



# Clan MacNeil

## Association of Australia

**Newsletter for clan members and friends.**

**December 2011**

**Editor - John McNeil 21 Laurel Avenue, Linden Park, SA 5065 telephone 08 83383858**

### Items in this newsletter –

- Welcome to new members
- Births, marriages and deaths
- Our next national clan gathering in Mittagong, NSW
- Next world clan gathering on Barra 2012
- News from Barra
- Our presence at highland gatherings and other Scottish events
- Coming events
- Clan MacNeil trophy award at Knox Grammar School, Sydney
- Our State clan representatives
- Lesley Neil can provide information on visiting Tuscany
- A visit by Ann Lang, sister of Heather MacFarlane
- An update of the research project of the McNeill / MacNeil families living in Argyll 1400 -1800 AD
- The origin of Irish family names
- Communicating with clan members and friends using the Skype program
- A search for lost relations – a request from the Salvation Army for help
- The granting of Arms by the Lord Lyon's office, Edinburgh

### New Members

I would like to welcome our new clan members who have joined since the last newsletter.

Keith & Dawn McNeil of Toorak, Victoria  
Keith's great grandfather came from Drumlamph in Ireland and settled in Westbrook, Queensland.

Jennifer Hoysted of Rosanna, Victoria  
Jennifer is a cousin of Bruce McNeill and their ancestors lived in New Zealand. Her maternal great grandfather, Peter McNeill left Scotland and settled in New Zealand.

At the end of 2011 I have received information from several members that they wish to retire due to their age or disability.

I am grateful to them for their support over a number of years but this is a warning to all of us to be diligent in looking for potential new members and talking with family relations about the importance of supporting the clan association.

The progression of time will continue to bring resignations due to sickness or age in our current members.

### Births, Marriages and Deaths

#### Births

William James Campbell McNeil, first son of Dr. Dale McNeil and Suni Campbell was born on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2011. He is the grandson of Marion McNeil and the late Alan McNeil who died in November 2010.

#### Marriages

Kristen Pope, daughter of Geoff and Heather Pope was married on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October at Bowral, NSW.

#### Deaths

### Our next national clan gathering at Mittagong, NSW –

#### 12 to 14th October 2012

You will remember that we were unfortunately required to cancel our annual clan gathering in 2011. I have recently spoken with Ian & Robyne McNeill about developing plans for the 2012 clan gathering.

Mittagong seems a suitable choice to hold the 2012 gathering and I am providing you with a preliminary notice of this with this newsletter. Ideally we would like to have at least 40 people at our gatherings and some of the financial arrangements become difficult if the number attending is significantly less.

The purpose of the advance preliminary notice is to allow you the opportunity to consider the date we have chosen and your preliminary indication of intention to come to Mittagong.

I am also conscious of our members who live in Queensland and Western Australia who face larger travelling costs to come to the Australian gatherings.

I would love to be able to hold a gathering in both states to make it easier for those of you who live there. I am keen to have another gathering in Queensland.

## World clan gathering on Barra August 2012



The challenging golf course on the west coast of the island of Barra – a picture taken from [www.ukgolfguide.com](http://www.ukgolfguide.com)

The next world clan gathering will be held on the island of Barra in 2012. The dates for the gathering have been set at **13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> August.**

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 or visit the web site [www.the-macneils.org.uk](http://www.the-macneils.org.uk) .



Kisimul castle in the entrance of Castlebay.

## News from the Isle of Barra

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

### Website for Barra Graveyards?

There will be an open meeting for all on the island to look at the possibility of

producing a website for our Graveyards. Ms. Sandra Stephens from Daliburgh on South Uist has been invited to come along and give a talk on her work of putting the local Daliburgh Graveyard online. To see her interesting and hard work why not visit the website; [www.hallancemeterysouthuist.co.uk](http://www.hallancemeterysouthuist.co.uk) The open meeting will be on Tuesday 6th December at 7.30pm in Castlebay School

This seems a great idea and if a web site is established for the cemeteries on Barra it will give all of us living overseas an opportunity to look at the information and trace our family ancestors.



### . New York - Stornoway - Paris -

Kristie Boyd who was one of the team of Barr a'Dannsa dancers from the Jane Douglas School of Dance who performed "The Harris Tweed Catwalk" in Paris two weekends ago.

The stunning Harris Tweed kilt was designed by Netty Sopata at Diggory Brown and the corset featuring the Harris Tweed Orb trademark was designed by Sallie Jane Avis. The outfit was first shown in dressed to Kilt in New York and brought to life by the dancers to great acclaim at the opening ceremony of the Royal National Mod in Stornoway.

