

Clan Donald Queensland, Annual Dinner

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed a pleasure to be here amongst you tonight.

I bring to you greetings from the Captain of Clanranald, Sir Ian Macdonald of Sleat and Glengarry.

Firstly **Ranald Captain of Clanranald.**

To all of my friends and fellow Clans men and women in Queensland I send you all my love and best wishes and hope that you all enjoy a splendid evening.

TO Cameron and Malcolm, jolly good show and please keep up the good work.

Glengarry

Please pass on my best wishes and congratulations on the organising committee. To all of the assembled I hope you have an enjoyable evening.

Sir Ian Macdonald of Sleat.

Allan, please pass on my sincere best wishes to all who are attending the annual dinner. At the end of this year I complete three years of service with the Red Cross, working with 37,000 volunteers. Once this is out of the way I look forward to one day being able to visit with all of our kinsmen and women in Queensland, and maybe even attend a future annual dinner. Love to all, Ian.

Personally I would like to thank **Cameron** for his kind invitation to come and be with you all this evening. I believe Cameron is doing a great job and we all think very highly of him.

Secondly I would like to thank **Malcolm** a great friend of ours for his many years of sterling service on behalf of Clan Donald in Queensland and Australia. Malcolm has been a tireless worker for the cause and this was recently recognised with his appointment to the Finlaggan Council, but more on that later.

Of Grahame Macdonald, of Buderim, and the Kinlochmoidart family, is especially dear to me. Without Grahame's superb historical and genealogical skills, perhaps I wouldn't be here today. Grahame traced our family from Scotland to Australia and thence onto New Zealand, and made us aware of our heritage and then helped me to matriculate for my Arms in Scotland. Grahame was also instrumental in getting

Clan Donald in Australia on the map. He has been a fantastic ambassador for Australia and Clan Donald and is a living treasure!

Well if I could start with the following

There are three classes of people in the world.

The Blessed, the Chosen and the Privileged.

The Blessed are those of us who are born of Clan Donald.

The Chosen are those that we pick to be our mates and partners.

And the Privileged are the rest that we allow to associate with us

Despite where we all reside now, we are all linked by blood and or history. There are estimated to be between 3 and 4 million people carrying the name McDonald or MacDonald internationally. Add to that the septs, and we have very a large international family.

Legend and Myth have long drawn on our Celtic origins reaching all the way back to Sumeria in modern day Iraq. This group of people moved along the Northern Shores of the Mediterranean becoming known as fierce warriors and eventually made it to Britain and Ireland. Some continued their migration North, to a land they called Alba where they fought and mixed with the resident Pictish peoples.

Later Tribes from the Southern Ural regions of Russia between Kazakhstan and Siberia domesticated the Horse and began their own Westward migration across Northern Europe and eventually settled in the Nordic Countries. From here their later descendants known as Vikings began raiding and plundering the lands of what had now become known as Ireland and Scotland.

From these peoples our Clan emerged, essentially in the personage of a great leader known as **Somerled** who lived from 1100 to 1164.

Legend has it as a young man he was approached by the MacInnes and MacGillivray Clans who were being harried by Olaf the Red's Norsemen. Because of his connections to the Great Clan Colla and Conn, it was Somerled's right and duty to take up the leadership and restore the fortunes of the Gaels in their homelands

Somerled was a very keen hunter and fisherman and when approached by the desperate Clansmen he had been trying to catch a Salmon in a pool for a few days. Eventually he agreed that if he caught the Salmon that day he would take up the challenge and lead the men into battle against the rampaging Norsemen.

As history would have it, he caught the **Salmon** and kept his promise and saw off the Vikings and eventually came to control virtually the entire West Coast of

Scotland. The Salmon to this day is represented on the Coats of Arms of most Clan Donald Chiefs.

