



# Clan Macpherson Association (Australian Branch)



Website [www.clan-macpherson.org](http://www.clan-macpherson.org)

## November 2020 Newsletter

Wishing all our members and friends a very Happy St Andrew's Day-November 30th!



There has been little Clan/Scottish activity in the last 10 months at home and abroad. The Annual Gathering in Badenoch was cancelled as were all attendant activities, the Newtonmore Highland Games and the Clan Chattan Dinner and AGM in Inverness. The CMA AGM and Council meetings were conducted by Skype, but work has started and continues on the Museum roof.

You can follow roof work progress on the Museum Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/clanmacphersonmuseum>

Cluny and his family continue to remain in good spirits at Newton Castle in Blairgowrie, and in typical form sent his good wishes to the AGM and Council representatives by e-mail.

On the home front, planning is underway for Bundanoon is Brigadoon 2021 on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April. The Bonnie Wingham Festival is being planned around Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May; subject of course to any NSW Government 'restrictions.'

In Victoria, Ballarat and Geelong Gatherings have been cancelled and Daylesford deferred to December 2021. Bendigo's Scottish Day Out is cancelled, but Ringwood's website advertises 28<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Again, Victorian Government restrictions could intervene!

For more timely information, go to <https://www.scottishbanner.com/> OR <http://www.scottishaustralianheritagecouncil.com.au/calendar.htm>

## 75<sup>th</sup> CMA Annual Gathering 2021

Recent COVID-19 events in the UK gave the CMA Council little confidence that a Gathering could be held in 2021. To that end it was agreed that any decision to proceed or not, would be held over until January 2021, and that the publication of Creag Dhubh be delayed accordingly.

### VALE

Two very long serving members of the Association have passed away in recent times.

Gina MacPherson (nee Saunders) of North Carlton, Vic was the widow of former RAF Bomber Command Flying Officer Ian Russell Macpherson. Having married in the UK in 1943, the couple with daughter Sally arrived in Australia in 1950. Ian died in 1974, but Gina survived him until 24 October 2019 when she passed away at the grand old age of 100 in the company of friends and daughter Sally at Redmond Park, Princes Hill Vic.



Edna MacPherson-Sabato of Maryborough Qld will be well known to



Queensland members, and the family of James Alpin MacPherson, the enigmatic bushranger whose capture was celebrated at the Wild Scotchman Capture Festival held at Gin Gin, Queensland. Edna was Patron of the Festival for many years; the highlight being the attendance of Cluny and the late Lady Sheila in 2000. Edna's talents within the Clan included diligently proofreading this Newsletter for many years and crocheting Macpherson and Bundanoon tartan

rugs as gifts and raffle prizes. Sadly, Edna passed away on 21 August 2020 after a lengthy illness and after-effects of a broken hip.

More detailed obituaries for Edna and Gina will appear in Creag Dhubh.

## Museum Convenor's Report

At the October 2020 CMA Council meeting held on Skype, Convenor Angus Macpherson reported inter alia:

‘Ewen (Talla Shee) has taken the big step to stand down from the Exhibits Sub-Committee. This ... is a tumultuous decision. His contributions to the Museum have been immense and it will take a brave man to step into these shoes. Fortunately, we have ... a duo and we welcome Jim and Mairi Macpherson into their new role. It is hardly as though they have not been busy already. Not only is the Macphersonia project progressing, with some 15 objects signed up, but ... they are putting the final touches on a potentially transformative grant application to Museums and Galleries Scotland Recovery and Resilience Fund for the internal refurbishment of the Museum; ... submitted on 1<sup>st</sup> November. We have enlisted the support of Studioarc, who amongst other recent projects set up the Wild and Majestic exhibition in the National Museum of Scotland, to design and then build the new interior for the Museum. If we succeed, the challenge is that we must spend the money by 31 March 2021 but that, if it comes, would be a nice problem to have!



Concurrently work has not only started but, as I am sure those of you who have been following the Museum Facebook page are aware, has been progressing at a pace despite some fairly inclement weather ... . The plus point is to date there has not been a leak into the Museum, something that the previous roof would not have achieved and this one, although progressing well, still requires a further month's work! On the basis of the current weather it looks as though the Trustees decision to start the replacement earlier in the year was wise. From a financial perspective things are still looking tight, although courtesy of Valerie's hard work we have been the beneficiaries of two further loans, a Bounceback one from the Royal Bank of Scotland underwritten by the Scottish Government, interest free for a year and a very generous seven year interest free loan from Zero Waste Scotland. Once the next interim payment is made on 14 November, ... some £55,000.00 will be left in the bank account with expenditure on the roof project budgeted at some £45,000.00 leaving a little leeway for routine expenditure. ... we still anticipate that at some stage there will be a need to draw down on the very generous loan offered by the Association.

