



Clan MacNeil

Association of Australia

Newsletter for clan members and friends.

June 2012

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New Members

In the last 6 months we have gained only one new member. She is Kate Abbott and the daughter of one of my cousins, Jean Abbott. It is with much pleasure that I welcome Kate and her family to the clan association.

Members who have renewed their membership

I have decided to include the names of members who have renewed their membership as I think information is useful for other members.

During the last 6 months the following people have renewed their membership.

Louise Harris
Mairi McIntosh
Veronica Duffy
Valerie Stockings
Bill MacNeil Sadler
Janeen Webb
Diana McNeil
Toni McNeill
Craig McNeil
Sharon McNeil
Kim McNeil

Neil McNeill
Graeme McNeill (Qld)
Andrew MacNeil
Ian McNeill (Qld)
Simon Neil
Graeme McNeil (Vic)

Births, Marriages and Deaths

Births

No new births

Marriages

Jean Buchanan and Ken Whiddon travelled to California recently for the marriage of her nephew.

Deaths

No news of family deaths

Our next national clan gathering at Mittagong, NSW –

12 to 14th October 2012

Arrangements are progressing with the development of the program for the gathering. On current numbers we should have about 40 people at the dinner on Saturday evening.

A booking has been made for our Friday evening dinner at "The Briars" at Bowral.

Our members' meeting on Saturday morning will be held at the Mittagong RSL Club commencing at 9.30 am

The formal dinner on Saturday evening will also be held at the Mittagong RSL Club.

We will attend a church service at St. Stephen's church, heritage building in Mittagong where the service commences at 10.30 am.

A venue for lunch on Sunday is yet to be arranged.

A more detailed information sheet will be sent to all those planning to attend as soon as we have arrangements finalized.

In the meantime if you have any questions then please contact me.

World clan gathering on Barra August 2012

The next gathering on the island of Barra is drawing closer and I am sure all those people who are travelling to Barra will now be getting quite excited in anticipation.

Mary Surman is going to the gathering and is our sole representative from the association. I think that there may be two families from Queensland who will also be attending.



View from Ben Heaval beside the Madonna & child overlooking Castlebay, Kisimul castle and the southern islands

I am aware that some of you are thinking about attending the next Barra gathering in 2014.

This is a special year as the next Commonwealth Games will be held in Glasgow in 2014.

It is also the year when the next Home Coming of the clans will be held in Scotland. You might remember that the first Home Coming was held in 2009 when 60,000 people participated in the program in Edinburgh.

In 2014 the Home Coming main program will be held in Stirling while regional events will be held in various parts of Scotland during the year.



Statue of Robert the Bruce

The Home Coming program will be held on 11 – 13th July and consist of –

Clans Village.

Cavalcade procession between the Clan Village and the Castle.

Entertainment on the Esplanade.

A program of musical and other cultural events in other key venues.

News from the Isle of Barra

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

100th anniversary of the abandonment of the families from the island of Mingulay

A series of events marking the 100th anniversary of the abandonment of Mingulay took place on the weekend of 15-17th June.

The Island Books Trust and the National Trust for Scotland joined forces to commemorate the decision of the island’s community to abandon human habitation. The Reflections on Mingulay events took place at Castlebay Hall on Barra on Friday 15 and Saturday 16 June.

Our clan chief, Rory Macneil of Barra presented a paper, “Barra & Vatersay’s choice in the 21st century – Become a centre or die”.

He drew an analogy of reflecting on Mingulay 100 years ago when the community of families left the island

A copy of his speech is attached to this newsletter for your information. While this is a fairly long document it correctly explains the importance of the Barra & Vatersay community taking action and responsibility for the future services available to the islands, the sustainability of the community and businesses on the islands. I urge you to read the attached document as you will better understand the fragile position of the communities of the islands in planning their future.

Barrathon 30th June 2012

This year’s race saw a record 250 completing the half marathon and a further 81 taking part in the fun runs.

These are just a few of the many positive comments received from runners participating in the 2012 Barrathon.

“I have spent the last two days raving about what a fantastic weekend we had to everyone who will listen.

I can’t wait to return to Barra with the rest of my family.”

"I've run all over the place - New York, Berlin, Barcelona, Rome -and at events, big and small, but I've not experienced anything that can compare with the Barra race for organisation, atmosphere, landscape or hills!"

"Great to see so many local kids in the fun run. The benefit to the people of Barra of this event, health as well as economic, must be very considerable."

"Nothing comes near the Barrathon for hospitality, excellent organisation, fantastic food, great music and the generosity of the whole community."

"It is heart-warming to think that there are still places like Barra on the map that make you feel good all over and want to return for more."



