



Clan MacNeil

Association of New Zealand



October 2010 Newsletter: Failte Clann Mhic Neill

Welcome to the October, 2010 Clan MacNeil newsletter. Enjoy!

MacNeils - Shake, Rattle and Roll in Christchurch

September 4, 2010 will never be forgotten by Clan members throughout the Canterbury region and the rest of New Zealand. It was the day that at 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck New Zealand's 2nd largest city, Christchurch, centred only 20 km west of the city and changed Christchurch's landscape forever.

Miraculously it resulted in no loss of life and few serious injuries. As many clan members have attested too since, it was incredibly lucky that it struck at 5:30am Sunday morning as families were all at home together. Given the collapsed heritage buildings and falling debris throughout the city, Clan members were thankful to escape with cracks in the walls, chimneys down and a lot of smashed crockery & glassware. *"It is just incredible there were so few injuries. Our big TV was thrown off the table over onto the floor and ripped up the carpets, that takes a great deal of force"* said Douglas MacNeil Washington. For the majority of the city power was back on within 2 days and water and waste water systems mostly operating. But with schools and public places all closed for the week it was a mammoth clean up job that most families had and one that will go on for months for others.

Clan members kindly share their stories:

Susannah Washington Brown ... *"It has been a real emotional roller coaster for us. Life has really been in limbo for the last few weeks, the quake was so violent and the hundreds of strong aftershocks have meant know one can sleep for long, we are all so exhausted. We are still experiencing magnitude 4.0 & 5.0 plus quakes and the children are fearful to leave our sides and it took 3 weeks for them to starting sleep in their own rooms again".*

Sally Washington *"Having shifted back from Italy, for a year, to be with family, being at the epicentre of an earthquake was the last thing we expected. We are all still on edge and very conscious of exactly where everyone is at all times".*

Matilde Washington Emerson (aged 11 years)

"This is a dream I told myself, I should go back to sleep. I closed my eyes again. A couple of seconds later my mother burst through my door shouting "earthquake!". I dashed under the doorway. Afterwards we got into my mum's bed. Mum turned the radio on which had been stuck under her upturned chest of drawers. The room was a mess. I tried to close my eyes but every time I started to drift off there was another aftershock.

At six o'clock I went downstairs to turn on the TV. Luckily we were in one of the few areas that still had power. As the man on TV spoke about the earthquake I just wanted cry, and wanted everything go back to normal. It finally started to sink in: the whole of Christchurch had been rocked by a 7.2 earthquake. We could



hear sirens and see flashing lights on the corner not far from us where several buildings had collapsed. Later we saw it up close up on television. We were frightened to go outside and just stayed at home to keep safe. The next day my mum ran to the service station to get some milk and bread as we were running short on supplies. She bought back some milk ,but no bread, there was none left. She was told that all the supplies of bottled water had also sold out within a few hours of the earthquake. Luckily we had some in the cupboard as well as plenty of canned food.

The following day my cousins came over to visit. Seeing them traumatized and tired made me even sadder. Stella (aged 3) made me laugh calling the earthquake "Mr. Wobbly". She seemed to think it was one great big adventure. Not so for her Dad though, who was sleeping in his clothes so that he would be ready to escape fast if another big quake happened. We also had an emergency bag packed 'just in case'.

We were so happy when the water came back on and even happier when they said we could flush the toilet again! I didn't mind having a week off school. We are still getting aftershocks over a month after the big quake. They are scary but we hope they are just the earth settling down after its big movement. I know how lucky I am: all I have to show for the earthquake is a few cracks in the plaster and a memory that will last a lifetime.

Ed Note: Our thoughts are with you all and we wish all those Clan Members in the region the very best.

