

# House of Gordon USA Annual General Meeting (AGM) Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in Linville, NC July 12, 2014

Federal IRS EIN # 26-0285250

**Call to Order: 2:19 PM** The meeting start was delayed to allow members gathered at the House of Gordon booth in McRae Meadows time for transportation to the meeting location in the campground.

**Appointment of Parliamentarian:** Lois Todd motioned to appoint Keith Linse Parliamentarian for the session. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

**Membership and Quorum:** Bonnie Linse reported the membership at 373 members, with 20% (75 votes) required to achieve a quorum to conduct official House of Gordon business. A quorum was met by the 12 voting members present and 165 proxy votes received from absentee members.

**Reading of the Chief's Greeting:** Omitted due to non-receipt

**Reading of the 2013 AGM Minutes:** Mark Ballard motioned this be omitted due to everyone in attendance having a copy in their hand. Keith Linse seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

## Reports:

### 1. President's Report (Lois Todd):

- a. *Board Changes:* Sadly, we lost our past president and board member Lu Gordon in November after a short illness, and we have accepted the resignation of Nikki Gordon Middleton as Secretary, House of Gordon USA. Geof Baker, who had already agreed to take on the position of Convener Chair was appointed by the board to take over Lu's Member-at-Large position on the board and David Gauthier has been appointed by the board to the secretary position.
- b. *Charitable Works:*
  - i. *Gordon Highlander Museum:* John & Nellie Lowry are in Scotland this month with their whole family. He was in Aberdeen on July 2nd and hand delivered a \$2000 check to the Gordon Highlander Museum as we continue our support of their wonderful organization and work. I told him to be sure to get some good photos for the newsletter!

- ii. *Gordon Camel Statue:* We were contacted last summer by Annie Hughes at Gordon's School in Woking, Surrey, England, asking for our support in their restoration efforts of the Gordon Camel Statue. This school is the National Memorial to Major-General Charles George Gordon, C.B., founded in 1885 by Queen Victoria, and this statue has significant historic value having been commissioned by the Royal Corps of Engineers to commemorate General Gordon and having stood in Khartoum where he died. The statue was returned to England in 1958 shortly after the Sudan became independent and since early in 1959 has made its home at the school. We were pleased to be able to contribute to this worthy project that honors our kinsman. It was kismet that I had already been doing research on General Gordon and working on an article for our May 2014 issue of *In the House* when Annie reached out to us. Being part of the restoration effort of this statue and other charitable efforts that help promote and keep our Gordon heritage alive is, in my opinion, one of the best parts of being a member of the House of Gordon USA Clan Society!
  
- c. *Graphics/Advertisements:* I have created a new version of the belted crest, and Geof & I have come up with some new banner designs which we have used in our display in the Gordon tent on clan row! The overhead, sept and belted crest banners will make up the standard banner set going to new conveners. We will order Wall of Honor and parade banners for those divisions who wish to buy them out of their operating budgets.
  
- d. *Scholarship Donations:* Many thanks for our members' donations to our scholarship fund. Your contributions enable us to support our heritage and some wonderful young talents. We do need to replenish this fund annually so that we can continue this important work. We are looking to bring online a shopping page that will allow us to sell a shirt with the proceeds dedicated to supporting the scholarship fund, and we are looking for ways to raise more funds for this worthy cause. Anyone with ideas for this project, please contact me.
  
- e. *Bylaws Revision:* Evan Rose and the other members of the Bylaws committee worked hard this past fall and winter to revise the bylaws as you will have read in the May newsletter. This was a long and laborious task. After our publication of the proposed revisions, we had a new member in Georgia, Jason M. Shepherd, who is an attorney, send instructions with his proxy regarding the Bylaws changes. He had some very good points that we had missed. A few are minor amendments that under Robert's Rules of Order may be included under the motion to the proposed changes published and we will make that motion on his behalf

later in the meeting. Other items he saw as potential problem areas will require further changes next year after publication of proposed changes can be made. His points were exactly on target catching items that had been missed in areas that could become points of misunderstanding and contention. Our whole purpose in this endeavor is to avoid future divisiveness, and so Evan and I have asked him to join the Bylaws Revision Committee and he has accepted.

