GRIP FAST OUR PRINTS The Newsletter of Clan Leslie Society International September 2025



LESLIES ON TOUR SCOTLAND 2025

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About the Cover

Exciting News awaits inside this issue of the Grip Fast Journal. The cover features the cake from the celebration at Leslie Castle (photo taken by Scott Leslie) at the end of the 2025 Gathering in Scotland. This edition includes reflections and photos from our time together in Scotland.

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From the Editor

This is my first edition as the new Editor of *Grip Fast: The Journal of the Clan Leslie Society.* I'm excited to be able to take this burden off our Chieftain's hands, so she can concentrate on Society business as the Chieftain, and as our new Commissioner for North America.

By way of introduction, my name is Scott Leslie, and I am a retired Presbyterian pastor and schoolteacher living in Allen, Texas, a suburb on the north side of Dallas. I have only recently become a member of the Society, even though I've known about my Scottish heritage for most of my life. I also serve as the Chaplain for the Scottish Society of Dallas. My family descends from the "South Carolina 96", and I've been fortunate that a second cousin has traced our family lineage back to those two brothers who arrived in South Carolina in the early 1720s.

I have been married to the love of my life, Mary, for over 41 years. We have two daughters who live in Texas, as well as a granddaughter. We enjoyed travelling to Scotland this summer and meeting so many of the Clan that gathered with us there. I also serve as the Southwest Convenor, having been recruited to this duty by the late David Leslie White and my good friend Susan Abernethy (who relocated to Texas after many years in San Diego).

As a new retiree, I've been looking for ways to use my skills and abilities. Helping to edit this journal as well as going to fairs and highland games has really captured my interest.

Many thanks to Chief Alex, Commissioner Laura, Retired Commissioner William Leslie, Baroness Nicola, and the many others who contributed photos, articles, and information for this edition. My goal is to produce this journal at least quarterly, and to do that I'll need your help! Please send photos, articles, ideas, etc. to me at my email address (below). In advance, thank you for helping me to make this OUR journal!

Grip Fast!

Scott Leslie Editor scottaleslie@att.net



Scott & Mary Leslie at the Chief's Banquet in Aberdeen earlier this summer

From the Chief

The Gathering of 2025 was a long time coming. For some years, members of the Society had wondered, officially and unofficially, whether a Gathering in Scotland was possible and the general consensus was 'yes' but with a lot of planning.

The first attempt was to have a Gathering in 2020, in Aberdeenshire, around the dates of the Aboyne Games and focused on Leslie Castle, as the last Scottish Gathering had been, some 30 years ago.

This idea was, sadly, scuppered by COVID.

Five years after that attempt, it came to fruition and the plan was to do something that very few, if any, clan gatherings had tried before. To do a three-centre Gathering, visiting the places that were important to Leslies, whether in the last few years or the last few hundred.

We went from Edinburgh and the tours down the Royal Mile, to Leslie (via a funny little bridge that goes nowhere, over nothing) past Dumfermline where it all began, to Aberdeenshire where many Leslie roots began.

Along the way, we listened to Angela my cousin and the story of our Great Grandmother, Noel, who not only survived the Titanic disaster but was hailed as a heroine. We celebrated a new memorial plaque on the wall of the Leslie Crypt, took a photo opportunity at Leslie House, sampled some whisky at Lindores Abbey, walked up to Ballinbreich Castle, danced some Scottish Country dances, enjoyed a service to celebrate Clan Leslie and a pig roast at Leslie Castle.

It was, to put it mildly, a busy schedule.

It was also a memorable few days, at least for me and Miranda, and I hope for those of you who were able to make it to Scotland.

It was, it always is, most memorable for the clansmen you meet and meet again, for the laughter and the feeling of 'clanship'.

Thank you so much to those of you who came from so far away. Thank you also to my cousins, who made up 'the home team' and were invaluable in their support and help. And thank you, particularly, to my wife Miranda and to Liz, 'without whom none of it would have happened.'