It seemed fitting that it should take centre stage in a 30 minute performance by the dancers to an audience of 3000 French visitors at the International Festival of Scottish Highland Dancing at Disneyland Paris.

Along with other dancers from the Western Isles, the school took part in an opening ceremony, 10 minute showcase and spectacular Disney Parade. The dance school also auditioned and met Disney's exacting performance standards to be selected as one of ten schools from Scotland and Canada who performed an extra 30 minute public performance on Disney's main public stage.

Dancers from three Barra dancing schools, Barra MAC School of Dance, Eileen O'Carroll Dance School and Jane Douglas School of Dance, along with parents made the trip to Paris, about 70 people in all.

- On Friday, dancers from the Jane Douglas School of Dance performed a fantastic thirty minute show to 3000 people on Disney's Videopolis stage.
- On Saturday Hazel MacDonald and Kristie Boyd danced in the opening ceremony, and a further 20 dancers aged 5 and up performed a 10 minute showcase.
- On Sunday, all the dancers danced in the spectacular Disney Pre Parade through the park.



The party of dancers from Barra

## Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December Gale force winds hit northern Scotland and the Hebrides

"In the Hebrides the police are asking members of the public to remain indoors as winds increase on the Isle of Barra and South Uist.

The advice for motorists across the Western Isles is to avoid travel due to high winds with gusts of up to 90 miles per hour.

Reports of power lines, fallen trees and flying debris have been received across the Highlands and Islands.

The extreme weather is expected for the remainder of the day and Northern Constabulary are receiving continuous updates from the Met Office and will continue to advise the public of developments in the Force area. Members of the public are asked to pay close attention to weather and road updates and act accordingly to the advice given."

## Our presence at highland gatherings and other Scottish events

Throughout Australia Tartan Day was celebrated on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July. In South Australia We were involved in a concert held in the Burnside Library which included story telling, piping music, highland and Scottish country dancing and a selection of Scottish food.

We were also provided with a presentation on the history of the sailing ship "City of Adelaide" and the program to raise money which will allow the hull of the ship to be transported from Scotland to Adelaide.

The *City of Adelaide* (1864) and *Cutty Sark* (1869) are the last two composite clippers surviving in the world today. The *City of Adelaide* also imported trade goods into South Australia as well as carry South Australian exports such as copper, wool and wheat to Britain on the return voyages. Donations are being sought to cover the cost of bringing the "City of Adelaide from Scotland to Adelaide where it will be preserved as an important part of the history of migration to South Australia.

In August Bill MacNeil Sadler and I attended the annual Clan MacLeod lunch on behalf of our clan.

In October Bill MacNeil Sadler and Cynthia hosted a clan barbecue luncheon at their home at Hove. Bill provided the meat for barbecuing and the ladies of the clan brought salads and sweets for the lunch.

Several people who were interested to join us apologised due to other commitments and sickness.

Those who attended were Jennie and Andrew Strickland, Andrew MacNeil and Denise Wilkey, Bruce Scotland and Dawn Juers, and John & Joy McNeil.



From left Andrew Strickland, Andrew MacNeil, Denise Wilkey, Bill MacNeil Sadler, Cynthia and Joy McNeil

In November Bill MacNeil Sadler, Cynthia and I attended the St. Andrew's day anniversary church service at St. Andrew's church, North Adelaide.

On the last Saturday in November I joined a small group of Scottish friends to walk in the Norwood Christmas pageant under the banner of Scotland.

A number of Scottish pipe bands also played in the parade. A short time after the start we were drenched with a cloud burst but continued to the end.

As was the custom from past years some of the pipers and drummers met in the front bar of the Norwood hotel after the pageant for an impromptu musical session. A truly inspiring

experience for a lover of the pipes and a lovely time to dry out my shirt and jacket.

Jean Buchanan and Ken Whiddon represented our clan at the annual Daylesford highland games held on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December at Victoria Park.

The program included a march down the main street, highland dancing and Scottish heavy athletics.

At Christmas time Joy, Andrew our son and I flew to Sydney to spend Christmas day with our daughter, Kirsty, husband Mark and their family. A few weeks before this I had been corresponding with Alan McNeil who lives on Norfolk Island and learnt that he and his wife would be visiting relatives in Sydney over the Christmas period.

This represented a unique opportunity to be able to meet Alan and bring him together with a few Sydney clan families.

We were able to arrange a date for a lunch together.

Neil McNeil of Balgowlah assisted in booking a table for us at the Totem Club at Balgowlah and we enjoyed a very pleasant time together. A picture of the group who attended is shown below.



