we shared lunch and just before our annual general meeting, Jenna McNutt, an associate producer/reporter from the NH1 television station in Concord, sat in our tent and interviewed our chairman for five minutes with her camera whirring. For the rest of the day, I chatted with new and old clan friends and visitors to our tent, visited the tents of other clans, and looked at merchandise for sale. At one point, I was stopped by two elderly brothers who had been sitting opposite me in the bus. They knew I lived near Baltimore because they heard my conversation with Benjamin and they were thrilled to see me marching with the Honored Clan.

The White Mountains are the most rugged mountains in New England. There are numerous geological wonders in the Franconia Notch State Park, but I wanted to see the Flume Gorge at the base of Mount Liberty. The two-mile trail that includes the gorge passes by the Great Boulder, crosses the Pemigewasset River via a covered bridge built in 1886, and comes to Table Rock. A narrow boardwalk crisscrosses the 800-ft long gorge, which culminates in the 45-ft Avalanche Falls. The trail passes Liberty Gorge, the Sentinel Pine Covered Bridge and the Pool, surrounded by cliffs 130 ft high. After this exhilarating excursion, I kept a 7pm reservation at Gypsy’s Café in Lincoln—Indonesian swordfish with peanut sauce, white rice and asparagus tips, followed by lemon berry mascarpone cake and decaf coffee.

2017: KRULL PARK, OLCOTT, NEW YORK

The 17th Annual Niagara Celtic Heritage Festival & Highland Games were held in Olcott, New York. During the annual general meeting of the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide I was privileged to be recognized and added to the Clan Macnachtan Honor Roll [2]. Sean Pogue is commissioner for the northwest section of eastern USA for the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide. He convened the association’s tents at the Celtic Festival with the help of his wife and extended family. I was talking with Sean by the McNaughton tents when he became aware we were being photographed from behind. The photographer was none other than the famous sculptress Susan Geissler. We corralled the chairman of the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide, Peter McNaughton, to illustrate three different McNaughton tartans.

**Macnachtan tartans: Sean Pogue in the Dress,
Ken McNaughton in the Ancient,
Peter McNaughton in the Weathered, September 2017.**

Canada lies to the left of the Niagara River and the USA to the right. As water enters the Niagara Gorge, Buffalo is to the right. Just before the gorge narrows, Goat Island divides the flow. Water flows over the Horseshoe Falls on the Canadian side and over the American Falls on the USA side. In summer, on the American side, scaffolding around the Bridal Veil Falls gets very close to the water. On the Hurricane Deck I let out a scream of delight as I backed into the 70-mile-per-hour wind generated by the rushing waters. On board the Maid of the Mist, we were surrounded by the Horseshoe Falls on all sides and shrouded in mist and spray from that mighty torrent. It was an exhilarating experience, but I did feel a bit relieved when we turned and headed back.



2018: ALAMEDA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, PLEASANTON, CALIFORNIA

A flight across country to the Scottish Highland Gathering & Games presented by the Caledonian Club of San Francisco enabled me to sample two outliers in the Bay Area—Pleasanton and Marin County [3]. These games have been held for 153 years in the area, and for the last 22 at the Alameda County Fairgrounds in Pleasanton. It was estimated that 50,000 people would attend the Games in this small town over Labor Day weekend and all the recommended hotels were at least five miles away. After several searches on AirBnB I discovered excellent accommodation right in Pleasanton, less than two miles from downtown and the Fairgrounds. I made arrangements with Paul by email and was met at the door by his wife Dana. She showed me to my comfortable room and I had a quick swim in the backyard pool.

This was where I was headed—to the Alameda County Fairgrounds, which includes the Pleasanton Fairgrounds Racetrack. This was built in 1858, making it the oldest one-mile (1.6 km) horse-racing track in the United States. But on this Labor Day weekend the 270-acre (110 ha) facility was host to the Scottish Highland Gathering & Games. I wandered by the athletic competitions, the marching bands, the Highland dancing, the concerts, food stands, whisky tasting, birds of prey, sheep dog trials and gift stalls to the clan area. Keith Everett was convening four Macnachtan Clan tents. This was an opportunity not only to see officers with whom I usually only email, but also to make contact with members of the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide on the other side of the continent. Over the two days I met some interesting people, all searching in one way or another for their family roots.

