



## THE CLAN MACPHERSON MUSEUM

### What kind of future?

#### Introduction

The Clan Macpherson Association has been in existence for over sixty years and is now firmly established with several thousand members in all parts of the world.

Four factors exist which hold the Association and its wide diversity of members together today:

1. Loyalty to a hereditary Chief
2. The circulation of 'Creag Dhubh' to all members
3. The Annual Gathering in Newtonmore
4. The Clan Museum situated in the Clan homelands displaying details of our history and heritage

These factors should never be in any doubt. The Trustees, who are ultimately responsible for the Museum and its operation, have a strong desire to for it to continue to prosper, improve and embrace modern technology and feel that with regard to future developments the views of Association members should be sought for guidance in its future path – including whether future developments are deemed necessary, desirable and appropriate at all.

Whereas it is appreciated that many Association members live overseas and have never had the chance to visit the Museum (other than through the excellent 'electronic museum'), they are entitled to express opinions just as well as more frequent visitors.

To further this aim, we have tried to isolate two objectives:

1. To establish a long-term vision for the Museum
2. To develop a costed development plan to enable us to realise that vision

This paper is designed to ascertain views on the long-term vision as seen by members, the questions posed are merely to stimulate discussion and should not be looked on as instant answers to problems.

#### The Collection

The Museum collection consists largely of artefacts directly, although sometimes indirectly, associated with the Clan Macpherson and its associated families, which accords strictly with the Museum Trust Deed.

- Is the collection relevant to the needs of modern visitors, whether Clan members or not?
- Should the manner of display be altered in any major way?

- Should the scope of the collection be widened to include items of more general interest, eg Scottish or Highland history?
- Are the artefacts in the best possible condition?
- Should we continue to develop the Library?
- Should remain a small research library or should we put the books on-line and tie in with some large shared-interest libraries?
- In view of the current public interest in genealogy, is this an area into which we should now expand, and if so how?

### **Space**

The Museum comprises exhibition and limited storage space, a library and small archive room. Overall, it has grown enormously in size over the last fifty years and the methods of display have changed beyond recognition.

- Are we using the existing available space to the best possible advantage?
- Should we extend the existing display space within the confines of our existing property?
- Should we abandon and sell our existing site and build a new purpose-made Museum elsewhere within the Clanlands?

### **Governance & Staffing**

At present the Museum is the responsibility of its Trustees who act through the agency of the Museum Advisory Committee (MAC), a body made up of Trustees with the addition of other members who need not necessarily be Association members.

The Curator is non-salaried but has accommodation and services provided. Assistance and relief is provided by paid part-time workers (including a designated Shop Manager).

- Is the present system of governance suitable for the needs of today and tomorrow?
- Should we have a full time salaried Curator and assistants?

### **Internal & External Relations**

The Museum is at the heart of the Association and members are kept in touch by articles in 'Creag Dhubh' and Branch newsletters.

In the wider world, the Museum is fully registered, ie it has government approval and has reached the status of being a '3 Star' visitor attraction.

In some quarters the Museum may be looked on as a 'closed shop', of interest only to Clan members and of little importance to the outside world.

- How can we make the world aware that the Clan Museum is of importance in the understanding of the history of Scotland in general and the Highlands in particular?
- How can we integrate fully into the local community and prove that the Museum is as much their heritage as it is ours?

### **Income and Expenditure**

At present, the running costs of the Museum are met by voluntary donations by the visiting public together with profits from the shop. Interest from the Guardians Fund, set up a few years ago, is dedicated to fabric maintenance. The Lady Sheila Endowment Fund is designed to accumulate to provide Curatorial support, education and training.

Capital expenditure is generally met from funds with the occasional grant from public sources.

Deficits are made up with an injection of money from the Association.

This somewhat precarious financial situation presents the greatest challenge to the running of the Museum in the future.

The argument that all visitors should be required to pay an entrance fee has been aired several times in the past, the general conclusion being that an entrance fee might prejudice numbers and donations. It is worth noting that all national-owned museums and galleries in Scotland have free entry.

- Innovative ideas are required to put the Museum on a firm financial footing, at present it relies on visitor numbers and generosity of Association members.
- Practical suggestions for innovations to assist profitability are welcomed.

### **The Shop**

As indicated above, the Shop provides an important source of income to pay for the running costs of the Museum, including the salaries of staff and the Shop Manager. By convention, the shop does not compete with other shops in the village in terms of the materials it stocks; by and large, Museum shop stock relates to the Clan Macpherson.

- Should the shop remain the same size as it is now, or should it be expanded to carry more items?
- Should it remain where it is currently located?
- Should the CMMT develop online shopping facilities, available to serve customers throughout the year?

### **IT and Technology**

At the moment the Clan Macpherson Museum is a 'low tech' one with traditional displays in show cases and behind glass.

The museums world is moving on and amazing electronic displays are now available, ranging from touch-screens and moving images to virtual exhibits which invite the visitor to take a leading and active part in the displays.

- Do you think the Museum should be re-organised to keep up with current/ future technology or stay in its present mode?

### **Resources for change**

Those who make suggestions regarding changes - no matter how small, are asked how they consider they should be implemented, by whom and by what financial means?

### **Summing up**

The topics mentioned above are not to be considered exhaustive and there may well be many other factors to be considered. Those listed parallel key sections of the Cheape Report (see MacPhorum or alternatively contact CMMT Chairman, Bruce Macpherson, for the complete PDF version) which this exercise is designed, in part, to update.

The questions asked are not the only ones to be considered but it is hoped that they might form the basis of discussion leading to the creation of a plan which will lead the Museum well into the present century and beyond.

***“Without a vision we perish”***