

Chief Christina Forbes Cockerill – addressing the AGM at Rosefield Uniting Hall on Monday 13 September 2010

I am an Honorary Life member of RCS and was as I say born into the Society.

My Grandparents on both sides were all members of the Society around 1900.

My Mum's father Alexander Bowden was a member of the Pipe Band in 1900, and my father Jock Cook was a member of the pipe band for over 30 years. My Dad's father was Archibald Cook who was the son of Thomas Cuthbertson Cook who lived only a stones throw from here, in Milne Street, Highgate. This area was bought up by the old Home for Incurables and the street disappeared. Dad's mother was Agnes Forrest and her family had settled Forreston. Dad was Pipe Sergeant and band and society secretary for many years. He joined the band in 1928 at 14 and met my mother Jean Bowden who was a highland dancer.

The youngest of their 4 children, I attended Bairns class until 1960. The whole family was very involved.

I rejoined the Society in my own right in 1973 when I brought my eldest daughter Michelle to the Bairns dancing class. My youngest Heather joined in 1976 when she was 4. We attended Bairns class until 1989.

I first became interested in Council matters when although unsuccessful, member Margaret Harkness and I tried in vain to stop the Society from going into massive debt to build the clubrooms which eventually led to the cracking of the walls under the weight of the top structure, and this was the death knoll of the Hall.

I became a member of Council in 1980 when Chief Ron Layton first took office. During the next few years I took on the tasks of providing suppers for the Highland Ball, St Andrews, Burns etc., with the assistance of my mother and other ladies of the society. On one occasion there were 250 people in the hall, 200 downstairs and 50 Band and partners upstairs. Sandwiches, pies & pasties, chicken platters and cakes. What a night!

For a few years during the later 80's although I was not on council I continued with fund raising at the Scottish Fairs and Lamington Drives etc. There was a band of six who made nearly 100 dozen lamingtons at regular intervals during the year. My late mother Jean Cook, present members Robin Pawson, Ann Wickham and myself, and Past members Raelene Welsh, and Margaret Harkness. We raised a lot of money and had a lot of fun and forged friendships which still continue to this day. At one Scottish Fair I convened the sweet stall which made \$400, everything from toffee, coconut ice, chocolate fudge, honeycomb and toffee apples, most of which I made. I regularly took in my basket of coconut ice and chocolate fudge to Bairns class on a Friday night to fund raise. I just love to cook and eat sweets and some of that weight is still with me today.

My late husband Graham and I also taught several groups of Debutantes from the Society and their partners to dance, and all the other niceties like how to walk, curtsy, and bow for presentation at the Debutante Balls.

I rejoined the Council in 1995 and have served Past Chief's Pawson, Calver, Wallace, Porteous, and Miller. During this time I have taken on the tasks of Social Director, Acting Secretary, and Roster Coordinator for the Wednesday and Sunday night dances. I took over as Treasurer from Helen Fawcett 6 years ago and have also been Secretary, Membership Officer and Newsletter editor for the passed 3 years. Since 2005 I have been the coordinator of the Societies Highland Dancing Competitions held in May each year and I also represent the Society at South Australian State Committee of Highland Dancing.

In 2005 I instigated the Family Dance Class at Collinswood which started slowly with 6 pupils. We then moved to Tusmore and attendance did reach a maximum of about 20 but unfortunately at the end of last year this was disbanded due to lack of numbers. During 2005-2008 my 4 grandchildren were the most regular attendees and it was a great joy to me to have them in kilts and doing some highland and country dancing, and even if it was mainly to please Nanna, they did enjoy it.

I had already paid to become a Life member in 1983, but in 2006 I was awarded Honorary Life Membership for service to the Society. It was a great honour.

Going into the office of Chief I cannot manage all the work I have been doing during the past few years, and some of the council have agreed to take on some of those responsibilities. I will still continue as Membership officer and Newsletter editor and printer, but the time that I have spent on Secretarial duties and Financial duties will give me more time to spend on visiting other societies and hopefully going to the Edinburgh Tattoo in August next year where our Pipes and Drums will be performing.

One could say that in 37 years I have had the longest apprenticeship to be Chief in the history of the society.

My heritage and my heart have long been entrenched in the Royal Caledonian Society and I will try during my time in office as Chief to continue to serve the Society well.

Chief Christina Forbes Cockerill