

The St Fillans Highland Society- (1819-1839)

Preamble



The Society was formed on the 28th of May 1778 when twenty-five Highland Gentlemen met at the Spring Garden Coffee House in London, in order to form a society “that might prove beneficial to that part of the Kingdom”.

For over two-hundred years the Society has been influential in matters pertaining to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. In 1782 it procured the repeal of the Disarming Act (passed after the rising of 1745 and which, amongst other things, prohibited the wearing of Highland dress); and from 1784, secured the restoration of the

Forfeited Highland Estates.

The Society was also instrumental in setting up the forerunner of the British Fisheries Society in 1786, leading to the founding of fishing villages in Ullapool, Tobermory and others. In 1815 it established the Royal Caledonian Asylum (now Royal Caledonian Schools), to educate needy children of Highland decent living in London. In 1902 it successfully blocked the attempt to abolish the wearing of the Kilt as the field dress of Highland Regiments.

In 1781 at Falkirk on the 10th of October they organised a piping competition, as Falkirk sits on the border between Highlands and Lowlands, it would have been very difficult to prove that a tune played there was played in the Highlands and fell foul of the Act. 13 pipers competed each playing two or more tunes. The winner was Patrick McGregor son of John McGregor who had been piper to Prince Charles Edward during the ‘Forty-five, he became piper to the society. The competition was a great success and continued annually, later in Edinburgh, and then became triennial, and paved the way for piping compactions as we know them today.

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[The Scottish Highland Society](#) was funded in 1784, to promote the regeneration of rural Scotland, as well as the preservation of its poetry, language and music. Initially with the help and assistance of the London Society to whom it was associated prizes were awarded annually for piping, dancing and poetry, however by the mid 1830s both societies had

begun to restrict their support, and began changing their approach more towards agricultural improvements, cutting back on the preservation of other rural pursuits.

The St. Fillans Highland Society instituted in 1819, by Peter Robert Burrell, husband of Sarah Clementine Drummond, of Drummond Castle, only surviving daughter of James Drummond 11<sup>th</sup> Earl of Perth. On his death in 1800 she inherited a large fortune, along with his estates in Perthshire. After her marriage to Peter Robert Burrell in 1807, they adopted the name Drummond-Burrell by royal warrant.

Just one year earlier as part of the estates improvement plan her husband had given the village its new name, and set in motion a change of culture more in keeping with the London Societies thinking.

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Perthshire Courier 14th October 1819 On the 22nd last, under the patronage of the neighbouring gentlemen, a great many Highlanders in their proper garb, met at St. Fillans near Comrie, Perthshire, in order to establish a Highland Society, for the annual distribution of prizes :- to the best piper that may appear at their competitions on the fourth Tuesday of August annually – to him that writes the best essay, in Gaelic, on such subject as may be given out by the Society – to the best four untaught dancers of Highland reels – to the best, and truest set of clan tartan that may be produced; and to him that sings the best Gaelic song, &c;- and also to support aged and distressed members, members widows, orphans and funerals; all of which met the approbation of those present, and a regular authority from one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace being produced, agreeably to the acts of parliament passed in the 39th and 52nd year of his present Majesty, a set of office bearers, was elected, and the meeting being duly constituted, a scroll of laws and regulations was produced, which was unanimously approved of;

“The meeting further agreed that another fund be established for the support of the aged and distressed members, widows, orphans, and funerals, &c., agreeable to the following laws and regulations for admission - to the society.” It was fixed that the ‘Annual General Meeting’ of the society be held annually on the fourth Thursday of August, at St Fillans;

that no member be allowed to join the procession under the age of 45 years unless dressed in a good tartan dress with short coat, kilt, tartan hose, &c., but those over the age of 45 years may put on tartan trousers if desired. "That; the office-bearers shall consist of a chaplain; - 2 vice-chaplains; treasurer & secretary - and 10 members."

The rules also set out what benefits members were to receive from the funds if unable to work or were laid aside by illness 2/6 per week being allowed; while 12/- was allowed for "funeral money, &co., and 21/- annually paid to widows or orphans till 10 years of age, during their good conduct."

Those entering as effective members to derive benefit from the funds shall pay 5/- of entry money, one shilling to the secretary and sixpence to the officer, and two shillings annually. When the fund amounts to £50 (*any member who has been four years in the Society clear of all arrears and unable to work for his support shall upon application by line to the Convener of the committee attended by two members or where they cannot be found by a parish minister and two elders, shall receive 2/6 per week during his distress if less than six months, but after that 2/- per week during the remainder of his distress*); *If any member draws money from the fund under a fraudulent claim a fine of 10/- will be imposed for each offence.*)

Another rule provided that "if any member be convicted of defaming the Society, .., curses, swears or takes the name of God in vain or attempts to introduce politics connected with church or state, for each offence shall pay one shilling sterling. If a member comes drunk to meetings, he shall pay for each offence 5/- and be obliged to retire from the meeting, such fines to go to the effective fund.

A procession through the village of St. Fillans took place, in which the members were honoured with the company of neighbouring Gentlemen in full tartan dress. On their return to St. Fillans Inn, they were counted of by fours, when to the Scotch Highland bagpipes; they all joined in dancing the reel of houlichan. Afterwards the members partook of an excellent dinner in the St. Fillans Inn, and the evening was spent with that harmony and conviviality which caricaturises the clans of Caledonia; when many loyal and patriotic toasts were given from the chair, and drank with great applause.

1819 - Highland Society Meeting room and Banqueting hall built in time for the 1820 games

Adjoining, the village Inn. In addition to organising the highland games they also gave their support to aged and distressed members, member's widows, orphans and funerals.

'Mr Brown described the hall as a well planned, commodious building, with a flat projecting roof, after the French fashion; and when the ground surrounding it is railed in, and otherwise tastefully disposed of, it will be a useful ornament to the village and district at large. The large room, properly styled the hall, will dine one hundred and forty gentlemen.'

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## *Edinburgh September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1820, the Official Report*

The second annual gathering of the St Fillans Highland Society was held on 30<sup>th</sup> August. Members from different parts of the country arrived in detachments, marching with their respective pipers at their head: and after they had all met, and joined in a general procession, the competitions began, the first was for a very handsome pair of bagpipes, given by the right honourable Lady Gwydir, (to whom, with Lord Gwydir, the society feel much obliged.) No less than fourteen pipers exhibited amongst whom were some of the first pipers in the highlands. The next was for Gaelic songs, the composition of members of the society, of which several good specimens were given. This was followed by foot racing and putting the stone; and some excellent highland dancing, and all closed by a procession of the members, preceded by their pipers. About 150 members of the society were present, all dressed in the full highland garb, and a number of new members were admitted. In addition to this, the meeting was attended by a splendid and numerous parties of all the neighbouring gentry, who came with their families in their carriages, the ladies being particularly attired in tartan.

Among the gentlemen present were Sir Patrick Murray of Ochtertyre, Bart; James Murray, Esq. of Abercairney; Thomas Graham Stirling, Esq. of Airth; Anthony Murray, Esq. of Crieff; Anthony Maxtone, Esq. of Coltoquhey; George Graham, Esq. younger, of Inchbrakie; James Drummond Esq. of Balquhandy; &c all of whom have become members of the society. Lord Mollineux an English nobleman, who has spent several seasons in this part of the country, also honoured the meeting with his company, dressed in full highland garb.

The society then sat down to a plentiful dinner (to which Lord Gwydir had handsomely sent both a red and a fallow deer), Robert Stewart, Esq. younger of Ardvorlich, in the chair, Patrick Drummond, Esq. of Aberuchil, croupier. After dinner the prizes were distributed, and a number of appropriate toasts, both in Gaelic and English being drunk, the meeting parted at an early hour, in the greatest harmony and good humour.

The fineness of the day and the novelty of the exhibition attracted a large concourse of well dressed spectators from all parts of the country, and it is computed that betwixt two and three thousand were present.

Although this society has only been in existence a very short time, it has already excited considerable spirit in the country for the resumption of the Highland Garb and the retention of the Gaelic language, both of which were lately to have fallen into disuse.

### *Extract from an Old Diary      Observations on a day out to the St Fillans Games*

*30<sup>th</sup> August 1820 – Wednesday,*

*All active soon after seven. Aghast to find it a wet day. It, however, cleared up. Nine was the hour we were to meet at the M'Comish's, (The Distillery) to set out. All punctual but our conveyance. He (the driver) had to go back and put the saddle on for himself to ride, which hindered us sadly. However, at last we did*

set off, the gig party off long before. J. Gowans and W. M'Comish hung about our coach expecting to be taken in. Had been disappointed in a cart. It ended at last in our taking W. M'Comish. Two or three little showers on the road, but altogether a delightful ride, and such another gay lively road as it was; am sure we passed 100 carts, all filled with people dressed in their best, besides other conveyances. Had a delightful ride. Arrived at last at the foot of Loch Earn. A new village built since I was there before, called St Fillans. The houses all have neat little flower plots before the doors. A decent-like Inn. Tents covered with blanket meant for the members of the said Highland Society to dine in. We were a good while there before anything was done, till the different chiefs arrived. The first was the Ardvorlich family in a boat down the lake. Received with plenty of piping. Abercairney came then, and Lord Mollineux, the eldest son of Earl Sefton. He is just now at Drummond Castle. He represents Lord Gwydyr. The competition for the best pipe playing commenced then. A kind of stage was erected for the dancers, and forms round for the ladies to sit. We accordingly all got places, and were about deafened with the pipes. Terrible showers of rain came, which made us run to the covered tents. In that way lost our places, which we could not regain. At last all our party got on the head of the noddy beside Mrs. Tainsh. Heard the singing of the Gaelic songs, not by any means good. Her, Mrs. T., on great restraint on being so near Sir P and Lady Mary Murray's carriage. What lovely girls their daughters. Is a very great display of genteel people there. They all went to another place to throw the putting-stone. In coming down off the noddy my petticoats caught it, and had it not been W M'Comish, I might have been killed. Tore my good bombazine petticoat. Joined by another party. Went into a cottage and drank wine and ate biscuit. Our coachman had by this time drawn our carriage up to the stage, and we all got on the dicky and top to see the dancing. Sp – e shut the coach-door on my hand. Bled my fingers sadly. He was so distressed about it, poor thing. Sat in agony, not so much from that as from fear of falling, it being so much to one side-the coach. Did not see the dancing well. Donald M'Comish exhibited. Jessie in such a state at him for doing so. He is a bad dancer. But otherwise looked very well, and his dress fully as handsome as any there. I was glad enough when it was over. Came all down safe. Went in search of a place to dine in. Invited into a house by a maid of Mrs. Barlas to her house, and took our dinner much more comfortable there than on the wet grass, and had plenty of everything. Twelve of us altogether. Wished D M'O in too, and the young man that was with him, but they would not come. After, went out to look at the company at dinner in the tent. Walked round them. Young Stewart of Ardvorlich, at the head, supported by Abercairney on one hand and Lord Mollineux on the other. Young Drummond of Strageath, at the bottom of the table. After seeing all this we went in search of our conveyance. However, found Mr. Turnbull was to go to Lochearnhead with M'C--ts, and take the gig, so there would be a pretty set to go home in the coach. Put Jessie in such a state about getting Christy home with Dannie in the gig. Flew up the side of the lake seeking him. Met him and his companion coming down in the gig. Each had his lass on his knee. Dannie had Miss Guild, so mortifying for them to have to dismount. It was changed after. Willy went in the gig, and Christy to go with us in the coach. After a great deal of discussion we did get off. Christy and me on the Dicky. Mrs. Murray, Miss Mackenzie, Jessie M'O., and my two sisters of course, it was well filled. Just dark before we arrived. All down to Mrs. Murray's to tea. Nine o'clock. Miss Caw had it so comfortable. So glad of my feet warming. Very cold up on the Dicky. Those inside in such a heat. Mr. Turnbull rode west on Mrs. Murray's horse and lamed it. Could carry nobody home. Glad enough after all our hair-breadth escapades to be safe in our own house. Played at whist after.