The Barrathon route

The Barrathon route is a clockwise circuit of the island, following an undulating course, the lowest point being near sea level and the highest point being just under 350 ft.

The route starts in Castlebay at about 60 ft falling quickly to sea level before rising to 100 ft around the 1 mile mark. The next 0.5 miles is mainly downhill and then the course undulates between sea level and 50 ft until the 4 mile mark.

From mile 4, the course climbs gradually as the route starts to head east, peaking at around 170 ft just past the 5.5 mile stage. The next 1.5 miles see the route drop back to sea level as the 7 mile mark is approached.

From miles 7 to 9, the route starts to work its way round the east coast of the island over a number of short, small climbs ranging from 50 ft to 90 ft. This is quickly followed by a downhill 0.5 mile and a gently undulating course to the 10.5 mile mark. From here the route climbs steeply to 340 ft at the 11.5 mile stage.

The route offers some respite with a mile long descent followed by a short but sharp climb of approximately 40 ft before a fairly steady run to the finish point in Castlebay.

Our presence at highland gatherings and other Scottish events

In past years the first highland games event of the year in which we normally participate is the Mount Barker games near to Adelaide.

Unfortunately over Christmas I contacted an illness called Polymyalgia Rheumatica. This caused pain in my arms, shoulders and neck. I also lost my strength and could not walk properly. As a result I was not able to take our information tent to Mount Barker and I had to stop participating in Scottish country dancing.

The good news is that I was able to commence medication in February which relieved the pain and with ongoing exercise I am now back to normal fitness and almost without pain.

Ringwood highland games

In April I drove to Melbourne and attended the Ringwood highland games

I am indebted to Graeme & Robyn McNeil who allowed me to stay at their home on the Friday and Saturday nights.

Robyn and I attended a McNeil family luncheon on the Saturday at the home of a daughter of one of my cousins, Fiona Martin.

This was a special occasion for me as it provided an opportunity to bring together three second cousins of my family, Fiona Martin, Kate Abbott and Christine Cooper. Clan association members who were also at the lunch were Natalie McLeish, Keith & Bonnie Williams, Robyn McNeil and myself.

A group picture is shown below.



Keith & Bonnie Williams, Kate Abbott, Robyn McNeil, Chris Cooper, Natalie McLeish and Fiona Martin

Geelong highland games

The Geelong highland games were held on the weekend of 17th and 18th March and we were represented at the games by Jean Buchanan and Ken Whiddon.

This event is now held at the Geelong showgrounds and provided a larger program over two days.

Jean took some pictures and some are now shown for you to enjoy.



Ken Whiddon in the clan information tent



Learning to toss the caber



Historic highland regiment

Brigadoon at Bundanoon

The Brigadoon at Bundanoon games were held on Saturday 21st April at Bundanoon in the southern highlands of NSW.

Ian, Robyne and Stephen McNeill with Mary Surman, Toni McNeill and Janet Pisenga all

attended to represent our clan. John Palmer also came with Toni and Janet's brother Stephen showed an interest in becoming a member. Robyne's brother John, his wife Sandra and Mary's sister Marion were also in the MacNeil information tent.



Highland dancers at Brigadoon at Bundanoon

In May Joy & I attended the annual luncheon hosted by Clan Campbell at the Feathers hotel, Burnside.

On 23rd June Clan MacNeil hosted the annual "Gathering of the clans" luncheon at the Enfield hotel. The program of the day included an address to the Haggis by Sam Mathers, piping by Hamy Marcelin and Scottish country dancing.



Hamy Marcelin piping in the haggis carried by Jean Lumsden



Ann McNeill, Rod McNeill and Joy McNeill

Coming events 2012

New South Wales

21st July

Celebration of the battle of Selkirk at Scottish House at the Glanville RSL sub branch 11.30 am to 3.00 pm RSVP to info@scottishhouse.org.au.

12-14th October

Clan MacNeil national gathering at Mittagong, NSW

21st October

Woollongong highland gathering and pipe band contest at the Viking football oval

4th November

Castle Hill combined Scottish Societies highland gathering at Castle Hill showgrounds.

30th November

National event – St Andrew's birthday anniversary.

Victoria

24 to 26th August

Robert Burns festival at Camperdown

9 -11th November

Beechworth Celtic festival at Beechworth.

1st December

Daylesford highland games at Victoria Park, Daylesford.

South Australia

22nd July

Celebration of the birth of Robert Burns commencing at his statue in front of the State Library, North Terrace, Adelaide at 11.00 am.

