



1946 Logo



125th Anniversary Logo



2006 Logo

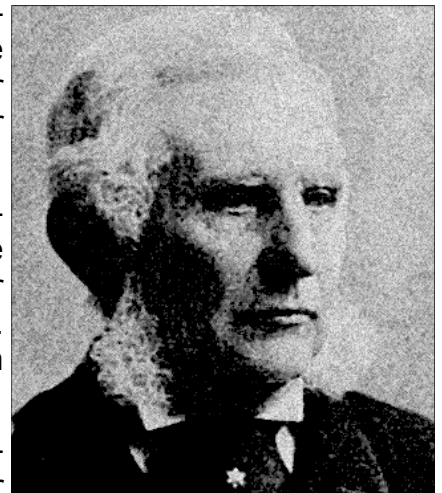
## A Brief History of the Royal Caledonian Society of South Australia.

### Overview

**T**he South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register of Saturday, 27 October, 1838 — just three years after the State was founded — published an advertisement calling upon 'Brithers Scots' for a general muster to take place to do honour to their Patron Saint, Saint Andrew.

A further advertisement on Saturday, 17 November, 1838, advised that "a Saint Andrew's Day Dinner would be held at the Adelaide Hotel on the Saint's Day, 30 November, 1838. Dinner to be on the table at five o'clock precisely. Tickets £1 each". George Stevenson, Esq., J. P., had been elected the Chairman for the event.

From this early beginning in the Colony of South Australia, began the gathering of fellow Scotsmen to uphold and honour their Patron Saint, their Country of birth and their traditions.



The Hon. Alexander Hay

### The formation of the Society

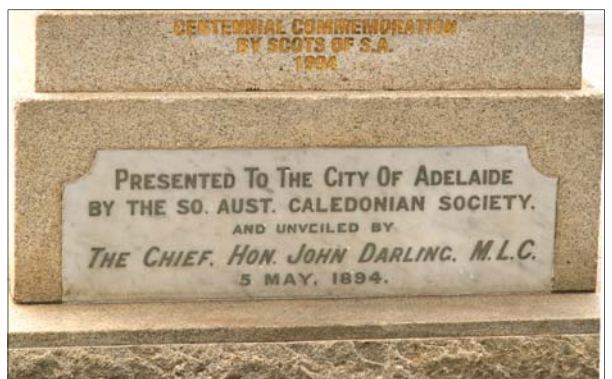
**B**y 1881, less that fifty years after the formation of the State, a group of Scotsmen met informally to discuss the formation of a Caledonian Society. Further meetings were held and the South Australian Caledonian Society was officially established. The Hon. Alexander Hay, M.L.C., was appointed as Chief, a Council established and Society Rules were drawn up. The initial Register of members, carrying all members signatures, is still in the possession of the Society.

By 1894 the Society was well established and it was agreed to have sculpted and to present to the citizens of Adelaide a Statue of Scotland's Bard, Robert Burns. This was the first public statue in the State.

A public appeal was initiated by the powers that be to raise a statue to the great explorer, John McDouall Stuart, a Scot, who had successfully crossed the continent from south to north in 1862. Stuart effectively established the route of both the



Robert Burns' Statue in the Library forecourt 28 January 2007



Detail from the base of Robert Burns' Statue

first telegraph, thus linking Australia to the rest of the world and the original north south railway line. The current railway closely follows the route he established. Due to the inability to raise sufficient funds by public subscription, in 1895, the Citizens Fund for the erection of a statue of Stuart, was taken over by the Society. Upon completion some time after June 1904, this statue was also handed over to the City of Adelaide. His statue stands in the north east corner of Victoria Square. An annual memorial service is held there each year at which the Royal Caledonian Society is always represented.

The year 1920 saw the visit of the Prince of Wales to the Colony. The Society were in the fore-front in presenting an illuminated welcome to the Prince.

The Society has always maintained a strong loyalty to the Crown and has for many years been graced with the patronage of the incumbent Governor of the State. The Society's Council has been a little disappointed at the lack of support given by the present Governor, despite the Society celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006 and inviting the Governor to attend several months in advance of the event.

### Looking after Young Scots



In 1899, a Bairns Highland Dancing Class was formed and was a vibrant part of the Society from which many of our members were recruited either by way of the Bairns themselves and, often, their parents. In the early days, Bairns' Dance Classes were held in the Rechabite Hall in Grote Street under Mrs Bruce and Mr Low.

