



Clan Munro Australia

Newsletter of the Clan Munro (Association) Australia

AUSTRALIA

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Blether

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President

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First thing to do this month is to thank our webmaster, Ken Betjeman, for his work over the past nine years.

When I took on the role of our Chief's Representative in Australia twenty one years ago, all I was expected to do was collect the annual dues and send them back to Scotland. But I decided we needed more than that and started the newsletter which has been successful in keeping members informed and through it we were able to connect members with relatives in other parts of the world as well as gaining new members.

Then I discovered that one of our members had a website up and ready to go so we got that off the ground and it ran successfully for a few years until it got hacked into and destroyed, so that was the end of that. However, an American Munro heard of our predicament and offered to get a website running for us, which he did until, for some reason he

stopped communicating with me and we were back to no website again!!

However, in 2014 I mentioned this to a very good friend of mine, Ken Betjeman, who said "I'll set up and run a website for you," which he did and for the past nine years has been the webmaster of our excellent Clan Munro Australia Website on a voluntary basis.

All good things come to an end this is this is the last year that Ken will be our webmaster, so from the bottom of my heart, I thank Ken for all the work he has done and for the excellent website he has produced.

You might think that this, once again, leaves us without a website but not so!! It just happens that Ray Munro's son, Allan, has a website design business and will be our new webmaster. I will let Ray tell you about that in his "From the Eagles Nest" piece.

Welcome

We have one new member to welcome this month, Allan Munro and I will let him tell you his story. "I am Ray Munro's younger son. I have a partner Belinda Crowe and a 6 year old daughter Emily Munro. I'm looking forward to helping the association modernise and gain new members.

By profession, I am a Web Designer & Developer with additional skills in Digital Marketing. I have prepared a strategy document that Dad has sent to our Chief, Hector Munro of Foulis.

I'm looking forward to catching up with Finnian (who is the same age as me) and Ohma next and discussing some ideas that could help the association worldwide." (Check "From the Eagles Nest" for that meeting.)

Alan is descended from his fifth great grandfather, Robert Munro from Argyle in Scotland who lived there prior to 1780. His first ancestor to come to Australia was his third great grandfather Alan Munro who came over in 1831 on the Stirling Castle together with his wife, Margaret

Pender & children, Henry Albert, Margaret & Elizabeth. On the passenger list Alan is shown as a plasterer, on his marriage certificate he was a shoemaker and when he died in Maitland, NSW in 1836 he was a farmer.

From the Eagles Nest

Visitors from Foulis.

Dear Cousins,

We were very pleased to recently meet up with our Chief's son Finnian Munro of Foulis, his wife Ohma Munro of Foulis and their children, Hector, Leila and Ulysses. They had been out here in Sydney visiting Ohma's parents in Sydney. Their visit was timely as we had been discussing with Hector, Finnian and Ohma what our Australian Association was doing to revamp our website and hopefully increase our membership.

Consequently, Allan (our new webmaster), my wife Helen and myself met with our guests at the North Sydney Leagues Club on the 4th. July for discussions and lunch. Allan proceeded to show Finnian and Ohma what we have done so far with the website as well as what we have planned for the near future. We feel that they were impressed by our developments and future plans. It is hoped that all of the Munro Associations may follow our system so that we can have fruitful contact and exchange of ideas with one another.

The meeting was very beneficial for both parties as we wished our guests farewell and that next time we meet in person will be at the Gathering in July, 2025. This is a year later than when it would normally be held as it will be an anniversary of the formation of The Munro Association.

Scottish Week

Once again we have celebrated Scottish Week between the 23rd and 27th June which was hosted by the Scottish Australian Heritage Council

(SAHC). We were able to attend three of the functions over the period of celebrations.

Friday, 23rd.

On the evening of the above day, we enjoyed the Burn's Supper held at the Club York in York Street Sydney. Highlights included a Piper, Address to the Haggis, Address to the Lassies and their response, Choral Singing and a wee dram or two. Our own prominent Clan Munro member, Elizabeth Munro, introduced and gave a running commentary on the excellent performance by the girls of the Highland dancing display. Special guests on the night were the patron of SAHC, the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Dunmore, Malcolm Murray and the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Loudoun, Simon Abney Hastings. Of interest both Earls reside in Australia. The night was well supported by the various Clans and all present enjoyed the evening.

Sunday, 25th.