Somerled had three sons, Dugall of whom come the MacDougalls, Reginald from whom his son **Donald of Islay, gave our Clan its name** and a third son Angus. For the next 400 odd years the Clan Donald was the pre-eminent force in the Highlands and West Coast of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

From around the late 1400's when the crown took the Lordship of the Isles from a too powerful Clan Donald, the separate Clans making up the greater Clan Donald began to emerge, ie the **MacAllisters, MacIains of Ardamurchan, MacDonnell's of Antrim, Macdonalds of Clanranald, MacDonnell's of Glengarry, MacDonald's of Sleat, the MacIains of Glencoe, MacDonald's of Keppoch.**

The next major change was occurred as a result of the **Battle of Culloden** and the eventual demise of the Clan system. From 1745 onward the great migrations from Scotland began to accelerate. The Chiefs eldest sons were taken away and educated in England to break their link to their kinsmen and clansmen. The wearing of the Kilt was banned, as was the playing of bagpipes, etc. This was the start and the eventual cause of the dislocation of the Clans people and their chiefs.

Famine, Religious persecution and a broken support system for many of the Highland Families caused Clansmen and women to flea to the promise of a better life in America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Eventually the infamous land clearances of the 1800's pushed off the last of the hardy people eking out a living in the Glens and on the Coast and in the Peat Bogs.

Essentially Highland culture and History takes a rapid decline during the mid 1800's as literally millions of Scots relocated around the globe.

The first signs of a rebuilding of the Clan Donald emerged in 1891 when the Clan Donald Society of Edinburgh was formed and later the annual Glencoe wreath laying Commemoration in February each year. Following on from this was the formation of Several Clan Societies, most notably the USA, then came the formation of the Clan Donald Lands Trust, the High Council of Chiefs, and the commemorations for the Battle of Culloden.

More recently we have seen the Clanranald Galley 'Aileach' constructed and the formation of the Finlaggan Council, Now rapid advances are being made in DNA technologies and the Clan is at that forefront of developments in this area as well.

The **Massacre of Glencoe** occurred early in the morning on **February 13, 1692.**

78 Macdonalds from Glencoe were killed by their military guests who had accepted their hospitality - others died of exposure following the attack, on the grounds that the MacDonalDs had not been prompt in pledging allegiance to the new king, William of Orange.

Memory of this massacre has been kept alive by continued ill feeling between MacDonalDs and Campbells — since the late 20th century the Inn at Glencoe popular with climbers, has had a sign on its door saying "No Hawkers or Campbells".

In fact this was a Government conspiracy sanctioned by the then King William and twisted to look like a Clan reprisal and murder under trust, a most heinous crime!

At the top end of the village beyond the Bridge of Coe on a hillock on the south side of the river there stands a unique slender tall Celtic Cross erected in August 1883 in memory of Maclain and his people who were slaughtered on that fateful February. **The wreath-laying ceremony was often carried out at the precise hour of the Massacre, 5 a.m. on 13th February and has continued annually ever since.**

Clan Donald Lands Trust was formed in **1971** to purchase the last remaining area of the once vast Clan Donald lands, as the present Lord MacDonalD on receiving notice of death duties due, following the passing of his father, simply could not afford the cost and had to sell the hereditary lands.

The then patriarch of the clan, Donald J. MacdonalD of Castleton, put forward the idea that Lord MacdonalD's lands in Sleat on the Isle of Skye should be saved for Clan Donald. Fortunately two US and one Canadian gentlemen stepped forward and provided the funds to buy one half of the estate, which is the present 20,000 acre Lands Trust Estate.

The trust has since developed under the leadership of Ellice McDonald Jnr , who has been noted for his hard work and foresight ensuring the future the Clan Donald Centre on Skye.

The position of international director was first filled in **1979 by Robert MacDonalD Parker, RobMac** as he is affectionately known held this position until he retired in 1999, during which time he was the creator of much that we are so proud of today.

