



Clan MacNeil

Association of Australia

Newsletter for clan members and friends.

December 2012

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New Members

I am pleased to tell you that Vicki Bond, who is Rhonda Lark's sister join our association immediately after our last gathering at Mittagong. I am sure that you will join me in welcoming Vicki and her husband Stephen.

Members who have renewed their membership

During the last 6 months the following people have renewed their membership as it became due.

Rhonda Lark
Sue Neil
Constance Neil
Mary Surman
Iain MacNeil
Maggie Sullivan
Jennie Strickland
Bob Neil – Southport
Bruce McNeill

Geoffrey Ellison
Glenice Holmes
John McNeil
Kirsty Almond
Andrew McNeil

Births, Marriages and Deaths

Births

Ian & Robyne McNeill announce details of their new grandchildren.

Ashkil Ethan born on 5th June 2012 to Libby Hubbard and Mark McNeill.

Aidan John born on 3rd July to Jenny and Zeth Grant.

Deaths

I am sad to report to you of the recent death of Walter (Wattie) McNeill of Timaru, New Zealand and a member of our association.

I have attached a short obituary of Wattie's life and I thank Alex Buchanan for helping me with this information.

A successful national clan gathering at Mittagong, NSW in October.

The clan families who came to Mittagong travelled from other states -Darwin, Brisbane, Adelaide, Naracoorte, Guildford, Melbourne, Canberra, in New South Wales from Sydney and just down the road from Bowral & Burrandoo

We were delighted to have a number of people attending their first national gathering and I particularly thank Simon Lennon for bringing his three elder children Esther, Oliver and Rosie. I would also like to thank my daughter Kirsty Almond for bringing two of my grandchildren, Harry and Isabel to the gathering.

Our gatherings are very much a time to meet friends and enjoy time together. It is important that we include our children and grandchildren in the sharing of our clan heritage and culture.

I would like to especially thank Ian, Robyne and Stephen McNeill for the organization of our program bookings, the piper and Haggis for our formal dinner and our accommodation bookings.

Mittagong in its location in the Southern highlands of New South Wales is a lovely place to visit with historic buildings, beautiful gardens and scenery.

At our annual general meeting of members a resolution was made to appoint Neil McNeill as the clan genealogist. Neil has had a passion for some time in researching his own family ancestry from the isle of Arran as well as all the other families on Arran. He has privately published a book on the McNeill families who lived on Arran and Bute.

Neil has now widened his research and is now working together with Alex Buchanan who is our administrator & analyst on the Clan MacNeil DNA Ancestry program.

Helen Trochoulis whose ancestors migrated from the isle of Barra has agreed to assist us with representation of the clan in Brisbane. I hope that some of our clan families in Brisbane will help her in this role. I am very grateful to Helen for her offer.



Stephen McNeill leading John Palmer and his father Ian McNeill carrying the Haggis



The Gay Gordons with Duncan McNeill and Sally Thomas in the foreground followed by Jane McNeil and Toni McNeill behind

On Sunday as a part of our tradition most clan families joined together in attending a church service at St Stephen's Anglican Church in Mittagong.

After the service we grouped together for a photograph.



Clan families after the church service at Mittagong



Esther and Rosie Lennon with their own technique of spinning in the "Strip the Willow" dance

We agreed to work towards holding our gathering next year in Queensland as it is now 5 years since we were last there.

2014 the 700th anniversary of the battle of Bannockburn, Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and possibly the next world clan gathering on Barra.

The arrangements for the 2014 Home Coming of clans is still being finalized. Stirling does not have the accommodation capacity of Edinburgh so it will not be possible for many visitors to walk from the accommodation to events as in Edinburgh.

However Stirling is geographically not far from Edinburgh and Glasgow and there is a good train service from both cities.

There will be an enactment of the battle of Bannockburn on 28th and 30th June played out by a caste of over 200 people.

A new visitors' centre will be open and there may be a clan village.

The Standing Council of Clan chiefs are encouraging clans to hold gatherings in the regions of Scotland to support the Home Coming year.

The latest news published in October is shown at the following web sites.

<http://www.highlandtrails.com/component/content/article/1-latest-news/140-new-dates-announced-for-clan-gathering-2014.html>



<http://www.eventscotland.org/news/2012/10/the-battle-of-bannockburn-will-be-a-key-event-in-the-homecoming-scotland-2014-programme>

News from the Isle of Barra

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

Neil Paul (Wallace), Sarah, Anna and Alexander MacLean would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and every happiness in 2013.

