

PRESS RELEASE

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100 years on, Canadian Curlers retrace their ancestors footsteps at

Blair Castle

In the Scottish year of Homecoming, Atholl Estates were delighted to host a very special homecoming visit by 20 Canadian Curlers who returned to Blair castle 100 years on, following in the footsteps of their Canadian curling predecessors. The visit was arranged by the Atholl Province, a group of around 9 curling clubs, whose patron is the current Duke of Atholl (11th). This trip recalls a visit made by the Canadian Curlers to Blair Castle in 1909 when they had a match with the then Duke of Atholl (7th)'s curling team.

The Canadian curlers were delighted to view the many curling items from the castle archives in a special tour led by archivist Jane Anderson. They were also invited to see first-hand, the documents and photos specifically relating to their countrymen's historic visit. A letter from the 7th Duke to Miss Murray MacGregor recalls the happy occasion of the 1909 visit. "We had a great day last Friday, entertained 30 of the Canadian Curlers at luncheon in the ballroom. I had all my skips and office bearers to meet them. There were a lot of Perthshire Curling Club committee in addition - we sat down to 85. And had a splendid feed."

Following their tour, the Canadian visitors then lined up outside the castle door to recreate a 1909 sepia photograph of their ancestor's visit. A copy of the original photo was given to each visitor alongside a letter of welcome and best wishes from the current Duke (11th).

Outdoor curling was very popular in Scotland between the 16th and 19th centuries, as the climate provided good ice conditions every winter. Today, the game is most firmly established in Canada, having been taken there by Scottish emigrants. The Canadian and Scottish curling teams have a special sporting relationship and are regular opponents in the Strathcona Cup which they compete for every five years and which also celebrates its 100th anniversary this year.

Blair Castle and Grounds are open throughout the winter on Tuesdays and Saturdays, 9.30am-2pm. Entrance to the Grounds, Restaurant and Shop is free until March 28, 2009 (an admission fee applies for castle tour). For further information about Blair Castle please phone 01796 481 207 or visit www.blair-castle.co.uk

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