We look forward to seeing you at Stone Mountain in October 2027!

Very best wishes.

Yours,

Chief Alex September 2025



From the Chieftain/Commissioner

By Laura Messing

In July, the members of Clan Leslie Society International came together, as we do every two years, for our CLSI gathering. This gathering, hosted by Chief Alex and Miranda in Scotland, marked the first time CLSI convened in Scotland since the Harlaw Commemoration in 2011. We celebrated not just our shared ancestry, but also the enduring spirit of kinship that binds us together across oceans and generations. It was tremendous to meet so many people that I had only previously seen on a zoom call or via email.

Gathering in Scotland is special and for many, a once in a lifetime trip. One of the most enriching aspects of this particular Gathering was the opportunity to visit many historic and cultural sites connected to our heritage. Chief Alex and Miranda planned so many activities that it's difficult to list everything, but I will give it a try. Together we explored:



- The Royal Mile, experiencing the heart of Scotland's capital.
- Parenwell Bridge and the town of Leslie, including Leslie House and Leslie Kirk, places closely tied to our clan history. This included a very meaningful dedication of a plaque at the Leslie crypt honoring Chief Alex's grandfather and father, the 20th and 21st Earls of Rothes.
- Glenrothes where we visited the Glenrothes Heritage Centre, had a wonderful dinner together, viewed Titanic artifacts and were treated to an incredible presentation from Angela Young about the Countess of Rothes and her heroism the night of the Titanic disaster.
- Ballinbreich Castle, Abernethy Tower and the Lindores Abbey Distillery, offering a glimpse into the Leslies' layered past. The distillery was a fun and educational break from our bus travels!
- **Aberdeenshire**, home to generations of Leslie history.
- Chapel of the Garioch and the Leslie Cross, which was donated with funds raised by Clan Leslie Society International members.
- The **Battle of Harlaw site**, where we reflected on a heartbreaking moment in Leslie history.
- Leslie Castle, a highlight and a meaningful connection to our name and legacy.

Each visit deepened our appreciation for the resilience and contributions of our ancestors and gave us opportunities to learn and reflect together as a Society.

One of the most poignant moments for me was the night of the Chief's banquet where I became Clan Commissioner of North America for CLSI. I am deeply honored to step into this role, and it is a responsibility I accept with humility and gratitude. William, who has served as Commissioner since 2009, leaves big shoes to fill. His dedication has strengthened our society and deepened our ties. His establishment of the Clan Leslie Collection at the University of Guelph will be a lasting legacy for generations. He has helped navigate us through challenging times and I know I will continue to seek his guidance.

As we look toward the future, Clan Leslie Society International remains committed to preserving our traditions, celebrating our heritage, and fostering fellowship among members. This year's gathering was a reminder that our Society is not only a link to the past, but also a living community for generations to come. Our time in Scotland together was more than just a reunion—it was a reaffirmation of who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. I am very much looking forward to our next gathering in 2027 at the Stone Mountain Games in Georgia.

William Leslie retires as Commissioner

By William Leslie

Every Gathering is more than just a reunion—it is a living tribute to the Clan's vibrant past and its hopeful future. Whether recounting tales of ancestors or forging new friendships, members are united by their pride in the Leslie name and the spirit of resilience that has carried the Clan through centuries. I attended the great Clan Leslie Gathering in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, in July. There were several members of my immediate family there, as well as many old friends and colleagues. The Clan Chief, the Honourable Alexander Leslie and his wife, Miranda organized this Gathering, and it was well attended. We visited several sites relevant to Leslie history and had fun and enjoyed each other's company. The Gathering ended at the beautiful Leslie Castle, which is a special place to me.

