

# CSSA Inc.

Clan Sutherland Society Australia Inc.



## June 2023 Special Edition Newsletter

### The International Gathering of Clan Sutherland in Golspie, Scotland

How wonderful is technology that I can come to you all the way from Scotland with this special edition newsletter! The following report is an account from those that have come to Scotland for the International Gathering of Clan Sutherland and some of the adventures we took before, during and after attending. I hope you enjoy the read and I'll try to add as many photos as possible without overloading you.

When I was preparing for this trip, I had every intention of travelling alone. I often do and I enjoy the solitude. However, Nathan was also travelling alone, and we decided why not travel together. We have similar interests in Scotland and when he heard what I was planning to do before the Gathering, I think it's safe to say he got rather excited about it.

Nathan and I had booked our flights separately with different airlines. Our plan was to meet in Edinburgh when I picked up the car and travel from there. We agreed our first night shouldn't be too far away but I personally didn't want to fight traffic of Edinburgh when I knew I wouldn't have slept much on the plane so I booked a room not far away at Sweet Chestnut Dunfermline for one night (Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June). This is only about 30 minutes from



the airport and boasts a bar and restaurant. Perfect for the weary traveller. Little did we realise what fun the airline had instore for Nathan! His suitcase was missing in action. It seemed it missed it's connecting flight. Thankfully he did not. So, it was delivered to him at one of our hotels.

The next day (Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June) we travelled up to Newtonmore. I am big on researching my trips beforehand, I find this is the best way not to miss your key places of interest. In my planning I found the Highland Folk Museum and decided it was a must!

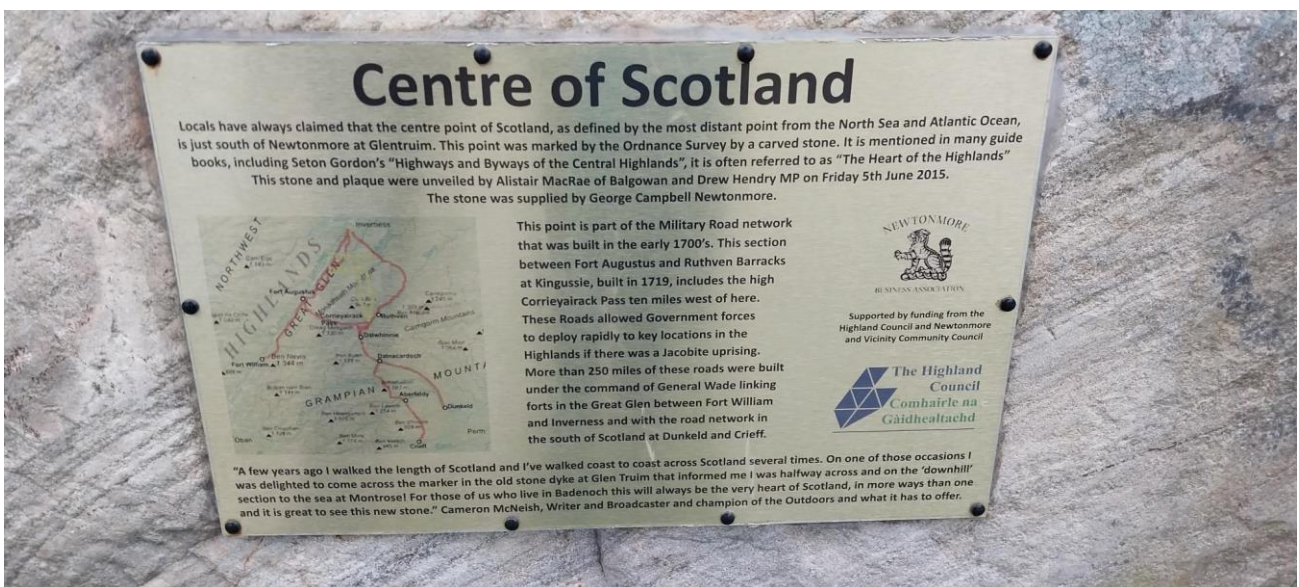
This filled our day, but being fatigued from the flight, we then checked into our hotel for the night in Newtonmore called OYO Braeriach Hotel. Again, boasting a bar but sadly the restaurant was no longer serving. We instead drove 5 minutes down the





road to The Grill and it did not disappoint! It was a simple roadhouse, but the meals were outstanding. So much, we went back for breakfast the next day.

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> June, we were ready before The Grill was open, so we went for a little mystery tour. Nathan wasn't aware I had been googling things in the area. We found "the centre of Scotland" down a little road. The views were amazing!



On our way back we stopped to see the view of the stone bridge which again was outstanding. I don't know what it was I saw cross the little river, but it looked to me like some sort of fox or something of that size. It disappeared quickly. Then went closer to take it all in before we headed back to breakfast.



