

SIR MALCOLM ROGVALD INNES OF EDINGIGHT, KCVO, WS 1938-2020

Sir Malcolm Innes of Edingight, KCVO, WS, Lord Lyon King of Arms and Secretary of the Order of the Thistle from 1981 to 2001, was born in 1938, the third son of Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, GCVO and Lady Lucy Buchan, daughter of the 18th Earl of Caithness. His father was already a distinguished herald when Sir Malcolm was born and was appointed Lord Lyon King of Arms in 1945 demitting office in 1969 by which time Sir Malcolm had held the office of Lyon Clerk and Keeper of the Records for three years.

He was educated at Gilsland Park School, the Edinburgh Academy, as were his three sons, and the University of Edinburgh from which he graduated with an LLB. He became a Writer to the Signet in 1964.

He was appointed Falkland Pursuivant Extraordinary in 1957 and the following year promoted to become Carrick Pursuivant of Arms, an office his father had also held. On his appointment in 1966 as Lyon Clerk, in succession to Colonel Andrew Lawson who had held the office since 1929, his connection with Lyon Office was firmly established and he spent the rest of his working life there. In 1966 he was also responsible for ensuring the move of Lyon Office from General Register House, where it had been situated since the end of the 19th century, to New Register House went smoothly and his efficiency allowed for a large library of books and archives to be moved and re-catalogued expertly. His knowledge of the history of the Court of the Lord Lyon was comprehensive and even in retirement he regularly sent in new material which he had been sent or had discovered in the archives. He seemed to remember every recording of arms which took place between 1966 and 2001 and recalled meeting many of the petitioners. He was, with a few other enthusiasts, responsible for the foundation of the Heraldry Society of Scotland in 1977, a society to which he devoted much time, becoming Chairman, President and Fellow and finally Patron. Many happy excursions took place in the earlier years where he, with other friends, enjoyed the back seat of the bus with suitable refreshments. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada and of the Heraldry Society of New Zealand.

He produced many articles and talks and in 1978 revised his father's great work "Scots Heraldry". He enjoyed the more difficult cases which came before him and relished the legal debate. Two of the major cases he heard were those related to the succession to the Earldom of Selkirk and the petition of Colonel Dunbar of Kilconzie to succeed to the Dunbar of Mochrum baronetcy, a wish Colonel Dunbar did not achieve.

In 1981, following the retirement of Sir James Monteith Grant, Malcolm was appointed Lord Lyon King of Arms and in the same year became a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order. In 1990 he was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order. His 20 years as Lord Lyon saw many changes in the way Lyon Office worked and in those appointed to be Officers of Arms. A thorough grounding in heraldry and a desire to contribute to the heraldic world were deemed by him essential before anyone could be appointed to the office. In 1987 he broke new ground by appointing a woman to become an Officer of Arms, the first in the world and the previous year had recommended that same person to become the first female Lyon Clerk.

He took a gentle but successful approach to bringing heraldry into modernity, with ideas of new symbols for new occupations which appealed to many new to the science. He encouraged those with little previous interaction to become armigerous. With corporate bodies he either discussed how a design might be better or if there was no intention of the body wishing to acquire arms how they could render a design inoffensive. He preferred education to allowing the Procurator Fiscal to Lyon Court to use a heavy hand.

He did not stand on ceremony at all and indeed one of the few occasions when he “used” his position was when police approached him when he was parked, just on the edge of the pavement, outside the gates of New Register House. They invited him to join them in the back of their squad car. Having asked him to take a breathalyser test, which he relished as no alcohol has passed his lips for several years, and found it negative they became a little more indignant but on asking his name to which he replied “Sir Malcolm Innes of Edingight, Lord Lyon King of Arms” hastily invited him to leave their care with profound apologies.

In 2001 he retired as Lord Lyon and Secretary of the Thistle and being already a herald for life was appointed Orkney Herald Extraordinary. He was the last person to hold the office of Lyon as a full-time appointment and also the last to have held previous heraldic office for a significant period of time. He continued to have an interest in Lyon Office and in the Order of the Thistle and was always generous with his thoughts and memories of both.

Whilst heraldry, genealogy and history were central to his life he had many interests well away from his professional life. He was a keen shot, excellent archer and, as a member of the Royal Company of Archers, the winner of The Queen’ Prize, an avid fisherman and a long serving and assiduous member of the River Deveron District Salmon Fisheries Board, and he had a deep knowledge of forestry matters. He enjoyed music and autobiographies, ecclesiastical and other intellectual debate, architecture and gardens to name a few. He kept up with the interests of his grandsons and their musical preferences, not necessarily a genre he also enjoyed. His knowledge of matters of the North East and in particular Innes history was profound. He was a well-read, cultured polymath, a generous and amusing host, and a staunch friend.

He was married for 50 happy years to Joan, who died in 2013, the daughter of Thomas Hay, WS and had three sons, John Innes of Edingight, Colin Innes of Kinnairdy and Michael Innes of Crommey, all of whom have sons. His father had had a passion for re-acquiring Innes dwelling hence the territorial designations they each hold from their respective property.