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### *1821 - Edinburgh Courant*

Writing in the *Edinburgh Courant* in 1821 Mr Samuel Carment commented “On Monday last the annual meeting of Saint Fillans Highland Games took place in a small park at Lochearnfoot, opposite to the village of Saint Fillans. The situation was well chosen for the purpose. It forms a kind of amphitheatre, where a large stage was erected to accommodate the ladies and judges. Early in the morning the company began to assemble. The different Clans appearing, descending the stupendous mountains for which the country is so remarkable, all dressed in full Highland costume, with bagpipes playing in front, and claymores drawn, as they approached the ground for competition. Their appearance was noble and warlike in the extreme; the different gentlemen appeared to vie with each other in the elegance of the ancient garb and in the athletic appearance of their clansmen. They met like Highlanders, greeting each other with a sincere shake of the hand. The company being assembled, thousands of pedestrians were seen seated in the front of hill overlooking the stage, and upwards of twenty carriages belonging to different noblemen and gentlemen, exhibited in the mist of these sequestered mountains a display of beauty and fashion that would have graced the ball-room of any metropolis. The ladies were in general dressed in tartans of their respective Clans. Many of those present, both on horse and foot, came from a great distance. The signal being given to commence the sports, the marksmen fired at a target at a considerable distance, and displayed evident proofs of their superior skill. The bagpipes were keenly contested, and exhibited knowledge of music which had a most interesting effect, favoured by the situation. The Gaelic compositions gave universal satisfaction, excited great interest among the highlanders, and reflected much honour on the competitors. The foot race took place on Loch Earn side for one mile, which was gained in grand style; the winner ran the last half-mile with evident ease in less than two minutes. The sports of the day terminated with a boat race for two miles on Loch Earn, which was decided in favour of Mr. McIntyre’s boat. Thereafter the members sat down to an elegant dinner, four deer having been presented by Lord Gwydir.”

### *1821 - Peter McArthur built the first Foot Bridge over the River*



Transcript of a letter to the honourable (Clementine Elphinstone) Lady Perth from Alexander Baxley; Dated *Monzjeeveird* 14<sup>th</sup> September 1821

*Madam,*

*I have been prevented from obeying your ladyships commands till now by several circumstances which required my attention since I arrived here – Indeed being absent from the St. Fillans meeting, I could not write on the subject at all, till I got from those who were present at the meeting, an account not merely descriptive of the exhibition itself, but of the spirit which animated it. For this purpose I went soon after my arrival to the castle, to consult my good acquaintance Peter McArthur and obtain from him a minute & technical detail of the various joining's of the platform prepared for the dancers, 35feet x 20 – and of the wooden bridge of 65feet, both of which had with an alacrity unprecedented, been erected by him in the course of two days. The bridge is thrown over the Earn exactly at the place it opens from its present lake: the platform Peter represents, to have been an uncommonly springy one; and he infers that the superiority of the dancing this season compared with the last was principally owing to his skill in constructing such a strong item. Whether it wd have met with the approbation of “The divine bigatini or sweet fanny bias” is a question which would come more accurately to be described by Albert Des-Hayes or my Lord Fife than by Peter: it is certain however, that the highlanders were thoroughly pleased with it, and that it asked in no small degree the attention of their bronzed and muscular limbs.*

*At an early hour, the roads leading to St. Fillans were crowded, the toll roads as they are called with articles of all sorts, - from the gently barouche filled with ladies fair down to the humble farm cart. The gigs and shandrydams were engaged for weeks before by the genteeler sort of chaps from Crieff and the surrounds, and I am told that many an old article, that had served as a roosting place to several generations of chickens, was taken out of its dark shed and furbished up for the occasion, as it was necessary they said, to appear purpose like, as my lord was to be present.*

*Most of the men of mountain blood, disdaining all manner of conveyances, appeared from their glens on foot, each clan proceeded by a piper; and by their pairs in martial air, with their claymores drawn, formed a strong contrast to the lowlanders who were seen, plodding there weary way, by the more regular turnpikes.*

*Upwards of three thousand people had already arrived; some of whom had come from a great distance, and were refreshing themselves at the Inn with mountain dew and bottled porter (now a common drink in Scotland).*

*The various groups of lowlanders and highlanders would have formed admirable subjects for our immortal Wilkie – between 12 and 1 o'clock they proceeded along the wooden bridge to the scene of action, around which several parties had already stationed themselves.*

*The platform was situated in the hollow of a natural amphitheatre of fine old turf, and was surrounded by an outer roped ring, an improvement no doubt borrowed from the pugilistic exhibitions in England, which not only had the effect of preventing the pressures of the crowd on the competitors for the prizes, but offered room for the pedestrians, to seat themselves near it, while those in the back ground, easily overlooked them from their carriages.*

*The uncommon beauty and sublimite of the scenery around the spot where so many had met, to celebrate the manly sports of this country, gave to the whole, a most imposing effect.*

*On the west, lay a noble lake of seven miles in length, and upwards of one in breadth, skirted with copewood and surrounded by lofty mountains, some of which fall into the lake by an abrupt, others by a*

*gentle declivity. On the east was seen nearly the same range, and a similar outline of mountains; only, instead of a lake we trace the river which has just left it, running in a quiet, tho clean alpine stream through a beautiful meadow, until it loses itself among isolated hills, which start up from the plain, in rugged and perpendicular splendour. Copse and creeping plants, still find in the crevices of the rocks, a little earth for their support. And adorn with their verdure, the scathed and barren rocks of these fantastic hills.*

*But, however much those objects of natural beauty might have disposed one to contemplation – the competition which now commenced, with shooting at a target, soon attracted the attention of everyone.*

*Lord Gwydir's silver cup value five guineas, was won by Donald McComish, younger son of McComish, distiller in Crieff. Donald is an enthusiastic highlander and may be distinguished by the passing traveller by the Rob-Roy-bonnet of prodigies' size. The wits of Crieff call him "the lad wi the bred bonnit": in the same way they may after the manner of Homer, give epithets to the rest of the successful competitors. Thus as well as Achilles, McNicol the shepherd of Ducheran in Glenorchy who gained the prize at the footrace may be styled the fleet footed Ducheran.*

*It would seem that there was a keen contest for the prize piper; value eight Guinness, which were awarded to William McFarlane, Glenartney.*

*It would appear that Pipers like poets, are rather of an irritable disposition, by them grumbling sadly at the performance given by successful candidate. The cognisant after bearing all the pipers with a gravity and importance fully equal to the Lord Chancellor gave their decision, after weighing their performances meticulously and dispassionately! – braving the bagpipes, despite any pretensions to comparison, with any musical instrument in Europe, it is still entitled to our highest regard. It is an instalment with which magnificent and patriotic ideas are allied, it is the medium by which the hearts of the finest people in the world, are warmed to deeds and melted into affections, the most tender and refined.*

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> prizes of a dirk and sporran Mollach----- were awarded to Donald Gun & Alex Dewar.*

*The footrace took place along the road on the north bank of the lake; and although seven runners started, it was won in grand style by McNicol a shepherd of Mr Peter McIntyre of Achinnara, he ran the mile in four minutes with the greatest apparent ease, and danced a reel immediately after, to the great amusement of the spectators. The prize was a sporran Mollach given by Lord Gwydir value £3. 3s Brown and Erskine gained the second and third prizes.*

*There were three prizes also awarded to the best thrower of the putting stone John Brown who gained first prize (Lord Gwydir's also) of a Snuff Mull, value three Guinness, although a man of low station, threw a stone 22 pound weight to a very uncommon distance. John McDonald and Donald Stuart took 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> prizes.*

*A Gaelic Bible was given to Hugh McQueen for a Gaelic song of his own composition. The same McNicol, who had gained the prize for running, gained the second prize for an original song also, N McDonald the 3<sup>rd</sup>.*

*Comrie the innkeeper at Comrie gained Lord Gwydir's Silver (prize) Buckles for dancing, and the whole of the day of entertainment was wound up by several reels, in which a great many joined.*

*The whole exhibition was wound up with a boat race on the lake, for Lord Gwydir's silver cup, value ten Guinness and was won after a hard struggle by Mr Peter McIntyre's boat. The spectator's, betted half muskies of whiskey, as freely on the race as those who sport thousands at lawnmarket. Mr McIntyre's boat was brought from Greenock; the unsuccessful one was built by Captain McRae and was manned by island-bred highlanders. I had the pleasure of seeing the beautiful prize for the boat race, exhibited in a cupboard at Achinnara, among various tokens of Lord & Lady Gwydir's munificence.*

*The dinner provided for the society displayed the old baronial style of entertainment: everything plain and plenty of it: four magnificent haunches two of the red – 2 “shot in Glenartney's hazel shade” and two of the fallow species, together with game of every description, from the extensive lakes and moors and grounds of Perth estate – were presented by Lord Gwydir. – Dinner being delayed this late hour, it may be easily conceived, that the party, who sat down to it, were pretty well appetized, and that they had little desire to enter conversation “until the stage of eating was appeased”; as soon however as they were fairly brought to a standstill, and when, the frequent applications of mountain dew in its unsophisticated state had lost its power in wetting the appetite to a renewal of alacrity, the expediency of introducing toddy, was suggested by some of the trenchermen and sundry highland stragglers, were in consequence of their tried skill and great experience, elected to those honourable and ambitious situations and in a few minutes reeking bowls of toddy, enriched with numerous glasses adorned the board, now cleared of its finest cloth.*