Sadly, no progress has been achieved to date on the installation of Electric Vehicle chargepoint. We will have to see what progress the end of the furlough scheme brings.

Other items of passing interest:

As part of the Badenoch Festival that has been taken place online, Mary Mackenzie was interviewed about her new book to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Newtonmore.

Valerie has been selling shop items on the Facebook page. So far facemasks, which have proved popular and USB Sticks but there is more to come!

I was interviewed both at Ruthven Barracks and the Museum for Great Rivers of the World – The Spey. It is being made by the same organisation that made Great Train Journeys of the World. They have assured me 3 minutes. It does not sound much but it took two days of recording. I have no idea what might come out!

### **Scotland Down Under** (2RRR 88.5FM)

Christine Southcombe advises that Robin MacKenzie is back presenting the renamed Scotland Down Under, on Tuesdays at 6-7:30PM on 2RRR 88.5FM. Tune in if you are in the broadcast area, listen via [2rrr@org.au](mailto:2rrr@org.au) or one of the TuneIn Apps. Christine now presents Breakfast on Wednesdays at 6-9AM

### **New members**

Annual: Nicole Macpherson (Booral NSW), (Ms) Cluny Seager (Chermside Qld)  
Young Adult: William McPherson (Wagga Wagga NSW)

### **First World War Service Records**

During 2019 I was privileged to be asked by Cluny to assist in the interpretation and transcription, by Shelagh Macpherson-Noble, of Cluny's father's WWI diaries. Then Captain, later Major Alan D Macpherson served as an artillery officer in the Indian Army, so, as a former artillery officer myself it was an interesting exercise to read the diaries from a professional viewpoint, as well as deciphering the many abbreviations and military jargon used in the diaries.

In trying to identify where Captain Macpherson's artillery battery was placed in the Order of Battle (ORBAT) of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) I searched the UK National Archives. Most family historians will be aware that many WWI UK service records were destroyed by fire as a result of German bombing raids during WWII. However, several records were unearthed by following the advice of the National Archives thus: '... *an estimated 2.8 million service records survived the bombing or were reconstructed from records of the Ministry of Pensions.* ...

*there is a 40% chance of finding the service record of a soldier ... discharged between 1914 and 1920.* Go to:

<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/research/military-records/british-soldiers-ww1-service-records.htm>

In addition to records pertaining to Cluny's father, another was found that described the service of Ewen George, 24<sup>th</sup> Chief. It recorded his continuing service in the British Army Royal Tank Corps after the Armistice, up to the 30<sup>th</sup> July 1921, just 9 days before he boarded the P&O SS Borda and returned to Australia.

### **Waltzing Matilda**

A book '*Grave Tales: Miss Macpherson Keeps Time*' is the subject of an interview that was broadcast on ABC Radio Nightlife between radio host **Philip Clark** with author Helen Goltz. In essence the interview revolves around *Christina Macpherson, a woman whose name many might not know, but whose life intersected with two of Australia's well known historical figures; Mad Dog Morgan and Banjo Paterson.*

Helen Goltz is one of the authors of the seven volume Grave Tales series, books written by journalists Helen Goltz and Chris Adams after visits to a selection of Melbourne cemeteries which unearthed some great tales.

The interview can be heard at:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/nightlife/history/12405420>

Details of the Grave Tales series are at:

<https://www.gravetales.com.au/melbourne/>

CMA member Alistair McArthur whose grandmother, Margaret Rutherford McArthur (nee Macpherson) is Christina Macpherson's sister, provided some interesting facts that dispel some of the Waltzing Matilda myths viz; Christina Rutherford Macpherson (born 18 June 1864; died 28 March 1936) arranged the music for Waltzing Matilda based on a 'catchy tune' she remembered hearing at the Warrnambool Races in western Victoria on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1894.

Later, Christina meets Andrew Barton 'Banjo' Paterson (born 17 February 1864, died 5 February 1941) (aged 30 or 31 years old) at Dagworth Station, about 130 kilometres north-west of Winton, western Queensland during 1895. Dagworth Station (100,000 acres) was owned and operated by the Macpherson for about 23 years (1883 to 1906). Waltzing Matilda is born when Banjo Paterson wrote the words to fit the "catchy tune" as remembered by Christina. The song is reputed to be first played in a public arena at the North Gregory Hotel at Winton in 1895 or 1896 (date unconfirmed). Winton (current population approximately 1,000) is located 180 kilometres north-

west of Longreach in central-west Queensland. Over 700 unique versions of Waltzing Matilda are reputed to exist. Waltzing Matilda has often been called “the unofficial national anthem of Australia”

NOT GOING AWAY!: It has been said, on many occasions, Waltzing Matilda is not going to go away!