A few words from the President - Peter McNeil

Hello all from Opunake. Nice to be rid of the September weather. October treated us all far better thankfully. Firstly let me send all our best wishes to our Canterbury members who have been affected by the disastrous earthquake, and continue to be frightened by the continuing aftershocks. In the days following I endeavoured to contact many of them to pass on our regards. If I missed anyone, please be assured we were thinking of you. Likewise our thoughts were with the Southland members who were affected by snow storms and the stormy spring weather. The other big news from us, is our announcement around what we are doing for the **2011 Clan Gathering**. As many of you who attended the Christchurch Gathering in 2009 will know, it was agreed that the next Gathering would be held around March 2011 in Auckland. Over this time, however, several things have happened: Membership numbers have not increased; Current members are now predominantly based in the lower north island or South Island; Fee payment has been low & sporadic; (The Balance sheet at 31 March has been audited and the balance at that time was \$1529.55. Thanks to **Carol McNeil** for auditing our accounts, much appreciated, the committee have copies and if anyone would like a copy please contact **Marion McNeil**). Funds are

therefore very tight (& that is by Scottish standards!!) As a result of all of the above it has been decided by the committee that it is in the best interests of the clan and overall value for money for participants, that the 2011 McNeil Clan Gathering not be held in Auckland next year, but closer to most members and focused around a Scottish event.



Therefore the 2011 Clan McNeil Gathering will now be held on the weekend of the Turakina Highland Games January 29—30, 2011 (near Wanganui).

The Games are a great family day of entertainment which clan members can both watch and participate in. Following the games on Saturday, we will all go out for dinner in Wanganui (only 20 minutes away) and then the following day in Wanganui, have our formal AGM. Participants are encouraged to stay in Wanganui. So put the date in your diary!

In March, we also heard of the death of **Aubrey Sandford** from Hamilton. **Aubrey** was a long time member of Clan MacNeil as well as one of our genealogists. Our sympathy is extended to Aubrey's family. We welcome Aubrey's daughter Val as a new member.

As this will be the last newsletter for 2010 we wish you all a very merry Christmas and happy and healthy 2011 and we look forward to seeing you at the Clan Gathering in January. Thanks Peter McNeil.

2011 NZ Clan MacNeil Gathering, Turakina Highland Games, 29th- 30th January 2011

The theme for the gathering will be "relaxed family fun" to encourage Clan members to bring along some younger members of the extended McNeil family and share a day at the Turakina Highland Games with other Clans and people who just want to belong to a Clan or love all things Scottish!

The schedule of events for the Gathering will be as follows:

Saturday 29th January: Turakina Highland Games, Turakina Domain

A day of family fun at the Turakina Highland Games which is New Zealand longest running highland games. The day is a great mix of traditional highland music, entertainment, and games, along with other Scottish and family orientated activities. The Clan will have a site and will have other McNeil material on display and for sale. So pack a picnic and bring a blanket.

Sat Evening: An informal dinner and drinks for all adult Clan MacNeil members will be held in the evening from 7:00pm at The Red Lion Inn (a waterfront restaurant at 45 Anzac Parade, Wanganui) www.redlioninn.co.nz This will be a great opportunity to wind down after the days events and to have a good catch up with your fellow McNeils.

Sunday 30th January: The formal Clan MacNeil meeting will also be held in Wanganui The Red Lion Inn around 10:30am, a morning tea followed by the meeting then allowing people time to either travel back home in the afternoon or take in a river cruise and local sites. At the meeting we will cover off the normal AGM matters, presentation of financial accounts, discussion/ debate on all other Clan MacNeil matters and the launch of the Clan MacNeil website. We will be encouraging all members and anyone considering joining the Clan to attend the meeting.

Other information:

Turakina is an easy 20 minute drive south of Wanganui which is the major town in the area. It is just over a 2 hour drive from Wellington.

Clan members will be responsible for arranging their own accommodation and travel arrangements however Wanganui has the best range of accommodation and other facilities in the area. www.wanganuionline.com

To aid in the planning of the weekend can you please e-mail Matthew Washington (wash.wilk@xtra.co.nz) with an indication of whether you think you will attend any of the three events (the games, the dinner, the Clan meeting) and how many people will be attending with you. This will be taken as an indication only and final numbers will be sought at a later date.

www.turakinahighlandgames.co.nz

Tartan Day - July New Zealand

April 6 1320, Monastery of Arbroath, Scotland

"We Fight not for glory nor for honors, but only and alone we fight for freedom, which no good man surrenders but with his life"

Tartan Day is a celebration of Scottish heritage on April 6, the date on which the Declaration of Arbroath was signed in 1320. A one off event to celebrate was held in New York in 1982, but the current format originated in Canada in the mid 1980's. It spread to other communities of the Scottish Diaspora in the 1990's. In New Zealand and Australia the similar **International Tartan Day** is held and celebrated around July 1, which is significant as the anniversary of the repeal of the 1747 Act of Proscription that banned the wearing of the tartan.

