

Friends of Loudoun Kirk

June 2004

A Warm Greeting to the New Earl



Following the death of his mother, the late Countess of Loudoun, her son and heir Michael, Lord Mauchline has now succeeded as 14th Earl of Loudoun. We felt that our members may wish some information of the latest holder of the historic title.

Michael Hastings was born on 28 August 1942, eldest son of Barbara. Like all the males in the family he was educated at Ampleforth School. At the age of 18 Michael succumbed to the spirit of adventure and embarked on a trip to Australia, at a cost of £10 and arranged by the Catholic Church, and he remains there to this day.

It is clear that life down under has agreed with Michael and indeed did so from the outset. The wanderlust which took Michael to the other side of the world quickly receded as he established a very settled life. The young emigrant took a job on a rice farm and now, some 42 years later, he remains in that same post, looking forward to retiral. Images of the future earl knee deep in paddy fields contain not a grain, neither long nor short, of truth as Michael's career in the rice industry took him into marketing rather than the production side of the business.

Family life soon followed. Michael met and married Nolleen who sadly died just before Michael's mother passed away in 2002. The couple had five children. Eldest son Simon who is a twin to Lady Rebecca, now bears the courtesy junior title of Lord Mauchline previously held by his father. Simon has two older sisters, Lady Mandy and Lady Lisa, and a younger brother The Hon. Marcus. The current Earl of Loudoun is now a grandfather five times over. Home for Michael continues to be at Jerilderie in New South Wales, Australia although he remains in contact with the family in both Scotland and England, and retains an interest in the progress being made at Loudoun Kirk.

On a recent visit to the UK from his home in Australia, The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Loudoun, graciously agreed to succeed his late mother, Lady Barbara, 13th Countess of Loudoun, as Patron of Friends of Loudoun Kirk. A presentation of commemorative Loudoun Kirk glasses was made to Michael, by FOLK President Johnny Alexander, in the grounds of the kirk, to mark the occasion.

Michael was accompanied throughout his period in the UK, by two of his daughters, Lady Lisa and Lady Rebecca, and by Riley, youngest of his five grandchildren. This was the Earl's first visit to Britain since the funeral of the Countess, and the first undertaken in the aftermath of the recent programmes broadcast on Channel 4 regarding the Royal line of succession. There was much media interest, both home and abroad.

For those who missed the broadcast, Tony Robinson presented a case culminating in the announcement of Michael as our rightful king, as a result of a flawed succession concerning Edward 4th. Instead the title should have passed to the Duke of Clarence, taking us directly to Michael, 14th Earl of Loudoun, in the present day. The programme's omissions so far as the Scottish throne, and its impact on the succession are concerned, do not form part of this remit. Much of the findings had been known, or at least suspected, by the family, but further research highlighted in the programmes, gave further evidence to those suspicions. Subsequently there has been much interest and Michael, who voted for a Republic in his adopted country, has taken to the media and to his new found status, with great aplomb. Indeed the writer takes the view that the enhanced publicity may have been a great help to Michael and his family following the death of the Countess.

A brief visit to Scotland followed, again primarily private and without the local media notified. Michael took great delight in being hosted by his young cousin Madeleine, at Drumclog, who had arranged various introductions to FOLK committee members. The Scottish part of the trip was highlighted by a visit to both the castle and the kirk at Loudoun, access to the former being generously provided by the Henke Benbaum and his family, the new owners of Loudoun, just days before the season's opening. It was the first visit by the new Earl to the kirk for some seven years, during which period there has of course been significant restoration work carried out.

Our patron was mightily impressed with all that has been achieved by both FOLK and the Trustees of the Loudoun Kirk Preservation Trust. Whilst he had been aware of our activities, the outcome far exceeded his expectations. We are fortunate in having Michael's support in our efforts to continue that good work. The family vaults were opened in the kirk allowing Michael and his family the opportunity to pay their respects to their ancestors. Even young Riley was given the rare opportunity to venture below. We can also report that the restoration work to the building has resulted in a marked improvement to conditions in the vault, which are now dry, having previously been prone to flooding. It was fortunate that the sun shone on the refurbished kirk building, enhancing the restoration work, and providing the perfect backdrop for the presentation of our whisky tumblers.

It was an enormous pleasure for us all to spend time with the 14th Earl of Loudoun and his family and we will certainly keep him closely involved in our activities and plans. Michael will serve us well as our new Patron, and the distance across the oceans, cut short by modern communications, will not stand in the way of our close ties with the family.

By Keith Roberts

The Question of the Plaque

One of the more curious associations of the Kirk is that of the Belgian SAS. The first event ever staged by the Friends, was a remembrance ceremony and civic reception to honour those stationed at the castle after World War II. To mark the occasion a plaque was kindly donated to the Friends.

Originally the plaque was destined to be positioned on the outer wall of the Kirk near to the buttresses. The impending work on the Kirk delayed it's positioning. After the completion of restoration work, the increase in vandalism resulted in a concern for the safety of the plaque. Positioning the plaque within the Kirk would allow limited visibility but was felt that it would attract more unsavoury attention and we would lack the power to make safe the site.

Currently the viewing of the plaque is available on request or on open day events held at the Kirk. Shortly it's existence is going to be marked in a new list recording in detail the locations and directions to all the Special Air Service graves and memorials in the UK, for the Regimental Association, as a companion to their Role of Honour, compiled by Bill MacLellan.



Forth Coming Events

5th June
Newmilns Agricultural Show
Loudoun Castle Park

19th June
South Ayrshire History Fair
Walker Halls in Troon

29th August
Medieval Fayre &

Fun, falconry, re-enactment
& stalls held at the Kirk.

5th September
Doors Open Day
Once more our doors will be
open to all and guided tours
provided.

27th November
Ceilidh 7.30pm
Galston Community Centre

A Grave Occasion

The Friends were honoured by an invite to speak at a recent Graveyard Conference hosted by the Royal Society of Antiquarians in Edinburgh.

The event ran to coincide with Historic Scotland's launch of good management practice & funding of graveyard management itself as opposed to the buildings.

The focus of the day was the highlighting of various projects associated with the study of graveyards from academic research to the presence of poster presentations from local preservation groups and family history societies involved in the recording of gravestones and their survey.

We are encouraged to think towards the more global unifying impact of the work which we have been involved with other groups and projects; aiming to bring heritage conversation issues into general awareness and encourage others to continue with similar projects by example. The hope is that through standardisation of survey techniques a unified resource of the data collected may be established, which would create a stronger argument toward the preservation of the graveyards.

Meet the New Committee

POSITION	NAME
Chairman	J. Alexander
Secretary	A. Wilson
Treasurer	G. Hutchison
Membership Secretary	B. Kerr
Minutes Secretaries	B. Kerr & M. Purdie
Committee Member	K. Roberts
Committee Member	S. Loudoun
Committee Member	I. Thomson
Committee Member	S. Smith
Internal Auditors	K. Roberts & J. Alexander

Hot Beetroot Salad

1 beetroot
 1 apple
 6 shallots (or ½ an onion)
 1 tbsp vinegar
 1 (generous) tsp cinnamon
 1 pinch ground cloves
 Olive oil

- 1) Grate the apple and beetroot using a large grater.
- 2) Coarsely chop the shallots and fry until almost soft.
- 3) Turn heat up to full, add rest of ingredients and fry for about 1min, stirring constantly.
- 4) Serve hot.

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Brain Teasers

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