

Clan MacNeil

Association of Australia

Newsletter for clan members and friends.

June 2011

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New Members

I would like to welcome our new clan member who has joined since the last newsletter.

Helen Trochoulis of Morningside, Queensland
Helen is a cousin of Mary Surman and of Philip Nott of Wollstonecraft, NSW.

At the Ringwood highland gathering I met with Barry & Barbara Brown who have McNeill ancestry, Kate Abbott and her daughters Fern & Skye Wright who are related to me through my cousin Jean

Abbott. Lastly I met with Paul Nelson who expressed an interest in becoming a member. The Scottish highland gatherings are an important place for us to meet with visitors who have MacNeil / McNeill ancestors.

We need to provide a positive communication with these people to attract them to our clan association.

Births, Marriages and Deaths

Marriages

We offer our congratulations to Janet, daughter of Ken & Carol McNeill of Caboolture on her marriage to Will Barling held on 19th February.



Carol McNeill, Will Barling, Janet McNeill and Kenneth McNeill.

Deaths

We offer our condolences to Marion McNeil and her children Colin, Dale, Sharon and Kerrie on the death of Alan, on 25th November.

Alan and Colin were among the first new members of our association when we commenced to re-establish the membership in 2002. In most years from this revival date Alan helped me with our clan information tent at the Ringwood highland gathering in Victoria. On some occasions he was joined by his wife Marion, Colin or Sharon. I greatly appreciated the time and effort which they provided to me at these gatherings.

Marion has indicated that she wishes to continue the family membership with the clan association. Both Colin and Sharon are members in their own right.



John McNeil & Alan McNeil at the Ringwood highland gathering

In May I received a letter from Diana McNeil of Heathcote, NSW telling me of the death of her husband, Alan who passed away on 20th April. We offer our condolences to Diana and her children Robyn, Lisa, Damian, and Dominic. Alan's ancestors came to Australia from the isle of Barra.

Lisa and her family attended the Barra clan gathering in 2004. Toni McNeill and John Palmer were also there as were Joy and I.

In 2009 Angus and Janet McNeil visited Australia and New Zealand from their home on Barra to meet their Australian relatives.

I hope that Diana and her sons Dominic and Damian will all become active members of our clan association and join us at our next national gathering in Mittagong.

Our next national clan gathering at Mittagong, NSW – 28th to 30th October 2011



Group picture from the last clan gathering at Mittagong

Earlier this year I sent information to you about the dates and program for the Mittagong gathering. I know that some of you have already

contacted the RSL Club in Mittagong to book your accommodation for this weekend. Others may have booked their accommodation without advising us of your plans to join us.

It would help us with our planning if you can please confirm your intention to come to the gathering.

Those of you who were able to attend our last gathering at Mittagong will remember meeting Geoff & Heather Pope, as well as their children Ben and Kristen.

Kristen is being married on Saturday 29th October at "The Briars" at Bowral. Her parents, Geoff and Heather Pope have invited us to attend the wedding service and to wear our tartan.

Our program for the weekend will comprise of an informal dinner on Friday evening, probably at "The Briars", a clan annual general meeting and forum on Saturday morning at the RSL Club, a formal dinner on Saturday evening at the RSL Club and a clan group attendance at a local church service on Sunday morning.

Please make an effort to join us on this weekend as it is the major opportunity to meet other clan members and enjoy our clan culture together. We would appreciate receiving advice from you as soon as possible of you plans to come to the gathering.

World clan gathering on Barra August 2012



Kisimul castle viewed from Castlebay village

The next world clan gathering will be held on the island of Barra in 2012. I have been regularly in touch with Sarah McLean on Barra to get details of the dates and the program for the gathering as soon as it is available.

Attending a Barra gathering is a great experience and is highly recommended.

If you would like to receive information about the gatherings or travelling to the island of Barra then please contact me.

News from the Isle of Barra

Articles taken from recent copies of the weekly electronic newsletter from Barra – “Guth Bharraidh”

2011 Barra Marathon



This year's race saw 227 individuals participating in the half marathon and a further 96 took part in the fun runs.

A new course record was set for the Barrathon, with Jamie Reid of Ronhill Cambuslang completing the race in 1:15:00. The first lady to finish was Gillian Carr of Corstorphine with a time of 1:31:36.