*Miserable Cockneys! Can your adulterated bowls of Punchy\* (\* is made of brandy and rum with lemon, sugar and hot water. I must own it is not all together to be sneezed at.) made by the inexperienced hand of some bar-maid, or your gin or brandy and water hot-with sugar be compared for a single moment, with the pure libations of highland whiskey toddy? No! You might as well compare your tiny pint, to our pint stoup that holds three times as much as yours.*

*But I am afraid I have exhausted your Ladyships patience with the length of my descriptions. It will suffice for the present to say that after the usual toasts were given, and Lord & Lady Gwydir's health drunk, with three times three and all the honours of the table, that the utmost hilarity prevailed, till the parties returned to their respective homes, rejoicing no doubt in their hearts, that their Lord, although an Englishman, was pleased to encourage the favourite amusements of their country.*

*I should justly add that his Lordships condescending and tender conduct to his tenants----- since, has not merely increased by far ----- proprietors, as he is also the-----proprietor in the country: - but has set a salutary lesson to many, who have been of late disposed to withhold, that return of regard, which is due to those who pay them both their rents and their homage.*

*I have the honour to be Madam, your ladyships much obliged and grateful humble servant*

*Alex Bakley*

*The Honourable: Lady Perth, 126 Park Hill, Hyde Park, London*

*(This letter was readdressed and delivered to Brighton)*

## *Prize Winners 1821*

*Shooting at a Target 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Gnydir's Silver Cup (value five Guineas):*

Donald McComish the Distillery Crieff

*Foot Race over One Mile: 1<sup>st</sup> A Sporrán Mollach:*

Achilles McNicol, Shepherd to Mr Peter McIntyre, Ducheran, Glenartney; 2<sup>nd</sup> Brown; 3<sup>rd</sup> Erskine;

*Putting the Stone: 1<sup>st</sup> A Snuff Mull (value three Guineas):*

John Brown; 2<sup>nd</sup> John McDonald; 3<sup>rd</sup> Donald Stewart

*Original Gaelic Song: 1<sup>st</sup> A Gaelic Bible:*

Hugh McBean; 2<sup>nd</sup> Achilles McNicol; 3<sup>rd</sup> H MacDiarmid

*Dancing 1<sup>st</sup> Pair of Silver Buckles:*

Comrie, Innkeeper, Comrie

*Boat Race 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Gnydir's Silver Cup (value ten Guineas):*

Peter McIntyre's boat

*Best Piper of the Pibroch on the Great Highland Bagpipe*

*Lord Glenorchy's prize pipe (value eight Guineas):*

William McFarlane, Glenartney 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Donald Gunn, Alexander McDonald

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## *Caledonia Mercury 9<sup>th</sup> September 1822 St. Fillans Highland Society*

The fourth anniversary of this Society took place on Monday last, at the Village of St. Fillans, the property of the family of Gwydir, at the foot of Loch Earn. Notwithstanding the very unfavourable state of the weather, a great number of people were collected to witness the spectacle, and many handsome equipages of the noblemen and gentlemen of the surrounding country were on the ground. The meeting of the members of the Society was held at nine o'clock, when the Chieftains, Judges and office-bearers for the ensuing year were chosen. After twelve o'clock the amusements commenced by putting with the stone, after which a competition of pipers on the great Highland bagpipe, for a handsome prize pipe, the gift of William Stewart Esq. of Ardvorlich, chieftain for the year, which was adjudged to A. Dewar, piper to Sir Neil Menzies of that ilk. Colonel Stewart of Garth made a suitable address to the successful competitor on presenting him his prize pipe. Various exhibitions of skill in dancing, running, leaping and firing at a target, &c. occupied the time until the hour of dinner, to which about fifty gentlemen sat down in a marquee, provided for the occasion- The chair was filled by Mr Stewart of Ardvorlich, supported by Mr Wedderburn, Secretary of the Highland Society of London, and Colonel Stewart of Garth, Mr Stewart, younger of Ardvorlich acted as croupier. Many loyal and appropriate toasts were drunk, and the company separated at a late hour, much gratified by the conviviality and good humour which pervaded the meeting.

### *'The Ardvorlich Chanter Mount'*



The games took place on 30<sup>th</sup> August, the day after King George VI finished his visit to Scotland. The chieftain for that year William Stewart of Ardvorlich awarded a silver chanter mount,

As 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the Pibroch: to Alexander Dewar, piper to Sir John MacGregor. This same chanter mount was entered into an auction sale at Lyon & Turnbull and sold for £188 on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

The third prize that year went to John MacGregor, piper to the Duke of Athol.

Amongst the company that year were Lord Molyneux, Sir Frances and Lady Sykes, Mr Graham Stirling of Airth, Mr Moray of Abercairney, and Major Moray Stirling, Mrs Beveridge Duncan of Damside, Mr & Mrs Maxton of Coltoquhey, Mr & Mrs Murray of Dollerie, Mr Gartshore Murray, Mr Stewart of Glenbuckie, Mr Robertson of Tullibelton, Mr John Ramsay, Mrs Drummond of Strathgeath, Messrs William, George and Thomas Drummond, Mr Rose, Mr Oliphant of Condie, &c.

The greater part of the gentlemen wore highland garb, and we particularly remarked the splendid dresses of Lord Molyneux, Colonel Stewart of Garth, Mr Graham Stirling, Abercairney, Mr Wedderburn, Mr Ramsay, &c. The tenantry of the family of Perth and Gwydir were handsomely dressed in the Drummond tartan, and wore in their bonnets the Holly Bough, the badge of their ancient name. Had the day been more favourable the effect would have been beyond measure fine, even under all the disadvantages, the varieties of the tartans and gay colours of many of them – the company broken into picturesque groups by the nature of the ground – the shrill notes of the bagpipes re-echoed by the surrounding hills, and above all the grand and romantic features of the mountains, the lakes, the rocks, and the woods which distinguish Loch Earn, render the meeting of the St Fillans Highland Society one of the most interesting and beautiful scenes that can be imagined.

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### *The Scotsman 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1823 – St Fillans Highland Society*

The Society had its annual exhibition at the beautiful village of St Fillans, on Thursday last, and excited a great interest in the West Highlands. The several roads leading to this village presented a most enlivening scene, as their hardy tartan-clad sons and dark-eyed damsels filled the winding tracts of the mountains around Loch Earn. As soon as the day began to peep, the population sallied forth from every quarter, and notwithstanding the forbidding aspect of the morning, all seemed ardently bent on beholding the Chieftains of their lands, and resolved to devote the day to festivity. Late in the morning; appeared the Chiefs in their carriages; gentlemen in their phaetons, gigs &c. All, in short, that could command

conveyances of any description were seen rolling along and making the glens echo with unwanted sounds. At St Fillans the eye was delighted by the diversified appearance of the adjoining hill. The groups of Highlanders in their various tartans – intermixed with the more sombre drapery of the southern visitors, had a novel and picturesque effect. Below were seated the judges, encircled by rows of Highlanders keeping the ground; and directly in front of the platform erected for the competitors were seated the ladies of rank, in a temporary shade set out with evergreens in a tasteful manner. About twelve the competition for Pibroch commenced; the candidates were numerous, and in general gave satisfaction. Then followed the dancing of reels; after which came the ancient dance across swords, which was elegantly performed by two Highlanders, and two young boys, who received great applause from the judges. The throwing of the canon ball in the manner of the putting stone came next, and was keenly contested by three Highlanders, remarkable for their strength and elegant appearance. The longest cast was between 29 and 30 feet. Gaelic songs followed; but unfortunately the rain, which had long threatened to disturb the festivity of the day, now descended in torrents, and with such noise as entirely to drown the voice of the singers- This had the effect of driving off most of the audience who had previously borne showers with much patience. The Ladies and Gentlemen of rank partook of a collation prepared for them in the shade, but the rain continuing, the general company were constrained to separate. And thus ended the meeting, anxiously anticipated; and which was really, the most numerous, elegant and most fashionable ever witnessed on the banks of Loch Earn. Among the company present were, Lord and Lady Gwydir, Lord Mollineux, Sir D Baird, Colonel D Stewart, Count Flauhault, Moray of Abercairney &c.

### *Perthshire Courier 5<sup>th</sup> September 1823- St Fillans Highland Society*

#### *List of Prize-winners*

##### *Prizes for the best Pibroch on the Great Highland Bag Pipe:*

##### *1<sup>st</sup> The Most Honourable Chieftain's prize of a Handsome Pipe:*

Awarded to Alexander Bruce, piper to Bruce of Glencieg, Isle of Sky; Being the best player of fourteen competitors

##### *2<sup>nd</sup> A Handsome silver mounted Dirk:*

Awarded to Donald Gunn, piper to the Royal Perthshire Militia

##### *3<sup>rd</sup> A Sporrán Mollach:*

Awarded to John McGregor, Fortingall, and late piper to his Grace the Duke of Athol

##### *4<sup>th</sup> The Right Honourable Lady Gwydir's Prize Purse of three Sovereigns:*

Awarded to Donald Gunn, as best player of Highland Reels on the bagpipe

##### *Putting the Stone (a Cannon Bullet 22lbs)*

##### *1<sup>st</sup> a large Snuff Mull handsomely mounted with silver with pebble on top:*

Gained by Robert Carrick, Bridge of Drip, Stirling, Throw 29 ft half ins

##### *2<sup>nd</sup> A Sporrán Mollach:*

Awarded to Daniel McInnes, Ardoch

*3<sup>rd</sup> Pair of Stocking Hose:*

Awarded to Alexander Robertson, near Airth Castle, Stirlingshire

*Dancing 1<sup>st</sup> Dancing of Reels: a Sporrán Mollach:*

John Campbell, Edinample

*A pair of Stockings: to each of the next three best competitors:*

William McFarlane, St Fillans: James Miller, Wright, Drummond Castle: John McGregor, Tulliecan, Breadalbane.

