Greetings to you all. It has been quite a busy few weeks with Clan Association Chairman Shelagh and her husband Alastair visiting New Zealand and meeting up with quite a number of our members.

All the plans and arrangements have pretty much gone to plan for them. The only drawback has been the weather and that is something no-one can predict or do anything about. But with their friendly attitude, that has not phased them at all so hopefully they have enjoyed their time with us and the many photos taken will remind them of their far away Branch of the Clan Macpherson.

On behalf of our Committee many thanks to those of you who met, hosted or entertained our visitors in any way. With Shelagh’s permission I am attaching the reports she has completed so far, pretty much the South Island leg of their travels and I will send any further reports as they arrive.

Your copy of Creag Dhubh should arrive in the next few days; there is always some interesting information in this. We are welcoming four new members this year, Cluny McPherson from Warkworth, Martin McPherson from Kerikeri, Ellyn Macpherson from Otorohanga and Alan Dudfield from Orepuki (Southland, for those who don’t know where that is !!) Great to have you join us.

It has also been nice to hear from some of you and it would be really great if any of you would like to provide an item for the newsletter anytime. I have only been an interested member in more recent times, but many of you go back a number of years. Please feel free to contribute anytime.

Regards for now and I hope you enjoy Shelagh’s reports.

Lesley

From left
Tim McPherson,
Shelagh Macpherson Noble,
Lesley Gray and
Alistair Noble at the end of the road signpost, at Bluff.
Chairman’s Report January 2012.

A belated Happy New Year to everyone and greetings from the South Island of New Zealand. Let us hope 2012 proves to be a successful year for the Clan Macpherson Association and the Museum which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

During the winter in the northern hemisphere, CMA activities quieten down, although individual branches hold their own events, but it is summer down under and Alastair and I are enjoying typical Macpherson hospitality from our New Zealand cousins.

We have travelled extensively over the last 3 years, visiting with and meeting Macphersons in Canada, the USA, Australia and the UK. Wherever we have been, Macpherson hospitality and generosity has been tremendous and now we are in New Zealand we find it is no different here. We have been overwhelmed by the warm welcome we have received and the kindness shown to us.

Dividing our 6 weeks between the north and south islands gives us the opportunity to meet with old and new members (3 new members since we arrived). On our arrival in Christchurch we were met by Tony McPherson who showed us the devastation caused by the earthquake last year and the 9000 aftershocks in the last 500 days. It is sad to see the destruction of such a beautiful city. Tony and his partner Linda took us to dinner in one of the few remaining restaurants in the centre of Christchurch. In Timaru we were greeted by Malcolm & Marg Macpherson who showed us round their area and hosted us in their home for dinner. We had 3 busy days in Invercargill with our Macpherson cousins, and a huge thank you must go to Lesley Gray, the NZ branch secretary, who organised the whole event and entertained us to dinner. Lesley and her husband Colin also acted as chauffeurs for most of the events.

It was good to get to know our NZ branch chairman Tim, who invited us to his dairy farm and allowed me to milk Lisa, one of his 400 docile cows. Tim’s wife Carol kindly provided me with a pair of Tim’s overalls and a huge pair of wellie boots!

We also visited Jeanie & Peter Levett’s sheep farm, where they entertained Alastair, me and 9 of their family to lunch. Despite heavy rain (which they were delighted to have due to recent drought conditions), Peter drove us over his property and showed us his deer enclosures.

We still have two more Macpherson visits in the south island and 3 more confirmed in the north island which we are looking forward to.

The New Zealand branch was formed in 1947, the same year as the Association was born and although small in numbers compared to other branches, the membership is as enthusiastic now as it was then. The members comprise family groups and our first group event in Invercargill included entertainment exclusively from the children, a truly encouraging sight, giving hope for the future of our Association. We enjoyed Scottish dancing and music from fiddles, cello and of course, the pipes. The CMA is very lucky to have so much young talent.

The economy of Southland, as this area is called, is dependent on agriculture and nearly all our members are involved directly or indirectly with farming. As you would expect, there are sheep and dairy farms; however in the last few years deer farming has also been developed. I was surprised to learn that 97% of New Zealand dairy products are exported and most of the venison is purchased by Germany.

The Macpherson warmth and friendliness that Alastair and I have experienced in our overseas visits to CMA branches, extends to the New Zealand branch too and we have enjoyed tremendous hospitality. When we leave New Zealand, we continue round the world, visiting and staying with US branch members, Mary Jane McBarnet in Maui in the Hawaiian Islands and Jean & Gordon Duffy in California.

Lunch at Colac Bay Pavilion, with Southland Members of the Clan Macpherson Association New Zealand
Macphersons in the Tasman Area

On Saturday 4th February we met up with Catriona & Chris Ward and family – also Zandra Glentruim who is here for six weeks.

We were lucky with the weather for once. It had been hot and sunny in the morning, but cooled down just enough for our BBQ on Rabbit Island. Catriona had given us instructions for our rendezvous and we were to meet her to the left of the bridge over to the island. We seem to do this quite a lot on our travels – we regularly meet people on bridges!

Chris was head chef and produced the most marvellous steaks, with all the accompaniments. New Zealand caters well for family BBQs with little individual sheltered areas where you can park your car beside where you are. The BBQ itself looks decidedly odd – a metal box with a flat top and a metal chimney. There is plenty of wood lying around and the fire is lit inside the box and the steaks, etc go on top.