He oversaw the restoration of the Stables, the development of the Museum, Study Centre, and Library, along with the establishment of self-catering cottages, and the re-establishment of the gardens. This development was recognised by receipt of no less than 23 major awards.

When Marsaili Cunningham, the Glengarry inheritor, gave priceless relics and approx. £800,000 to the Trust, on the condition that the relics were appropriately housed. It was decided that that an entirely new museum would be built. Peter MacDonald was offered the job of Resident Director and oversaw this 3 million pound project.

Our Clan centre is now the envy of all the other Highland Clans, and still much indebted to Ellice and his wife Rosa's continued involvement, being generously funded by the Glencoe Foundation Inc. of USA, a Trust set up and funded by Ellice and Rosa MacDonald, to the tune of **\$600,000 every year.**

Ellice has recently handed over Chairmanship of the Clan Donald Lands Trust to Angus Macdonald, headmaster of Lomond School of Hellensburgh, Scotland. Doctor David McFadyen has been appointed Chair of the executive committee.

We have unfortunately learnt of the recent passing of one of the Clan Donald Land Trusts founders **Mr AWR MacDonald of Sydney**, Australia who left a bequest to the trust of some **1.2 million pounds**, which is to be invested and the income is to be used to develop various cultural and musical activities associated with the Clan Donald internationally. Mr MacDonald was an artist and Art curator.

Our Clan Centre at Armadale, is a 'must visit,' worthy of the journey, and is one of the most remarkable achievements of any Clan during the 20th century revival.

The new Museum's is simply outstanding, and the research area and library are unparalleled for the information they contain on MacDonald families all of the world and historical events involving MacDonald's. There are conference facilities and a very nice restaurant and also accommodation to cater for travellers.

The estate offers magnificent scenery, and it is presently involved in the first large-scale reforestation project on the Isle. **250 acres have been fenced off from the red Deer and thousands of Alder, Ash, Oak, Scottish Pine, have been planted.** The trust is hoping to continue this project to provide a wildlife corridor right across the Sleat Peninsula.

I would urge you to become members of the lands Trust, and to check out their website.

BATTLE OF CULLODEN COMMEMORATIONS

Late in 1995 Ian MacDonell of Lochgarry, spoke to Lois MacDonell of Glengarry and advised that he was coming to Scotland for the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Culloden.

The then Glengarry, realised that many Clan Donald members world-wide were likely to want to mark this important anniversary and he put forward the idea of a lunch

The tradition was then established that, after the Gaelic Society of Inverness' Main Cairn ceremony, on **16th April each year**, a Clan Donald contingent gathers behind its piper and the chiefs' banners and marches round the Battlefield, pausing to lay wreaths on the various Clan Donald markers and stones.

The organising continues to be done by Lois MacDonell of Glengarry, with Glengarry family members and the Chief of Clanranald being regular attendees.

Malcolm has laid a wreath at the MacDonald Markers

The High Council of Chiefs

High Council Mission Statement is “ **To provide leadership and guidance, through communication to bring Unity to Clan Donald** ”.

The Present Chiefs have always been comfortable with one another, and anxious to uphold their duties to their clan's folk. Their earliest endeavour was to set up the High Council of the Chiefs of Clan Donald in 1971.

After his retirement, from the CDLT in 1999, Rob Mac, challenged the High Council of Clan Donald Chiefs to assume their rightful role as leaders of the Clan. Clanranald who was present at the lunch took up the challenge and in June 2000 he organized a gathering of senior clans folk at our original seat of power, Finlaggan on Islay.

From this meeting many decisions were made which have dictated the Clan's Initiatives of late; these include having an Annual gathering Tour, and most importantly to have an annual Forum.

High Council annual gathering and Tour

Chief's Hosted Gatherings and Tours were established each year at a Clan Donald area of ancient importance, **always held over the second full weekend of June**

In 2006 it was held on Skye and South Uist.