Some time in the 1970's, the then Clan Chief, the late Earl of Rothes, who had worked with Alex Leslie Klieforth to form the American Clan Leslie Society, wished to honour Alex Klieforth for all his hard work in starting and running the new Society. The Earl had a special Griffin medallion made for the occasion and appointed Alex as the Commissioner of the Clan. When Alex retired from all the activity of the Society's business, Robert Leslie of Ohio, who was the then current Chieftain of the Society was appointed as the Commissioner of the Clan. I first met Robert at the fantastic Clan Leslie Gathering in 1995 at the Leslie Castle in Aberdeenshire, hosted by David and Leslie Leslie to celebrate the end of their amazing restoration of the Castle on the spot where our founder, Bartholomew built his first wooden castle. Robert's Council also changed the Society's name to the Clan Leslie Society, later to become the Clan Leslie Society International. Canadians were very



William Leslie appointed North America Commissioner for Clan Leslie by Chief Alex Leslie, 1995



William Leslie and Chief Alex at his retirement at the Chief's Banquet, July 2025. 2025

interested, and I joined the Society at that Gathering, also attended by ten members of my immediate family.

I became very involved with the work of the CLSI, serving as Chieftain, Vice-Chieftain, and as Editor of the monthly Grip Fast newsletter for many years. I also attended many Scottish Festivals with my wife Sue and hosted Tents for years at festivals in Ontario. We also hosted a large Clan Gathering in 2002 in our hometown of Orillia. David Leslie of Leslie Castle and I came up with the plan to erect a cross near the Harlaw Battlefield to honour the Leslies who fought and died in that battle. David Leslie White of Dallas, Chieftain at the time, and I created the Clan Leslie Collection at the McLaughlin Library at the University of Guelph in Ontario.

In the year 2009, Robert Leslie had retired as Commissioner, and our Clan Chief hosted a tent at the Homecoming Scotland Gathering in Holyrood Park, next to the Castle with many of the Clans attending. Sue and I were there. It was at this event that the Chief honoured me by appointing me as the Commissioner of the Clan Leslie of North America. I have worked closely with the Council of the CLSI and enjoyed my position.

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William Leslie retires as Commissioner

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Prior to the Gathering in July, I had decided to retire from this position and ask the Clan Chief to appoint a younger person. I was amazed at the attention I received at the Chief's Banquet in Aberdeen and was pleased to accept a beautiful, engraved silver tray as a retirement present. Ironically, my active career with the Clan and the Society concluded at the Leslie Castle the next day, where it had all begun in 1995. 30 years ago. The Clan Chief appointed Laura Messing, our current CLSI Chieftain as his new Commissioner. Laura works tirelessly for the CLSI and will be an outstanding Commissioner as well.



Sue & William Leslie at the Chief's Banquet, Aberdeen, July, 2025

"Our Place, Our Purpose"

A reflection on Leslie Castle and the Gift of Stewardship, by Nicola Teal, Baroness of Leslie Delivered at the Leslie Chapel in Garioch, Sunday July 6, 2025 as a part of the Leslie Gathering.

Good morning, everyone.

Today, I want to share a story—not just of stone and timber, but of legacy, faith, and the sacred duty of stewardship, that comes with ownership. It's the story of Leslie Castle, a place that has stood for nearly a thousand years, and the people who have carried its torch through the centuries.

The roots of this story stretch back to the 11th century, when the Hungarian nobleman known to us as Bartholomew arrived in Scotland in the company of Princess Margaret, who would become Queen and later Saint Margaret of Scotland. And it was

here, in the Garioch district of Aberdeenshire, that he built his home at "Leslie," described as being between a "less and ley," or a stream and a meadow—the first Leslie Castle.

Similarly, we all know that history tells us that while fording a swollen river with Queen Margaret, she cried out, "Gin the buckle bide?"—"Will the buckle hold?" Bartholomew shouted back, "Grip fast!" and pulled her to safety. That phrase, *Grip Fast*, became the family motto, and the three buckles on the Leslie coat of arms still bear witness to that moment of courage and care.

Kinship is at the heart of this story. Bartholomew's act of bravery was not just for his queen, but for a member of his extended family, bound by loyalty and shared purpose. This sense of kinship has been passed down through generations, shaping the values and actions of those who have called Leslie Castle home.