It was fantastic to see a big increase in local participation with 25 runners taking part – 15 female and 10 male. The first local male was Iain MacNeil of Ardmhor with a time of 1:38:12, the first female being Adele Page of Vatersay with a time of 1:56:49. We look forward to the time that a local wins the Barrathon – get training for next year folks!!

The junior fun run, which is open to children under the age of ten, was won by Donald Kilpatrick, with Ishbel Inglis being the first girl to finish. Local boy, Liam Davidson won the main fun run with an impressive time of 16:20. The overall female winner, Eve MacKinnon was close behind with a time of 16:46.

Flying Visit for Beach Landing



Family and friends made their way to the Traigh Mhor last week when Angus John MacNeil and Oighrig Keogh landed on the beach in a chartered private plane. While both Angus John and Oighrig hold pilots' licences, on this

occasion they were being flown by a pilot from the charter company who was delighted to make his first landing on the beach.

Angus John MacNeil, now living in Tasmania, was born in Melbourne but came to live in Uist as a baby when his father Donnie MacNeil ran Polochar Inn. His aunt Mrs Oighrig Keogh, emigrated to Canada, gained her pilot's licence in her 20's. She is now living in Aurora, Ontario.

Both Oighrig and Angus John were delighted by the reception they received on their brief visit to Barra. They then made their way to Benbecula where they stayed overnight before returning to Inverness.

Oighrig Keogh is a member of the executive committee of the Clan MacNeil Association of Canada. Her husband, Tony is the association Chaplain.

Our presence at highland gatherings and other Scottish events

During the last 6 months we have participated in a number of events and functions.

A separate article by Kaye McBride covering her experiences in attending the Glen Innes Celtic Festival and the Aberdeen highland gathering follows this topic.

Mary Surman attended the last McLean, NSW highland gathering and a photograph of the massed pipe bands is shown below.

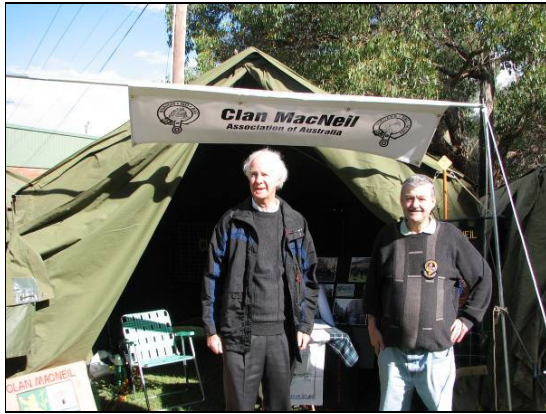


McLean highland gathering

Ian & Robyne McNeill attended the Bundanoon, NSW highland gathering held in April.

Jean Buchanan and Ken Whiddon attended the Geelong, Victoria highland gathering.

John McNeil, Graeme & Robyn McNeil attended the Ringwood, Victoria highland gathering. We were joined on the day by Keith and Bonnie Williams, Natalie McLeish and her daughter Christine Cooper, Craig McNeil and Marion Harrison.



Keith Williams and Graeme McNeill at the Ringwood highland gathering



John McNeil with Scottish deer hounds at the Ringwood highland gathering

John McNeil, Peter, Suzanne Hoskin and Valerie Walters attended the Mount Barker, South Australia highland gathering.



Peter Hoskin, Valerie Walters, Jessica Hill with Angus Hill and Suzanne Hoskin at Mount Barker highland gathering

My visits to the gatherings at Glen Innes Celtic festival and the Aberdeen highland gathering in 2010 by Kaye McBride

Glen Innes

30th April was a lovely day with blue skies up at Glen Innes, at the start of the Celtic Festival

which ran for four days. The theme for this year was Ireland.

There were quite a few things we could have done on that first day but we opted for a Celtic highlands tour around Glen Innes to Ben Lomond, dropping in to sample some wine from a winery near Glencoe. Then it was off to Ben Lomond where we had a tasty lunch of Irish Stew followed by blackberry crunch and crème, yummy! That night was the Cead Mile Failte, "A Hundred Thousand Welcomes" at the Town Hall, It was a concert featuring Kathleen Procter-Moore, a fantastic singer, and various displays by the Cape Bryon Celtic dancers and the Glen Innes Pipe band.

Friday started off the actual day with the lone piper on the balcony of the Glen Innes Town Hall with entertainment from the various school children and Celtic dancers and square dancers in front of the Hall. Also a great display was given from the Australian Federation Guard drill team and the official opening and the raising of the Irish Flag. There were other places to go in the evening but we opted for the Irish Concert in the Town Hall, where the Queensland Irish Pipe band played as well as the Irish dancers and Sydney Irish Ceilidh dancers.

