



THE Marjoribanks LETTER

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THE MARJORIBANKS FAMILY IS FORMALLY LAUNCHED

The Marjoribanks Family officially came into being when about 40 members of the family, from Scotland, England, Canada, the United States and Africa, meeting in June at the Marchbank Hotel at Balerno, near Edinburgh, gave their approval to a constitution and a set of by-laws.

William Marjoribanks of that Ilk, Chief and hereditary head of the family, greeted those attending:

"To Marjoribankses from all the earth, to the sound of the Marjoribanks Bell, I bid you one and all a warm and hearty welcome!"

(The bell was used at Balbardie, the Marjoribanks estate in Bathgate, from 1727 to 1824 when the laird had announcements to make, and is the gift of Hazel Leslie of Kilconquhar, Leven, Fife.)

The draft constitution, which was unanimously accepted with two amendments, declares that the organization exists in order to "promote friendship and closer acquaintance among members of the Family" and to collect and distribute knowledge about the Family throughout the world.

As those attending the Inaugural Meeting in 1988 agreed, it provides that membership "shall be open to persons bearing the name Marjoribanks or Marchbanks or Marchbank or Marshbanks, or who are descended of people bearing such names, and to anyone of whatever name who professes an interest in the purposes of The Marjoribanks Family."

The By-laws specify that the annual dues will be ten pounds for an Individual Membership, and twenty pounds for a Family Membership, comprising parents and their dependant children.

The following officers were elected: President, Andrew Marjoribanks, Younger of that Ilk; Vice-President, Roger Marjoribanks, Guildford, Surrey; Honorary Secretary and Editor of The Marjoribanks Letter, Robert Marjoribanks, Ottawa, Canada; Honorary Treasurer, Nancy Marjoribanks, Ottawa.

Among those present from beyond the United Kingdom were: Angus and Phyllis Marchbanks of Bakersfield, California; William P. Jackson of McLean, Virginia, and his young son, William P. Jackson III, known as "Jay". Both Dr. Marchbanks and Mr. Jackson are descended from George Marjoribanks who was captured while fighting the English at Preston in 1715, and transported to Virginia.

John Marjoribanks and his wife Andrea and their four young children were visiting from Harare, Zimbabwe, where he is engaged in community development.

Mystery Solved!

The Mystery of Marjoribanks in His Cloak has been solved.

In Letter No. 4 a reader reported having read a reference in a travel book written in the 1930s to a statue of "Marjoribanks in his cloak" which once stood in Tabriz, in the northern part of Iran, but has since disappeared.

Roger Marjoribanks of Guildford, Surrey, provides this explanation.



Young members of the family enjoy their lunch at the Annual Meeting. The young man in the foreground, in the white shirt, is Alexander. Moving clockwise, the others are: Faith, Charlotte, Catriona, Rachel, and Kirstie — all Marjoribankses. The other young man is William P. Jackson III.

The statue was not really of a Marjoribanks, but of the man who was at that time the Shah of Persia, Prince Mohammed Ali Reza.

The Shah, a powerful presence in his realm, inspired such awe among the British population of Tabriz that they were reluctant to speak his name aloud. When they had occasion to speak of the imposing figure that stood in the city square, they referred to it familiarly as "Marjoribanks." And, since it was draped in traditional eastern clothing, it was known as "Marjoribanks, in his cloak."

Canadian Guisachan Restored

Guisachan, the ranch built in Kelowna, British Columbia, by Lord Aberdeen and his wife, the former Ishbel Marjoribanks, has been preserved as a park and historical site.

William Marjoribanks, who was born in Bathgate and has lived for more than 20 years in Kelowna, reports that the colonial bungalow and its grounds have been restored as Guisachan Heritage Park.

The house was built in 1891, two years before Lord Aberdeen was appointed Governor-General of Canada. It was called Guisachan ("place of the firs") after the country house owned by Ishbel's father, Baron Tweedmouth, near Inverness. The Aberdeens sold the Kelowna house and lands in 1901.