The next Future Planned Tour is:-

2007 Kintyre and Islay, with a special visit to Skye Clan Centre celebrations.

These gatherings give the opportunity for any one who cares to attend to get to know the Chiefs, and senior officers, and is the opportunity for the Chiefs to hold their annual Clan Donald Forum,

Among many social events we have a formal ceremony to honour a situation or person of importance, and a formal highland dinner followed by music and dancing.

Forum

At the Chiefs annual Clan Donald Forum, Clan matters are openly discussed, ideas exchanged and information imparted and reports received from High Commissioners.

The views expressed and the consensuses agreed are minuted, and form the current understanding of the way forward for Clan Donald.

Chief's visits

The Chiefs have individually made a considerable impact on the Clan by visiting all the countries with Clan Donald Societies, including U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand and Australia, Northern Ireland and Scotland. These much looked forward to visits lead to close social involvement for our overseas clans folk.

High Commissioners

The Chiefs are now collectively represented by their High Commissioner in each major English-speaking nation, who serves at the Chiefs pleasure. The High Commissioners are the senior Clan Donald person in their country and should be given the respect that a Chief would command.

Herald

In order to bring some order to protocol, and help in heraldic matters, Lyon Court acknowledged Clan Donald's right to have their own Pursuivant. The Clan was pleased when the Honourable Adam Bruce W.S. accepted to serve in this post, and was installed on June 11th 2005. Indeed Adam is heavily involved in the present petition to the Lord Lyon by Colin MacDonald of Christchurch for the Arms of MacLain of Glencoe.

Chamberlain

One of the first appointments made was that of Chamberlain, and Robmac has carried out these duties since his departure from the CDLT, and is one of main reasons for the Clan Donald's current success. The Chamberlain is the channel through whom the Chiefs should be formally approached.

Web Master

All organisations these days have to have a web site to keep all and sundry informed, this is in place with Ronald van Groen who incorporated the first Chiefs web site.

This site is intended to give news of the Chiefs and their doings, and to inform as to the Clan's World wide structure, which in turn points people who wish to support their Clan, as to which is the appropriate society that they should join. Not surprisingly each Society have their own sites, together with the Clan Donald Lands Trust site and other organisations. It is appropriate that we have a web 'forum', which is under construction by Roddy Macdonald of the Clan Donald Society of Edinburgh and I recommend this site to all clansfolk.

The Council of Finlaggan

Finlaggan (located on the Island of Islay) is where the installation of the Lords of the Isles originally took place and where the Lords of the Isles ruled the greater part of the West of Scotland, independent of Royal control. From here land charters were issued, laws set and judgements made.

The constitution of the ancient government of the Isles was, **reporting to Macdonald, were 4 Thanes, 4 Armin's (lords or sub-thanes), 4 bastards (ie squires, or men of competent estates, or factory.** (I am not sure which of these classes Malcolm and I fit into, but I would assume that since New Zealand won the rugby this year, it is quite probable that I would be considered a bastard)

The formation of the **new Council of Finlaggan, on the lines of the ancient 16 member Council that last met in 1493, was reinstated on 11th June 2004** as it become apparent that there is a great deal of work needed to implement projects brought forward at Clan Donald Forums. The present day Finlaggan Council has 16 chairs, each to be appointed by the High Council of Clan Donald Chiefs. All appointments must have unanimous approval.

Major Bruce Macdonald has taken on the post of Toiseach or leader.

The Clan's needs are now global and not focussed on a single nation or society, and need to be coordinated to bring about results. Guidance for these activities

will come from the Chiefs, cognisant of the views and concerns expressed during the annual Forum.

The members of the Council are to provide advice to the High Council on issues referred to them by the High Council, and may bring forward to the High Council unsolicited advice on issues of concern or interest.

DNA

Because the Clan Donald genealogy is so strong we are an ideal group of people to test because known rates of genetic mutation can be mapped and eventually family groupings can be established. The hope is in the future that we will be able to identify which part of the clan you may belong to and possibly from which region to help target further genealogical study.