10th November

Mount Barker Caledonian Society Celtic night

Queensland

1st August

Learn to speak Gaelic at the Brisbane Square library conducted by the Scottish Gaelic Association of Australia

Aust Capital Territory

6th October

Canberra highland gathering at Kambah oval

Scottish Country dancing can provide good health and well being

History

The history of Scottish Country dancing goes back to old manuscripts and part of folklore passed down by word of mouth from one generation to the next. Many of the names of the dances excite curiosity and the hope of interesting stories.

Good health

Dancing is a unique form of exercise because it provides the heart-healthy benefit of aerobic exercise while also allowing you to engage in a social activity.

It is also stimulating to the mind and one 21 year study published in the New England Journal of Medicine even found that dancing can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in elderly citizens.

Dancing may be a triple benefit to the brain. Not only does the physical aspect of dancing increase blood flow to the brain, but the social aspect of the activity leads to less stress, depression and loneliness. Dancing requires memorizing of steps and working with a partner, both of which provide mental challenges that are crucial to brain health.

Regular exercise and fitness will ultimately lead to happy and healthy retirement.



A recent study by the University of Strathclyde looked at Scottish country dancing.

"We chose to study this particular type of dancing partly because it is very popular with older people in Scotland but also because it has steps which have to be followed precisely. This calls for a particular level of physical fitness and mental alertness and the dancers who took

part in the have all been dancing for at least five years, some for 30 years and more."

Dr Dougall believes the benefits are not just physical, and that the dances exercise the mind as well.

Scottish country dancing classes are active in Scotland, England, Continental Europe, Canada, USA, New Zealand and Australia.

In Australia there are branches of the Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society in Adelaide, Canberra, Hunter Valley, Melbourne, Northern Territory, Queensland, Sydney, Tasmania and Western Australia

Please contact me if you would like further information about a group near to you or other details about the dances, buying shoes or any other matter. You may also like to look at the following web sites for more information.

www.rscds.org.au

<http://www.scottish-country-dancing-dictionary.com/rscds-books.htm>

The Galloglass warriors

The **galloglass** or **galloglass** – from Irish: *gallóglai* (plural), *gallóglach* (singular) – were a class of elite mercenary warriors who principally were members of the Norse-Gaelic clans of Scotland between the mid 13th century and late 16th century. As Scots, they were Gaels and shared a common background and language with the Irish, but as they had intermarried with the 10th century Norse settlers of western Scotland, the Irish called them *Gall Gaeil* ("foreign Gaels").

The first record of galloglass service under the Irish was in 1259 when Aedh O'Conchobair King of Connaught received a dowry of 150 Scottish warriors from the daughter of the King of the Hebrides. Galloglass contingents were given land and settled in Irish lordships where they were entitled to receive supplies from the local population.

In 1569 Turlough O'Neill married Lady Agnes MacDonald of Kintyre. She was the daughter of Colin Campbell of Argyll. She earlier married James Macdonald of Dunyvaig. Her dowry consisted of at least 1200 galloglass fighters. Along with support of two young men and friends to assist or fight. The fighting force could easily have numbered over 5,000 future Galloglass warriors coming into this area of Tyrone.

By 1512, there were reported to be fifty-nine groups throughout the country under the control

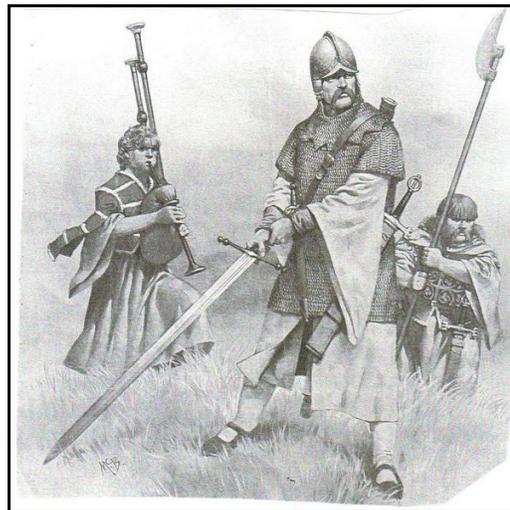
of the Irish nobility, though initially they were mercenaries. Over time they settled and their ranks became filled with native Irish men.

The importation of galloglass into Ireland was a major factor in containing the Anglo-Norman invasion of the 12th century, as their ranks stiffened the resistance of the Irish lordships. Throughout the Middle Ages in Ireland, galloglass troops were maintained by Gaelic Irish and Hiberno-Norman lords alike. Even the English Lord Deputy of Ireland usually kept a company of them in his service.

Up to the time of the Norman invasion there had been no standing force at the command of the Irish leaders and so the English men-at-arms found little difficulty in overcoming their yeomen opponents. Trained fighting men were introduced from Argyll and the Outer Islands to aid the Irish.