*Ancient Scotch Sward Dance: a Sporrán Mollach:*

William McFarlane, St Fillans

*Highland fling: a Sporrán Mollach given by John McGregor:*

Wm McFarlane

*Boy Dancers under the age of Fourteen*

*1<sup>st</sup> Lady Gnydir's Prize: a large silver brooch for the best dancer of Highland Reels:*

Alexander Morison, son of John Morison, Comrie

*2<sup>nd</sup> Plaid:* Findlay Carmichael, St. Fillans

*3<sup>rd</sup> Pair Stocking Hose:* David Tainsh, junior, Crieff

*Boys Sword Dance 1<sup>st</sup> Plaid of the Graham Tartan given by the Chieftain:* Alex Morison

*2<sup>nd</sup> Pair of Stocking Hose given by the Chieftain:* Findlay Carmichael

*Leaping for Men 1<sup>st</sup> Handsome Snuff Mull silver mounted with Large Topaz set on top:*

Gained by John McGregor, Tulliecan, and Breadalbane

*Boys Highland Leap Large Silver Brooch:* 1<sup>st</sup> John McGregor, Ardeonaig: 2<sup>nd</sup> David Tainsh, junior, Crieff

*Gaelic Composition Prize: Handsome Gaelic Bible, in two volumes and Ossian's Poems, bound in Morocco and Gilt:* Gained by Peter McNaughton, Balquhiddy

*Gaelic Song Prize: Ossian's Poems, in Gaelic, bound in Morocco and Gilt:* Gained by Duncan McNicol, shepherd to Mr P McIntyre, Glenartney

*Best Dressed Highlander 1<sup>st</sup> Handsome silver mounted Powder Horn, given by the Right Hon, Lady Gnydir:* Awarded to, Robert McAra, vintner, Muthill

*2<sup>nd</sup> A very large Silver Brooch, given by the Right Hon. Lady Gnydir:* Awarded to, James Miller, Drummond Castle

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Office bearers for the ensuing year appointed at the Annual meeting 27<sup>th</sup> August

Chieftain James Murray of Abercairney

Vice Chieftains:

The Hon John Stewart: The Right Hon Lord Gwydyr: Major Moray Stirling of Ardoch

Anthony Maxton Esq. of Coltoquhey: Stewart of Glengyle:  
 Alexander McLaurin of Bruich  
 Marshals: Anthony Oliphant Esq. of Condie: Robert Stewart the younger of Ardvorlich:  
 Lieutenant Patrick Drummond. RN: Donald McDonald Esq.

**ST. FILLAN'S HIGHLAND SOCIETY.**

**THE FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** of the SOCIETY will take place, at the Village of ST. FILLAN'S, LOCHEARNFOOT, PERTHSHIRE, on the 27th August next, precisely at Nine o'clock, A. M. for Electing the Officers-bearers, Examining the Accounts, and Transacting the Business of the Society; the Members to be equipt according to the Society Regulations, and the Competitions to commence immediately after the Private Business of the Society is arranged—supposed to be about Eleven o'clock.

| The following PRIZES given by MEMBERS<br>of the SOCIETY.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | By the SOCIETY.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <p style="text-align: center;">BY THE RIGHT. HON. LADY GWYDYR.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To the Person most Correctly Equipt in the Highland Garb—<i>A Silver-mounted Powder Horn.</i></li> <li>2. To the Second Best do.—<i>A Silver Brooch.</i></li> <li>3. To the Best Player of Highland Reels on the Bag-pipe—<i>Three Sovereigns.</i></li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;">TO BOYS UNDER FOURTEEN YEARS OF AGE.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. To the Best Runner of a Foot Race, 200 Yards—<i>A Suit of Dressing of Perth Tartan.</i></li> <li>5. To the Best Dancer of a Highland Reel—<i>A Silver Brooch.</i></li> <li>6. To the Second Best do.—<i>A Plaid.</i></li> <li>7. To the Third Best do.—<i>A Pair of Hose.</i></li> <li>8. To the Fourth Best do.—<i>A Pair of Hose.</i></li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;">BY THE RIGHT HON. LORD GWYDYR.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To the Person who makes the Highest Leap—<i>A Silver-mounted Snuff Malt.</i></li> <li>2. To the Boy under Fourteen Years who makes the Highest Leap—<i>A Silver Brooch.</i></li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;">BY THE MOST HON. CHIEFTAIN THOMAS GRAHAM STIRLING, ESQ. OF AIRTH AND STROWAN.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To the Best Player of Pibrochs on the Great Highland Bag-pipe—<i>A Handsome Pipe.</i></li> <li>2. To the Boy under Fourteen Years who is the Best at the Sword Dance—<i>A Plaid of the Graham Tartan.</i></li> <li>3. To the Second Best do.—<i>A Pair of Stocking Hose.</i></li> <li>4. To the Best Marksman at a Target—<i>A Dirk, the one half to be paid by the Chieftain, and the other by the Society.</i></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To the Second Best Player of Pibrochs on the Bag-pipe—<i>A Dirk.</i></li> <li>2. To the Third Best do.—<i>A Sperran Mollach.</i></li> <li>3. To the Best Dancer of the Scotch Ancient Sword Dance—<i>A Sperran Mollach.</i></li> <li>4. To the Second Best—<i>A Pair of Stocking Hose.</i></li> <li>5. To the Best Dancer of Highland Reels—<i>A Sperran Mollach.</i></li> <li>6. To the Second Best do.—<i>A Pair of Stocking Hose.</i></li> <li>7. To the Third do.—<i>Ditto.</i></li> <li>8. To the Fourth do.—<i>Ditto.</i></li> <li>9. To the Best Thrower of the Putting Stone—<i>A Large Snuff Malt, Silver-mounted.</i></li> <li>10. To the next Best—<i>A Sperran Mollach.</i></li> <li>11. To the Third Best—<i>A Pair of Stocking Hose.</i></li> <li>12. To the Gaelic Bard who can produce the Best Essay, Song, or Poem of his own composition—<i>A Gaelic Bible, in 2 vols. and Ossian's Poems, handsomely bound in Morocco, and Gilt.</i></li> <li>13. To the Second Best do.—<i>Ossian's Poems in Gaelic, extra bound in Morocco, and Gilt.</i></li> <li>14. To the Best Singer of a Gaelic Song—<i>Ditto.</i></li> <li>15. To the Best Runner at a Foot Race—<i>A Sperran Mollach.</i></li> <li>16. To the Second Best do.—<i>Ditto.</i></li> <li>17. To the Third do.—<i>A Pair of Stocking Hose.</i></li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;">BY JOHN M'GRIGOR, ARDVORLICH.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To the Best Dancer of the Highland Fling—<i>A Sperran Mollach.</i></li> </ol> |

Those intending to Dine, will leave their names at St. Fillan's Inn, before One o'clock P. M. on the day of Competition.

**Competitors will attend to the following Regulations:—**

1. Those intending to compete for Prizes, will lodge their names with the Secretary, in Chief, or Treasurer, at St. Fillan's, at least twenty-four hours previous to the Competition, mentioning what they are going to compete for; and meet the Committee, at St. Fillan's, by Eight o'clock on the morning of Competition, all equipt in the Highland Garb. All communications to be sent free of expense to the Society.
2. Pipers to lodge, in Gaelic and English, the names of Five Pibrochs; and those going to compete for Reel playing, will lodge the names of Five Highland Reels, any of which they may be required to play.
3. Gaelic Bards will each lodge Four Copies of the Pieces intended for Competition—each copy separately sealed, and the four put under cover, addressed to the Secretary, and delivered on or before the 22d August.
4. None but Members of the Society will be allowed to compete for any of the above Prizes, (and they clear off all Arrears, and obtain a Certificate from the Secretary to that effect,) except for the Pipe and Boys' Prizes, for which strangers are allowed to compete.
5. Boys to produce a regular Certificate of their age, when booked, and be equipt in the Highland Garb.
6. Those who gained a First Prize, will not be allowed to compete for the like Prize again; but they may compete for the Secondary Prizes.
7. If only 2 Run at the Race, there shall be but One Prize; if 4 Run, Two Prizes; and if 6 Run, there will be Three Prizes.

By Order of the Committee.—**DAVID TAINSH, Secretary.**

## 1823 Flyer

“Between” 1823-1828 The London Society provided £5 to £10 in prize monies to the St. Fillans gathering along with in 1823 and 1825 copies of McGregor Murray's ‘Poems of Ossian’. Prizes designed both to delight and educate. The winner of the Pibroch competition was also presented with a prize pipe. However from the very outset the Edinburgh society was eager to stress that it ran the competitions on behalf of the London Society with no liability of its own.

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## *St Fillans Highland Society Games held on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1824*

*Extract from the Perthshire Courier 10<sup>th</sup> September*

At eight o'clock, the - Most Honourable Chieftain for the games, Mr James Moray of Abercairney, the Vice Chieftains and other the other office-bearers, and members of committee, attended at St. Fillans Inn, and made the necessary arrangement for the feats of the day. At eleven o'clock the members of the society were marshalled opposite the Inn, and from thence marched, by the bridge of Dundurn, to the arena appropriated for the games, headed by their chieftain, who was supported by his vice chieftains, the other office-bearers and about 250 of the St. Fillans Highlanders, carrying in their ranks the colours of a highly distinguished Highland Regiment, the whole equipped in the Highland costume, and attended by nineteen piper competitors. The martial appearance of the members of the Society, the glistening of their claymores, added to their soldier like demeanour, gave splendour to the procession, which was calculated to inspire enthusiastic and patriotic feelings into the vast multitudes assembled to witness the exhibitions. Scarcely had the members got themselves arranged round the platform erected for the competitors, when an announcement was made that a deputation from the Stirling and Bannockburn Caledonian Society, headed by Ronald MacDonald, Esq. of Staffa, was at hand. The Chieftain ordered the St Fillans Society immediately to form and march out to meet, and welcome their neighbouring clansmen. About one o'clock the Chieftains of the Clan Drummond (the amiable Lady Gwydir) accompanied by her Noble Lord and distinguished guests, arrived, and were received by the clans with raptures applause.

In 1824 a young Edwin Landseer on his first visit to Scotland along with his friend and mentor Charles Leslie arranged a short visit into the highlands. J. R. Aitken in an article in *The Scotsman* described their visit to Loch Earn thus: - "They visited Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine, whence they walked across the hills to Loch Earn to be present at an annual gathering of Highlanders under the patronage of Lord Gwydir. In a large rowing boat, on a morning fresh and fair, and destined to live long in their memories, they left Lochearnhead for the other end of the loch, a distance of seven miles or so, accompanied by a number of Highlanders, men, women and children. As they rowed down the loch, the rowers amused them with stories of the fairies that inhabited the shores, though the fairies were fearfully real and serious enough to the Celtic mind. Ever and anon, they heard the distant sound of bagpipes, and saw the hills enlivened with parties of Highlanders in costume, each headed by a piper, and all bound for the place of gathering. This little voyage gave them an entrance to the wonder-world of Highland life. 'The amusement of the games which we afterwards witnessed,' they wrote, 'was nothing to the delight of gliding gently down the clear smooth lake with such accompaniments.' " *It is thought that there could not be less than eight thousand persons present*

After the conclusion of the games, the prizes were adjudged and awarded as follows:

### *Prizes Winners 1824*

*Prizes for the best Pibroch on the Great Highland Bag-Pipe*

*1<sup>st</sup> The Most Honourable Chieftain's prize of a handsome pipe:* Awarded to Donald McKay, late piper to G. R. McDonald, Esq. of Clanronald; who formerly had gained the prize pipes at the competitions of Edinburgh and Muthill, and who is now appointed piper to the Stirling and Caledonian Society.