Our next engagement was the church service at the historic Hunter Baillie Presbyterian Church in Annandale, close to the city. The Piping in of the Clan Banners was performed by Piper, David Patterson. Next, the "Lord's My Shepherd" was sung by the Gaelic Choir, verses 1&2 sung in Gaelic and later they sang the (Hymn - Be Thou My Vision). The first Bible Reading was read by the Earl of Loudoun and the Second Reading by Susan Cooke of Clan Lindsay and VP of SAHC. The Rev. Conrad Nixon, the Chaplain at Scots College gave the sermon. Speaking to him after the Service it came to pass that he knew my son-in-law, a former student at Scots. He didn't say if this was good or bad. I had forgotten, until reminded, that the Rev. married my daughter and son-in-law at the chapel at Scots. What a small world. The Kirkin' of the Tartans followed and the Kirkin' Prayer was read by the Earl of Dunmore and the Piping out of Clan Banners was lead by Piper, David Patterson. Following morning tea in the church hall, which was the original church building, we heard from a congregation member, Allan Roberts, that 2003 was the 200th anniversary of the first ordained Presbyterian Reverend in Australia, Dr. John Dunmore Lang. Dunmore Lang was

instrumental in the setting up of the Hunter Baillie Church and arrived here in 1823 from Scotland. We were then privileged to be given a talk by former History Professor at Sydney University, Professor Sybil Jack, the story of the controversial character Dunmore Lang. Lang was either loved or despised by the people in the colony. Notwithstanding, he did a lot for the good of Australia. However, he was very hard headed and strongly believed in his convictions. He was elected to the Legislative Council at various times, the first occasion being June, 1843. He wrote many important books and pamphlets that were appreciated worldwide.



Lang was instrumental in organising the migration of poorer Scottish and Highland families to Australia. On a personal note Lang was on board the vessel, "Stirling Castle" the ship that my Great and Great Great grandfathers emigrated to Sydney in 1831. Furthermore, my Great Grandfather and his wife were married by Dunmore Lang in December, 1853 at the Scottish Church in York Street, Sydney.

This man, Lang, was an advocate for the Chinese and Aboriginal communities. His influence in the colony included such activities as preacher, politician, journalist, organiser, immigration agent, anthropologist, geographer and historian. Truly multi talented but also a man of the people.

The Earl of Loudoun then spoke of his story and the history of the Campbell Earldom of Loudoun. He explained that because Campbell was such a large Clan they have four separate Earldoms.

Tuesday, 27th.

This day we congregated at Rawson Park, Mosman, to visit the Scotland Australian Cairn. We marched to the Cairn and met up with the Mayor and GM of Mosman Council. The Cairn was donated by Scotland for our bicentenary in 1988. Every region of Scotland gathered and sent stones for the construction of the Cairn. A stonemason was sent from Scotland to erect the Cairn. The inspection,



which must be carried out every year, was carried out by our guest, The Earl of Loudoun and the Mayor. The Cairn was found to be in excellent condition so the Mayor can report the finding back to Scotland.

A sad note to report is that the wonderful Gaelic Choir who entertained us during the formalities performed their last engagement at this function. Unfortunately the members are getting on in years and cannot find any replacements.

Lunch was generously supplied by Mosman Council.

After lunch the Earl of Loudoun spoke of his association with the St Andrews First Aid Society and the work they perform. He also spoke about the fact that he was the only Australian in the official Ceremony in the Coronation of King Charles. His duty being the presentation of the Golden Spurs. His family have been responsible for this task over many centuries.

Scottish History.

The important document, The Declaration of Arbroath, will be put on display at the Nation Museum of Scotland this Northern Summer. This Declaration was signed by the Barons and Freeholders of Scotland in 1320. It was sent to the Pope requesting him to persuade King Edward 2nd to stop hostilities against Scotland and recognise Robert the Bruce King of Scotland. A truce was agreed to in 1323 but of course short lived.

All the best,
Ray Munro.

Transportation

In July, Bet & I had a visit from our eldest daughter, Fiona and her husband Terry. They took us to the old Fremantle Prison and we did a tour related to the prisoners who had been transported from the UK as a result of what was, very often, a petty theft. We found this very interesting especially as an ancestor of Terry's had spent some time there! Convicts have played such a large part in founding Australia, I thought that this article by George Finkel that I came across would be of interest.