From left – Stephen McNeill, Ian McNeill, Mary Surman, Robyne McNeill, John McNeill, Joy McNeill, Polini McNeill, Alan McNeil and Neil McNeil

## Coming events 2012

### New South Wales

**25th January**  
**SAHC Burns supper**  
at Mosman Art Gallery

**21st April**  
**Bundanoon highland games**  
at Bundanoon

**3<sup>rd</sup> May**  
**Australian Celtic Festival**  
at Glen Innes

**26<sup>th</sup> May**  
**Berry Celtic Festival**  
at Berry

**7<sup>th</sup> July**  
**Aberdeen highland games**  
at Aberdeen

### Victoria

**22<sup>nd</sup> January**  
**Burns statue and anniversary celebration**  
Treasury gardens picnic lunch at 12.00 noon

**18<sup>th</sup> March**  
**Geelong highland games**  
at Geelong showgrounds

**1<sup>st</sup> April**  
**Ringwood highland games**  
at Russell Lucas oval, Ringwood

**1<sup>st</sup> July**  
**Tartan day celebration**  
at Federation Square, Melbourne  
2.00 pm

### South Australia

**25<sup>th</sup> January**  
**Robert Burns's anniversary supper**  
at Stonyfell winery

**28<sup>th</sup> January**  
**Robert Burns anniversary concert**  
at the Burnside library  
11.00 am to 3.00 pm

**19th February**  
**Mount Barker highland gathering**  
at Mount Barker show grounds

**23rd June**  
**Gathering of the clans annual lunch**  
Location to be decided

### Queensland

**7<sup>th</sup> July**  
**International tartan day**  
at King George Square, Brisbane city hall at 9.00 am

## Clan MacNeil trophy award at Knox Grammar School, NSW

In 2011 the Clan MacNeil perpetual trophy was presented to Daniel Mazza. He has provided us with an outline of his experience as follows-

"I began playing the tenor drum at the Knox Prep in year 6. It had always been my goal to become a member of the Pipe Band. At first learning the tenor drum was difficult - I not only struggled to learn the music, but also to swing the sticks! I persevered and practiced as often as I could (using any surface I could find!) and 3 ½ months later I received my kilt and performed at the Kirking of the Tartan - my first performance as a member of the Pipe Band. In the past few years, I have been very fortunate to be involved in many memorable performances. In 2009 the Pipe Band performed for HRH Prince Edward and in 2010 I was selected to perform with the Band in the Edinburgh Military Tattoo - at 13 years of age, I was the youngest drummer in the performance. The week that I spent with the Band at the Tattoo has definitely been one my highlights. In 2010 I was very proud to be the recipient of the award for Best Junior Bandsmen."

### Our Clan Association State representatives and Officers

While some of you who have attended annual clan gatherings and have met most of our state representatives, I thought that it would be helpful to you if I provided a small picture of each person for your future reference. A page is attached to this newsletter with pictures of our state representatives and association officers.

I would like to make special mention of Neil McNeill of Balgowlah, NSW, Cliff McNeil of Drummoyne, NSW and Alex Buchanan of St Helens, Tasmania for the valuable contributions which they continue to make in family ancestry and the Clan MacNeil DNA ancestry program.

### Lesley Neil can provide helpful information on touring in Tuscany

Lesley and Bob Neil live at Waverton, in Sydney and Lesley works as a tourist consultant. She has a business "Tuscany under the skin" and represents a couple in Italy, Ugo and Barbara Mariotti who provide personal guided tours.

We have visited Tuscany and it is a lovely place to spend some time as a part of a trip to Scotland. There is a significant advantage in being able to access a local experienced couple such as Ugo and Barbara. Tuscany is a wonderful area to visit with many interests to offer visitors. You may like to look at the web site [www.tuscanyundertheskin.com/tourinfo](http://www.tuscanyundertheskin.com/tourinfo). For further information or contact Lesley Neil by phone 0414 398 450.

We are lucky to have Bob & Lesley as members of the clan association and so

accessible to talk about ideas to visit Tuscany.

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

Our study of the McNeill families in Argyll is a continuing work. Alex Buchanan and Neil McNeill have been busy looking for new participants for the Clan MacNeil DNA ancestry program. We have recently sponsored together with Neil McNeill the cost of the Ancestry DNA analysis for Danny McNeill of Antrim. His family has lived on the same property for 200 years. Both Alex Buchanan and Neil felt that the pedigree of Danny's ancestry could be important to build our understanding of the Irish families.