Fast forward to the 1980s. The castle, long fallen into ruin, was lovingly restored by David and Leslie Leslie. Ten years of work. Over a million pounds. Fifty-five windows handcrafted on a kitchen table. It was a quiet sacrifice, not unlike the words from Hebrews 13 [v.16]: "Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." And today, thanks to their vision and our stewardship, Leslie Castle stands not just as a guesthouse, but as a living sanctuary of heritage.

Guests come from around the world to stay in this authentic Scottish stronghold—hosted by the Baron and his family, nourished by local food, and surrounded by stories that echo through the stone walls. But behind the beauty lies a deeper truth: preserving history is hard. It's expensive. It's slow. And it often doesn't fit neatly into modern systems of taxation or business.

Yet it is important work.

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 13:22, "A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children." That inheritance isn't just wealth — it's wisdom, memory, and place. It's the courage to say, "This matters. This is worth saving."

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Micah [6:8] reminds us that the Lord does not demand grand, performative offerings. What He asks is this: "to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." In the Leslie story, that walk took the shape of building, protecting, and passing on something more than stone — it was about character, stewardship, and honouring where we've come from.

Kinship extends beyond bloodlines. It encompasses the bonds we form with our community, our environment, and our shared history. At Leslie Castle, we've re-homed bees, insulated ancient walls, and replaced roof tiles after storms. We've faced red tape, long delays, and trades unfamiliar with the quirks of a 17th-century structure. But we've kept going. Because we understand what Bartholomew did nearly a millennium ago: that to grip fast is to hold on—not just to a belt, but to a calling.

So, I ask you today: what have you been called to grip fast to? What legacy are you building, preserving, or passing on?

Let us be people who remember. Who restore. Who rise to the challenge of stewardship — not just of castles, but of communities, of faith, and of the stories that shape us.

Thank you.

[Editor's Note: This was the sermon given during the worship service at the Leslie Chapel of the Garioch. The congregation has dwindled so that services are usually only held twice a month. We were fortunate that members of the parish and Nicola were willing to assume the leadership for us to worship there during the Gathering. Photos of the castle below were taken by the editor during the "Pig Roast" at the end of our gathering. If you would like to contribute to the castle charitable trust, please use the QR code below. Many thanks to Baroness Nicola for bringing this message and allowing its reproduction here.]









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Company Registration No. SC584440

Images from the 2025 Clan Gathering



Images from the 2025 Clan Gathering



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Images from the 2025 Clan Gathering



TENTS, GAMES & EVENTS



Central Florida Scottish Highland Games

Winter Springs, FL

Tent Host: Sheryl Moore, Michelle Smith Green

January 18 & 19, 2025

Pictured: Jennifer Green, Karl Riley, &

Michelle Smith Green



Fergus Scottish Festival Fergus, Ontario Canada Tent Host: Zach Leslie August 9 & 10, 2025



1782 Scottish Festival, St Andiole, France, July 1, 2025; Tent Hosts: Jean-François Codomier Leslie and Virginie Lorain-Codomier Leslie

We exchanged a lot about Clan Leslie and its rich history, as well as the creation and purpose of the "Clan Leslie Society International".

Thank you again Chief Alexander Leslie, Dame Miranda Leslie and Laura Sawyer Messing for your trust and the honor you give us to be Leslie and officially represent the Clan Leslie Society International for France.

TENTS, GAMES & EVENTS



Scott Leslie has participated in a number of clan festivals this past spring. Included were the Scottish Village at the North Texas Irish (Music) Festival in Fair Park, Dallas (Feb. 28 – Mar 2, 2025); the Sherman Celtic Festival in Sherman, Texas (March 21-23), the San Antonio Highland Games & Celtic Fair (April 4-6), the Nacogdoches Scottish Highland Games (May 9-10) in Nacogdoches, Texas; and the Stirling Classic Scottish Festival & Highland Games in Yukon, Oklahoma (pictured above, May 30- June 1). Also assisting him at these events were Susan Abernethy, her son Joshua Persons, and Scott's wife, Mary, and daughter, Abigail.