Saturday, another fine day, bit chilly but okay. We were at the Standing Stones early for the Piper in the mist, only there was no mist, but the atmosphere was great as he marched along to where the Dawn Service was held. After that there were a couple of special ceremonies at the Standing Stones and we went and sampled some of the food that was there. Bacon and Egg sandwich was great, then it was down to the front of the Town Hall again for the Festival Parade of the Pipe Bands, various Scottish and Irish clans.

There was a massed band display and then back up to Standing Stones for the various displays that were held in four big marquees. I opted for the Irish Dance Spectacular where the various Irish dancers did their displays, as well as the Scottish Dancers. One thing that was great was that the Irish group had a special guest dancer by the name of Shawn Silver who came from Canada and the Scottish group was "Down under the Kilt" in which the main dancer was Douglas McFarlane who is an expert dancer and at the end of the display the both of them had a dance off. It was fantastic. I am sure that Douglas won though. As I said before there were a lot of other things to see e.g. The Strongmen, the Country Yard dog championships, the Poets tent and various pipe bands playing. The entertainment was running all day at various venues. That night

we went to a Ceilidh dance at the Town Hall where everyone could join in and be shown how to do square dancing or Irish set dancing. A great night was had by all.

Sunday, it was back up to the Standing Stones where I watched the yard dogs do their bit and then down to the Massed Bands performance at the Standing Stones, the Federation Guard team and the Kirkin' of the Tartan, then it was back to the various venues that I didn't get around to the day before. I also had this scrumptious fruit salad which was in a dish made out of the side of a pineapple with cut up fresh fruit salad and Ice Cream on top. Makes my mouth water just picturing it now, "yum yum" That afternoon I saw the band called the Highlanders who put on a top show and Kathleen Proctor-Moore who was fantastic and the day finished at 4pm and we headed home to change and come back for the farewell at the Glen Innes Services club. This was a lay back affair with anyone who wanted to play a tune or sing could join in. It really was a great finish to a great four days. Definitely will be going again when it is the Scottish Theme. This theme changes every year. If you want any more information on this you the look at the "Australian Celtic Festival" address on the internet using Google or another search engine. I also did quite a bit of filming of the festival, mainly the day activities so if any one wants a DVD of it let me know.

Aberdeen

The Aberdeen highland gathering is another event that is great. This has been going since 2000 on the first weekend in July.

It starts of with the bands marching into the oval, until a couple of years ago they had a big march on the road but that was squashed by the police as they were holding up too much traffic.

Usually there are about ten bands from all over the place there and also the last few years they have had the Australian Defence Federation Display team there. Also they have the tug of war team championships as well as the Strongmen They also have the Scottish Highland Dancers and the Scottish Country dancers doing their displays.

Also there is usually a Celtic choir and a piano and fiddle group. There are quite a few food and Clan stalls for people to go and look at and sample. A great day is had by all.

For the last few years I have been going to the Ceilidh at the Catholic High School where we are given a two course meal which is cooked by the Scout Group and they do the Ode to the Haggis. The Australian Federation Drill team and the Lithgow Pipe Band put on displays,

however that could change from year to year. It is a top night with Highland dancing displays as well the band teaches you some country dancing if you want to have a go. Sunday morning is the Kirkin' of the Tartans at the Anglican Church followed by a scrumptious morning tea.

I have filmed this gathering for the last six years, from go to whoa, usually 5 DVD discs and I charge \$50.00 for these if anyone wants one. Let me know. I will be filming this years one too as I am Aberdeen's official videographer.

Mary Surman nominated for the NSW woman of the year in 2009

Mary recently sent me information about her nomination by the Gosford electorate. Mary is a foundation member of the grandparents who are parenting grandchildren on the Central Coast. I am sure that you will want to join with me in congratulating Mary on this award.



Robyne McNeill with Mary Surman at the Canberra clan gathering

A Watersay boy

By Andrew MacNeil

I was born in Adelaide, South Australia as were my two brothers and our mother. My father was born and raised on the island of Watersay in the Western Hebrides of Scotland. Watersay was an island near to Barra but separated by the sea at that time. It is now joined to the island of Barra with a motor causeway.