If you wish to know more on this, please read **Bruce Sykes books, "The Seven daughters of Eve, which traces the female mitochondrial DNA back to seven women in ancient Europe and Africa. His last book Adam's Curse is all about the Y DNA. Chapter 16 of Adam's Curse is all about the descendents of Somerled. Y DNA is known to mutate every 20 to 26 generations, and is handed down from father to son.** Sykes found close links between the MacDougall's and the Macalister's, who we know are descended from Somerled and the Macdonalds. Sykes managed to get the five chiefs of MacDonald to agree to undertake the YDNA test. All of the Chiefs showed the signature of Somerled, which proved that at least the MacDonald women were faithful!!

Sykes is just releasing a new book called the Blood of the Isles, which should be interesting as well.

In my own case I am closely related to 3 of the chiefs and my DNA tests confirmed this. I would recommend to all of you interested in genealogy and or genetics or trying to find your family beyond your grandparents look at participating in this research, as it is fascinating. To date the Chiefly line has been confirmed to be Nordic in origin. Furthermore our DNA shows signature shows R1a1, which traces back to the Southern Ural region of Russia and is believed to be from tribes that originally domesticated the Horse?? Around 3000 BC.

Interestingly, many MacDonald's are also indicating R1b1, which is Irish the celtic lineage and much contemporary research is being undertaken by scholars reviewing archaeology discoveries and the Gaelic records of Scotland as opposed to the Irish

The Celtic Galley Aileach

During 1990, Clanranald initiated the Lord of the Isles Galley Trust, a charitable trust set up to promote knowledge of the maritime history of the Celtic Revival period in Scotland, to commission the building of the Aileach, which was the first replica of a Hebridean *birlinn* (or West Highland Galley) ever built.

Aileach was built in **1991** at the MacDonald boatyard in Donegal, Ireland, where the MacDonald Brothers have been building wooden boats since their ancestors fled Scotland in 1745.

She is forty feet long, clinker built. She has sixteen oars and one square sail. Aileach is a light boat, which can negotiate shallow channels and be hauled up beaches out of the reach of weather.

The undecked galley was the vessel, which enabled Somerled, the founder of Clan Donald, to break the power of the Norsemen in the twelfth century. They formed the sole means of communication for the next 400 years in the kingdom created by Somerled. Their domain spanned 25,000 square miles and 500 islands.

The Aileach will be at the Homecoming to be celebrated at Armadale on June 8th and 9th 2007. Get in contact with the Clan Donald Lands Trust to be there and see the Aileach for yourself.

Societies

You are all aware of the Clan Donald Societies. They are scattered all over the world, all have a President and a working committee. Some are growing; some are in decline, depending on many different elements. Being essentially volunteer organizations we are very reliant on the passionate few prepared to put in long hours of unpaid work, solely for the pleasure of fellow Clan members. IF there is a good crew in control the Societies appear to flourish. It is important for each and every one of you to please spread the word and when and where ever possible get involved.

Lee and I have made a great many friends because of our involvement in Clan Donald internationally. There isn't a day go by when I don't have an email from at least 5 to 10 different people from all over the globe in relation to Clan Donald. We have visited and stayed with many Clan Donald people and have had the pleasure of helping many young Clan Donald people from the UK and USA on their OE holiday down under.

Finally the Clan Donald is putting together a framework within which we hope to develop a coordinated international body, to foster fellowship, friendship, education, the preservation of our history, cultural identity and music / language. There is plenty of scope for you to become involved and make genuine life long friendships, have a great time and to have the odd dram of Whisky.

However at the end of the day, I would like to plagiarise some famous words.

**“It is not what your clan can do for you,
it is what you can do for your Clan that counts.
And if you don’t enjoy yourself,
you only have yourself to blame,
‘for there is no joy without Clan Donald’.”**