More information on Christina can be found at:

<https://trishansoz.com/trishansoz/waltzing-matilda/christina-macpherson.html>

## **DNA**

Athol McDonald (Girgarre, Victoria), the administrator of the Macpherson DNA Project has prepared a comprehensive report for the next issue of Creag Dhubh (2021). While the project continues to develop slowly, membership now exceeds 450.

The primary focus remains the yDNA side of the project, continuing the initiative of the late Professor Alan G. Macpherson. The recently developed Big Y700 test is a great advance and much is now being revealed about how Clan Macpherson evolved.

As a general rule this surname project is open to males and females born with the surname Macpherson/McPherson, or fairly recent Macpherson ancestry. Please provide the project administrators with a brief description of your Macpherson ancestral connections with your request to join. There are exceptions to this rule and all enquiries are welcome regardless of your name. It is best to become a member of the Macpherson project before ordering a DNA test because group members receive a discount. The join link is listed below. Please copy and paste to your browser to order a kit at the discounted price.

<https://www.familytreedna.com/group-join.aspx?group=McPherson&code=H18973>

The first two paragraphs of Athol’s comprehensive report, which will appear in next year’s Creag Dhubh follow. Australian participants can get an early copy of the full report on request to [Australian.Chairman@clan-macpherson.com](mailto:Australian.Chairman@clan-macpherson.com).

## **The Genetic Evolution of a Highland Chief and His Clan**

When Alan G Macpherson presented his first report on the Macpherson DNA Project in the 2009 edition of Creag Dhubh there were about 35 project members. This number has now grown to over 500. Autosomal tests such as Family Finder and Ancestry have allowed many men and women not in the direct paternal line to join the project, but the main focus remains with *y chromosome* testing of Macpherson men. Each new test adds to our knowledge and we have certainly learnt that we are a diverse Clan, with many different origins. Not surprisingly the

largest group within the project consists of those Macpherson men who are connected (however remotely) to the Chiefly line. The emergence of Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) tests such as the Big Y has enabled the building a virtual tree of mankind, right back to the time that the first men left the African continent for Asia. More importantly the large number of Macpherson men who have undertaken the Big Y (or at least some form of NGS testing) has led to the identification of specific Macpherson branches on this tree. Sir William Macpherson of Cluny willingly agreed to participate in the Project and allowed the results to be made public; not all Clans have been so fortunate.

Generally, the *y chromosome* is passed intact from father to son, allowing the direct paternal line to be traced back for centuries. Mutations do occur occasionally and are passed on to the next generation allowing the identification of distinct family lines. The Big Y test scans the *y chromosome* at up to 700,000 set locations, searching for such mutations, these mutations are known as Single Nuclear Polymorphisms (SNPs). On average around 70,000 SNPs are identified that define that male's genetic signature. Unique yDNA variants are discovered that are specific to that person. Only others in the same direct paternal line will share a similar DNA signature, perhaps back 20 generations. The vast majority of male project members commence their DNA journey with a standard Y37 or Y111, more basic tests than the Big Y. These tests identify Short Tandem Repeats (STRs) on the *y chromosome*, which once again identify particular family lines. Unlike the Big Y the results are predictive rather than definitive, the Big Y includes a more comprehensive STR analysis at 700 locations.

### **A Monumental Feat at Laggan.**

The Strathspey and Badenoch Herald of 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020 describes work done on the Sarah Justina (Macpherson) monument located on the Laggan Road heading towards Cluny Castle.

The project was commissioned by Laggan Heritage, a group of enthusiasts with an interest in the culture and history of the parish. Committee member Valerie Macpherson explained that the group - celebrating its 20th anniversary, had undertaken a number of projects over the years. She said the monument was assessed, and with their own group funds raised through various events and the cooperation and support of the landowners Cluny Estate, additional funding was achieved.

