



Blair of Blair

• Honorary Member Rt. Hon. Robin Blair — Former Lord Lyon King of Arms of Scotland •



Blair of Balthayock

# BLAIR BRUIDHINN

"Blair Talk" for Clan Blair Society

[www.clanblair.org](http://www.clanblair.org)

Third Quarter - August 2016

## President's Message



Fellow Scots:

Summer is nearing an end! Here's wishing you wonderful Scottish events celebrating our Celtic heritage. By my count more than 20 festivals have been attended by the State Clan Blair Society members and reports are excellent. Please watch your email for announcements from CBS State Commissioners about activities near you.

I am pleased to announce the next **Annual General Meeting of Clan Blair Society is now scheduled for 10 am MDT on Saturday October 1.** This meeting provides members a full report on CBS activities for the year, financials, a program of interest (under development) and this year we will announce the results of the general election which will be held in September. Watch you email box for the ballot.

And speaking of webinar presentations, the June 11 broadcast featuring Scottish member Jack Blair who resides in Bridge of Earn Perthshire, Scotland, was extraordinary. Interviewed by Erynn Shryack of Littleton, CO Jack shared his life in Scotland including his youth, activities on the coast line and in the hills and countryside. He shared stories from the Blair's of Balthayock, a book he authored. Thank you Jack for a most interesting and intriguing discussion. Jack's presentation is available for member viewing on the [clanblair.org](http://clanblair.org) website.

All members, please consider becoming involved with your State Clan and/or the CBS leadership team.

- We are seeking volunteers to assist Charlie Diman with the Membership function and a volunteer to oversee the CBS library. It houses the Blair's of Balthayock publication for check out just like any other library.
- Also we are seeking a new State Commissioner for Northern California to succeed retiring Dr. Bill Blair (who was one of the CBS founding members). The area covered is San Francisco north to the Oregon border. It is critical for our Northern California members to join a new leader.
- Please contact Curtis Blair [cbsclantent1@clanblair.org](mailto:cbsclantent1@clanblair.org) or me with your ideas.

Please share with me your ideas and suggestions for CBS activities, programs and publications.

I look forward to your questions and ideas.

It is a Great Day to be a Scot - Sláinte!

Jim Blair

[president@clanblair.org](mailto:president@clanblair.org)

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## **Announcement – AGM Webinar October 1**

The 2016 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Clan Blair Society now scheduled for 10 am MDT on Saturday October 1. This is an all member meeting complete with a full report on CBS activities for the year, financials, a program of interest (which is under development) and this year we will announce the results of the general election which will be held in September. Watch you email box for the ballot.

Please join us and bring your thoughts and questions.

Webmaster Shawn Blair will provide the details about how members sign into the broadcast using web-service ZOOM. Please take time to download the application on your computer at <https://zoom.us>

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### **Recorded Broadcasts Available on Members-only website**

All webinar hosted presentations by the CBS Board are available for your viewing on the Members-only website (<http://members.clanblair.org>). Please let Shawn Blair know if you have questions or encounter and difficulty viewing these wonderful programs ([weblaird@clanblair.org](mailto:weblaird@clanblair.org)).

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### **SCOTLAND TRIP**

Charlie Diman reports that his trip to Scotland departs August 27, 2016. It is still open for others and Charlie will happily provide the details. Please contact Charlie at [Clanblairmembership@clanblair.org](mailto:Clanblairmembership@clanblair.org).

Also, High Commissioner Curtis Blair and his wife Anne are touring Scotland this month. We

look forward to many pictures from Charlie and Curtis, along with good stories of their adventures.

Travel well!

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### **MEMBERSHIP REPORT Charlie Diman – Membership Chair**

Membership continues strong, with over 210 active members. This year, along with our new annual members, we enrolled three returning Members.

As of July 2016, Clan Blair Society membership is:

- 216 Total members
- 153 Annual dues paying members
- 57 Lifetime members
- 6 Honorary members

During the 2016 membership renewal 25 members did not renew and 13 new members gained. About 50% of the non-renewals did not respond to emails, paper mails or telephone calls from the Board.

Recruiting is most effective during Scottish games where CBS is active. All members - please invite friends and family who might enjoy the spirit and history of Clan Blair.

Renewal notices will be sent out in early October. Please respond promptly.