Guisachan Heritage Park was formally opened this Spring by Alistair Gordon, Sixth Marquess of Aberdeen, the grandson of the original owners.

The Ancestral Lands

Members of the family attending this year's meeting made a pilgrimage to the original Marjoribanks lands — the property given to Lady Marjorie Bruce by her father, King Robert the Bruce, on the occasion of her marriage in 1315.

The ancestral lands are in Kirkpatrick-Juxta parish, about 20 miles north of the village of Lochmaben in Dumfriesshire. The main part of the property is now known as Marchbank Farm, and its hills are covered with grazing sheep.

John Marjoribanks of Harare explains that the lands continued to be called Marjoribanks up until the middle of the 19th century when, for some reason, the spelling was changed.

They were held by the Marjoribanks family until about 1630, when they were sold to a family of Johnstones who, in accordance with the custom of the time, adopted the name of the lands and called themselves Marjoribanks. For that reason, the ancestors of at least some of the people now called Marjoribanks were at one time Johnstones.

The Johnstones surrendered the lands to the Crown in the middle of this century to settle death duties on their Annandale estate. They are now occupied and farmed by a Mrs. J.K. Braid.

Members of the Family also visited the parish church of Kirkpatrick-Juxta, where many Marjoribankses are buried beneath gravestones dating back as far as 1714 and bearing several different spellings — including one gentleman who apparently styled himself Margoribanks.

In honour of the connection between the Marjoribanks and Johnstone families, those attending the meeting were invited to tea at Raehills, the home of the Earl of Annandale and Hartfell, head of the Johnstone clan. He and his wife graciously gave the visiting Marjoribankses a tour of the house and grounds.

William Marjoribanks of that Ilk, introducing members of the family to Lord and Lady Annandale, acknowledged "this ancient bond that has existed between us for all these centuries and which, I trust, will continue and be strengthened in the centuries to come."

Several members of the Family, with Lord Annandale's consent, were wearing kilts in the Johnstone tartan.

Next Year in Bathgate

The next Annual General Meeting and Family Gathering will be held during the first week-end in June, 1991, at Bathgate, a city midway between Glasgow and Edinburgh that has many historical associations with The Family.

The meeting will coincide with the Bathgate Procession which is held each year on the first Saturday in June as the climax of a week-long celebration which commemorates the founding of the town and the marriage in 1315 of Lady Marjorie Bruce and Walter Stewart, the progenitors of the Stewart kings.

As part of her dowry, Lady Marjorie received from her father, Robert the Bruce, in addition to the lands of Marjoribanks near Lochmaben, the castle and lands of Bathgate. The school children each year re-enact the wedding ceremony in a colourful pageant.

The procession also honours two Bathgate benefactors: John Newland who left money for the founding of Bathgate Academy, and Alexander Marjoribanks of that Ilk who, at considerable cost to himself, ensured that the school was built.

Mr Newland, a sugar planter who died in 1799, left a large part of his fortune to found a free school in his native town but some of his heirs contested the will in a legal battle that persisted for more than 30 years.

Alexander Marjoribanks, great-great-grandfather of William Marjoribanks of that Ilk, financed the long legal suit on behalf of the town and the school. The town did not receive the money

which Mr Newlands bequeathed it, but it was awarded the interest on that money over ten years, amounting to some 14,500 pounds, and that was enough to pay for the Academy, which opened in 1833.

Alexander Marjoribanks has been called the father of modern Bathgate and the annual parade passes along a street named in his honour. He promoted an Act of Parliament in 1824 which created Bathgate a free burgh, independent of the barony of Marjoribanks, relinquishing all dues accruing from his office. In the same year, he was elected the first Provost of the town.

His home, the handsome Balbardie House, built in the middle of the 18th century, survived until 1950, when it was destroyed.

Newest Recruit

The newest entry in the family records is William Robert Marjoribanks who was born earlier this year to Lt. Andrew Dominic Marjoribanks, of Jellalabad Barracks, Tidworth, Wiltshire, and his wife Sarah. Young William is the grandson of Robert and Bridget Marjoribanks of Edinburgh.

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