*2<sup>nd</sup> A handsome silver-mounted Dirk given by the Society:* Awarded to: Donald McInnes of Lochaber, who gained the prize pipe at the late Fort William Competition.

*3<sup>rd</sup> A Dirk awarded by the Society:* Awarded to John McGregor, piper to The Earl of Breadalbane, who gained first the inferior prizes, and then the pipe at the Edinburgh Competition.

There were in all nineteen Pipe Competitors, the execution on the Great Highland Bag Pipe of Donald Gunn, piper to the Royal Perthshire Militia, and his regular attendance, endeared himself to all the members of the St Fillans Highland Society.

Angus McKay son of John McKay, piper to the Right Hon Lord Gwydir, a boy under fourteen years of age, gave the audience great satisfaction; it was his first appearance on the St Fillans boards, but he had previously gained a prize for Reel playing at Muthill.

*Ancient Highland Sword Dance 1<sup>st</sup> A Sporrán Mollach given by the Society:* Gained by Findlay Carmichael, St Fillans *2<sup>nd</sup> A pair of Hose given by the Society:* Awarded to Peter McNaughton, Bridge of Ardoch

*Highland Reel Dancing 1<sup>st</sup> A Set of silver vest buttons given by the Society:* Awarded to William Scott, gamekeeper, Abercairney *2<sup>nd</sup> A Plaid of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Tartan:* Awarded to William Stewart Maxtone Dochart McGregor, medical student, Dalmally (*returned to the Society, to be awarded next year as a prize for the Highland fling*)

*Foot Race Prize: A Sporrán Mollach given by the Society:* Gained by John Brown, Bailmore, by Killin

Prizes given by the Highland Society London, with appropriate inscriptions engraved on the face

*putting stone a ball 22lb weight 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome Snuff Mull with cairngorm on top and silver thistle on front:* Gained by Mr Mien, Yetts of Muchart, throw 30 foot 4 inches

*2<sup>nd</sup> A Skein Dhu richly ornamented with silver and cairngorm on top:* Gained by Robert Bell, near Kippen, a member of the Stirling and Bannockburn Caledonian Society

*Throwing the Sledge Hammer 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome Snuff Mull with cairngorm on top and silver thistle on front:* Gained by Robert Bell, near Kippen: *2<sup>nd</sup> A set of Sword belts complete:* Gained by John Brown, Bailmore, by Killin



*Tossing the Bar 1<sup>st</sup> A Silver Brooch:* Gained by Robert Bell, Kippen

*2<sup>nd</sup> A Tobacco Spieachean richly ornamented with silver:* Gained by Gilbert Brown, Glenogle, by Lochearnhead

*Rifle Shooting A prize given by a member of the Society - Handsome silver mounted powder horn with weighty silver chain:* Gained by the Hon Lord Mollineux

*Plain Gun Shooting Prizes given by Captain May of Mugdrum 1<sup>st</sup> Shot Two Sovereigns:* Gained by Lieutenant Fletcher, Royal Perthshire Militia, St Fillans: *2<sup>nd</sup> Shot One Sovereign:* Gained by Grigor McGregor, Callander

*The Prizes: normally awarded for Gaelic Composition and Broadsword Exercise, were ordered returned to the chest; as prizes for next year's games; There being an insufficient number of competitors for them this season.*

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Office Bearers Appointed for the Ensuing Year

At the annual meeting in the Society Hall 31<sup>st</sup> August

Chieftain: The Right Honourable Lord Gwydir

Past Chieftain: James Moray Esq. of Abercairney

Vice Chieftains: The Honourable John Stewart: Major Moray Stirling of Ardoch:

Alexander McLaurin Esq. of Broich: Lord Mollineux:

James Drummond of Strathgeath: Thomas Graham Stirling Esq. of Airth and Strowan:

Marshals:

1<sup>st</sup> Donald McDonald Esq. of Craiglee: 2<sup>nd</sup> Anthony Oliphant Esq. of Condie:

3<sup>rd</sup> Lewis Kennedy, Pitkellony: 4<sup>th</sup> Donald McDonald 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment

Chaplains and Judges of Gaelic Competitions

The Reverend Patrick McIsaac, Comrie: The Reverend Alexander McGregor, Balquhidder

The Reverend Alexander McDonald, Crieff

Treasurers:

Lieutenant Alexander Stewart, Royal Perthshire Militia, St Fillans

Mr Duncan McLaren, Taxman of Derry, Lochearnside

Secretary: David Tainsh, Watchmaker, Crieff

Steward: David Stewart, St Fillans

Committee members for Districts. 1824-5

Crieff

Alexander McLaurin Esq., Thomas Graham Stirling Esq.,

Comrie

Lieut. Patrick Drummond R.N Mr James Comrie.

St Fillans

George Drummond Esq. - Lieut. Fletcher - Robert Stewart - James McNaughton  
Balquhider

Messrs. John McArthur and Robert Stewart  
Callander

Donald McDonald Esq., 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment - Thomas McLaggan Esq.,  
Aberfeldy

Mr James Drummond, Surgeon, Bannockburn

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*The Caledonian Mercury 8<sup>th</sup> September 1825*

*St. Fillans Highland Society Games*

*Reports: - that the seventh annual games were held on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> August, under the direction of Major Moray Stirling of Ardoch, in attendance was a deputation from The Highland Society of Edinburgh, headed by Lord Glenorchy, their president, and another from the Stirling and Bannockburn Caledonian Society, under the command of Thomas Graham Stirling, Esq. of Airth and Strowan, their chieftain. Prize Winners 1825*

*Best player of Highland Pibroch on the Great Highland Bagpipe 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome full mounted pipe - given by the most honourable chieftain Major Moray Stirling of Ardoch - John Mor McGregor, piper to Lord Breadalbane, 2<sup>nd</sup> A silver mounted dirk - to John MacGregor, piper to Mr Farquharson of Monzie*

*Ancient Scottish Sword Dance 1<sup>st</sup> A set of patent leather sword belts: Ralph Erskine*

*Highland Reels 1<sup>st</sup> A Silver Broach: William McFarlane, St. Fillans: 2<sup>nd</sup> A Tartan Plaid: Ralph Erskine*

*Ancient Scottish Sword Dance - Awarded to boys under 14: 1<sup>st</sup> A set of handsome Dirk handles; and a plaid: Alexander Morrison, Comrie. 2<sup>nd</sup> A tartan Plaid: Ralph Erskine*

*Highland Reels - Awarded to boys under 14 years of age: 1<sup>st</sup> A Philibeg: D. Erskine  
2<sup>nd</sup> A Plaid: Alexander Morrison, Comrie*

*Putting Stone 1<sup>st</sup> A Handsome Silver Mounted Snuff Mull, by W Auld Esq. Edinburgh, a member: Lawrence Drysdale, Alva: 2<sup>nd</sup> A Silver Mounted Snuff Mull: Peter McKinley: 3<sup>rd</sup> A Spleuchrum: Daniel McInnis*

*Throwing the Sledge Hammer 1<sup>st</sup> A Large Silver Broach: Daniel McInnes: 2<sup>nd</sup> A set of Patent Leather Sword Belts: D Campbell*

*Tossing The Bar 1<sup>st</sup> A large Silver Broach: D Campbell: 2<sup>nd</sup> A Plaid and pair of Hose: John Brown*

*Broad Sword Exercise 1<sup>st</sup> A large handsome pair of Silver Buckles from the London Society: William Wallace, Aberfeldy: 2<sup>nd</sup> A large Silver Broach: Daniel Ferguson*

*Best shot with a Plain Gun 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome Dirk: Mungo Comrie: 2<sup>nd</sup> A Skein Dhu, mounted in silver with a Cairngorm set on top: Mr Leitch, Crieff*

*Best shot with Rifled Gun 1<sup>st</sup> Silver mounted Powder Horn: John Wilson: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tartan for a Suit: Mr David Tainsh, Crieff, and Society Secretary*

*Boat Race 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome Silver Cup, by the Scotch Society, Cambridge: James Stewart, Loch Katrine: 2<sup>nd</sup> A pair of handsome Silver Buckles by the same society: Alexander Stewart, Loch Venacher*

*At the conclusion of the presentations Mr Tainsh, the Society Secretary was presented with a handsome Silver Mounted Snuff Mull with Cairngorm on Top, for his constant zeal and attention to everything connected with the prosperity of the society.*

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*Office Bearers Appointed for the Ensuing Year*

Chieftain: The Hon John Stuart

Past Chieftain: Major Murray Stirling

Vice Chieftains:

Thomas Graham Stirling: James Drummond Esq. of Aberuchil:

John Stewart Esq. Glenbuckie: Robert Stewart Esq. Ardoch: Lord Mollineux

John Hepburn Esq.,

Marshals:

Lewis Kennedy Esq.: Donald McDonald 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment: John Brown, Aberuchil:

George Howie, Ochertyre

Treasurers:

Lieut. Alexander Stewart: Mr Duncan McLaren

Secretary: David Tainsh

Chaplains:

The Rev. Patrick McIsaac, Comrie: The Rev. Alexander McGregor, Balquhiddy:

The Rev. Alexander McDonald, Crieff

Steward: Alexander Stewart

District Committee Members

*Comrie:*

Alexander McLaurin - Thomas Graham Stirling - Anthony Maxton of Coltoquhey

*Comrie:*

Lieut. Patrick Drummond RN - Mr James Comrie

*St Fillans:*

George Drummond Esq. - Lieutenant Fletcher

Robert Stuart Esq. WS - Mr James McNaughton

*Balquhiddy:*

Messrs John McArthur and Robert Stewart

Callander:

Captain McKinley and Mr John Stewart

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## *The Caledonian Mercury 11<sup>th</sup> September 1826*

The eighth annual games were held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> August, 'on this occasion it is supposed there could not be fewer than eight thousand in attendance. Fortunately notwithstanding the gloominess of the morning, the day proved uncommonly fine'.