In November Mary Lang of Calgary, Canada visited Australia to go walking in the Flinders Ranges with friends. Mary is a sister of Heather McFarlane who has built up a wonderful web site on the history and families of Knapdale in Scotland. This has been a valuable resource for us in our search for information about the McNeill families.

Mary has walked with Heather in Knapdale and is familiar with the areas of interest to us.



A picture of Mary Lang taken from the Knapdalespeople web site and probably snapped by her sister Heather McFarlane.

Mary visited Neil McNeill in Sydney and then arranged to meet with me during her stay in Adelaide. I was delighted to meet her and to discuss our research studies of the McNeill families in Argyll. Many families migrated to Canada and we are pleased to share our research with our friends in Canada.

### The origin of Irish family surnames

We have been fortunate to have read the research of A.I.B. Stewart, President of the Kintyre Antiquarian and Natural History Society on the subject of Gaelic family names.

A list of Campbeltown tenants prepared for the Earl of Argyll in 1505 showed 12 merkland of Carskey and the Mull of Kintyre held by Hector McIain MacGilliecallum. In later documents he

was referred to as Hector McNeill and his family occupied this land until 1824.

While I have understood the use of O'Neill as a surname to describe the grandson of Neill, I have not until recently found information on the use of "Mac" in Ireland in early times. I had started to wonder if the McNeills in Ireland were descendants of Scottish families rather than from an Irish ancestry.

The early use of names in Ireland were associated with the collective tribe description of a region. The use of both "Mac" and "O" were established prior to the beginning of the Anglo-Norman invasions in 1171 AD.

While many of the names appearing in accounts of this time appear similar in form to modern Irish names, incorporating in particular the prefix "Mac" (meaning "son of"), in fact they were not hereditary, lasting only one generation. Thus Turlough mac Airt, was Turlough, son of Art; his own son would be Conor mac Turlough, Conor son of Turlough.

Nonetheless, Ireland was one of the first European countries in which a system of fixed hereditary surnames developed. The earliest names appear to be those incorporating "Ó" or its earlier form Ua, meaning "grandson". According to Fr. Woulfe, an early authority on Irish surnames, the first recorded fixed surname is O'Clery (Ó Cleirigh), as noted by the Annals, which record the death of Tighearnach Ua Cleirigh, lord of Aidhne in Co. Galway in the year 916. It seems likely that this is the oldest surname recorded anywhere in Europe.

By the eleventh century many families had acquired true surnames as we would know them today. All of these surnames incorporate the same two basic elements, "O" or "Mac", together with the personal name of the ancestor from whom descent is indicated. In many cases this ancestor can be quite accurately identified, and the origin of the name dated precisely. Thus, at the start of the eleventh century, Brian Boru possessed no surname, being simply "Brian, High-King of the Irish", his grandson Teigue called himself Ua Briain in memory of his illustrious grandfather, and the name became hereditary thereafter. Similarly, the O'Neills derive their surname from Niall mac Aoidh, who died in 917.

We have a few Australian association members who trace their family ancestry to Ireland. Some of their ancestors can be traced as relations of Scottish families while others have no direct link with Scotland. We are interested to expand our DNA ancestry sampling from some of the

descendants of these families to find if they are linked through earlier relatives.

**Communicating with other clan families using a free telephone call provided by Skype with the ability to see each other.**

I am particularly interested to learn if you are registered on Skype or would like to learn more about how you can arrange this.

It is a wonderful way to communicate with children and grandchildren on a regular basis no matter where they may live – either in Australia, North America, Scotland or another country.

I have become aware that the Clan MacFarlane Society in Australia hold national management meetings using Skype and have found it very effective.

I would like us to consider adopting this opportunity and I hope that you will help me in the first instance by telling me if you are already registered.

You can learn more about Skype at their web site [www.skype.com/intl/en/home](http://www.skype.com/intl/en/home)

**A request for assistance in finding Llewelyn McNeil**

The Salvation Army has contacted me to seek help in finding Llewelyn McNeil who was born in Glasgow in March 1937 and migrated to Australia. Please let me know if you have any knowledge of him.

**The Granting of Arms by Lord Lyon's court, Edinburgh**

A document is attached which provides information of the arms granted to a number of prominent MacNeil / McNeill personalities. The arms which are granted by the Lord Lyon's court belong to those individuals. Most of you will be familiar with the arms of our clan chief. They consist of the shield and a crest above. The crest is shown in the badge which we have permission to wear and represents Biula Craig, a 700 foot sea cliff on the island of Mingulay, south from Barra.

Joy & I send you our best wishes for a happy and healthy new year to all clan members and friends of the clan.

*John McNeil*