Patrick Masson attended the Capital District Games again this year and even had a few Leslies stop by the tent and one actually walked with him in the parade. The gentleman with him is Justin Leslie of Schenectady NY and the woman is Heather "Leslie" Rooney of Rensselaer NY. Susan Leslie of Broadalbin, NY also visited the tent. (September 5th, Altamont, NY)



Please share your photos and reports from the different highland games and festivals with Scott Leslie (scottaleslie@att.net) for inclusion in future issues of Grip Fast.

Clan Leslie News & Updates

ROYAL SIGHTING IN FDINBURGH



The first part of our Gathering was in Edinburgh, and it happened to take place during Royal Week. My mom, sister and I were fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of King Charles and Queen Camilla as they were leaving St. Giles Cathedral

Laura Sawyer Messing

ITEMS FROM THE SOCIETY BUSINESS MEETING

The Society held its meeting of the membership on Sunday, July 6, 2025, in West Aberdeen, as part of this year's Gathering. During the meeting, it was agreed that the next Gathering would occur during the Stone Mountain Games in Atlanta, Georgia in 2027. Laura Messing was recognized for her appointment by Chief Alex as the new Commissioner for North America, replacing the retiring William Leslie. Many thanks were given to the "crew" that organized this year's Gathering. Having it in multiple locations allowed us to visit important heritage sites.



CLAN LESLIE CHARITABLE TRUST

In 1982 The Clan Leslie Charitable Trust was set up in Edinburgh, under Scottish Law. The original purpose of the Trust was (and remains) 'to safeguard Scottish historical chattels and heirlooms in general and in particular those relating to the Leslie family.'

Over time, the aims and responsibilities of a Trust evolve. For instance, Fife Council no longer maintains the grounds around the Leslie Crypt in Leslie, nor the area around Parenwell Bridge in Fife. And while Historic Scotland takes an interest in preserving Ballinbreich Castle, there is always more to do.

Over the next few months, the Trustees of the Clan Leslie Trust will be discussing ways that we can work with the Clan Leslie Society and its members.

For more information and updates, see our website at https://clanleslietrust.org/

Chief Alex Leslie

UPCOMING LESLIE TENTS

Check the CLSI website for our games calendar as we hope to add more events!

50th Annual New Hampshire Highland Games & Festival, Sept. 17-19, Lincoln. NH Hosted by Laura Messing

Oklahoma Highland Gathering, Oct. 10-12, Choctaw, OK Hosted by Scott Leslie & Susan Abernethy

Stone Mountain Highland Games & Scottish Festival, Oct. 17-19, Stone Mountain, GA Hosted by Sheryl & Chuck Moore

Arkansas ScotFest, Oct. 17-19, Lyon College, Batesville, AR Hosted by Scott Leslie & Susan Abernethy

65th Annual Salado Scottish Gathering & Highland Games, Nov. 7-9, Salado, TX Hosted by Scott Leslie & Susan Abernethy

City of Deltona Highland Games & Festival, Nov. 8, Deltona, FL Hosted by Sheryl & Chuck Moore & Jennifer Green

Scottish Village at the North Texas Irish (Music) Festival, Mar. 6-8, 2026, Fair Park, Dallas, TX Hosted by Scott Leslie & Susan Abernethy

CLSI needs a Quartermaster!

If you are looking for a way to serve Clan Leslie Society International, here is your opportunity. Please email Laura at: designinvasion@gmail.com for more information.

NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Hiler Lithonia, GA

Michael Gearman

Chaska, MN

Rejoin

Walter Leslie Spruce Pine, NC

Anniele de Mander

Finland

Robyn Leslie Roselle, IL

Rejoin

Kenneth Leslie Vallejo, CA

Rejoin

Michelle Hammond

Mill Creek, WA

Leslie Davis Reddick, FL

Gwendylan Kelley San Antonio, TX

Katheryn O'Dell Bakersfield, CA

William "Will" Leslie

Guelph, ON Canada Rejoin

Katie Christie Burbank, CA

Kristin Ingersoll San Diego, CA

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Kelly Mecifi Lumberton, NC

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France

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Kimberly Goldsmith-

Leslie

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Jacob Leslie Inman, SC

Virginie Codomier

France

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Kennesaw, GA Inceptor

Presley Dodd Homossasa, FL Sodonia Genteman

Gastonia, NC

Keith Genteman Gastonia, NC

Associate Member Elias Genteman

Gastonia, NC

Inceptor

Inceptor

Moriah Genteman Gastonia, NC

Trinity Genteman Gastonia, NC Inceptor

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Nebo, NC Jeanette Moore,

Nebo, NC David Lesley Mt. Ulla, NC

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Kevin Leslie Rock Hill, SC

James Leslie

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Associate Member

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France

Olivier Hornec-Ostertag

France

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NEW MEMBERS

(continued)

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Erin Leslie

Mount Dora, FL Associate Member

Jason Leslie Mount Dora, FL

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Annamarie Leslie Mooresville, NC Associate Member

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Harriet Hoskyns-

Abraliall Atlanta, GA Jack Abernethy Watkinsville, GA Chadwick Moore Newman, GA

Candace Abernathy

Zniber

Charlotte, NC Meagan Leslie British Columbia,

Canada

Zachary Leslie Ontario, Canada

Barbara Graisy-Adams

Lacey, WA

Lucinda Moore Clinton, MS Rejoined

Jennifer Green Orlando, FL Rejoined

Jennifer Berlin Porter Ranch, CA

Michael Magee Albion, RI Rejoined

Jennifer Leslie Roseville, CA Leslie Weekley Shreve, OH

Ethel Weekley Shreve, OH Sharon Meek

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Dwight DeLaet Omaha, NE **Steve Lasley** Sonoma, CA

Amanda Lockman

Lenoir, NC

Alyssa Lockman Ricks

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Timnath, CO Russell Moore Jersey City, NJ Lifetime Member

Mackenzie Eicher Berne, IN

Steven Sheely Bremen, GA

Connie Bagwell Union, SC

Jill Onno

Carlsbad Springs, On

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Marilyne Mondello Mougins, France Associate Member

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Historian

Karen Lessley Ingersoll (See Council Listing)

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Laura Sawyer Messing. (See Commissioner Listing)

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www.clanlesliesociety.org

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VIRGINIA, NORTH CAROLINA

Vacant

CLSI NEEDS A QUARTERMASTER!

If you are looking for a way to serve Clan Leslie Society International, here is your opportunity. Please email Laura at: designinvasion@gmail.c om for more information.

YOU NEED SOME LESLIE SWAG.

Don't forget about the Leslie store on our website! We have some really nice items. Click on the photos below to go directly to our store page or visit **clanlesliesociety.com/shop** to shop anytime.







Grip Fast: The Leslies in History



Clan Badge, Pin (or Patch)

SCOTLANDSHOP



A big **thank you** to our friends at the Scotland Shop for making our gathering so memorable and featuring Clan Leslie the entire month of July!

Clan Leslie society members recieve a 10% discount with code **CLSI10**. This does not expire, and The Scotland Shop has all of the Leslie tartan variations.

https://www.scotlandshop.com/us/

Clan Leslie Gathering Pop Up in Edinburgh, July 2025



Leslie Clan Leslie Society International

1709 Giddings Court Allen, TX 75002 USA

The Purpose of Our Society:

To gather kindred together in clanship.

To promote, foster, collect and preserve historical and genealogical records and information about descendants of Clan Leslie throughout the world.

To promote knowledge of Clan Leslie specifically and the history and culture of Scotland generally.