The work was undertaken during April 2020 by stone mason Alistair Denovan. He followed a strict protocol and was able to work in isolation on site, under lock down, to take advantage of really good weather. The work was completed with the

repainting of the surrounding railings co-funded by the Clan Macpherson Association and Laggan Heritage and undertaken by local outdoor guides Josh Robinson and Laura Swanson who were unable to undertake their normal work during lockdown. Bill Macpherson, Chairman of the Clan Macpherson Association said the association was delighted to contribute to this work. Sarah Justina (nee Davidson) died in 1886 and is buried at the nearby Cluny graveyard in Laggan. She was the wife of Ewan Macpherson (Old Cluny) whose monument stands on Craig Buidhe, a few miles to the south west. Search [www.strathspey-herald.co.uk](http://www.strathspey-herald.co.uk) and <http://lagganheritage.com/index.html> for photos of the Cluny Private Cemetery.

(Source; Tom Ramage, Strathspey and Badenoch Herald dated 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020.)

### **Activities across the Country**

As at 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020 advice received from local organisers is as shown.

#### **Events cancelled in 2021**

- \* 1 January: Maryborough Highland Gathering, Maryborough, Vic
- \* 21 February: Richmond Highland Gathering, Tas
- \* 27 February: Scots Day Out, Bendigo, Vic
- \* 21 March: Highland Gathering, Geelong, Vic
- \* April: Australasian Pipe Band Championships, Maryborough, Vic

#### **Event planning proceeding for 2021**

- \* 6 March: Liverpool Plains Military Tattoo, Quirindi, NSW  
[www.liverpoolplainsmilitarytattoo.com.au](http://www.liverpoolplainsmilitarytattoo.com.au)
- \* **28 March: Ringwood Highland Gathering, Vic**  
[www.ringwoodhighlandgames.org.au](http://www.ringwoodhighlandgames.org.au)
- \* 2-3 April (Easter): Maclean Highland Gathering, Maclean, NSW  
[www.macleanhIGHLANDGATHERING.com.au](http://www.macleanhIGHLANDGATHERING.com.au)
- \* **17 April: Bundanoon Highland Gathering, Bundanoon, NSW**  
[www.brigadoon.org.au](http://www.brigadoon.org.au)
- \* 29 April-2 May: Australian Celtic Festival (Ireland & Isle of Man), Glen Innes, NSW  
<https://www.australiancelticfestival.com/about/>
- \* **28/29 May: Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival, Wingham, NSW**  
<http://bonnie-ingham-scottish-festival.manninghistorical.org/>
- \* 4 December: Daylesford Highland Gathering, Daylesford Vic  
<https://daylesfordhighland.com/>

Red/**BOLD** type indicates a Clan Macpherson presence is planned.

## *Have a Laugh!!!*

Listen/read a COVID 19 adaptation of Robbie Burns' 'To a Mouse', a witty poem about the Corona Virus by Scottish actor Denis Lawson on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utiUtY5AIHE>

### **'Tae a virus' written by Willie Sinclair**

"Twa months ago, we didna ken,  
yer name or ocht aboot ye,  
But lots of things have changed since then,  
I really must salute ye.

"Yer spreading rate is quite intense,  
yer feeding like a gannet,  
Disruption caused, is so immense,  
ye've shaken oor wee planet.

"Corona used tae be a beer,  
they garnished it wae limes,  
But noo it's filled us awe wae fear,  
These days, are scary times.

"Nae shakin hawns, or peckin lips,  
it's whit they awe advise,  
But scrub them weel, richt tae the tips,  
that's how we'll awe survive.

"Just stay inside, the hoose, ye bide,  
Nae sneakin oot for strolls,  
Just check the lavvy every hoor,  
And stock-take, your, loo rolls.

"Our holidays have been pit aff,  
Noo that's the Jet2 patter,

Pit oan yer thermals, have a laugh,  
And paddle 'doon the waater'.

"Canary isles, no for a while,  
Nae need for suntan cream,  
And awe because o this wee bug,  
We ken tae be... 19.

"The boredom surely will set in,  
But have a read, or doodle,  
Or plan yer menu for the month,  
Wi 95 pot noodles.

“When these run oot, just look aboot,  
 A change, it would be nice,  
 We’ve beans and pasta By the ton,  
 and twenty stane o rice.

“So dinny think yell wipe us oot,  
 Aye true, a few have died,  
 Bubonic, bird flu, and Tb,  
 They came, they left, they tried.

“Ye might be gallus noo ma freen,  
 As ye jump fae cup tae cup,  
 But when we get oor vaccine made,  
 Yer number will be up.