Most people in eighteenth century Britain did not regard transportation as a cruel sentence, but as a merciful one. The alternative was to be hanged. At that time there were more than two hundred offences which could be punished by hanging, and most of them we would regard as trivial offences today. A boy of twelve could be sentenced to death for stealing a silk handkerchief from someone's pocket. The convicts who were sentenced to transportation were considered lucky to have escaped hanging, not only were they alive, but they had the chance of making good in a new country after their sentence was served. Both men and women were transported, and girls and boys as young as nine years. (*Back in 2015, I wrote the story of Alexander Munro, a 14 year old boy from Ardersier, who was transported to New South Wales for seven years but made good. Ed*)

If a convict had a profession, he might be allowed to practice it during his sentence, and to keep part of his earnings. At the end of their sentences many ex-

convicts set up in business for themselves, and soon became part of the community. Many did well and some became rich. But some convicts did not have an easy time of it. If they disobeyed or broke a rule, they would be brutally flogged. They wore heavy chains while they were at work, so that they could not escape. Their overseers were sometimes ex-convicts; these men were often very strict and sometimes cruel



A Prison Block

Transportation to the American colonies ended in 1776 with the American War of Independence. But in England the courts continued to pass sentences of transportation, even though there was nowhere to send the convicts. The prisons were soon filled, and old warships in harbour were used as jails. These hulks, as they were called, were verminous and unhealthy, and many convicts and guards died of disease.

Another place had to be found for the convicts. Sir Joseph Banks, who had sailed with Captain Cook to Botany Bay, suggested that Australia might be suitable as a penal settlement. The First Fleet sailed in 1787 to Botany Bay. With the convicts, officials, marines, and seamen the First Fleet numbered nearly fifteen hundred souls, for which the water supply at Botany Bay proved to be far too scanty. A better supply of fresh water was found running into Sydney Cove in Port Jackson, and it was here on 26 January 1788 that the Colony of New South Wales was formally proclaimed.

Most convicts in the penal settlement had more personal freedom than they would have today on a modern prison farm. There were rules, of course, and a curfew which meant they had to be back in their quarters by a certain time. By day they had a great deal of liberty. They slept in barracks or quarters provided by their employer. Only those who committed new crimes after arriving in the colony were locked up in a cell - and there were quite a number of them.

Before the farmers became used to the strange soils and the topsy-turvy seasons, New South Wales was plagued by food shortages. From time to time everyone, from the governor down, was on starvation rations, and even people invited to dinner at Government House would take their own food. The temptation to break into the food stores to steal extra rations was very great, but no one had any sympathy for a mess-mate who stole food. First offenders earned a flogging, and repeated offences could bring a death penalty. Few convicts would act as informers, but none was sorry when a food-thief was caught.

Convicts who behaved well were freed on a ticket-of-leave, and could live almost as free men. Some convicts were assigned to employers, which was a lottery: if a convict was lucky his employer would treat him well, and possibly even pay him a small wage. But some employers made their assigned convicts work long hours, and often punished them. The worst of the convicts worked in the government gangs, often on hard labour such as quarrying or road making. They wore heavy chains even while working, and were locked in barracks at

night. Some of them were very desperate men, looking eagerly for any chance of escape.

Transportation to New South Wales continued for over fifty years, and to other colonies almost as long. But gradually the colonists began to object to this system. England was sending some of its worst criminals to colonies which were now home to a large number of free settlers. They disliked the viciousness and brutality which accompanied transportation; they feared the vengeance of those convicts who managed to escape. And it was obvious that the system did not reform criminals, as it claimed to, but in some cases even made them worse.

After some time, the British government heeded these opinions, and stopped transporting convicts to the eastern colonies. Again, the problem arose of what to do with British criminals, for there were still more than the prisons could hold. Western Australia solved the problem by agreeing to allow transportation in order to reduce its desperate labour shortage.

The first shipload of convicts arrived in Western Australia in 1850 and set to work almost at once. They built their own prisons and quarters for the guards, roads, bridges and public buildings. And they built well. They did not make an immediate improvement in the labour situation. In 1851 came the first of the gold rushes; it attracted a great many labourers to try their luck on the gold fields. But few convicts had an opportunity to desert, so they formed a small but stable labour force.



Fremantle Prison

The presence of the convicts created an increased market for farm produce. Until then some farmers had lived under very primitive conditions, producing their own food and clothing materials. To be able to employ convicts made the farmers more productive, producing crops that they could sell and giving them a much more stable and prosperous living. As well as this

the gangs of convicts built roads & bridges which opened up the country

& made it easier to transport produce to market. And they had to be fed!!