In 1912 a certain John Ogg (pictured left in the 1970's) was competing in a Highland Dancing competition held on the Jubilee Oval (now the University grounds). He met with immediate success and was invited by the Society Secretary, Mr C B Anderson, to join the Society and help foster the art of Highland Dancing amongst its members.

From junior assistant to Mrs Bruce and Mr Low, he graduated to Senior Assistant to Mr Jock McPherson, advancing eventually to the position of Chief Instructor.

In 1943 he was elected a Director of the Society; and in 1948, he had Honorary Life Membership conferred upon him for his services to the Society. John eventually retired from teaching Highland Dancing in 1961 at the age of nearly 77 and after more than 50 years carrying out that duty

On the occasion of John Ogg's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday on 26 February, 1974, to commemorate his contribution to Highland Dancing, the Society presented the John Ogg Open Highland Dancing Trophy for Annual Competition. The John



1920's Bairns Class

Ogg Competition continues to be held each year at the Society's Highland Dancing Competition in May. Unlike other named trophies that are funded by the donor, the John Ogg Trophy is totally funded by the Society.

Regrettably, after over a century of operating successfully, the last Bairns Class was held in

December 2000. Despite much encouragement by the Council of the Society, lack of numbers forced its closure.

Determined to maintain the traditions of Highland Dancing, in April 2001, the Society initiated "Caly Capers" to replace the Bairns Class. This new venture was to be a fun night for all ages, not just bairns and included a variety of Scottish traditional activities including history, poetry and music as well as Highland Dancing. Whilst starting off with a good following, by the end of 2002, Council regrettably had to make the decision not to continue with this venture, once again due to lack of support.



Dancers at the Druid's Hall 2006



Dancing at the Tasmore Park Uniting Church —February 2007

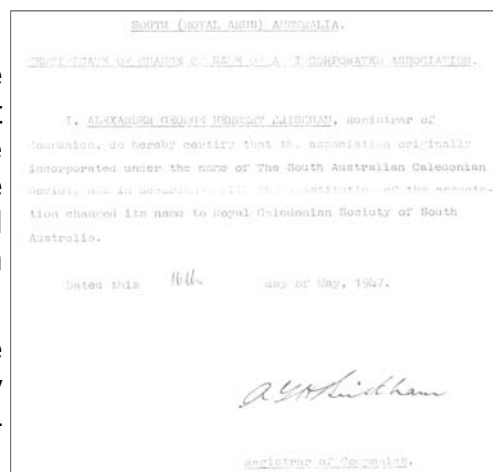
In 2006, Council established a new venture to cater for both Bairns and the whole family. This venture was to be known as Family Scottish Dancing and would include Highland, Country and Ball-room dancing. Initially, the Society hired the Druids Hall at Collinswood with the classes being held on Friday nights during school terms.

The Society approached the renowned teacher, Mrs Leonie Burgess to be the instructor. Mrs Burgess has carried out her duties faithfully for nearly two years without recompense. Due to the poor quality of the venue, from 2007, the classes moved to the Tasmore Park Uniting Church Hall where the number attending classes doubled.

## The Society Name

In 1911 the South Australian Caledonian Society became an incorporated body, and in July 1946, largely as a result of the work undertaken by the Band in raising funds for the War Effort, the Society received permission from His late Majesty, King George VI, to use the term 'Royal' and changed it's name to the Royal Caledonian Society of South Australia Inc. (See certificate at right).

Unfortunately, the term 'Royal Charter' has crept into some expressions of the Society. This is not correct. The Society does not hold a Royal Charter, only written Royal permission to use the name Royal.



## Education Scholarships

Between about 1906 and 1961, annual Educational Scholarships for children of Society members with a tenure of three years were allotted to by the Society to students attending Saint Peter's, Prince Alfred's and Scotch Colleges, and, since the mid 1920's, to students attending the Presbyterian Girls College. In 1903, an early Director of the Society, one Mr Muirden who founded Muirden College, generously established an annual one year scholarship for a student to attend his College. The first such student was a Miss Maxwell in 1904. In all, in excess of fifty students benefited from all these scholarships until their cessation. Following the financial difficulties caused by the hall additions, all remaining funds in the Scholarship Account were transferred into General Revenue to assist with mitigating the debt.