## Prize Winners 1826

*Best player of Pibroch on the Great Highland Bagpipe 1<sup>st</sup> The Chieftains Prize Pipe:* John McGregor, late piper to his Grace the Duke of Athol, at present piper to Archibald Farquharson of Finzean and who formerly gained the prize pipes in Edinburgh and Muthill: *2<sup>nd</sup> Ossian's poems in three volumes, given by The Highland Society of London:* John McLeod, piper to Dr. Hamilton of Lennie: *3<sup>rd</sup> A handsome mounted Dirk:* Angus McKay, Drummond Castle

*Best player of Reels on the Great Highland Bagpipe 1<sup>st</sup> A large Silver Mounted Snuff Mull set with a Cairngorm Stone:* Roderick McKay, piper to James Murray of Abercairney:  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Ossian's poems in Gaelic:* Adam McPherson, piper, Perth

*Ancient Scottish Sword Dance 1<sup>st</sup> A Silver Quiche:* James Campbell, Lochearnhead: *2<sup>nd</sup> A Pair of Hose:* Peter McNaughton. Ardoch

*Best Dancer of Highland Reels 1<sup>st</sup> A Set of Sword Belts:* John Cairns, Edinburgh: *2<sup>nd</sup> A Skein Dhu:* James Robertson, Abercairney

*Best Thrower of the Putting Stone 1<sup>st</sup> A Large Silver Mounted Snuff Mull set with Cairngorm:* William Hall from the Borders – throw of 31ft 3 and one-half inch *2<sup>nd</sup> A handsome Silver Mounted Snuff Mull:* Peter McKinley, Dulater

*Throwing the Hammer 1<sup>st</sup> A Large Silver Broach:* John Brown, Bailmore by Killin: *2<sup>nd</sup> A Set of Patent Leather Sword Belts:* Donald Brown

*Tossing The Bar 1<sup>st</sup> A Silver Broach:* Donald McInnes, Guarancabbin near Doune:  
*2<sup>nd</sup> A pair of Hose:* John Cameron

*Sword Exercise 1<sup>st</sup> Three Volumes Ossian's poems in Gaelic, presented by the Highland Society London:* John Glover, Crieff: *2<sup>nd</sup> A very large handsome Silver Broach:* Samuel Erskine, Crieff

*Boat Race Prizes given by The Scottish Society Trinity Collage Cambridge*  
*1<sup>st</sup> A Handsome Silver Cup: each boat rowed by two men –* John McGregor Glengyle:  
*2<sup>nd</sup> A Silver Quaich: each boat rowed by one man -* James Murray Abercairney

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*Office Bearers Appointed for the Ensuing Year*

Most Honourable Chieftain:

General Stewart of Garth

Past Chieftain: Honourable John Stewart

Vice Chieftains:

The Honourable Lord Viscount Glenorchy John McGregor of Glenorchy:  
Donald McDonald of Craiglee: Thomas Graham Stirling of Airth and Strowan  
Alexander McLaurin of Broich: James Murray of Abercairney  
Colonel McDonald of Dalchonzie (91<sup>st</sup> Regiment)

Marshals:

John Brown of Aberuchil: George Home of Ochtertyre: John Tainsh – Writer – Crieff  
Lieutenant Fletcher – St Fillans

Treasurers: Lieutenant Alexander Stewart, Duncan McLaren

Secretary: David Tainsh

Steward: M Stewart

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### *The Caledonian Mercury of October 1827*

Reports: - that the games were held on 6<sup>th</sup> September, under the direction of Major-General Stewart of Garth, Chieftain accompanied by Lord Glenorchy, Moray of Abercairney, Graham-Stirling of Airth, vice president. "Of all the institutions of similar objects and tendencies with the present, which of late years have been established in this country, St.Fillans enjoys pre-eminence not only from the striking magnificence of the scenery amidst which its meetings are held, but from the assemblage of rank, beauty and fashion who honour its amusement by their presence. On the present occasion, both advantages were enjoyed in their fullest extent. At this season nature is in all its glory, the weather was highly favourable and those who have seen the peculiarly romantic beauties of St.Fillans, its level plain, wooded knolls, and placid lake, with the Grampians encircling it like sentinels of an enchanted land, may imagine the additional interest which such a scene derives from the assemblage now met from all parts of the kingdom. The various objects of the institution, also, added as much to the moral effect of the meeting, as the variegated Hues of the Highland costume did to its picturesque: - these were for the relief of the poor, for the encouragement of the deserving, and to promote the practice of those athletic exercises which create a spirit of laudable emulation among the youth, and fit them for the defence of their country." Among the distinguished company on this occasion were observed –

The Duchess Dowager of Leeds; the Countess of Wilton; Lord and Lady Gwydir and Misses Drummond Burrell; Lord Glenorchy; Lord John Hart; Lord Kinnauld; Ladies Mary and Matilda Bruce of Elgin; Hon. Mrs Mary Stirling of Ardoch; Hon. Miss. Montagu; General Sir David Baird and Lady Baird and Miss Preston of Ferntower; Sir Robert and Lady Dundas; Mr David Dundas and the Misses Dundas of Dunito; Sir John Erskine and Miss Erskine from Torrie: The Hon John Gray and Miss Gray from Kinfauns Castle: The Hon John Hope; Mr & Mrs Murray and Miss Murray from Abercairney: Mr Murray Stirling of Ardoch; Sir John Ogilvie, Bart; Sir James Ramsey, of Banff; General and Mrs and Miss Moncrieff; Colonel Elphinstone: Major-General Sir Andrew Barnard; General Graham Stirling and Miss Graham of Duchray Castle; Mr & Mrs Murray of Dollerie and family; Mrs Cheap of Strathtyrum: Mr P Smythe and Miss Smythe of Methven; Miss Cameron of Lochiel; Miss Douglass Moncrieff; Miss Wedderburn of Wedderburn; Mrs Henry Cockburn and Miss Cockburn, Edinburgh; Miss Graham of Inchbrakie; Miss Graham of Fintry; Miss C Campbell of Monzie; Charles and J Bruce Esq.; J. White Melville Esq.; Capt. Graeme senior of Inchbrakie; Capt. Laurence & Mrs Graeme; Capt. William Graham of Mosknow; Mr Graeme of Garvock and family; Capt. Murray Gartshore, Ochertyre; Robert Wigham Esq. Advocate and Mrs Wigham; John Erskine of Clathick; Captain William Stewart of Murthly Castle; Mr Campbell of Glenfalloch; Mr & Mrs Stewart Hepburn; Mr Drummond of Strathgeath; Miss Roland; Dr. Stewart of Bonskead; George Wauchope Esq.; Major and Miss Reid Culdees Castle; Mr Murray Binning; William McInroy Esq. of Shearglass; Mrs Johnstone and family of Kincardine; Mr Oliphant of Gask; Captain Robertson and Lieutenant Gordon 92<sup>nd</sup> Highlanders; Robert Fraser of Struie; &c

*“Many of the company living at a distance, and Mrs Williamson of Balgray having given a public breakfast to a large party of ladies and gentlemen at Lawers House, on their way to St.Fillans, it was one o’clock before the whole assembled, and the competitions and exercises commenced”*

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## *Prizes Awarded 1827*

### *Best Pibroch on the Great Highland Bagpipe*

1<sup>st</sup> To Roderick McKay piper to Abercairney - *A handsome ornamented pipe: given by General Stewart* 2<sup>nd</sup> To John Gordon, Fincastle by Athol: *given by the Highland Society London*  
3<sup>rd</sup> To John Scott, Pitlochry in Athol

*Throwing the Hammer* 1<sup>st</sup> Peter McDougall, Braes of Fogs in Athol: 2<sup>nd</sup> Donald Campbell, Carwhin in Breadalbane

*Putting the Stone* 1<sup>st</sup> Peter McDougall, Braes of Fogs in Athol: 2<sup>nd</sup> Donald Campbell, Carwhin in Breadalbane: 3<sup>rd</sup> John McNab, Killin

*Best Shot with Ball* 1<sup>st</sup> To Duncan Menzies junior, Star Inn, Perth: Ossian’s poems in Gaelic and superbly bound, given by the Highland Society London

*Pitching or Tossing the Bar* 1<sup>st</sup> To John Duff, Moulin

*Reel Dancing* 1<sup>st</sup> To Donald Erskine, Crieff: 2<sup>nd</sup> To James Campbell, Glendochart:  
3<sup>rd</sup> To James Erskine, Crieff

*Boat Race prizes given by the Highland Society Cambridge* 1<sup>st</sup> Both Races Abercairney – *An elegant Silver Cup – and a Silver Quache*

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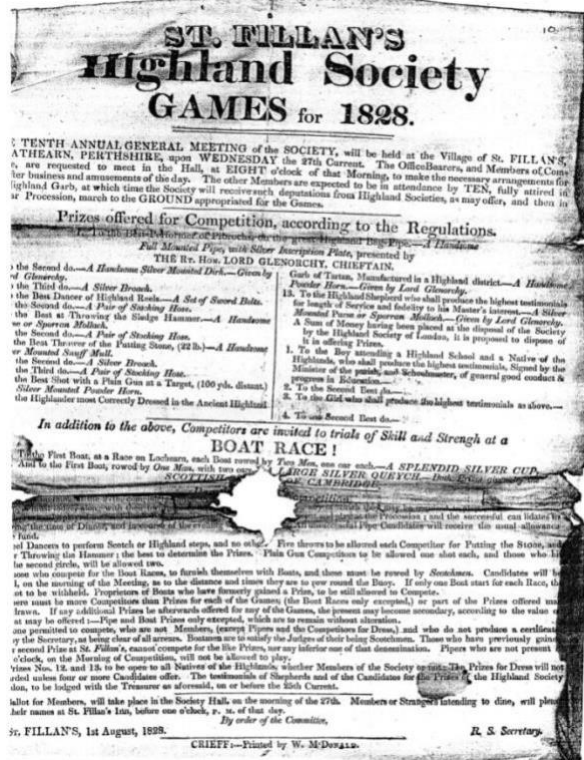
### *Office Bearers Appointed for the Ensuing Year*

Chieftain: The Lord Viscount Glenorchy  
Past Chieftain: Major General Stewart of Garth

Vice Chieftains:  
Sir John Ogilvie of Inverquhar, Bart: James Murray of Abercairney  
Thomas Graham Stirling of Airth and Strowan

Secretary  
Robert Stewart Junior of Ardvorlich

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## *Caledonian Mercury 30<sup>th</sup> August 1828*

*'Wednesday last, the day set apart for these far-famed Highland sports was one of uninterrupted sunshine'*

### *Prize Winners 1828*

*Best Pibroch on the Great Highland Bagpipes:* 1<sup>st</sup> *A handsome pair of Pipes presented by Lord Glenorchy:* John McKenzie, piper to Mr Davidson of Tulloch: 2<sup>nd</sup> James Scott from Athol; 3<sup>rd</sup> Angus Cameron from Rannoch

*Highland Reels* 1<sup>st</sup> John Robertson: 2<sup>nd</sup> Ralph Erskine from Crieff

*Throwing the Sledge Hammer* 1<sup>st</sup> Adam Wilson from Edinburgh: 2<sup>nd</sup> John McNab from Breadalbane

*Throwing the Putting Stone* 1<sup>st</sup> John McNab from Breadalbane: 2<sup>nd</sup> John McEwan from Inverpaffrey: 3<sup>rd</sup> Donald McIntosh from Rannoch

*Best Shot with Plain Gun* 1<sup>st</sup> John Robertson

### *Best Highland Dress*

1<sup>st</sup> Angus Cameron from Rannoch – an additional prize was awarded to David Patterson blacksmith from Doune, his whole accoutrements being of his own manufacture, and displayed great skill and ingenuity.