On Sunday I was able to introduce Shandy, who is half McCracken and half Navajo, to Ed, whose grandmother was a McNaughton and who is half Cherokee. Two days prior, Ed had married April, who was with him. I was very impressed by watching the Royal Scots Renaissance Faire Guild, Family of Folk, portray the Royal Court of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, in the year 1562. The players were all dressed in colorful period costumes and spoke in

dialect, keeping in character and portraying typical court procedure. Her Royal Guards presented a pageantry of military maneuvers with weapons that was quite scary.



Pleasanton, site of the 2018 Highland Games and AGM, is bottom right in this Bay Area map.

The young woman who played Mary was very vivacious and charismatic. I saw her dancing in a mixed circle. She came by the Macnachtan tents just before our annual general meeting and shared a wee dram of McNaughton whisky with us. She insisted on giving me a hug and one of her courtiers left a small royal token with me.

After the Games, I had time to investigate Sausalito, in Marin County. I strolled up and down Bridgeway, explored the plaza, and found myself in the Bubble Street Art Gallery. Daniel Merriam opened it in 2012, an emporium celebrating creativity and the imagination where he and other steam-punk-infused artists showcase their work. Normally his wife Yulia runs the gallery but I had come at a rare moment when he was filling in. When I asked if the music on his Pandora sound system was by Carlos Santana, he noted coincidentally that Carlos lives in Sausalito. Daniel often sees him at the Angelino Italian restaurant, and once ran into him at the local hospital. My car was parked next to Angelino's, so I asked the Mexican attendant if he ever parked for Carlos Santana. He froze for a split second, and then said softly, "Yes."

2019: STANLEY PARK, ESTES PARK, COLORADO

On Saturday morning, the clans, including Macnachtans, parade to downtown Estes Park.

The tents for the Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival could be seen across Lake Estes from my bed-and-breakfast [4]. Every hour on the hour, four cannons were fired in rapid succession to herald the festival, and smoke hung in the air. On Saturday morning, clans paraded downtown, which created some excitement. From the bed-and-breakfast, I circled to the east, parked at lakeside, and walked into Stanley Park. Peter



McNaughton, chairman of the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide convened the tent with the help of Paula Renshaw, secretary, and her husband Jim, and Peter's daughter Laura, with her husband Matt and son Colton. For me, the highlights of the two-day festival were parading into the Welcome Ceremony with the Macnachtan Clan in presence of the Northern Caledonian Pipe Band; attending the AGM of the CMAW and proposing we explore the possibility of allowing daughters of the Chief to inherit the title; attending a jousting competition with Peter and his family; attending (with Erin Grantham, a new recruit from Denver) a trick-riding demonstration by four young women currently traveling with an Italian circus; twice joining the mosh pit for a performance by the charismatic Scottish Celtic rock band Albanach; and dancing an entire set up front at a performance by the Celtic rock band Tempest, from San Francisco.

When I heard that the 2019 annual general meeting of the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide was to be held in Estes Park, Colorado, I decided to add some hiking in the adjacent Rocky Mountain National Park. For photos and a full account, read the article on the CMAW website, under Articles, USA. There you will find stories about all the adventures I had in and around these four annual general meetings. You can design your own adventures by planning in advance to attend a meeting and adding a trip to the places you want to see.

REFERENCES

1. McNaughton, Ken, [The White Mountains](#), CMAW website, 22 September 2015, (9 photos, 1 map).
2. McNaughton, Ken, [Northwest New York State](#), CMAW website, 24 September 2017, (19 photos, 3 maps).
3. McNaughton, Ken, [Bay Area](#), CMAW website, 8 September 2018, (43 photos, 1 map).
4. McNaughton, Ken, [Rocky Mountain National Park](#), CMAW website, 20 September 2019, (67 photos, 3 maps).

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