Then made our way to visit the sight of the Battle of Culloden. I had visited previously but Nathan had not, so I wanted to be sure we had plenty of time for him to experience this very important place in Scottish history. That night we had booked to stay at the Carnegie Lodge Hotel in Tain for the night which again had a bar and restaurant. We had been invited to catch up with Mark Sutherland-Fisher at North Cadboll House before the



Gathering. It was a lovely visit talking about the Sutherland history and family connections over a pot of tea and sweets. Mark was very careful to ensure the family tree he has prepared for the Gathering on the weekend was not visible but happily pulled out the one from years passed to get us up to date.

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> June, we went on a bit of a road trip adventure North and came across Cairn Liath. This is an Iron Age broch about 4km north of Golspie overlooking the north shore of Moray Firth. It was originally a large circular tower building made in stone with walls several feet thick. It would have had wooden frame and doors originally.



The remains are still 3 meters tall, while the original tower would have been a 9-10-metre-tall tower like structure and unusually, has the remains of a small farming village surrounding it. For those on Facebook, you can see a video I have made of me walking into and onto this structure.



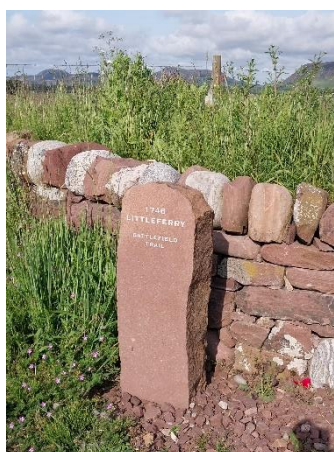
After our investigation of the broch, we continued north for a bit of a drive. We got as far as just north of Latheron before we turned back knowing we had a time limit. We had a quick stop just a little north of the border of Sutherland and Caithness for this photo opportunity.

In the afternoon, Nathan and I had agreed to take Nick Lindsay's offer of a tour of the Brora Heritage Centre. We had a visit of the little museum while we waited for Nick, we found the area was once a working hub with the only deep coal mine in the Scottish Highlands. They also had working salt pans, a brick works, quarry, Hunters Woollen Mill, an RAF radar station and lemonade factory. Sadly, most of these have closed since the 1960s. However, the Clynelish Distillery is still a functioning distillery that hosts tours and may be familiar to Johnny Walker drinkers. All of which Nick explained to us when he arrived pointing out the locations of what would have been factories and buildings that have since disappeared. Like other locals before him, Nick recommended a back way to return to Golspie following a lovely drive through the mountains and hills not far inland.

Following the road, we found Loch Brora before continuing through the exquisite countryside. We even passed a Peat Farm!



Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June, the day the International Gathering was to begin. But not until 3pm, so we busied ourselves with another road trip of seeing as much as we could in the short time, we had allowed ourselves. We decided not to go too far. We took the opportunity to visit Littleferry where we were told to expect the Seals to make an appearance however, we must have been too early. However, we did get the chance to stop at the memorial of the battle of Littleferry. The memorial that was installed not long ago is well kept. It was nice to get a chance to see it in person after seeing the updates of its progress on Facebook.



Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June

The International Gathering of Clan Sutherland began in the Afternoon from 3pm Registration opens in the **Clan Room, Dunrobin Castle** followed by a **The Drinks Reception at 6pm** held at the Tea Room, Dunrobin Castle. This was where I was afforded the opportunity to present Lady Rachel our Clan pin made for our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Australian clan members in attendance Michelle Williams, Nathan Rantall, Sue Frolchenco and new members Kaye Amel and family.





There were also presentations from the Belgium branch of Clan Sutherland Scotland of statues and information that were from the Anzac Day installation to pay respects to fallen Sutherland soldiers. This was an emotional presentation and very much appreciated by the representatives of each family.

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June we all assembled at our pickup points for the 10am Coach Tour. Nathan and I were on Bus 1 and depart from the Golspie Inn, Golspie. As we headed past Helmsdale, we travelled the few miles up the glen to **Kildonan and Kilpheader** where we saw the beautiful landscape and some old Croft homes that were renovated or reused, and we were lucky enough to see many red deer just wandering round the mountain side. From there, we continued north until we reached the abandoned village of **Badbea**. Those that were able walked to the sight where a monument has been erected and remains of old crofts remain. Not all was visible due to the overgrowth. But you can clearly see how remote and exposed the location is. The cliff side can be dangerous, particularly in bad weather and we were warned to stick to the upper areas.



From here we heading north through villages and townships associated with the clan. At **Latheron** we took the A9 Causeymire road towards **Thurso** before branching off to **Wick**. We enjoyed a light Lunch at Mackay's Hotel in Wick of soup and sandwiches before stopping at the **Latheron Parish Churchyard** where many Sutherlands were laid to **rest**. When we finished at the Churchyard, we headed back to our drop off points to prepare for the 7.30pm Gathering Dinner held at the **Royal Marine Hotel** in **Brora**.



