

Annual Meeting

This issue contains information and reservation forms for our

Annual Meeting and election of officers.

Tartan Day

Tartan Day is a Scottish national holiday not well known to modern Americans, equivalent to American celebration the Declaration of Independence. On April 6, 1320, at the abbey of Arbroath, Robert Bruce the Scots Parliament declared Bruce King so long as he opposed English domination, so long as 100 are left living. The idea of conditional loyalty to a king, so strong in Scotland, was a problem for the

Stuarts. Andrew Lang, the famous 19th century cultural historian writing in Encyclopedia Britannica, states that the Declaration of Arbroath resembles more than any other medieval document "a breath from ancient Greece." The implicit social contract doctrine behind the Declaration presupposes Democracy, and makes impossible any Divine Right of Kings in the French mode.

Our National Poets

Alan Ramsay is no longer a well known name, but in the 18th century he was wildly popular. His Scottish career took off just following the Act of Union. Installed in Edinburgh as a periwig maker about 1704, he began publishing topical poems about Edinburgh. Like many of his time, he was fond of singing Scots songs, dancing, and partying with good company.

He saw the loss of a native parliament as signalling the end of Scots culture; to counter the loss, he published music, songs, ballads, folk tales, and stories written in Scots English (not in Broad Scots). About 1730, a correspondent tells him that his "Tea Table Miscellany" is so popular in Virginia that all one hears in Richmond is songs of Mary Scot or Mary Gray.

Scots Names

Names of Colors --

The colors Gray, Brown, Black, and White comprise the greatest share of Scots names, following in frequency only Smith and Young. The Gaelic forms of these adjectives is glas, donn, dubh, and ban. From Gaelic therefore come additional family names such as Glass, Dunn, Dow or Duff, and Bain. Gray is about the 30th commonest surname in Scotland, and Brown about 6th.

As with any commonly used names, it is not possible to establish a clan affiliation solely from the name: one needs some indication of a place or tenantry. The Browns of Glasgow were very prominent in both commerce and academia: John Brown's shipyard produced many Cunard liners, and several Browns were prominent biologists and botanists in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Some Scots Words

skeely a. skilful, artful
skeenie (n) small twine
skeich (v) to startle
skeigh (a) spirited or proud
skeil (n) a washtub, any large tub
skewl (v) to warp or distort

skeir (a) harebrained
skeitchers (n pl) ice skates
skelf (n) small splinter; shelf
skellat (n) a tiny bell
skelly (n or v) squint; to squint
skew (n) sloping side of gable roof

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