Transportation to the colony went on until 1868, by which year 9,700 convicts had been shipped out. The last of them completed his sentence in 1880. The system was brought to an end because of a change in ideas. The idea behind the sentence was that the prisoner was punished for his crime, the work he was to do might show him the error of his ways, while the roads, bridges or hospitals he built would be for the good of all. Now it was held that work like this, in the open air in view of the passers-by, was quite wrong, but that the work a convict did in a closely walled prison was somehow 'right'. It is difficult to see why sitting cross-legged stitching heavy mail-bags is better for a man than working with pick and shovel in the open, but that is what people thought a hundred years ago.

As women were never transported to Western Australia, the free settlers began to fear that the colony was getting more men with criminal backgrounds than the small free population could absorb. By the mid-1860s there were as many convicts and ex-convicts as free settlers in Western Australia. So transportation ended at last in Australia, after doing its part in building the colonies for eighty years. Convicts had done much to open up the eastern colonies. Some ex-convicts rose great honour in the colonies and others had lapsed back into crime, and been flogged for it or else died on the gallows. But most had served out their time, and their joint efforts had helped to found a nation.

Australian Celtic Festival

This excellent description of this year's Australian Celtic Festival at Glen Iris was sent to me by member John Munro from Tamworth.

It was hard to believe that 12 months had already passed since the last Australian Celtic Festival but here we were again, a group of fun loving, Celtic originating friends, travelling along the New England Highway to Glen Innes for 4 days of music, dance and culture. This year

was special as Scotland was to be the central attraction. The other Celtic regions were also on show, but it was the blue flag with the white cross that was raised the highest and the proudest.



Various levels and types of accommodation can be found all over town. The last three of my seven visits have been spent at the Grand Central, a two storey, historical pub. It has a lot going for it, including being located on the main street near many activities as well as the base for a number of musicians. This guarantees a prime spot for late into the night sing-a-longs.

Arriving on the Friday gave us plenty of time to check in, and then, at a leisurely pace, check out the main street before tomorrow's crowd. The sound of buskers filled the air before and after the opening ceremony and school performance in the town square. Around town were various exhibits. Many of the stores had decorated their windows with Scotland the prominent theme. One particular tartan was dominant; that of Glen Innes with its colours representing the area and its gemstones. An exhibit at the art gallery was well worth seeing. The council tourist centre was of great value for those wishing to pick up tickets and gain information from the locals manning the counters.

Friday night at the Services Club has become a tradition. The first few ales were downed before the crowd was entertained by a rendition of, Address To A Haggis, a many versed poem penned by Robbie Burns, actively and wonderfully recited by a gentleman doing his best to look stereotypically laird like.

Good luck to you and your honest, plump face,
Great chieftain of the sausage race!
Above them all you take your place,
Stomach, tripe, or intestines:
Well are you worthy of a grace
As long as my arm.



In past years, the ceremony included having the tasty mound of innards and cereal shared with the masses but this time none came my way. (Covid?)

The Festival action proper began early Saturday morning with a dawn piper and flag raising ceremony. After avoiding participation in the fun run, it was time to assemble with others representing their particular cultural group, Celtic region, pipe band and clan, at one end of town for the street parade. For a while it looked like a disorganised mob but once the first beats from the drummers and notes from the pipers came forth, lines were formed and uniformity prevailed.

The procession headed up one side of the divided main street, performed a U turn at the round-a-bout, and back down the other side. The crowd lining the parade route this year seemed to be well up on past numbers. I felt very proud to be part of the procession



so raised our Munro banner high. To round off this event, the pipe bands massed in the town square for a united performance playing a number of Scotland's favourites. The applause was deafening.

It was then time to drop the kilt, get back into civies and head up the hill above town to the to the Standing Stones, a circle of large, upright, rectangular, granite monoliths. This is the location of much of the weekend entertainment.

The site is made up of three main undercover stages dedicated to musical and dance performances. Elsewhere are tents lined up, street like, selling goods, foodstuff as well as others providing clan information. With program in hand, quite a bit of planning was required so that nothing was missed. Many of the acts perform more than once each day and both days, which makes the task easier. Becoming involved is strongly encouraged. When not singing along, watching the dance groups, shopping or eating, there are other activities around the site to please the senses. These include poetry recitals, yoga, jousting, arm wrestling, Scottish wrestling, dog parades, art exhibits, pipe band competitions, clan and Celtic ceremonies, highland games, kids' arts and crafts, face painting, Highland cows and horses, a medieval camp site and battle re-enactments.