Feasibility of Community Land Buyout of the Islands' Estates?

The question of whether our community should consider investigating the pros and cons of a Community Buyout is to be debated on Barra and Vatersay the week before Christmas.

Ceimhearsnachd Bharraidh agus Bhatarsaidh

Ltd are facilitating three public meetings and have invited three guest speakers to help inform the debate and gather local opinion. David Cameron, Chair of Community Land Scotland will be present to outline his organisations remit in supporting small rural communities to consider taking ownership of public land.

Murdo MacKay is a director of the West Harris Trust who were recently awarded a Big Lottery grant of £380,000 to kick start a process of allowing their community to manage their own affairs as they develop

plans which includes affordable housing, a hydro-electric scheme and a number of other economic development projects.

Helen MacDougall works for HIE Community Assets Branch who also assist communities in their preparation for a bid and offer start up advice.

In order to maximise the opportunity for all residents to attend, meetings will be held in Vatersay, Castlebay and Northbay Halls. This is an important step in the potential development of a land buyout for Barra and Vatersay. Guth Bharraidh would encourage everyone, young and old, to attend these meetings and contribute your views which will be used to shape our islands future.

The meetings will be held on:

Monday 17th December 2012 Vatersay Hall 6pm

Monday 17th December 2012 Castlebay Hall 8pm

Tuesday 18th December 2012 Northbay Hall 7pm

Mingulay Schoolhouse Renovation

The National Trust for Scotland would like to thank everyone who helped us with the renovation of the Schoolhouse on the island of Mingulay this summer.

The School House was built in 1894 and is now the only roofed building on Mingulay. The roof remains mostly due to remedial works undertaken by the Barrahead Sheep Stock Company in the early 1980s, however upon detailed assessment in 2011 serious problems with damp and woodworm were found and it was clear that the building was in need of considerable repair.

This summer we carried out the first phase of those repairs in order to make the School House safe and habitable for use by staff, volunteers and researchers. We committed to reusing existing materials wherever possible, and the layout and appearance of the building has not been significantly changed.

We will finish the works in 2013 and we are looking forward to being able to enhance our research and protection works on the island now that we have a suitable building. To those who are interested a photographic record of the 2012 season and our Conservation Statement for the School House is available to read at the Barra Heritage Centre in Castlebay.

The National Trust for Scotland are always grateful for any additional information people may have on Mingulay, Pabbay or Berneray and if you are interested to know more about volunteering, the islands, or indeed the National Trust for Scotland, please do not hesitate to speak with Jonathan Grant, our Ranger, who can be contacted on 07969722477 or by email at jgrant@nts.org.uk



The old school house on the isle of Mingulay

Our presence at highland gatherings and other Scottish events

July

On 2nd July I attended a celebration of Tartan Day at the local Burnside Library organized by the Scottish Associations of South Australia with the Library staff.

This was followed by a church service on 8th July at St. Andrew's church, north Adelaide to celebrate Tartan Day.

A celebration for Robert Burns was held in the State Library of South Australia on 22nd July. The program included recitals, singing, piping dancing and enjoying a selection of Scottish food. I was involved in the presentation of Scottish country dancing.

August

On 19th August I attended the Clan MacLeod Society of South Australia annual lunch for their clan families and those of other clans.

September

During September I attended the annual ball of the Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society.

October

Many of us travelled to Mittagong for the nation gathering of the Clan MacNeil held on 12 -14th October.

I attended the annual luncheon hosted by both Clan Donald and Clan MacFarlane.

November

I attended the Combined Clans church service at St. Augustine's Anglican Church, Unley on 18th November. On 25th November I attended the St.

Andrew's anniversary service at St. Andrew's church, North Adelaide.

On 30th November joy & I attended the St. Andrew's anniversary dinner hosted by the Naracoorte Caledonian Society at Naracoorte.

December

Jean Buchanan and Ken Whiddon represented our clan with an information tent at the Daylesford Highland games held on 1st December. She reported –

"I was given a book last Christmas called "The complete book of Tartan "

and had taken it with us, so I was able to use it to answer some of the various questions that people asked about other clans.

Nothing much on the MacNeil's, but I did hand out an application form so hopefully we may hear from a girl called Jessica or her family.

Her boss threatened her with the sack if she didn't join.!

No photo's, we forgot the camera, isn't funny how there's always something that you forget.

Anyway we felt that it was a productive day."