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## The Posterity of The Three Brethren (by Professor Alan G. Macpherson)

First published in 1966 'The Posterity ...' might be regarded as the definitive short history of the Clan Macpherson. The authors were the late Professor Alan G. Macpherson who until his death was the Clan genealogist (Seanachaidh). He was ably assisted by the late A. Fraser Macpherson who was one of the early office bearers of the Clan Macpherson Association (CMA) while the third was the eminent Canadian heraldic authority, R. Gordon M. Macpherson who was International Chairman of the CMA Association from 1991 to 1994. The most recent (5th Edition) was published in 2004. Given that a large number of members of more recent years might not have had access to 'The Posterity ...' there follow some excerpts from the 2004 (5<sup>th</sup>) edition.

### The Name

The name Macpherson - or MacPherson or McPherson, according to the spelling preferred by individual families - comes from the Gaelic *Mac a' Phearsain* and means literally 'Son of the Parson'. In the case of all families related to the Clan Macpherson or Clanpherson of Badenoch and the Castlelands of Inverness in the Scottish Highlands the name refers to a specific individual who was their common ancestor. His own name and the precise nature of his office, however, are matters of controversy. The Clan Macpherson of Badenoch was also known among other Highlanders as the Clan Vurich, (or in Gaelic *Clan Mhuirich*), that is 'The Children of *Muireach*', a name which is usually rendered as Muriach, Murdo, or Murdoch, and is sometimes given the English equivalent of Maurice. There is no evidence, however, that the names MacVurich, MacMurdo or MacMurdoch were ever used as general surnames by the clan, although individual families who moved to other parts of the Highlands may well have adopted these names. The Clan Macpherson also identified itself with the Old Clanchattan or Clann Ghillechatain, and claimed to be 'The Children of Gillichattan'; the name itself is simply a 'saints name' ('the servant lad of [St] Catan') typical of a naming tradition once prevalent in the *Gaeltachd* of both Ireland and Scotland. The names Muriach and Gillichattan are common to the two versions of the origin of the Clan Macpherson, and are probably authentic, although neither appears in contemporary record as the names of historical personages.

### The Clan Plant Badge

It is usually stated that the *suaicheantas* or plant worn on the bonnet to identify the clansman in battle was white Heather, boxwood or whortleberry. An entry in the household book of Nuide for 1687, however, indicates that the preparations for a Badenoch weaponshaw at the time involved something colourfully different: *Item, to Donald bain, for gadding and great creel of Birros-flowers, against the swerd-play, in Loch of Uvay, a mutchkin of whisky, being sair wetted and filed.* As Lochan Uvay lies below Creag Dhubh, the mountain in the centre of Badenoch

which gave the clan its battle slogan, the ‘sword-play’ probably took place on the same spot where the fugitive chief, Ewan og of Cluny is reputed to have watched his clansman playing shinty from his hiding place on the face of Creag Dhubh. The Bioras or Bior-ros is the Water-rose or Water-lily, which grows in the lochan in profusion.

Donald ban's ‘great creel of Birros-flowers’, however, may have had a purpose other than indicating clan affiliation- hardly necessary in the circumstances. Perhaps they were a substitute for the classical laurel with which visitors in mock combat were adorned; or they may have been deemed to have medicinal properties for staunching minor nicks and cuts in ‘the sword-play’.

### Threats of Eviction and Extermination

The Clan was faced a number of times with the threat of mass eviction from its lands. There is some evidence that the Earl of Huntly had thoughts of this when he recovered his estates from Argyle after the Restoration of 1660. About 1682 there were negotiations with the Marquis of Athole that might have resulted in the entire clan moving to the Baronies of Comrie and Glenlyon in Perthshire, but again nothing came of it. A more serious crisis occurred in 1723 when, as a result of a foolish attempt on the life of John Gordon of Glenbucket, Chamberlain of Badenoch, the Duke of Gordon threatened to march a private army into Badenoch and try to drive out the Macphersons by force. The exiled King James, the Old Pretender intervened on behalf of the clan, but not before negotiations were opened with Macintosh for the acquisition of Glen Roy and Glen Spean; in in 1724 these negotiations, which involved the question of the chiefship of the Clanchattan, ended with the transfer of the estate of Lochlaggan to Clunie. Actual extermination was advocated in 1755 by no less a person than James Wolfe; the conqueror of Canada, in the following terms: ‘Mr. Macpherson should have a couple of hundred men in his neighbourhood with orders to massacre the whole clan if they show the least symptom of rebellion; they are a warlike tribe and he is a cunning fellow himself. They should be narrowly watched ... They are a people better governed by fear than favour.’

### **Australian Branch Membership Rates (Due 1<sup>st</sup> January each year)**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Aust fee</b>
Junior	\$15 (one off)
Young Adult	\$22.50 (per annum)
Annual	\$45
10 year Term	\$450
Life	\$1400