## The Hall

Prior to building the Society's Memorial Hall at 379 King William Street in 1926, Annual and Quarterly Meetings, social events and Bairns' dance classes were held in various halls, cafes and hotels in Adelaide. For example: · Bracknell's Cafe, Rundle Street, was the venue for Annual and Quarterly meetings from at least 1908 to 1919. It was here at the Quarterly Meeting in November 1908 that Chief J. W. Sandford "expressed hope that before long the Society would have a hall of its own — a hope that was not to be fulfilled until 1926. · Social dances: Co-operative Hall, Angus Street in 1909; · Halloween Ball: The Adelaide Town Hall in 1906; Smoke Socials: The South Australian Hotel in 1909, to wish bon voyage to Past Chief John Darling. Smoke Night: Miss Martin's Cafe, Old Exchange, Pirie Street in 1910. What a contrast in social attitudes to smoking then, compared with the present restrictions on smoking in public places!

It was clearly apparent that the Society needed a "home". At the Quarterly Meeting held in May 1913, it was decided to start a fund to acquire land on which to erect a hall, as the headquarters of the Society. However, with the onset of World War I in 1914, this effort was temporarily suspended.

In 1915, because members of the Society (or their sons), were leaving for the War, a decision was made to start a roll of honour to preserve their names.

On August 27, 1919, the Register newspaper of Adelaide reported on the May 1919 Quarterly Meeting:

*"In moving the adoption of the Quarterly Report; Mr Hill (Chief W. J. Hill) said it would be fitting if the Society could have a hall of its own. If it did, it would serve as a memorial to members who had served the Association well. He was sure that they would have a hall of their own."*

At the Annual Meeting of the Society, it was announced that 112 members and sons of members served in the war, with 25 making the supreme sacrifice, and it was desired to honour and perpetuate the memory of these "heroic lads" for which purpose it was proposed to raise not less than £10, 000 to erect a building as a memorial so that 'future generations might be reminded of the part played by the Scotsmen and their descendants in South Australia'.

Already, it was stated, a number of substantial contributions had been received. The Chief (Mr W. J. Hill) said he hoped the undertaking would be brought to a successful completion. He was satisfied from reports coming to hand that that would be the case. It was the duty of every member, he concluded, to lend a helping hand in anyway possible.

The Adelaide 'Advertiser' reported in 1920 and 1922 that the Caledonian Society planned to build a new hall. ·In 1921 the Advertiser reported that an appeal for funds had been launched, and in 1924, that appreciation had been expressed to Chief Duncan Fraser for acquiring a site in King William Street for the hall.

Notice was given in the Advertiser on 19 October 1925, that "the Foundation Stone of the new Me-



The Laying of the Foundation Stone of the New Building

morial Hall was to be laid at 3.00 pm. on the following Saturday by Chief Andrew D. Young”.

Construction of the new Caledonian Memorial Hall was completed in 1926 and the Hall was opened on 27 March of that year. The `Register' of that day reported the event as follows:

*“The new Caledonian Memorial Hall in King William Street; which has been erected under the supervision of Mr Donald Graham, Architect, has now been completed by the contractor (Mr T. P. Menzies) and will be formally declared open by Past Chief Duncan Fraser SM at 8 o'clock this evening.*

*At the same time an elaborate roll of honour (presented by Mr J. G. Duncan-Hughes, M. H. R.) will be unveiled by Lady Duncan. The Chief (Mr Andrew D. Young) will preside. A programme of Scottish songs and dances has been arranged.”*

'The Advertiser', in its report on the opening proceedings, included the following points: · The estimated cost of the Hall was more than £9,000; · Past Chief J. W McGregor donated £1 for each £1 collected up to £500. The Hall was a memorial to members who served in the Great War; four brass memorial tablets in the entrance porch testify to the memory of the members of the Society who served in the Great War.

As a matter of interest, when the Hall was sold, this memorial was placed on permanent loan with the Returned Servicemen's' League and is currently housed in their headquarters on the Torrens Parade Ground.

Both the 'Advertiser' and 'Register' reported that the first Annual Meeting of the Society in the Memorial Hall, was held on 21 July 1926.

The Annual Report for 1927/28 stated that “a library was opened in the office during the year; and, thanks to generous donors, we now have the nucleus of a good assortment of Scottish literature”.

Notwithstanding the completion of the new Hall, it was often necessary to accommodate some of the larger functions in more spacious venues such as the Palais on North Terrace or the Adelaide Town Hall.

In the early 1970's, the Adelaide City Council approved a planning scheme to allow multi-story buildings to be built along both sides of King William Street south of Victoria Square. The Society property had suddenly become very valuable and an offer was received to purchase the site for a figure rumoured to be of the order of \$6,000,000. This was refused by the Society Council. In the end, only one building, on the corner of King William Street and South Terrace was ever built under this scheme and remained almost empty for several years.