Coming events 2013

New South Wales

25th January

Burns supper at Castlereagh Inn, Sydney – Scottish Australia Heritage Council

26th January

Australia Day celebrations at Milson's point

30th March

McLean highland games

6th April

Brigadoon highland games at Bundanoon

2-5th May

Celtic festival at Glen Innes

25th May

Berry highland games

6th July

Aberdeen highland games

Victoria

20th January

Annual picnic in Treasury gardens near Robert Burns statue, 12 noon.

9th February

Scots day out- a celebration of dancing, music and culture in Bendigo.

3rd March

Geelong highland games at Deakin University Waum Ponds Campus.

14th April

Ringwood highland games

South Australia

25th January

Robert Burns birthday supper at Stonyfell
function room

17th February

Mount Barker highland games

Western Australia

25th January

The St Andrews Society of Western Australia
Burns supper

Queensland

19th January

Brisbane clans, pipes and drums Burns night.

Highland Cattle an ancient bred of Scotland

High Archaeological evidence can place
Highland Cattle back in the sixth century while
written records go as far back as the twelfth yet
no one can determine the exact origins of the
breed. What is known is that they are the oldest
pedigree breed of cattle in the world and the first
breed to be registered.

The Highland Cattle Society's first herd book
dates from 1884.

Originally there were two types. Kyloes, these
were small and black in colour, and were
associated with the West of Scotland and the
Islands, whilst the larger red haired cattle grazed
the Highlands. Today they are known collectively
as Highland Cattle and the recognised colours are
red, black, yellow, dun, white, brindle and silver.

Famous folds associated with the Western Isles
were those of the Stewarts of Glenlyon;
Luskintyre and Ensay in Harris. There was also a
famous black fold belonging to the MacNeils of
Barra however this was dispersed in 1885, some
of the stock going to Lord Dunmore of Harris.



Highland cattle – by the sea
By William Smellie Watson

The oldest acknowledged herd of cattle in the
world was the Balranald Fold in North Uist. The
Balranald Fold dates back to at least the fourteenth
century before finally being dispersed in 1922
due to new legislation by the Board of
Agriculture regarding smallholding policy in the
Western Isles.

The Kinlochroag Fold is a relative newcomer to the
Western Isles, being set up in the late 1990's
with the help and assistance of Angus Macdonald
and Ena MacNeil (Ardbhan Fold of North Uist)
David MacDonald (Macleod Estates, Dunvegan,
Skye) Sue Campbell (CnocArd, South Uist)

It is a great accomplishment to be again raising
these marvelous animals in their home
environment, reintroducing them to the mountains
and moor lands of the isle of Lewis.



The stone pier at Lagg, isle of Jura where cattle were
shipped across to Keills in Knapdale

It is still a matter of debate as to whether they
were an origin of Scotland or imported from
Scandinavia perhaps with the hair useful in the
process of spinning yarn. The calves were bought
and sold at the annual trysts or cattle sales.

The Knapdale McNeills: Why was Tainish so
valuable?

Certainly, there is no great McNeill stronghold
remaining on that Peninsula. The answer lies in
the Keills stone pier.

In the heyday of cattle raising on the Hebrides,
most of the cattle raised on Islay, Colonsay and
Jura were ferried over the Jura sound to Keills,
from which point, they were driven north to the
tryst in Kilmichael. The numbers were
considerable: in 1787, at Port Askaig on Islay, a
holding corral of about 60 acres in area existed
for cattle waiting to be ferried north to Jura.
The presence of prehistoric standing stones along
the drovers' road from Keills north indicates that
it is of a very great age.

Therefore, one can assume that it was the domination of the Keills stone pier that was the basis of Tainish's wealth.

Australian National Highland Cattle Show – Mount Pleasant, South Australia 2012

The Australian highland Cattle Society held their 2012 Australian national cattle show at Mount Pleasant located in the Adelaide hills about 40 minutes drive from Adelaide in South Australia. The Society invited the Scottish clans in South Australia and the City of Elizabeth highland pipe band to attend on the weekend when the judging took place.

The Clan MacNeil attended with Clan Campbell and Clan Donald. We mounted a joint information display and received a number of visitors including some McNeill descendants from the isle of Mull.

This was my first attendance at a judging show of highland cattle and it was a most interesting experience with many of the animals showing individual characters as they were paraded for judging.



The Scottish Diaspora tapestry

I have recently received an email letter from Seona Anderson and she told me about a large tapestry being produced which will include Scottish plants.