My father, John MacNeil was born in 1926 to a life of no power or running water and hard work. All water was taken from a community well in the village and lanterns were the only source of light at night. Before leaving for school he was up early setting rabbit traps which were also about the only source of entertainment at the time. After school it was out on the croft turning spuds, turnips etc., and tending to cabbages and the like.

At least the crofts were a reasonable walking distance from home.

My grandfather, Jonathon MacNeil was born on the island of Mingulay and was one of the last to leave in 1905. He had a boat and when my dad was a boy, he and his brother, Donald would take it out and fish in the unforgiving waters around the neighbouring isles.

There were plenty of lobsters, flounder, cod and halibut to be caught. They would send their catch from the Vatersay docks to the Oban markets where it would be bought by fish merchants and shipped on to retail outlets throughout the United Kingdom and Europe. Not bad for someone in their early teens.

My grandfather ran a general store from the back of the family home selling his own bred mutton along with salt, sugar and other general produce.

Dad left the island life and joined the merchant navy in 1942. His ship plied the sea routes between Canada, England, North and South America. He returned to Vatersay twice in 1946 to catch up with the family and spent 3 months on one of the visits fishing with his brother.

Dad made two trips to Australia in 1945 and 1948 before settling in Adelaide in 1951. He had a variety of jobs before serving in the Metropolitan Fire Service for 35 years. He has now retired and lives in Adelaide.

Amazingly our cousins are still laying lobster pots and fishing in the same waters as we did in past years. We are told they are the best lobster fishermen on Barra. One cousin also lives in the same house on Barra built by my grandfather and tends the same crofts with his brother.

The main thing which has changed in their daily life is the availability of electricity for power and running water.



View over Vatersay to Sandray

Some extracts from a book titled “The Vatersay Raiders” by Ben Buxton

Settlement of Vatersay can be traced back to the period of 2000–3000BC. During the 18th century the land on Vatersay was leased by the clan chief to a landlord or tacksman to whom the tenants would pay a rent. In 1825 General MacNeil took back the farm on Vatersay which had been tenanted for 200 years. The crofters were evicted and some of them ended up on the island of Mingulay. General MacNeil went into bankruptcy and his estate was sold in 1840 to Colonel John Gordon of Cluny. Colonel Gordon evicted the crofters from his lands and replaced them with sheep.

From early 1900 crofters and coter on Mingulay and Barra began a gradual reoccupying of land on Vatersay and Barra. At this time the owner was Lady Gordon and after some negotiations with the Scottish government more land was officially made available to crofter tenants on Vatersay and Lady Gordon disposed of her island ownership.

In 1891 the population on Vatersay was 32 people and there were 4 houses. By 1911 it had grown to 288 people and 55 houses.

Coming events 2011

New South Wales

31st July

Roseville, NSW - Kirking Service
All Clans Kirking Service at St. Lukes
Presbyterian Church, 28 Lord St., 9.30 am

27th August

Toukley highland gathering at the Harry Moore oval commencing at 11.00 am.

18th September

Manly, NSW - Manly Warringah Pipe Band Contest and Highland Gathering at Manly Oval, Sydney Rd, 9.00am-5.00pm.

16th October

Wollongong, NSW - 31st City of Wollongong Highland Gathering Pipe Band Contest, Highland & Irish dancing, kids events, Scottish Country Dancing, stalls and more at Vikings Football Oval.

28-30th October

Mittagong, NSW - Annual Clan MacNeil Association of Australia Clan Gathering in the NSW southern highlands, all descendant families who have ancestry with the MacNeil Clan are welcome.

26th January 2012

North Sydney, NSW - Celtic Australia Day Festival at Bradfield Park, Milson's Point. Enjoy Australia Day harbour side Celtic style with entertainment.

Victoria

9-11th September

Traralgon, VIC - The Victorian Scottish Union Conference includes ceilidh, conference dinner dance, AGM and Kirking of the Tartan. Info: www.victorianscottishunion.com.

4-6th November

Beechworth, VIC - The 16th Beechworth Celtic Festival. The festival will showcase many bands and artists from around Australia in a series of concerts and workshops. Info: www.beechworthcelticfestival.com.au

3rd December

Daylesford, VIC - Daylesford Highland Gathering at Victoria Park, full day of Scottish events and fun. Info: Cameron Telfer P:0437 659 148 Email ctelfer@bigpond.com.