Tartan days now typically have parades of Pipe Bands, Highland Dancing and other Scottish themed events. This year in Auckland there was a huge Tartan Day celebratory Tattoo. The Auckland Tattoo was held inside at the North Shore Events Centre and certainly delivered on the tradition with Scottish Country Dancers, a WW2 battle of Monte Cassino re-enactment, Drummers Salute with massed Bands and the Balmoral Dancers, Marching Teams, Music and a full cast and massed bands finale. It was a fantastic afternoon attended by thousands of people and it was wonderful to see so many families attending and keeping the Scottish spirit alive.



History of the Tattoo

A Tattoo is a display of ancient and modern skills and pageantry, with its origins in a very simple piece of army routine observed as far back as the 17th Century. In those days, all active war operations ceased in the late autumn and the rival forces went to billet families in the towns and villages in and around the battlefield. This was the practice in the British Army since those serving under King William 111 in his campaign in the Low Countries during the 1690's.

The social centre for the troops were the inns where most of the troops gathered in the evenings. To get them back to the billets at night it was necessary for the innkeeper to turn off the taps and stop serving beer. The time for doing this was between 9:30-10:00pm and it was notified to the innkeepers by a military drummer beating a 'call'. When the innkeeper heard the drums he would call out "Doe den tap toe". It is thought that the word Tattoo is derived from this expression, which freely translates into English as "Turn off the Taps". The word 'Taptoe' was used in official books for a long time but has now given way to the familiar "Tattoo". The Tattoo was therefore beaten each night for the same purpose i.e. ceasing of drinking and sending the troops home.

Over a period of time, a flute player joined the military drummer and short tunes were played, then whole corps of drums or pipes were added and eventually bands played and this extended to the entertainment of the garrisons at barracks. At the beginning of the 20th Century display tattoos began as a public entertainment. So a simple piece of military routine has evolved overtime into an established customer providing entertainment and enjoyment for countless people around the world.

Upcoming Events

November 27	Auckland Highland Games
November 30	St Andrews Day
2011	
January 1	Highland Games, Waipu
January 25	Nationwide—Burns Night
January 29	Turakina Highland Games
January 29	Clan McNeil New Zealand Gathering www.turakinagames.co.nz
January 30	Clan MacNeil AGM in Wanganui
February 12	Paeora Highland Games & Tattoo
February 27	Howick Military Tattoo & Piping contest, Auckland

Editor Note:

You will be pleased to know that a number of our NZ stories have been published in the international McNeil clan magazines & newsletters around the world too.

If you have been on a trip to Scotland recently or have any stories, obituaries etc keep them coming.

Apologise for the late newsletter, I had a motor bike accident early October so that literally threw me out!

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MacNeil Bible - Who is Alexander MacNeil?

By Amanda Wilkinson

Thanks to a curious Aucklander, with an interest in history and genealogy a MacNeil family Bible has found its way 'home'.