"I work for the wild plant conservation charity Plantlife Scotland and we are currently coordinating a UK wide public participation project, the Patchwork Meadow, to create a Bayeux Tapestry celebrating the role of wild plants and trees in British culture (www.wildflowereurope.org). We are making a special effort in Scotland because the first exhibition of the work will be at the Wild North Festival in Caithness and Sutherland at the end of June 2013, in the year of Natural Scotland. The Wild North Festival will be coordinated by the North Highland Initiative.

We would be delighted if anyone connected with the Clan MacNeil Society of Australia would consider contributing a square based on the clan plant (I believe that this is Mountain avens – *Dryas octopetala* but please let me know if this is incorrect).

This can be any design and any fabric and there is further information on how to make the squares below. I have attached a link to our Clan plants factsheet (<http://wildflowereurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Names-and-Clan-Plants.pdf>) and a sample square for Clan Sinclair.

It would be nice to have our clan represented in this project and I wonder if there are any clan families either here in Australia or overseas who have the skills of producing a tapestry square. The basic instructions for participating in the Patchwork Meadow are that anyone who is interested can contribute a 15cm fabric square (sewing, weaving, felting, printing, painting, lace etc) depicting a plant (or plants) that currently grows wild in Britain. All the squares are to be mounted on card (acid free foam or mount board are best but any rigid, unprinted card will work).

The general deadline for submission of squares is the end of March 2013. However if this would be a problem we could extend to the end of May 2013.

Each person can enter information about their square in the online submission form (<http://wildflowereurope.org/create-your-patch/>), including your organisation and in this case the project name 'Clan Plants', and then send the square along with its unique reference number to Plantlife at 14 Rollestone Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 1DX. The squares will be assembled for a first exhibition at the Wild North Festival in June 2013 and then other UK venues as we have capacity for. At the end of the project

we plan to find permanent homes for the squares at the county or regional level depending on the participation in different regions.

The history of the Clan MacNeil – a film recently produced by BBC Scotland

I was recently told about a series of films produced about the history of a number of Scottish clans which are now available to be watched on your computer.

These can be reached on the internet by using the following address.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Llam-TzNFPs>

You will find the material very interesting and both our clan chief, Rory Macneil of Barra and Calum MacNeil, the genealogist of Barra are interviewed in the presentation.

I recommend it to you.



Neil McNeill of Balagowlah, Sydney was appointed to the position of the genealogist of our clan association at the Mittagong general meeting of members.

We have introduced a new information column in the biannual clan newsletter on the topic of family genealogy and the work being carried out on our DNA ancestry program.

Neil and one of our administrators of the clan DNA ancestry program, Alex Buchanan have prepared the first of their information columns for you and this is set out in an information column and a family ancestry chart.

The Genealogy Column Neil McNeill

I would like to welcome you to our new Genealogy section. My aim is to encourage as many Clan Families as I can, who are perhaps interested in sharing or requesting information on their family's migration to Australia and any additional information they may have about the location in Scotland from which their Ancestors set sail.

We well understand, not all Clan Members can attend the annual Clan gathering, and this means that information- sharing of family history cannot easily happen. My hope in starting this column is that it will become a way of communicating with others, and thus seeing new information that may be presented. This may then allow us as a group to point that person in the direction of detailed work that may have already been done on that very subject. I feel this could be of great assistance in swapping information that is to hand, or in fact gaining new historical information.

I would also like to encourage a question and answer section. If you send the questions, I will do my very best to get them answered in the next newsletter. For an example I will give to you some common questions that are often asked or misunderstood.

“Many years back we must be from Barra as this is the seat of the MacNeil’s?”

Answer. Well no not everyone. As our Worldwide Clan MacNeil DNA programme is gathering size by way of participants, it is clearly showing that there is no match between, let me say loosely, the more southern McNeill’s in Scotland and MacNeil’s of Barra. However one has to be a little guarded in making this statement as there have been migrations of Barra MacNeil’s to Ireland and Nova Scotia in Canada.

It may be of interest to also say that other clues are; the spelling of the surname which is generally, for ex-Barra families, MacNeil. They also tended to be more Catholic by way of religion while the Argyll McNeill families were Protestant. A second question could be. “How do I start looking for relations, and is there an internet site I can use for free to get started?”

Answer. Well yes there is, it is called Family Search. Start by putting in what you have and work back.

Also at this point, I would very much like to acknowledge the generosity of our fellow Clan Members, Beth Price, Toni McNeill, John Palmer, Cliff McNeil and Alex Buchanan, who have very generously donated funds towards our International Clan MacNeil DNA programme.