*Awards were also given:*

To Donald Dewar, shepherd in Lurg, Glenlednock for 26 years service on the same farm

To Duncan Cameron in Boreland for 21 years service

To the boys and girls who produced the highest testimonials of attention to the instruction of their teacher: Daniel McLaren and Duncan McNab from Comrie, Margaret Ferguson and Jessie McDougall from Comrie

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*Office Bearers Appointed for the Ensuing Year*

Chieftain: David Dundas, younger of Dunira

Vice Chieftains: Lord Glenorchy, Sir John Ogilvie Bart, Captain Stewart Grandtully, Dr Stewart of Bonshead

Secretary: R Stewart Younger of Ardvorlich

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*Caledonian Mercury 7<sup>th</sup> September 1829*

*'The Eleventh annual meeting of the St Fillans Society was held on 28<sup>th</sup> August. The day being favourable, the company began assembling from all quarters, at an early hour'*

*Prize Winners for 1829*

*Best Pibroch on the Great Highland Bagpipe*

*1<sup>st</sup> A Handsome full mounted Pipe:* Donald McInnes from Lochaber

*2<sup>nd</sup> A Handsome Silver Mounted Dirk:* John McDonald from Fortingall

*3<sup>rd</sup> A Silver Brooch:* Adam McPherson, piper to the Stirling and Bannockburn Caledonian Society

*Dancing 1<sup>st</sup> A set of Sword Belts:* Peter McLaren, piper, Lochearnhead:

*2<sup>nd</sup> A pair of Stocking Hose:* Duncan Menzies, piper, Glenlyon

*Throwing the Hammer 1<sup>st</sup> A Handsome Sporrán Mollach:* William Drysdale, Crieff *2<sup>nd</sup> A pair of Stocking Hose:* John McDougall from Foss

*Putting the Stone 1<sup>st</sup> A Handsome Silver Mounted Snuff Mull:* William Drysdale, Crieff

*2<sup>nd</sup> A Silver Brooch:* John McDougall from Foss



*Tossing the Bar 1<sup>st</sup> A Handsome pair of Silver Buckles:* William Drysdale, Crieff

*Boat Race 1<sup>st</sup> A Silver Quaich:* John McNab from Callander

*Best Dressed Highlander 1<sup>st</sup> A Handsome Powder Horn:* Hugh McVean from Crieff

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*Office Bearers Appointed for the Ensuing Year*  
Chieftain: Lord Willoughby de Eresby

Vice Chieftains: McPherson of Cluny, Murray of Abercairney, Sir John Ogilvy Bart,  
Captain William Stewart of Murthly

Secretary: R Stewart younger of Ardvorlich

The other office bearers to remain in office as formerly

### *Highland Society Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> August 1829*

*'In proposing "Prosperity to the St Fillans Society" the chairman stated that he was happy to inform the company, that it was the intention of the members and patrons of this interesting institution, to render it more useful, and worthy of the patronage and support of the country, by combining with its present laudable objects, a school for the instructions of the destitute poor – which was received with great applause'*

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### *Caledonian Mercury 6<sup>th</sup> September 1830*

*'Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. The weather was exceedingly favourable. The Chieftain McDonald of Staffa, presided over the sports with a characteristic zeal and activity, and Abercairney appeared in all his Highland glory.'*

### *Prize Winners for 1830*

*Best Pibroch on the Great Highland Bagpipe 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome full-mounted pipe with silver plate:*

Adam McPherson piper to the Stirling and Bannockburn Society:

*2<sup>nd</sup> A handsome Silver mounted Dirk:* John McKay, Drummond Castle

*3<sup>rd</sup> A Silver Brooch:* Charles Duff, Donavoured in Athol

*Best Dancer of Highland Reels 1<sup>st</sup> A set of Sword Belts:* John Grant. Strathspey: *2<sup>nd</sup> A pair of stocking Hose:* Roderick McKay, Abercairney

*Throwing the Sledge Hammer 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome Sporrán Mollach:* John McDougall, Foss: *2<sup>nd</sup> A pair of Stocking Hose:* D McInnes, Doune

*Throwing the Putting Stone 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome Silver mounted Snuff Mull:* Mr McKerrow, Ayrshire (31 foot 8 inches): *2<sup>nd</sup> A Silver Brooch:* John McDougall, Foss

*Tossing the Bar 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome pair of Silver Buckles:* D McInnes, Doune

*Best shot with a Rifle 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome and Costly Rifle given by Sir John Ogilvie:* Duncan McNabb, Comrie

*Best shot with a Plain Gun 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome Silver Mounted Snuff Mull:* Duncan McNab, Comrie

A Silver Medal awarded to Duncan Cameron for 24 years service to Captain Campbell of Boreland.

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### *Caledonian Mercury 8<sup>th</sup> September 1831*

*'St Fillans 31<sup>st</sup> August, the games that took place here this day, did not, from various causes, present the same attraction, they did not go off with the same éclat as hither-lay. The chieftain, we regret to say, was unable to attend, due to indisposition, and the unfavourable weather both on the day of the meeting and the previous day, was also greatly against the attendance and spirit of the proceedings. Several of the Prizes were not contested for.'*

### *Prize Winners for 1831*

*Best Pibroch on the Great Highland Bagpipe 1<sup>st</sup> A Silver mounted Bagpipe given by the Chieftain:* John McKay piper to Lord Willoughby D'Eresby: *2<sup>nd</sup> A handsome Silver mounted Dirk:* Peter McLaren, Lochearnhead

*Dancing 1<sup>st</sup> A Silver Brooch:* John McKay. Drummond Castle: *2<sup>nd</sup> A pair of stocking Hose:* James Jack, Ardoch

*Putting the Stone 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome Silver Mounted Snuff Mull:* Joseph McIntyre. Blarinroar

*Foot Race Two prizes were given by Mr George Morison, St Fillans 1<sup>st</sup> John McIntyre, Wester Dundurn: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gilbert Walker of Comrie*

*Good Conduct: A Silver Medal* Daniel Cameron, Coshnacan

### *The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia conducted by David Brewster*

Records: - "Among those recent improvements, we wish particularly to notice the village of St.Fillans, near Loch Earn. Built, by Lord Gwydir on the Drummond Estate because it proves that nothing is wanted to render the cottages of Scotland as neat and clean as those of England, and the habits of the people as orderly, but a little attention and perseverance by the proprietors. The rose and honeysuckle have here taken place of the dub and the midden, and the inhabitants have learnt to think that there may be a merit and a happiness in neatness and cleanliness."

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*Perthshire Courier 9<sup>th</sup> August 1832*

It would appear that the Athol Gathering was beginning to take over from the St Fillans Gathering and ‘bids fair to rival its sister of the lakes St Fillans.’

*Perthshire Courier 31st October 1832*

A meeting of the society will be held in the Society Hall, St Fillans, on 10<sup>th</sup> November at 1 o’clock afternoon, to decide about the rifle shot for in 1830.

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*Perthshire Advertiser 27<sup>th</sup> March 1834*

Comrie 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1834: To. Robert Stewart Esq., Secretary, St Fillans Highland Society  
Sir,

We have to request that you call a general meeting of the St Fillans Highland Society, for the purpose of ultimately disposing of the Rifle, presented to the society by Sir John Ogilvie, Bart, which was competed for at the general meeting of the society, held on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1830, we are, sir,

You’re most obedient,

Signed

John McLaren – Duncan McNab – Mungo Comrie – Donald Dochart – Peter McArter – Joseph Fashney – John Brown – John Monuson – Duncan McNaughton – John Stewart – Joseph McIntyre.

*(At the 1830 games Duncan McNab won both the best shot with a rifle at a target over 120 yards and the best shot with a Plain gun over 100 yards. After the games were over, a dispute arose between McNab and Richard’s Lady Willoughby’s Gamekeeper who stated that McNab had not stuck to the rules, and that as he Richard’s was the next best shot he should therefore receive the Gun presented by Sir John Ogilvie.)*

Robert Stewart Esq., - Secretary, St Fillans Highland Society

In terms of the above requisition, I hereby call a meeting of the St Fillans Highland Society, within the society hall, St Fillans, on Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup> April next at one o’clock afternoon.

Robert Stewart, secretary 24<sup>th</sup> March 1834

Over the years The Scottish Highland Society, had put less and less commitment on the cultural side of its remit and on several occasions indicated a growing distaste. This was made more explicit in 1834 with its re-incorporation under the title “The Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland”.

The; emphasis being on the Promotion of agriculture, and the different branches of rural affairs.

*Not long after this the Rev. John McIntyre commented "that the society had once had reference to mental culture of their Caledonian countrymen, instead of as now, unfortunately, to the physical development to the points of the inferior animals."*

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### *The Scotsman 29<sup>th</sup> August 1835*

Tuesday last being the seventeenth anniversary of the St Fillans Highland Society, its celebrated games were competed for at the village of St Fillans, with an impetus, we believe, never exceeded on any former occasion, although the unfavourable state of the weather would have damped the spirits of any other than Scotsmen, meeting with such patriotic and inspiring motives as influenced those attending St Fillans Society. The Broadsword exercise, the throwing of the sledge hammer, the dancing of Scotch reels and hornpipes, the sward dance, and the running of foot races, were what were chiefly exhibited on this occasion. The highland costume, once put under the ban of the government, is now restored to its native dignity; and many of Scotland's nobility were present on this occasion, to give éclat to its native garb, which, in the field of Waterloo, &c, became associated with everything that is valorous and enterprising.