- f. Things are looking up for the House in the USA. The board is working well together and we are seeing some very encouraging results. I have high hopes for this coming year to see more growth.
2. **Treasurer's Report (Bonnie Linse):** Our finances are in order. The numbers look skewed initially, but the apparent discrepancy is due to inconsistency in the members' payment timeframes. Many members paid their 2015 membership fees early this spring. Also the Convener's fund is higher than the membership fund because some members make direct contributions to support Convener activities. The important things are that our books balance and the PayPal mechanism we've established to support our financial activities is working splendidly. Additionally, our status as a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Corporation remains in good standing with over 30% of our income going toward charitable endeavors versus the 5% legal requirement. See addendum 1 for the detailed complete Treasurer's Report.
  3. **Convener's Chair Report (Geof Baker):** There have been a number of changes within the Convener's ranks and an exciting new invitation to formally participate in the New Hampshire Highland Games:
    - Arizona: Tom Gardenhire, our former North Carolina Convener until his relocation out west, has become the Arizona Convener and has also stepped up to produce the Southwest Newsletter.
    - Georgia: Amy Edwards has accepted the Convener position in Georgia and is moving forward to get the House reorganized down there following the untimely loss of Turpin Ballard last year. She hosted the Gordon tent at Stone Mountain last fall and is already in possession of the House's properties down there. With her leadership, we look forward to Georgia House of Gordon USA membership growth and strength.
    - Massachusetts: After not hearing from David Gordon, our former New England area Convener from Massachusetts, we have had some tentative contact with him, fostered through Donald Gordon up in Connecticut. We hope that we may be able to bring David back into the House and begin growing the House throughout the New England area. Donald has offered to host a tent in Rhode Island and Connecticut until we can find another

convener for those areas, but at 85 he, understandably, does not want to take it on himself. We appreciate Donald's help, and House of Gordon USA will continue to work with him to get the House of Gordon tent items from David or to get David back into the House and hosting the tents.

- Michigan: There is an active search under way for a new Convener in the wake of the resignation of Garth Gordon.
  
- New Hampshire: After several years of trying to get accepted to have a clan tent at the New Hampshire Highland Games we have received the invitation and will be hosting a tent there! We have a new convener for NH in Robert Gordon, and Rob and Kathy are very excited. Merle Gordon, our Maine Convener, Jim Gordon, one of the administrators for the DNA Project, and Bonnie & Keith Linse (Bonnie as our treasurer and membership secretary will head up the efforts) will all be giving Rob a hand on his first time out as Convener so he will be in good hands! Bonnie will be stopping off in Virginia to pick up our extra tent and some of our display items to supplement his new Convener's kit. With a huge number of Gordons in the area, we anticipate a big turnout. There has been a lot of interest in the event among the Gordons on our Facebook Group who are in the area!

#### 4. **Communications Chair Report (Lois Todd):**

- a. Lois relayed that over the last several months she designed a new logo for the House of Gordon DNA pages and updated them and designed and put out an informational pamphlet on our House of Gordon DNA Project. She also created and launched a House of Gordon DNA Project Facebook Group. This is a private group where people of Gordon heritage can come together specifically to talk about genealogy and the DNA Project results. The House of Gordon DNA Project Group now has over 100 members and continues to grow.
  
- b. The House of Gordon USA Facebook Group gained its 700<sup>th</sup> member on New Year's Day and since then has added over 140 more members and is growing every day. The Facebook group's growth since it began in 2009 has been good. In its first year 2009-2010 the group grew to 315 members. In 2010-2011 the group increased by 162.86% to 513 members. From 2011-2012 the group showed a loss of members from December 2011- June 2012 and only posted an overall increase of 1.07% to 548 members. In 2012-2013 there was a small growth of 1% until February 2012 when the growth took off again and we ended the year with 638 members representing an increase of 116.43% for the year. This past year the growth rate has increased to 131.82% as of June 18th with membership currently at 841 members as well. Both of these groups are

garnering interest in our Clan Society and sending new members our way. While we know we will not gain every member of the group as a member of the society, it is an avenue that we use to further our main mission statement to educate people about our Gordon heritage and promote goodwill in our community. The Facebook Page is being used as another way to make official announcements. This page has sent new members to the Facebook Group and to the House.

- c. Our main website is averaging 6400 visits per month with almost 10,000 page views per month; 78% of that traffic being direct traffic. That means our members know where we are and visit it fairly regularly. 17% of the traffic comes from referring domains – sites that link to us (like our Facebook group site and Wikipedia), and only 5% comes from search engines. Our PayPal integration is working great for membership applications. Our conveners may want to suggest to potential new members (and renewals) that they can pay online with PayPal and show them on their smart phone where it is! While we cannot take memberships with credit card in the tent due to liability and business licensing issues, members can pay with PayPal on their own phone. Now that we have PayPal working well in this regard, we are looking into having a few items online to sell that can support the Scholarship Fund and a Gordon Heritage Fund that will support the work of supporting conveners in our education efforts and other charitable works and deeds that support our Gordon heritage. Anyone with IT and merchandising experience is welcome to join a committee that will work on this project.
  - d. This year's ***In The House!*** publication was 56 pages and still came in at a reasonable printing cost of \$2.24/ea. Since we stuffed the envelopes with as much as possible to maximize our postal savings, we still came in with a total cost in line with the previous year's mailings even though the magazine was twice as large as before. We had more people sending information for the news section (YAY!) and a couple of article submissions. I encourage everyone to submit your news and articles for publication.
5. **Scholarship Chair Report (Lois Todd):** This year House of Gordon USA provided 4 scholarships to worthy individuals sustaining their heritage by various means. See Addendum 2 for complete details:
- a. ***Gaelic Language studies:*** This year we gave a special one-time \$500.00 scholarship in honor and in memory of our past president, Lu Gordon. A House of Gordon USA member from Utah, Rachel Noorda, was chosen as the recipient of this award. Rachel is currently studying abroad in Edinburgh, Scotland working on her PhD, and is using the scholarship toward her Gaelic language studies.