Charles N. Diman  
Membership Chair  
Clan Blair Society  
3413 Sunnybrook Drive  
Charlotte, NC 28210

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## ARIZONA REPORT

Helen Blair Commissioner

[azclanblair@gmail.com](mailto:azclanblair@gmail.com)

Andrew Blair Cupp co-commissioner

[stealgar@yahoo.com](mailto:stealgar@yahoo.com)

May 14 & 15, Andrew & I hosted two CBS tents at the Prescott Highland Games that were held at beautiful Watson Lake Park. It was so nice to be back and reconnect with old friends. No Blairs stopped by but had a good time watching the events that were within sight the tent. This was the first time I had stayed for both days, I had a great time.



Helen Blair



Helen Blair

July 16 & 17 was the Flagstaff Games. I was recuperating from two surgeries but luckily James A. Blair & his family took over my spot and gave Andrew a much needed hand with the two tents. Several Blairs stopped by to visit the tent. Weather was perfect and they all enjoyed all the full range of activities at this big event.



The Tina Blair Family and Andrew Blair Cupp at the Flagstaff Games

This year's Sedona Games have been put on hold until September 2017 due to organizers health issues.

November 4-6<sup>th</sup> is the Tucson Games. We will be hosting two tents at this event. We have not been to this game in ages. It will be nice to see our Tucson Blairs, family and

friends again. This is another BIG event. The actual games are held Saturday & Sunday but they have Friday evening events in the works. Updated information can be found at [Tucsoncelticfestival.org](http://Tucsoncelticfestival.org)  
Andrew has moved onto our new property in Phoenix. I'm still in my Mesa home, waiting for a buyer but keeping my fingers crossed that it will sell soon. I'm having weekly open house trying to move the process along. Wish me luck!

-Helen

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### **NORTH CAROLINA REPORT**

**Charles Diman, NC Commissioner**

North Carolina now has 14 member-families. This year, the Clan Blair Society was represented at the Latta Plantation Celtic Festival, Saint Patrick's Day weekend; the Loch Norman Highland Games; and the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.

The Latta Plantation Celtic Festival, March 18th & 19th, featured re-enactors from every stage of Celtic life in North Carolina, including military re-enactors from the backwoods men down to WWII. Clan Blair has had a tent there each of its four years.

The Loch Norman Highland Games, held April 16th & 17th, were once again visited by a large number of Blairs. This year, we were assisted by Scott and Vallie Blair, and their children. We expect to have their assistance for many years to come. The Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, held July 7th - 10th, were once again the home base of the Macholz-Stephens (Blair) families. Harry "The Blair" also spent time with us. We were also visited by many other Blairs.

Conor Blair Stevens, and Parker Edward Stevens, were one and two in the 14 - 15 year old Highland Wrestling competition. This marks the 6th straight year that a Blair representative has won the wrestling competition in their age group. This is particularly impressive when you realize that there were about eighty Clans in attendance each year.

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### **COLORADO REPORT**

**Leslie Blair Gallagher, CO Commissioner**

The Colorado Clan Blair Society enjoyed a wonderful weekend at the Pikes Peak Scottish Festival on June 20 in Colorado Springs. We were joined by 20 members, new members and friends. We welcomed new members Russell and Rebecca Blair and their two adult daughters Melissa and Rachel. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of this festival held at the foot of Pikes Peak, and the venue, games and participation was excellent. Please see our picture.

We are now off to the Longs Peak Festival in Estes Park in September.





Left – Right front: Atia Blair, Tiernan Blair Galligan. Second row: Leslie Blair Gallagher, Janet McLaughlin, Alycia Stanfill, Tamara Ames, Torin Blair, Russell Blair, Melissa Blair, Rachel Blair, Jim Blair



Left – Right front: Atia Blair, Tiernan Blair Galligan. Second row: Leslie Blair Gallagher, Janet McLaughlin, Alycia Stanfill, Tamara Ames, Torin Blair, Russell Blair, Melissa Blair, Rachel Blair, Elisa Campbell

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**OREGON REPORT**  
**Bill Blair, OR Commissioner**

As I write this, I'm recuperating from our presence at the Portland Highland Games last Saturday. The Portland Games is the biggest Scottish heritage event in Oregon, held every year in the summer heat of mid-July. In mid-August we will be heading down to the Umpqua Valley and the Douglas County Highland Games, held each year at Riverbank Park in Winston. Our tent and display set-up is pretty well refined by now, but in the meantime I'm working on building a targe – the small, round forearm



shield that was common in the Highlands and even Lowlands throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

But that's another story.