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### *Gazetteer of Scotland 1836*

*Gives this description: "St Fillans was formerly a wretched hamlet, denominated Portmore, but it is now one of the sweetest spots in Scotland. The village has been reared and encouraged by the attention of Lord and Lady Willoughby D'Eresby (lately Gwydir), and here the traveller is delighted to find the people altogether loosing there taste for dunghills, and thatch, and peat-reek, and fast adopting a better one for slate, cleanliness and honeysuckle. The houses have all gardens attached to them, and are even in many cases surrounded by sweet shrubs and flowers. There are also a few villas built, for families who may wish to settle in this delicious spot. It is annually, in autumn, rendered a scene of high festival, by a meeting of the St.Fillans Society, which was instituted in 1819, for the pur pose of giving prizes to competitors in certain national sports, and as a benefits society for imparting aid to indigent and distressed members, widows and orphans. Their festivals are usually attended by persons of condition, male and female from all parts of the Highlands.*

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### *The National Directory of Scotland 1837*

Observes: - "that in the month of August annually this picturesque village is the scene of an interesting festival, instituted in 1819 by a society called the St.Fillans Society, for the purpose of awarding prizes to successful competitors in certain national games; there is a prize bestowed upon the best dressed Highlander, and another upon the most approved vocal performance in Gaelic. The society partakes also of a benevolent character, as it imparts aid to indigent and distressed members, widows and orphans. Great numbers of persons of respectable rank, from all parts of the Highlands, attend the meetings of this interesting association.

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### *Statistical Accounts Parish of Comrie 1838*

The Rev William Mackenzie notes that the Society had funds of £100 and a membership of about 60, supporting 3 widows on funds.

### *13<sup>th</sup> September 1838 Perthshire Advertiser*

*'These national and interesting games took place on Wednesday, at the usual place at the foot of Loch Earn. For some days previous, men were employed in erecting booths, fixing tents, constructing arches and decorating them with heather and flowers. The good folk of the village also, with commendable zeal, vied with each other in ornamenting their cottages with blooming heath, variegated with bouquets of flowers and evergreens.'*

Sir David Dundas entertained a large party of fashionables in a marquee, to an elegant dejeuner, among whom were the Hon William Drummond the chieftain of the games, the Hon Miss Drummond, Lord and Lady Rollo and family, Lord John Scott, Sir William and Lady Gomm, Sir Adam and Miss Drummond, Misses Dundas of Dunira, Hon Capt Murray, Hon John Stewart, Sir Gordon and Lady Drummond, Mr & Mrs Williamson of Lawers, Mr & Mrs Whigham, Mr & Mrs Colquhoun of Clathaig, Mr Drummond yr of Blairdrummond, Major Graham of Inchbrakie, Mr Graham Stirling of Airth, &c &c. The games consisted of competitions in the usual athletic sports of throwing the hammer, caber and stone, with dancing; but the weather prevented these from being enjoyed with the usual effect. After the prizes were distributed, the members of the society retired to their hall and spent the evening with true highland glee, under the auspices of the chieftain. The dinner, &c, reflected much credit to Mr Stewart, the landlord. Mr Graham Stirling of Strowan is Chieftain for next year.

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## *Perthshire Courier Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 1839*

*The twenty first anniversary meeting of the St Fillans Highland Society is to be held at St Fillans, on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August next, when the usual PRIZES will be offered for Competition. For particulars see hand-bills.*

*St Fillans Society House} 15<sup>th</sup> July 1839*



*The Inn showing the Society Hall on the left-hand side*

## *Caledonian Mercury 14<sup>th</sup> September 1839*

*'This ancient and celebrated meeting was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September. As the day was fine, the attendance of spectators of all ranks was exceedingly numerous, and owing to the tournament at Eglinton a day or two previous, included visitors from England, Ireland, Germany and even the Americas. Altogether there could not have been fewer than 5000 in attendance.'*

### *Prize Winners for 1839*

*Best Pibroch on the Great Highland Bagpipe 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome Full Mounted Pipe with silver inscription: Peter McLaren, Piper to the Duke of Buckingham: 2<sup>nd</sup> A handsome Silver mounted Dirk: Donald Cameron, Piper to McKenzie of Seatwell*

*Dancer of Highland Reels 1<sup>st</sup> A pair of Silver Shoe Buckles: James McIntosh, Piper to Mr Murray of Pulmaise: 2<sup>nd</sup> A Highland Plaid of Graham Tartan: John McDougal, Piper, Perth*

*Throwing the Sledge Hammer 1<sup>st</sup> A Handsome Sporrán Mollach: Duncan Robertson, one of the Lord Glen Lyon's men: 2<sup>nd</sup> A pair of Stocking Hose: Robert Stewart, St Fillans*

*Putting the Stone 1<sup>st</sup> A Handsome mounted Snuff Mull: Duncan Robertson (thirty one feet) 2<sup>nd</sup> A Skein Dhu: Robert Stewart, St Fillans*

*Tossing the Caber 1<sup>st</sup> A handsome silver Brooch: Duncan Robertson 2<sup>nd</sup> A Highland Bonnet and Crest: Robert Stewart, St Fillans*

*Sword Dance 1<sup>st</sup> A Silver Brooch: James McRostie, Fowles Wester: 2<sup>nd</sup> A Silver Mounted Skein Dhu: Peter Comrie, Comrie*

*Highland fling 1<sup>st</sup> A set of Sword Belts: Peter Comrie, Comrie: 2<sup>nd</sup> James McRostie*

To secure good Reel playing to the Dancers the Chieftain awarded two money prizes

1<sup>st</sup> Donald Cameron - 2<sup>nd</sup> divided between Peter McLaren and James McIntosh

*Best Shot with a Plain Gun 1<sup>st</sup> A Powder Horn:* James McRostie

*Foot Race 1<sup>st</sup> A Silver Brooch:* Duncan Cameron, Glenartney: 2<sup>nd</sup> *A Highland Bonnet with ornamentations:* James Comrie, Comrie

*In 1839 it was estimated that some 6000 attended the games. Yet despite that, this was the last recorded society event. At Martinmas Alexander Stewart gave up the tenancy of the Inn and there are no records suggesting that his successor Andrew Walker ever had any dealings with the association.*

*1849 - Recollections from my youth,*

*St Fillans - Extract from an article by George Gilfillan*

*'See beyond that wooden bridge that spans the Earn at the very point whence she leaves the lake, a wooden shed erected on a flat grass space, lying at the foot of a gently sloping brae. That is the site of the famous St Fillans Games, Alas! Troja fuit. They are now among the things that were. On that green space the old heroic games of Scotland were renewed; the putting stone and the sledge hammer were shot from stalwart arms, as from catapults; the broad swords clashed in mimic fight, the sword-dance shook the stage; boat races tempest the lake; and, above all, the Pibroch sent up its shrill wedge-like sound, as if it thought to pierce to the very heart of the everlasting hills. On that sloped brae that stood or sat, or reclined, or walked about in eager enjoyment of the scene, a great multitude, including visitors from the remotest districts of Scotland, from Orkney and the Shetland Isles, from England, Ireland, and many parts of the Continent. It was, be sure, a great day to Comrie and the neighbourhood. Not a boy in the neighbourhood had but counted the days to it for months before: and as for sleeping the night previous, the idea was absurd. Early in the morning, the carriages, gigs, phaetons and farm carts, &c. Began to rattle along the streets of Comrie, filled with the great, the fair, the fashionable, not to speak of shopkeepers from Perth and Glasgow, or ruddy farmers 'blackguarding' from the Carse of Gowrie 'for fun that day' On they came, to the infinite joy of the Toll Men, and the amazement of the sombre inhabitants, who would if they could have cried out, 'What! Will the line stretch to the crack o doom?'*

*To us and to the other beardless urchins of the village, it was famous fun. After tiring our eyes with beholding, and our memories with counting, the endless train of carriages &c, we generally sprung up behind one of them, and, headless alike of the expostulations of the driver and the flourishing of the whip, were conveyed at a rattling pace to the spot. The scene on the road would require the pencil of Hogarth, or the lyre of Burns, or the pen of a Washington Irving. Here is a cart filled with country lads and lassies all in their best, and showing in their every feature, and in their peals of laughter, that their minds were made up for one day's perfect enjoyment, and that they have left the old thief, care, at home with their every-day's clothes. Now, their vehicle is left to move at 'its own sweet will,' and now it is driven on at a mad pace mad as the mirth of its light hearted passengers.*

*Here in a single gig is a spruce haberdasher, doing the agreeable to his wife or sweetheart. Here in a double gig, are a 'swatch' of writers, looking forward with more pleasure to the evening's hard drinking than to the more ethereal enjoyments of the day. Here, alone, and perched up on his conveyance, with an air of intense self-importance, is a stray bagman, a prim Cockney, who has turned aside at Crieff from his ordinary route to see the games, and who stares like a stuck pig at 'them dismal mountains.' Here, on foot, is a solitary lover of nature, perhaps a painter, or an angler, or there were poets in those days, a bard lifting up a rapt eye to the sterile but sublime hills? Here is a cartful of regular 'gentry,' looking with ineffable contempt upon the poor pedestrians, and every look saying, 'I drink nothing but champagne.' Here, ha! Are these two of the swell mob, two of the long dandy figured gentry on business? Ye bucks beware 'O for that warning voice which erst,' &c. Here is a party of pedestrians 'Wabster lads,' who have clubbed their cash for a day's frolic; and who armed with sticks, are 'retorting scorn' upon the respectable 'wot keeps gigs.' And here is a batch of schoolboys as happy and as proud as any, with 'shining morning faces' and the gleesome motions of birds or 'Peris let loose from their cages.'*

*On arrival the scene is picturesque in the extreme. Taking our place on the top of the little hill before mentioned — a hill which has but one fault, it is full of small seeping wells — our eye ranges over a gay and varied prospect. In general, the scene is one of naked, severe, and solitary simplicity. Bare hills now alive with activity, the great current of human life has forced its way into this dry mountain-channel, and is running and roaring like a torrent; around us every corner is occupied; below, about the circular stage, there is a first ring of carriages, in one of which we remember to have pointed out to us no less a person than Jeffrey or as some call him the 'we reekit deel' of criticism; then a deeper ring of people; under a bower of evergreens on the west sit the judges; 'bright eyes rain influence' from every side of the circle; in the distance stragglers are seen, some picking pebbles from the beach of the lake, others parading the street of the village, and, a few, who had gained the top of the high northern hills, sending down a far voice, but unheard, competing the high-toned romance of the scene, and mingling strangely with the wails of the pibrochs. All is bustle but meanwhile the games go on until the sun approaches the gates of the west, and still evening comes slowly on. What happens thereafter; the adjournment to the tents; the oceans of yill which were discussed; the breaking up of the assembly; the strange scenes which sometimes occurred on the homeward road; the wit of rival coachmen, inspired by their potations; and jostling against each other in more senses than one; the eloquence of pot-valiant pedestrians; the scuffles, scrambles, mensurations of the road; the downright tumbles which occasionally took place. Pity that the 'invisible spirit of wine' should be permitted to play such mad pranks with reasonable men; Pity that enjoyment should ever be pushed to excess; Pity that the sublime should ever terminate in the ridiculous.*



**The Society's Stance**

*Viewed from 'Croch Mhat' looking towards Littleport*