2nd January

Maryborough, VIC - The Maryborough Highland Gathering. The oldest continuous Highland Gathering in Australia-full day of Scottish events, a great way to kick off the year! Info: (03) 5461 1480 www.maryboroughhighlandsociety.com.

South Australia

11th September

Scottish Associations of SA Quiz afternoon at Port Adelaide Caledonian Society

16th September

Genealogy day at Torrens Parade ground officers' mess organized by Clan Campbell

13th November

Combined clans Kirking church service at St. Augustine's, Unley Road, Unley.

27th November

St. Andrew's day church service at St. Andrew's church, North Adelaide followed by a light luncheon.

20th February 2012

Mount Barker highland gathering at Mount Barker show grounds

Queensland

30th July

Brisbane, Grand Highland Charity Ball Endeavour Foundation presents another fantastic evening of fine dining and world class entertainment with Queensland Police Pipes and Drums, Artillery Band, Brisbane Celtic Fiddles, Highland and Country dancing. A Taste of haggis and a wee dram with plenty of fun dancing. Info: www.grandhighlandball.com.au.

21st August

Beginner Gaelic Workshop
At Brisbane Square Library, 266 George St
12:30-2:30. Designed for people with no Gaelic exposure. 407 158 781

Western Australia

11th November

Armadale, WA - Armadale Highland Gathering 11am-5pm at Minnawarra Park. WA's largest Scottish event with highland and country dancing, pipe band competition and more. Free events. Info:08 9399 0603 www.armadale.wa.gov.au.

Our clan library

An information page is attached which provides you with a list of the books which we currently own. Please add this page to your information folder.

An update on our project of the MacNeil / McNeill families who lived in Argyll & Bute during the period of 1400 to 1800 AD

I am pleased to tell you that I have now completed a report on the history of the island of Colonsay and the McNeill families who lived there. This was a most interesting task and I received enormous help from Duncan McNeill with details of his family ancestry, Iain MacIntosh. and Kevin Byrne.

The Colonsay story included the McNeills living on the island of Jura and family links with Gigha, Ardnacross and Islay. I now have three reports, completed namely Knapdale, Gigha and Colonsay. Toni McNeill is working on the McNeill families of the Kintyre Peninsula and because of the many links between the Scottish families and those in Ireland we still need to consider a report on the families who lived in Ireland.

A valuable ancestry map of the McNeills in Knapdale and Kintyre.
Neil McNeill has purchased a copy of the George Langland map of this area of Scotland

published in 1801 and then entered all the locations where McNeill families lived. This is now a most informative document and a copy is now shown below.



The original digital print can be significantly increased in size allowing the information to be clearly read.

McNeill's Deerhounds

Copy taken from "Corncrake" newsletter, Colonsay

The following information might be of interest, something that was stumbled across this week at <http://www.http://www.highlander-deerhounds.com/library.html>

"THE ART OF DEERSTALKING, by William Scrope, Esq. is out of print and very difficult to find. Our copy is the 1839 second edition, boasting one more plate than the first.

Scrope gives us some traditional Celtic verse that describes the hounds of ancient chieftains of around 200 A.D. The reader sees Bran, Luath, and Phorp emerge from the mythical mists, as hounds whose coursing, fighting, and loyalties matched the bigger than life legends of their masters. Scrope has a guest authority pen his chapters on coursing with deerhounds in his own times, Archibald MacNeill, Esq., of Colonsay. Archibald and Duncan MacNeill are credited today with having brought the breed back from near extinction in the early nineteenth century [c. 1825 - Editor].

The MacNeills bred for performance, as well as tradition. They coursed the Red Deer stag on the Isle of Jura, testing their hounds in their traditional moment of truth



The deerhound pictured above is the MacNeill's Buscar

These deerhounds were smaller than those of today, by two to four inches at the shoulder. They were heavier in proportion to their height, but the overall image is remarkable in its similarity to the modern deerhound.

Elsewhere on the web, one reads that: In 1825, Duncan and Archibald MacNeill undertook the restoration of the breed. Along with Lord Colonsay, the Menzies family and other Highland owners, the deerhounds, although somewhat smaller in size, were saved from extinction and regained their former perfection as "Royal Dog of Scotland."

Centuries of acting as guard and hunting companion to its master has given the deerhound, and its Irish cousin the Wolfhound, a desire for human companionship, eagerness to please, excellent temperament and a gentle dignity.

Joy & I send you our best wishes to all clan members and friends of the clan.

John McNeil