Gathering attendees were asked to pre order their meals to make it easier for the hotel to ensure they had enough of everything for us all. It was great to see so many varieties of Clan Sutherland Tartan and the ladies using the tartan in a variety of ways from Sashes, wraps, skirts and full outfits. Many of the men were



fully kilted up or just a hint of tartan to show their connection to Clan Sutherland. The meals were served promptly and were out of this world. From Salads to cheese and meat platters or prawn cocktail, haggis stuffed chicken, salmon or beef, and I chose for dessert the Sticky toffee pudding, while others had an apple crumble or a flummery. Wine flowed and other beverages and everyone had a great time getting to know everyone.



Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June was more low key with the The 46<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the CSSS at 10am in the Breakfast room at the **Golspie Inn**, followed by a Genealogy seminar where Mark Sutherland-Fisher explained the connections of the Earl's & Dukes of Sutherland and how we are connected to them and to the history of the area. He also noted good resources that can help in the search for our ancestors in burial records before unveiling the family tree he had been painstakingly working on using the DNA project and records in hope of linking us all.

Next was the opportunity to learn more about the Distillery that Lady Lizzie and her team are wanting to start using old out buildings on the estate. They explained the plan for the next 5-7 years and offered the opportunity for Clan Members to be involved in the undertaking. This is very exciting, and I look forward to hearing it's progress.

When all questions regarding the Distillery were answered, Bryce Sutherland lead the group in a Gaelic for Beginners class with coffee/tea served. Sadly, I had not been sleeping all that much and felt the need for a





nap. However, Nathan assured me this was a lot of fun and Bryce lead the group in singing songs in Gaelic.

Saturday afternoon Nathan and I used our free time to visit **Dunrobin Castle** for a more extensive look. It still overwhelms me to walk through the halls and think of the things that would have happened once upon a time. On arrival Nathan went down to the Falconry show, where I chose to walk around the castle before going down to the gardens and museum.



In the evening at 7.30pm **The Ceilidh supper** was held in the Golspie Golf Club. Many enjoyed the dancing and a video of one of the reels has been posted on our Facebook page. This was followed by a buffet style dinner and a lot of conversations. The younger clan members were outside on the golf course having a great time playing in the fresh air while adults watched on through the huge glass windows.

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June Nathan and I left a bit early to go the back way to Dornoch. In doing so we passed a peat farm and some highland coos before finding ourselves in Lairg. The interesting thing to see there is a small house in the middle of the loch. Too tiny for any particular use, but it was very cute.



From here we made our way to Dornoch by 10:30am for the 11am at the **Dornoch Cathedral** for the morning service. This was an absolute delight. The parish minister Reverent Carol Anne Porter had a soothing voice and spoke of love and family. Mark Sutherland-Fisher read the bible readings and thanked the congregation for having us as part of their morning worship.

They say all good things come to an end. At 1pm we grouped at lunch at the **Dornoch Castle Hotel**. This is where we again shared a meal and many conversations before saying the long farewell and "see you again soon". Overall, the International Gathering of

Clan Sutherland was a huge success and organisers should be proud of the outstanding job they did with planning, preparation and implementation of all events. Not to mention keeping us all on time and showing us as much as possible in such a limited time.

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June saw Nathan and I making the journey back to Edinburgh. We left the Golspie Inn at 6am stopping back at The Grill for breakfast and passing Falkirk to see the Kelpies before I dropped

Nathan at a train station for his next Scottish adventure for a few more days before heading back to Australia and I presented at the airport for flight to Italy.



## Some housekeeping

For regular updates of the events, we attend as they unfold be sure to follow our Facebook page. Feel free to email me at any time, I am happy to forward emails to other committee members or members at your request as well.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/clansutherlandaustralia>

Michelle Williams Secretary [clansutherlandaustralia@hotmail.com](mailto:clansutherlandaustralia@hotmail.com)

New members contact [clansutherlandaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:clansutherlandaustralia@gmail.com)

## Request for newsletter items

Do you have something interesting your fellow Clan Members might like to read about? Or perhaps there's a topic you would like us to research and include. Send your ideas and additions for the newsletter to Michelle Williams (Secretary) by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month for its inclusion.

## Clan Sutherland Australia Lapel Pins still available!

These superb lapel pins are still in stock. This is the same pin that was presented to Lady Rachel on behalf of her father The Earl of Sutherland. If you would like to purchase a pin for you or a loved one for \$10 (including postage), These can be added to your membership fee payments. Please contact Michelle Williams (Secretary) for how to order.



## Reminder of change of mailing address

Please forward all physical mail to Michelle Williams Secretary at 44-58 Old Pub Lane Greenbank QLD 4124