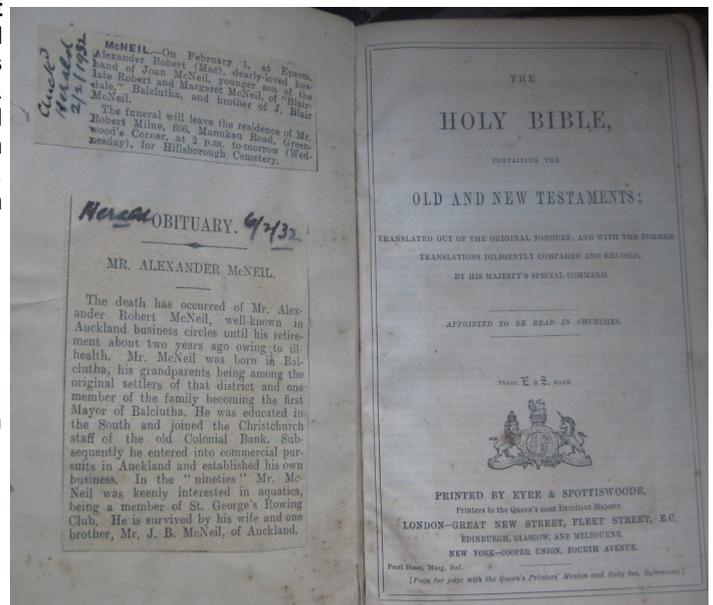
While rummaging through a book stall at a market at Browns Bay, on Auckland's North Shore, Liz Burden, (who thankfully for us "*finds genealogy interesting and loves local history books*") came across a Bible which had a hand written inscription dated April 1896 and a New Zealand Herald Newspaper death notice stuck in it for an **Alexander MacNeil in Auckland, 1932**. The stall holder said of the Bible '*it had been in their family property, a pioneer cottage, near Rotorua for years and it had been kept for decoration, she didn't think they were related*'. When Liz mentioned she was interested in genealogy, she is in fact a member of the NZSG and was curious to trace the family and reunite the Bible with them if possible. The stallholder was thrilled at the thought and simply gave her the Bible. Liz kindly contacted Clan McNeil and thanks to her and some extensive research by our fabulous Clan Genealogist and font of all knowledge — Diane Daly, we have solved the mystery. So who is Alexander MacNeil?



Liz Burden handing over the Bible to Amanda Wilkinson, in Auckland.

The bible relates to the family of **Alexander Robert MacNeil and his wife Joanna,(Jo/Joan) Ledwill Gosling Lewis MacNeil (nee Dermer)**. Alexander was the son of **Robert & Margaret MacNeil**, of Blairdale, Balclutha; Nephew of **John MacNeil** (Balclutha's first mayor) and founding Balclutha settler **James MacNeil**; Grandson of the regions very early white settlers & Clan MacNeil's beginning in NZ, **James and Anne MacNeil** (who arrived with 5 of their sons including **Robert (11) John (13), George (18) James(22) Alexander (26)** on the Mooltan, Port Chalmers, December 26, 1849) and from whom many in the NZ Clan MacNeil are directly descended.

Alexander Robert MacNeil was born and raised in Balclutha in 1863. He became an accountant, joined the Old Colonial Bank in Christchurch then later transferred to Auckland, where he met and married Joanna Dermer (born in Dunedin, Otago). They had no children. His only brother James Blair MacNeil (who never married) farmed in Balclutha, then moved to farm in Marlborough, Wanganui and later Auckland with his mother. Alexander died February 1, 1932 in Epsom, Auckland and like his brother and mother died and is buried in Auckland. With the inscription saying "*To Jo from her sister May*" it appears likely the Bible was Joanna MacNeils, therefore explaining her husband's death notice being stuck into the front page of the Bible.



Therefore, with no issue or direct descendents from either Alexander & Joanna MacNeil or his brother James, but many extended family and close family links to it's founding family in Balclutha it was decided that the Balclutha Museum would be the best place for the Bible to be kept, given:

1. Alexander MacNeil was born and brought up in the area (His wife was also born in Otago)
2. His forefathers and family founded and were key in the history of the town (i.e. first mayor, key in establishment of the Balclutha Presbyterian church etc)
3. The MacNeil Clan association of New Zealand had its first gathering and was formed in Balclutha in 1989
4. The Balclutha Museum already has a copy of the 'McNeil history book' and lots of information on the family and this seems likely to increase with expansion of the museum and increased local council focus on local history and founding families.

I contacted the Balclutha Museum curator Gary Ross, who was delighted to accept this and informed me, as they are in the process of upgrading the museum and incorporating more founding MacNeil family information (i.e.: Presbyterian church links, Cemetery history etc) the contact proved very timely. It is anticipated that the bible will be presented to Gary Ross and the Balclutha Museum on November 22, by Douglas McNeil Washington and extended family from Christchurch and Balclutha and any other clan members that would like to join then. This will actually be done in conjunction with a MacNeil family history & McNeil Cemetery Signage unveiling in Balclutha, which we also found out about in the same conversation! (But that's another story—see page 5!)