At the Portland Games this year I fielded lots of questions from visitors, most of whom have no Blair connection or particular interest. The questions were about Scotland today, touring Scotland, Scottish history, the clan system, tartans and kilts. Most of our visitors have some ancestral connection to Scotland and Ireland, and are interested in talking about how their Gaelic ancestors ended up leaving home for the New World. These questions and comments are usually the start of an interesting discussion, aided by several posters and Jacobite era weapons we have on display. Curiosity demands answers and the answers raise more questions. In my humble opinion, answers are what we're there for. Whether it be questions about the origins of the Blairs or the origins of the clan system, questions about Blair castles or Stirling Castle, William Wallace or Tony Blair, or just where to go to find answers about that rumored Scotch-Irish connection in the family tree, we try to have some answers and some questions of our own. That's what makes a discussion and discussions are what make Celtic gatherings fun.



Over the past two years we've become friends with a man named Anthony, who single-handedly is the Clan Ciann (pronounced "kee·n") tent at every Oregon Celtic heritage event. Ciann is an Irish clan, and Anthony is fond of pointing out to folks proudly wearing their Scottish clan tartan that the Scots are actually Irish. The flow of folks from Ireland and Scotland back and forth across the Irish Sea over the centuries is a little-told history. We may know that one of the advisors and comrades-in-arms of King Robert the Bruce was a Blair, but do we know that Robert sent his brother Edward across the Irish Sea with a Scottish army to help the Irish kings of Ulster in their rebellion against the English? Or that Edward Bruce was proclaimed "High King of Ireland" by the Irish kings? Or that their mother was the daughter of an Irish king? Did Edward, like his brother Robert, have a Blair at his side?

At the Portland Highland Games this year we were assigned a space next to Clan Graham. Years ago I attended the Portland Games knowing next to nothing about the name "Blair" or its history in Scotland. I found a list of "septs" on a poster in the Clan Graham tent and got all excited, thinking that I had found a clan affiliation.

A few years later I discovered the Clan Blair Society and then the 17-page legal opinion from the Lyon Court, and the

correspondence between our then-president and officers of the Standing Council of Clan Chiefs – as well as the letter from Graham's Chief acknowledging that listing "Blair" as a Graham sept may not have been the best-documented decision.

I was loaded for bear when I found out that our next-door neighbor would be Clan Graham. Just plant that poster of septs, I thought, and I'll bury you with your own Chief's words. There was no poster. The young Graham running the tent was new at the job – even newer than I was – and we struck up a friendship.



Meanwhile, a steady stream of visitors stopped by to examine the weapons, take a look at our posters (the one with Tony Blair's picture is an attention-grabber) and talk about how their ancestors might have lived in Scottish castles, come from Ireland but they didn't know why, and admire the print of the Thomas Faed painting, "Last of the Clan" hanging behind the crossed swords on our back wall.

Our visitors, for a Scottish heritage event, were amazingly diverse. We welcomed visitors of all ethnicities, and all religions, some even wearing the tartan of a clan or locality found somewhere in their own roots. I met five Scots, three of them ex-pats living in the U.S. or Canada, and two just visiting from their home near Edinburgh.

And, of course, I came away with some new ideas about how to refine our display. We

are all looking forward to our remaining two Oregon events. And, of course, next year!  
*Slàinte mhath!*

Bill Blair, Oregon Commissioner

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**NEW YORK REPORT**  
**Samson and Marilou Blair, NY**  
**Commissioners**

Greetings from China! As I write this, I am again in Shanghai, teaching classes and conducting research at East China Normal University. The weather here has been absolutely scorching, and has left me longing for the cool green hills of Scotland! Despite being abroad at the moment, we have continued our regular schedule of festivals in New York.

We began our year with the Finger Lakes Celtic Festival, which took place on May 21, in Shortsville, which is approximately an hour south of Rochester. We have been attending this festival for several years, and it continues to get larger, each time. The number of clans attending is becoming quite impressive, and the organizers may need to locate a larger space to hold the festival. On June 4<sup>th</sup>, we traveled south to Belmont, where we represented the clan at the Allegany Celtic Festival. It was our first trip to this festival, which is located very close to the Pennsylvania state line. The festival was well attended, and featured a complete schedule of athletic events, pipe bands, and a variety of dancers and performers.