In 1974, despite strong opposition from some quarters, Chief Charles Gardener was able to convince the majority of Council members to extend the Hall by adding a mezzanine floor at the rear of the building above where the stage then was and to completely refurbish the kitchen to bring it up to a commercial standard so that full dinners etc could be served. The project had not been long finished when interest rates rose substantially to around 21% per annum. The Society had mortgaged the building to pay for the alterations and was finding it hard to make the repayments. Money had to be borrowed from members under a unit trust scheme and the Society had to stop providing financial support to the Society's Pipe Band.

In order to satisfy the bank, a small band of dedicated members worked feverishly for many years to help pay off the mortgage. Thrice weekly dances were held for many year plus weekly Bingo and card nights, monthly whisky tastings and every other fund-raising idea that could be imagined. A most successful venture was a BBQ in the lane alongside the hall in conjunction with the annual Christmas Pageant.

Over the years, little money had been spent on maintaining the Hall as all funds had had to be channelled into clearing the debt. The members who had loaned money where still owed about \$50,000 with the date of maturity fast approaching and no funds to meet the debt.

Not only did the Hall need general maintenance, but the roof needed replacing, the building

badly needed painting both inside and out and, worst of all, two trees that had self-seeded at the rear of the hall were sucking all moisture out of the soil with the result that huge cracks had appeared from the ground to the roof in several places at the rear of the building, leaving a gaps that one could easily put an arm through. Also, to bring the Hall up to a hireable state, air-conditioning would have needed to be installed. It was conservatively estimated that the total bill would be of the order of \$100,000. It was clearly evident that the Society could not afford to undertake the necessary upgrade to the Hall and the decision was made to sell it. With heavy hearts, Council put the Hall up for auction and it was sold in November 2002.

The Society set about determining what it wanted by way of a new building. It was determined that a "hall" was not appropriate but rather a smaller building would be the answer within about 10 minute's drive of the GPO and outside the City Parklands. Importantly, it must have at least one or preferably two additional tenantable areas in order to cover the cost of outgoings without Society members having to continually raise funds.

Council members have been actively looking for a new "home", but, despite bidding at several auctions, a purchase has not been made to date.

## Membership

It is of interest that for the first 57 years of the Society, membership was restricted to Scotsmen, the sons and grandsons of a native of Scotland. It was not until 1938 that membership was opened up to women, with New Rule 10 stating that Ladies of Scottish descent can become Associate Members'.

The number of members has fluctuated over the years from a high of about 600 to today's total of about 200. Of today's members, about 41 per cent are female and only 17 per cent born in Scotland.

The Society's Chiefs have included such prominent personages as the Hon. Alexander Hay MLC, the Hon. Dr Allen Campbell, the Hon. Sir Lancelot Stirling, the Hon. J H Howe, the Hon. John Darling, the Hon. Wallace Sandford, George McEwin of jam fame, the Hon. Sir David Gordon, the Hon. Sir George Ritchie, the Hon. Sir John McLeay, the Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin and many others. Even today, the Society's membership includes a number of prominent members of society.

## The Pipe Band

Initiated and sponsored by the foresight of Chief John Darling, what started out in 1894 as "The Pipers Band" is now commonly acknowledged as one of the most recognised Pipe Bands in South Australia and the oldest continuing civilian pipe band in the Southern Hemisphere and one of the oldest in the world. For that first Band, Mr Darling advanced sufficient money to obtain six full sets of pipes and paraphernalia to properly equip the Band, which was composed of ten pipers and six drummers. He also made available the billiard room in his home for Band practices.

The Band's first public performance was at the unveiling of the Robert Burns Statue on 5 May, 1894. Special permission had been obtained from the City Council for the Band to march from the Post Office to the Exhibition Building on North Ter-



The Pipers' Band, 1894.

race, playing on route.

In 1895, the Band was equipped with kilts in the Gordon (92<sup>nd</sup> Highlanders) Tartan. The budgeted cost was £3.0.0 per man. However, when the bills came in, the cost turned out to be £5.0.0 per man and much debate ensued in Council before allowing the Band to overdraw their account to pay for their new uniforms. As a result of this event, new Band rules were promulgated requiring that the Band consist only of members of the Society and that all uniforms and equipment, not privately owned, belonged to the Society. This same situation pertains today and is the cause of some discomfort amongst Band members.