Three of Catriona’s children were there, Rachel, Jamie and Douglas. Douglas has been with the family for two years and they are finally going through custody hearings, so he can be made a permanent member of the family. Connor remained at home. He has recently become a teenager and plays in a band. He claimed a headache as his reason for staying at home, although he did ask for a steak to be brought back for him!!

Catriona & Chris are thriving out here and look really well. Nelson, where they live, is built on an earthquake fault, so they have sold their house there and are moving inland in March. Everyone here talks about a forthcoming, huge earthquake which is long overdue.

Catriona says she is planning to visit Scotland at some stage this year, depending on school holidays and children’s exams, etc. Once again, the Macphersons did us proud and it was great to catch up with the Ward family.

Sunday 5th February and we are just back from visiting with Netta & Phil Walters, with even more superb Macpherson hospitality. Netta’s grandfather was John Thomas Macpherson who became a Labour MP for Preston in 1908 and he is featured in a book entitled Men who made Labour by Alan Haworth and Dianne Hayter. The family originated from Perthshire; however moved first to Kirkcaldy, then Dunfermline, then the Isle of Dogs where John Thomas was born. Netta was born in Nottingham and went to a Quaker Boarding School. She met Phil Walters who was a wood machinist and they married. About 5 years later, and on Christmas Day, they announced to their parents they were emigrating to New Zealand. They have lived here for over 40 years and have one son, who works in Christchurch and a daughter who lives in Milton Keynes in the UK.

For twenty years, Phil worked for a carpentry business, but when it changed hands, he decided to start his own business, making aluminium windows, doors and conservatories. Netta joined him in the business and when they retired, they closed the business, but still lease out the building.

They live in the main apple growing area in the south island, on Research Orchard Road, near Richmond. As you can tell from the address, the region was covered with orchards and there are still huge estates filled with apple trees. In addition to the apples there are lots of wineries.

After a lot of blethering, they entertained us to lunch at one of the wineries, after which they took us on a driving tour of Richmond and Nelson, finishing up back at their house.

They are a lovely couple who made us very welcome. They are coming to the UK in June/July and will be passing through Edinburgh en route to visit friends in Wick, so I have invited them to dinner in Haddington, so we can repay some of their hospitality.

Thought for Ewen (I think I mentioned this before, so apologies if I have): I will probably have enough material when I come back to create a small exhibition of the New Zealand Macphersons. I think Netta did send an article on John Thomas to Creag Dhubh a few years ago, and she could send a photo of him. Also the 1956 CD was a Southland issue which has a lot of info on it. It would be nice for Tim to see it when he is over in the summer. Alastair has taken photos of everyone we have met so far.

(The next message I have just received so well timed to add to this newsletter.)
From the far North, 19th February

We have had another two days of Macpherson visits and once again, we have been given a wonderful time.

Yesterday morning, before we left Auckland, we had breakfast with Robyn Gray, Lesley, our NZ branch secretary’s daughter. Robyn is a solicitor in Auckland and is a busy wife and mother, so breakfast was the only option and she is a lovely person. Although we had little time together, it was great to meet her.

After breakfast, we packed up and headed for Warkworth, where we were invited to lunch with Cluny & Sisi Macpherson. Cluny is a first cousin of Jeanie Levett’s and his father was the only one of the family who left the south island for the north and worked as a journalist for an agricultural publication. Sisi is a lovely Samoan lady and there are also Maori connections in the family. Cluny and Sisi have a son who has just been appointed as the NZ Ambassador to Turkey, with responsibilities for some other Middle East countries, and he lives in the Embassy in Ankara. (I would say an excellent candidate for Ewen’s wall of 21st century Macphersons in the Museum).

Cluny worked in Auckland University and when he semi-retired, took a job in a local university where he works for one complete term a year. Once or twice each year he & Sisi are invited to join a cruise ship, where he gives lectures to the passengers on the places they will visit when they go on-shore. As well as owning some Maori land in NZ (through their Maori heritage), they own family land in Samoa which they visit once a year. They are a very gracious couple. For several years they have been researching their Maori and Samoan roots and have recently become interested in their Macpherson background, hence the reason Cluny is our most recent member. He and his brother intend coming to the 2013 gathering in Badenoch.

Cluny had invited his brother Martin and wife Joan, who live in Kerikeri, to join us for lunch and they are another super couple. Martin (known as Jock) spent his career in the police force in Darwin, Australia and as he said himself, if you are willing to work and live in the tropics in Oz, they reward you well, so he retired at 52 and bought a property in Adelaide. After 4 years, they decided to return to NZ and now live in Kerikeri, a small town in the Bay of Islands.

We left Warkworth and had a 4 hour drive north (in torrential rain) to our next stop in Ahipara. Alastair and I understood there were no Macpherson events here and prepared ourselves for a lazy, relaxed 5 days with sun, sea and sand; however, as they say, the best laid plans, etc . . . . .

To cut a long story short, we discovered that 14 Macphersons were waiting to welcome us to lunch a few miles along the coast, so we were collected at 11am this morning and were whisked away to join the family who had gathered to greet us. This is another great family who, through the generations have lived and worked in the north of the north island, mainly in dairy farming.

So there you have it. Only one more Macpherson event to go in NZ – lunch with Neil & Valda Macpherson in Tikipunga.

I have photographs of them all and will no doubt bore you all with them when we get home.

I can’t say this often enough. We have a great Association and the world wide network we have gives us connections wherever we go.

Best Wishes
Shelagh

(No doubt there will be another report and photos, from our visitors when their trip is over, but again many thanks for those who have helped in any way to make their time in our Country so enjoyable. Cheers Lesley)