I will be returning home, soon, and we will be at the Buffalo-Niagara Scottish Festival, which is located just a few miles from our home, in Amherst. This year, the festival is featuring the Masters World

Champion Scottish Games, and will have athletes from a variety of countries competing. The festival will run from August 19<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup>, and will likely be very well attended. On August 26 and 27, we will turn our car southward again, as we will be heading again to the Jamestown Regional Celtic Festival. This is always one of our favorite festivals, as it is held on the shores of Lake Chautaugua. The organizers always place the clans with our tents along the shoreline, so some clan members even bring along a fishing pole!

Our season will come to a close on the weekend of September 17, when we will again be at the Niagara Celtic Festival. This festival is held in the lakefront town on Olcott, in a park which sits on the southern shore of Lake Ontario. Given that the cold weather arrives rather early in western New York, this festival always draws many thousands of visitors, as they all want to enjoy the very last festival of the year. We have attended this festival for over a decade, now, and it is consistently a wonderful weekend.

If you should happen to be in the vicinity, please drop by and visit our tent. Our warmest regards to everyone!...

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Scottish Garden

# IRISH DANCE NATIONALS

## An interview with Saoirse Alys Blair Galligan



They were pleased to take home awards for 2<sup>nd</sup> place Under 13 [years old] figure choreography dramatizing the sinking of the Titanic, 1<sup>st</sup> place, figure choreography under 11, and 4<sup>th</sup> place for their 8-hand.



July 2-5, 2016, Irish dancers from all over the world met in Florida for the Irish Dance National Championships.

Saoirse Blair Galligan, 11-year-old granddaughter of Clan Blair President Jim Blair, was a competitor from the Celtic Steps School of Irish Dance in Centennial, and Colorado Springs, Colorado. She and her teammates competed in 4 days of team and solo events.

Saoirse says: “It’s really fun to be at Nationals because you are with your team. You always have someone there to support you.

But it is also nerve-wracking because you don’t know what is going to happen and you don’t know what your teammates are thinking. You have to just think as one person and do your best.

You have to go through a lot of training and hard work to get to Nationals. And once you get there, it seems when you get there, you feel like you are on top of the world.”



## **DOORWAY IN THE SAND**

**Submitted to the Editor by Cal Ensor**

**Nestled in the mossy, green hills on the Orkney Islands off Scotland is a secret older than the great pyramids of Egypt.**



**At first, it might not look like much, but the fact is, This is a unique and magical place.**



**Because within this rolling hillside is a perfectly preserved prehistoric village called Skara Brae.**



**The winter of 1850 hit Orkney hard. A severe storm caused great devastation and resulted in more than 200 deaths. But it also revealed something long forgotten. When the storm abated, villagers discovered a settlement under the sand.**

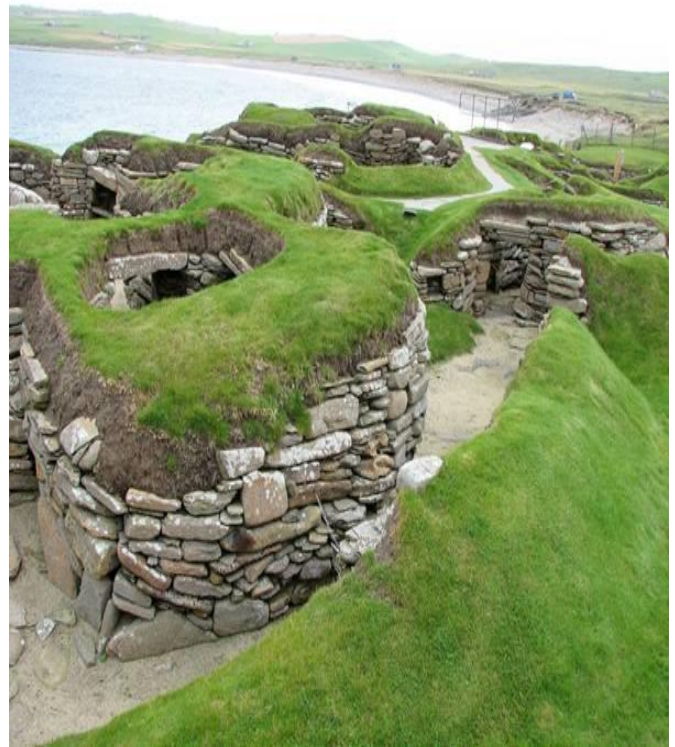


**The settlement consists of eight stone houses and was inhabited between roughly 3180 and 2500 B.C., making Skara Brae one of the oldest agriculture villages in the UK.**