Ed Note: Thanks again to both Liz Burden and Diane Daly for solving this mystery for us and I was thrilled to be able to show our son 'Alexander McNeil Washington' aged 6, some family history first hand.

If any of you have any family heirlooms, china, photos, military records etc that relate back to **James and Anne** (From The Mooltan) and their direct descendents particularly their children, who were key to local south Otago history and in founding the township of Balclutha, please let me know so we can get copies or photos of items for the museum, who are accumulating a wonderful archive for Clan MacNeil.

Given the revamp of the museum you may even have items you wish to donate to the museum, please feel free to contact me to discuss further. Contact Amanda: wash.wilk@xtra.co.nz or Ph 09 520 4066

Balclutha Township to Enhance MacNeil Profile

The Clutha District Council in South Otago are producing and unveiling a number of information billboards and signs in the regions key cemeteries in the coming months to help extended families from throughout New Zealand and abroad, particularly England, Scotland & Ireland easily trace family members who emigrated. As Balclutha's founding family, a MacNeil Family History Billboard has been designed by the Council and will be erected in the Balclutha cemetery on November 22nd and locating key historic McNeil figures. Thanks to Gary Ross from the Balclutha Museum for informing us of this and providing the Council with the family history . We look forward to hearing more on the times and will keep you informed. Anyone interested in attending please contact Amanda Wilkinson.

Also as part of the Balclutha museums upgrade increased MacNeil references, and displays are being planned eg Family History, first marriages etc. A profile of John MacNeil, the first mayor, James MacNeil on establishing the town and Presbyterian Church etc. Clan MacNeil have also offered to provide a family Crest on the MacNeil Tartan, to go with any such display. As the museum plans are developed and finalised we will keep you updated.

Clan MacNeil (Barra and Colonsay) items available online

Reminder for those of you interested in purchasing Clan MacNeil items for Christmas such as scarves, ties etc there are some great sites to purchase from online which stock MacNeil; MacNeil of Barra and Colonsay specific items eg www.scotclans.com www.scotsconnection.com

Some Clan MacNeil items will also be available to purchase at the Gathering in January.

Grave site care business—helping Clans and families

A grave care business is now available around Scotland and the wider United Kingdom offering services for families who are unable to care for them themselves or increasingly, have migrated to other countries.

A range of grave site and headstone care options are available for family members as well as a service of taking digital photos of headstones for family members and emailing them to you. So for those of you with family left in Scotland and the UK check out their website: www.gravecarescotland.com

Scottish Register of Tartans

After many years of appeals by the Scottish community for a body to regulate the design and registration of tartans , the Scottish Register of Tartans has been launched. It is the Scottish national repository of tartan designs with an online website database maintained by the National Archives of Scotland, an agency of the Scottish Government, dating back to the 13th century.

Anyone can register new tartan designs , from members of the public to fashion designers, weavers and kilt makers. You can search the many thousands of existing tartans on www.tartanregister.gov.uk Several tartans are registered every week from around the world. Some recent examples are Shipley, Andrew, Shepards, Derek, Ian, Black Raven, Spice of life!

Thanks to our Canadian kinsfolk for alerting us to this!

MacNeil Killed in Afghanistan

We were greatly saddened to see reports also from our Canadian kinsfolk that one of their MacNeil boys James 'jimmy' MacNeil of Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Canada was tragically killed while on foot patrol with the Afghan National Army near Kandahar, Afghanistan, on June 21, this year. He was only 28 years old! And described as a man with 'a big heart' .

Poem—Aubrey McNeill (Sandford)

Miss Aubrey McNeill, 1924, aged 8 years

*Each little flower bears a message, A message to us from God
Tis to tell of the love and glory, On the path that saints have trod.*

*As each little flower doth open, In beauty in the Spring,
The message that all are seeking, From its glittering petals ring.*

*And each little bird bears a message, As it soars in the deep blue sky
It sings a song in the blue up there, Of god and his home on high.*

*In the Garden of Life there blossoms, Flowers of a varied hue.
The rose that is beautifully scented, And white lilies pure and true.*

*Oft in the cool of the evening, As nature sinks to rest
The master walks in the Garden, And gently gathers the best*

NB: Thanks to Jean Jane for sending this poem to us.

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