The Hebridean clans had such close connections with the Vikings that they had learned to make and use Viking arms, essentially the same arms and tactics employed by the Normans. The Irish, on the other hand, until the Norman invasion, had no experience with heavy cavalry or armor. Their quilted linen war coats might provide some slight deterrence to a knife thrust, but would provide no protection at all against a Norman battle-axe or mace; and certainly no protection from the great range and penetrating power of the English longbow. It was only a matter of time before Irish chiefs sought the aid of their relatives in Scotland to help them against the Normans.

The Scottish mercenaries they employed to teach them to fight the Normans were called "*gallóglai*" (galloglasses - foreigners in green) in Ireland; while in Scotland, a military caste of mercenaries evolved called the "*buannachan*," from the Gaelic "*buanna*," meaning a hired soldier.



The leaders of the Irish gallóglaiigh belonged to a limited number of Norse-Scottish families among whom mercenary service became hereditary; i.e., the MacDonnells of Leinster, MacDonnells of Ulster MacDonnells of Mayo, MacSuibhnes, MacDowells, MacRuairidh, MacCibes and some others. The MacDonnells served in Ulster first, where they were employed as men at arms by the ÓCahans and the ÓNeills of Tyrone, to whom they were related by marriage

By the middle of the 14th Century they had spread to Connacht, where the ÓConnors and the Ó'Kellys employed them. By 1399, they also served such Gaelo-Normans as the Clanrickard Burkes of Mayo, the FitzGeralds of Kildare and the ÓNeills of Clandeboye., MacDonnells of Clandeboye and Lecale,

Galloglass families

Scottish families who provided warriors in the fight against the Norman invaders were -

- Creedon
- Gallagher
- Gielty
- Kennedy
- McCabe
- McCann
- McCoy/Coy
- MacDonald
- McDonnell
- McFadden/McFadyen
- McGinley
- McGinty
- McGreal/Grealis – a sept of the McNeills
- McHale
- McLaughlin
- McNamara
- McNeill
- McRuairi
- McSorley

- Nevin
- Sheehy
- Sweeney/MacSuibhne



It is interesting to look at the residential records which are accessible of McNeill / McNeile families living in Ireland in the period of 1700 - 1800. While in some instances we have been able to trace their ancestry migration from Scotland, there are many others whose ancestry is not so clear.

It seems quite likely that some are descendants of galloglass warriors who came from Scotland to fight against the Norman invaders in earlier years and remained in Ireland.

Jean Buchanan & Ken Whiddon's trip to California for the wedding of her nephew

We arrived in San Francisco on Wednesday 11th April for my nephew's wedding on the 14th of April. The next day we were driven up to the mountain area of Bass Lake, California where my brother and his family had booked a holiday home for the weekend

We woke up on Friday morning to some very heavy snow fall, it was also very cold. It reminded me of a cold winter's day in the highlands of Scotland (childhood memories) and being surrounded by Scottish voices I felt very much at home.

By the Saturday afternoon the snow had stopped and we had a wee bit of sun shinning through, but still quite cold.

The morning of the wedding a few of us cooked a full Scottish breakfast for the groom and all the groomsmen, some of them a bit reluctant to eat the black pudding, but at least they all tried

it. They didn't know how or what it was made from.

There was lots of laughter coming from the bedrooms as the all American groomsmen were getting dressed into their kilts, but they all looked really handsome in their full dress.

The wedding of Chris and Megan was held at Saint Dominic Savio Church in Bass Lake and the following reception at the Pine Resort in Bass Lake

My brother John and nephew, Chris both have there own McNeill tartan kilts. The groomsmen all had their outfits from a hire firm, which unfortunately were unable to supply our specific tartan. John was born a McNeill and later adopted.

Megan's family also joined in the tartan theme with Megan's father and grandfather wearing Mc Neill tartan ties. Mc Neill tartan ribbon was also added to the wedding bouquet.

Most of the wedding guests were from America, a few of Scottish birth who now live and work in America.

Ken and I being the only guests from Australia, were with all the Scots sitting on the same table so we could relate well to each other, sharing the same sense of humour, and a fun time was had by all



Chris Fulton in lighter tartan kilt with groomsmen



John & Janey Fulton, son Chris, Jean Buchanan and Ken Whiddon



The bride, Megan Arrighi and her father

Tartan for the ladies to wear

It is some time since I last provided details of the recommended custom for ladies to wear a tartan sash.

In past years ladies wore the most fashionable clothing that their loom or pocket could handle. While styles changed over time, ladies did not wear a kilt apart from those who played in pipe bands.

A white dress and a tartan sash were appropriate for most formal occasions.

As a general practice ladies wore their sash over their right shoulder.



In these pictures the ladies are wearing tartan skirts with a matching sash.

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

John McNeil