The early years saw a fair amount of friction between the Band and the Society with resignations being tendered and withdrawn several times by the Pipe Major.

The Band's financial position was cause for further discussion at the Council meeting in late 1898 as the debt to Mr Darling had not yet been paid and the Band's account was still in overdraft. As a result the Band was disbanded and a new Band formed.

In approximately 1912 the Band became known as the Caledonian Pipe Band.

In the 1930's, there was a move to create a Scottish Regiment as had the other colonies. The attempt failed, but the army authorities eventually agreed to convert the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion to a kilted regiment. It was also agreed that a pipe band with a full complement of pipes and drums would be formed. Until that could be done, it was agreed that the Caledonian Pipe Band would act. The Band played in the recruiting parades and a number of members joined the Battalion.

A few years after the formation of the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion's Pipe Band, the Caledonian Pipe Band was involved in training a pipe band for the Australian Women's Army Service.

In 1946, the late King George VI granted permission to the Society to incorporate the word "Royal" into the Society's name in recognition of the untiring efforts and devoted services of the Society and its Pipe Band members. However, it was not until 1978 that the Band became known, as they are today, as The Pipes and Drums of the Royal Caledonian Society of South Australia.

In 1948, the Adelaide University Regiment was formed but without a pipe band connected to it. Once again the services of the Pipes and Drums of the Royal Caledonian Society were called upon. In the course of the year, Col. Lipman persuaded a significant number of Caledonian Society bandsmen to come across to be their band.

From its inception until 1982, the Band was an all male band but now has women in both the piping and drumming ranks. The first woman to join the Band was Wendy Bassell who joined at the age of fourteen. She started on the tenor drum and in 1992, took up a new challenge and learned the pipes playing with the Band for the first time as a piper in the Band's centenary year.

From the Band's first engagement in 1894 at the Grand Concert to celebrate the unveiling of the Robert Burns Statue in North Terrace, the Band has performed on thousands of public occasions throughout South Australia and entertained millions of South Australians, young and old, regardless of their origins.



Fundraising in 2004 at the Four-Wheel Drive Show

Well known examples of these are John Martins Christmas Pageant, now the Credit Union Pageant, Anzac Day Marches, Carols by Candlelight, Concerts, smaller pageants, fetes, weddings and funerals. Members of the Band volunteer their services for all these performances.

Above all else, it is probably the uniform of the vivid red McGregor tartan, the flowing plaid and full feather bonnet that has made

today's Band the most recognisable of Pipe Bands in South Australia.

The Band actively fosters Scottish Heritage by tutoring young people in piping and drumming as well as participating in Highland gatherings and Pipe Band competitions.

Over the past 100 years, the Band has maintained an excellent competition record competing throughout Australia and, in 1986, achieved the status of Australian Grade 2 Champions.

The highlight for the Band was the invitation to perform at the internationally famous Edinburgh Military Tattoo in 2001. Band members worked hard for two years fundraising for replacement uniforms and equipment to enable them to maintain their high standard when they represented Australia and performed at this highly prestigious event.

In 2005, the Band was invited to perform at the Edinburgh Tattoo, a Salute to Australia in Sydney and in 2007 the Band will be again performing at the prestigious Edinburgh Tattoo in Scotland — again much time was spent in fund-raising for this event.



Preparing for the official 2007 Edinburgh Tattoo photograph in Light Square, Adelaide

## Tartan Day

**D**uring 1999, The Society initiated a Tartan Day March for all South Australians of Scottish descent. This has become an annual event and is held on the Saturday nearest Tartan Day — 1 July. It has grown from a march along either North Terrace or Grenfell street to a march down Rundle Mall, the principal shopping centre of Adelaide, followed by a display of Scottish culture under the canopy at the intersection of Gawler Place and Rundle Mall. The March is lead by massed Pipe Bands followed by representatives of the various Societies and Clans, each proudly bearing their respective banners.

In 2007, due to the City Council establishing a market on Saturdays in Rundle Street, the March was transferred to King William Street, starting in Victoria Square. All costs associated with the March are met by the Society.



Marching down Rundle Mall, Adelaide — Tartan Day 2004 with members of the SA Pipes and Drums (red and blue Kilts)

“One hundred and twenty-five years long and still going strong” might be a good adage to finish on but, as with many other organisations, the Society needs new young members to take it forward for next 125 years.

If you have an interest in things Scottish, give us a call. See this site's Membership Page for contact details.

Updated — May 2007.