A donation fund has now been set up in which it has allowed us to invite participants who it is felt have strong traceable markers to the areas in Scotland that they and their ancestors have long hailed from. In time this will make comparison with new participants so much more meaningful. More exciting news to come on this is in the next newsletter.

As this is our first column I will start the ball rolling with a very recent example of what can be achieved with just a mere photo from an old grave yard taken by a cousin of mine in Auckland New Zealand a month ago.

After receiving the photo which took our interest, we started searching marriage records and is so often is the case at first, we went in the wrong direction, as there were two marriages here in Australia with almost identical information.

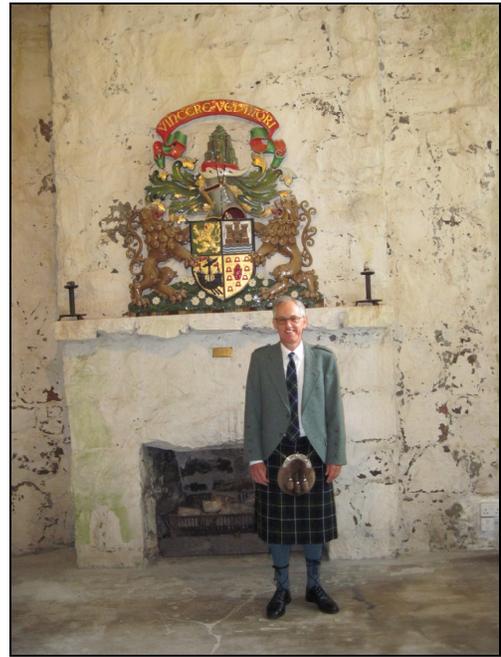
We have chosen to share with you what we call the Stroud McNeills and we are still working hard on attaining information of the other family buried in the Auckland Cemetery, but married here in Australia. Once back on track and with a little luck the trail soon lead us right back to 1758 when we were able to obtain the marriage Certificate between, one Torquil McNeill and Margaret McMath living in a place called Coal Hill in Kintyre, Scotland just a few kilometres to the South West of Campbeltown. (By the way they did mine for coal there)

Torquil was a weaver in a well known McNeill farming area called Tirfergus. One day we may get back even further from this date as I have “a Torquil “ living in that very location in the 1694 Hearth Tax Records. As you will see by the Family Tree their grandson then immigrated to Australia in 1838, settling in the registration district of Raymond Tce, in town of Stroud, upper Hunter Valley of New South Wales. I was then lucky enough using Google searches to find a McNeill descendant who was written up as a great cricketer in the local area, with the achievement of bowling out a whole team for 28 runs in the local game. That then gave me the author of article and after a phone call it lead to tracing living relations in Port Macquarie NSW. A family chart is set out on the following page.

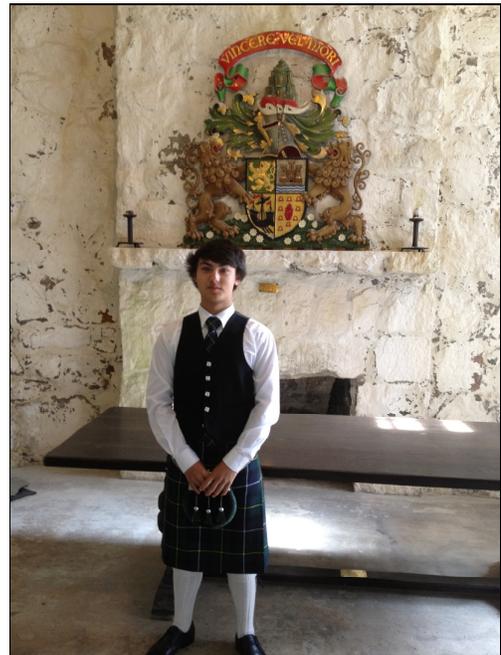
I have additional information on this family if anyone has any questions.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank Alex Buchanan our fellow member and DNA Joint coordinator, who has provided me and so many others so much of his time and expertise. He played a very big part in the discovery of these two new McNeill family stories, and tracing them back to early Scotland

So there is an example. I would now love to hear from any of you with questions or stories about your family ancestry. My contact details are n.mceill@hotmail.com



Rory Macneil of Barra, chief of Clan MacNeil in the main hall of Kisimul castle



Ruari Macneil elder son of the clan chief in the main hall of Kisimul castle

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

John McNeil