**Skara Brae has been called the "Scottish Pompeii" because the ancient monument is so well preserved. Since the surrounding sand and the buildings' architecture was well protected against the cold, both the buildings and their contents have been remarkably preserved throughout the millennia.**

**settlement has changed from pastures to the sea.**



**The settlement's seven or eight houses were connected to each other by tunnels. Each residence could be closed off with a stone door.**



**Archaeologists estimate that 50-100 people lived in the village. When the settlement was built, the houses were 1,500 [metres] from the sea. Now, the sea has dug closer to the village and the view from the**



**In every room, one bed was always bigger than the other, but no one knows why. Each room also contains cabinets, dressers, seats, and storage boxes. The waterproof, suggesting that they might have stored live seafood for later consumption.**



**One house is distinct from the other, however. Archaeologists didn't find any beds or other furniture. The house is believed to have functioned as a workshop.**



**Skara Brae was a society which centered around families. The dwellings are all quite similar, which led archaeologists to conclude that this society was a fairly equal one, without any authoritative leadership.**



**Amazingly, the village also had a sewage system and each house had its own toilet.**



**Some believe that the villagers were Picts, a people of unknown origin who settled in eastern and northern Scotland near the end of the British Iron Age. But archaeological findings have shown that the**

people who lived here could have lived much earlier than that.



A number of mysterious discoveries have been made at the site, including this carved stone ball, though no one really knows what it was used for.



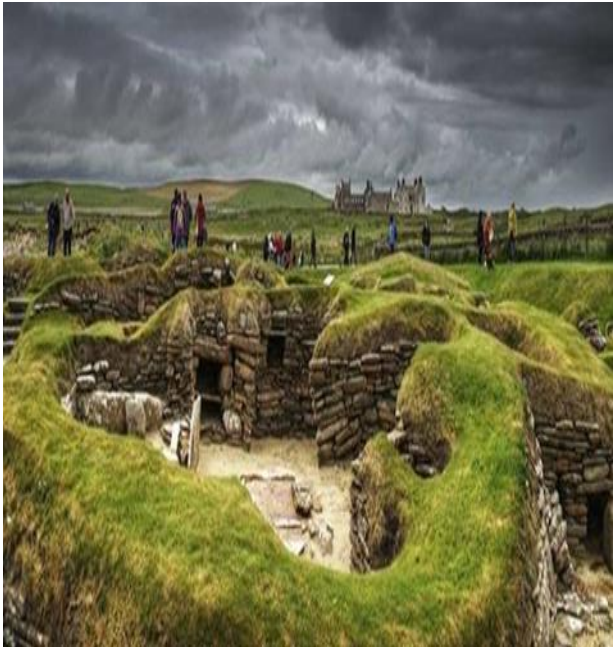
And no one knows why the village was abandoned. But around 2500 B.C., the Orkney Islands became cooler and wetter. Many theories speculate about how the people of Skara Brae met their fate; the most popular ones involve a violent storm.



What's the future look like for Skara Brae? Although the settlement was built nearly two [kilometres] from the beach, in recent centuries, it has been increasingly threatened by the sea. Since 1926, the houses have been protected from the approaching sea and harsh autumn winds by a concrete wall.



There has been talk about building an artificial beach with boulders and breakwater to preserve Skara Brae and several other ancient monuments at risk of being destroyed. But nothing has happened yet.



Until further notice, tourists continue to visit this fascinating place, but the question is for how long.

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*tartle*  
scottish  
The act of hesitating while introducing someone because you've forgotten their name



**USE YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE!!! DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 4!**

**LOG INTO CLAN BLAIR.NET TO CAST YOUR VOTES!**

To log in from your computer now, follow this link: <http://clanblair.net/cbsmembers/>

**REMEMBER, THIS IS AN ELECTRONIC BALLOT ONLY (NO PAPER)**

## **Clan Blair Society**

Please go to the site above and vote! You will vote for the following candidates or you can write someone in:

President – Jim Blair

Vice President – Shawn Blair

Secretary – Frances Holt

Treasurer – Ann Fredline

Nominating Committee Chair – Curtis Blair

Nominating Committee 2 – Helen Blair

Nominating Committee 3 – Charles Diman



**SCOTTISH GARDENS**

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August 2016

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CBS State Commissioners see:  
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(For Members)

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First Class Mail