On the Sunday, besides all of the above being repeated, formal individual ceremonies occurred for each Celtic location with a parade up to the flagged area. The Scottish ceremony was last on the agenda. Each represented clan was invited to join a pipers' led procession and to

announce that their clan was in attendance and to call out their motto to the masses below. After performing this task, we then attended the Kirking Of The Tartan ceremony where each tartan is presented and blessed. My Munro tartan blanket was somewhat larger than the other clans' tokens and may have dominated.

With the sun setting over the Standing Stones site, it was time to head back down the hill after days of fun and entertainment.

The 2024 Festival is on from 2nd May to 5th May. That year will see Ireland and The Isle Of Man as the focus. However, if past years are anything to go by, all things Scotland will still be well represented and on show.

Dad's Story (Part 3)

In our previous issue Dad had just left school and had taken a job as a telegraph messenger in the Post Office so we continue from there. Interesting to note that my grand uncle was one of the first sugar cane farmers at Home Hill

When I reached fourteen, the then leaving age, a job as a messenger, came up in the Post Office and Dad, having failed to get me in as an apprentice fitter and turner at Pioneer and Inkerman sugar mills, probably because of the lack of vacancies and my lack of educational qualifications, thought it best if I took the Post Office job. The only other thing available for a lad in Home Hill then was as a porter in the Railway or as a messenger boy in a store and these were not numerous. Also, the pay was only 12/6 per week.

In the Post Office, I received 32/6 a week. Although the job was supposed to be delivering telegrams, there were few to deliver and a bike was not supplied so Dad had to buy me one for 10 pounds or I would have to walk. Most of the time, you were engaged as a general roustabout, sweeping the floors, cleaning up, working the switchboard at nights and at relief

breaks for the girls during the day and serving out mail at the counter. It was here that I first became aware of some of the tricks a lot of people would resort to in order to make some money. These tricks were committed by several of the many relieving postmaster and postal assistants we had at the time and who later rose to high positions in the Postmaster General's Department. I was always being sent on useless errands to get me out of the way but this also kept me from doing chores which they wanted me to do so, when it was finally decided that I was reasonably "safe", they would take me into their confidence and I then worked for them.

The trick involved carefully removing the uncancelled stamps and when a customer came in with a parcel they would pay for the stamp but the parcel would be put in a bin to have one of the removed stamps placed at the end of the day. Nowadays the customer is given the stamps to fix themselves!!

Apart from that, those chaps, however, did help me to send and receive Morse Code - I suppose, mainly, because they received a 6 pound bonus for everyone they got through the Morse Code test of 25 words per minute. Having passed the test, in due course, I became eligible for appointment as a postal assistant and, at sixteen and a half years of age, I was sent off as Postal Assistant to Ingham.

In Home Hill, where I had only just passed my Morse test about six months earlier, I was not allowed to work the telegraph line much and only at odd times did the postmaster allow me to send or receive more than a couple of telegrams at a time, There being so few telegrams at the time and they being far between, I could make some mistakes and cross outs on the originals and then copy the message without the cross-outs for delivery to the addressee.



Sugar cane at Home Hill

In Ingham, however, I found that apart from the postmaster, I was the only member of the staff who could read Morse so I had to work the telegraph line all day. It was extremely busy and, instead of having one or two messages at a time to send and receive, I found myself confronted with batches



Shire hall, Ingham, circa 1930

of thirty or fifty at a time. Not being able to type at the time (anyway, a typewriter was not supplied) and being inexperienced, instead of being able to do some extra work on telephone accounts like my predecessor, I found I was flat out all day on the morse line. After a few months of this, it absolutely wore me down and I resigned.

On my way home, I went into the Railway Department in Townsville and asked for a job as telegraphist. A week or so later, they sent for me and off I went to Townsville as a Railway Telegraphist. After a few weeks of this, I was told I would have to learn signalling and go out as Night Officer in the crushing season. I could not imagine myself being sent to some god-forsaken siding somewhere as a Night Officer so I told them to made up my pay and off I went.

Membership

Annual: \$25.00

Spouse or children of member under 18 years \$8.00

Three Years:\$55.00

Spouse or children of member under 18 years \$20.00

*Clan Munro (Association) Australia
Newsletter*

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By the editor on that basis Where necessary they have been abridged to fit the newsletter