- b. **Highland Dance:** We were able to further the dreams of a young Highland Dancer from California, Emma Schiff, with a \$400.00 scholarship which allowed her to attend the Eastern Canadian Open Championships in Toronto in May where she was victorious and was awarded Champion of her age division, a unanimous vote among the panel of 3 judges. Her trip was made possible with our support. Emma is on her way to making her goal of competing in Cowal, Scotland in the World Championships where she hopes to place in the top 6 overall in her age group. I am sure you are all with me in sending good wishes her way!
  - c. **Drum Corps:** We awarded a talented young drummer from Rockville, MD, Nicholas Shropshire, a \$300.00 scholarship which he used to attend the Piping Centre's Winchester, VA Summer School. He plans on taking the skills that he learns back to his drum corps and passing them along.
  - d. **Bagpipes:** Today we awarded the Charles O. Gordon Memorial annual scholarship of \$250.00 and a trophy to Tyler Detremps from Bethlehem, PA, the young Grade 4 Junior Piper of the Day, at Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.
6. **DNA Project Report:** There are presently 538 members (mostly Jock and Tam) in the DNA project. Of the original \$1000 dedicated to the fund, only \$17 remains. The DNA Project is discussed further in HoG USA Item of Business 3 below:

### House of Gordon USA Items of Business:

1. **Bylaws Revisions:** Originally, the intent was to vote on the final modifications to the Bylaws at the AGM, however, astute recommended improvements were received from Jason Shepherd, a member from Georgia, during the final review. Some of these recommendations could not immediately be settled prior to the vote. Lois read the recommended changes to the AGM attendees and distributed hardcopies. All in attendance agreed that Jason's inputs were valuable and insightful (thank you, Jason).
  - a. The ensuing discussion led to a motion by Lois to continue the work of the Bylaws Review Committee to act on the significant recommended changes submitted by Jason. It was seconded and passed.
  - b. Keith Linse then motioned that the work done by the Bylaws Review Committee be voted on to be accepted as written to be the official governing document for House of Gordon USA. Geof seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
  - c. Geof Baker then motioned that the minor recommended administrative and clarification changes submitted by Jason that could be integrated into the final version of the House of Gordon USA Bylaws by Robert's Rules

guidance be accepted and published with the final document. Keith seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- d. A typo (extra word 'with') was identified at the AGM by Ginnie Gordon in Article 5, Section 3, paragraph 2, line 1). Motion that the word be deleted in final edit was seconded and unanimously approved.

## **2. Scottish Gordon Heritage Charities Fund**

- a. When House of Gordon USA was founded, the link to Scotland was maintained by an annual Publication produced by House of Gordon in Scotland. When House of Gordon in Scotland terminated the publication, members of House of Gordon USA voted to cease sending the \$5 from every membership to Scotland. This money instead was diverted to the Scottish Heritage Charities.
- b. Another part of membership funds went toward the Gordon Quartermasters fund for charity.
- c. In the absence of the House of Gordon publication it no longer made sense to separate these line items in the budget as it unnecessarily tied the hands of the Board regarding how they allocated charitable assets.
- d. Bonnie Linse motioned to combine the charitable aspects of House of Gordon USA into a single account. Geof Baker seconded. The measure passed unanimously.

## **3. DNA Project Funding:**

- a. As mentioned in the President's Report, DNA funding was down to \$17. A discussion ensued whether to add money to the account. Using logic similar to that regarding the Scottish Charities fund, it made no sense to set a separate account for DNA project and the Board valued the flexibility to weigh DNA project funding against other charitable endeavors on a case by case basis.
- b. Keith motioned to roll the DNA Project Fund into the Scottish Gordon Heritage Charities Fund established in 2 above. Mark Ballard seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

## **4. House of Gordon USA Goals:**

- a. Continue to grow membership

- b.** Expand House of Gordon USA throughout the US by recruiting Convener's in areas as yet untapped and retaining the present membership
  - c.** Add capabilities to the web site to sell merchandise to supplement the charitable aspects of House of Gordon USA
  - d.** Motion, seconded, and unanimously approved.
- 5. Adjournment:** At 2:55 pm, the slate was clear and Bonnie motioned to adjourn, Geof seconded, unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

DAVID J GAUTHIER  
Secretary