



Clan Maclean Heritage Trust

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Céad míle fáilte

Welcome to the introductory issue of the Clan Maclean Heritage Trust's newsletter. This incorporates elements of the

Chairman's annual report, and a special article contributed by Trustee Ian MacLean, Nova Scotia, together with other news about

the Trust and its activities throughout the world.

Your views on this venture are welcomed.

Eilean Amalaig - Guardian of Duart's Galleys

The Macleans are a seafaring clan. Throughout their history as a clan, Maclean lands, and castles have been accessible only by water. They were on islands or coasts where the water was the highway. Travel, raiding, fishing, and trading were all sea based. Those of us who are interested in our clan's history, as well as Scottish history, would do well to heed RCAHMS Aerial Survey Manager Dave Cowley, who said, *"We are now so used to thinking about travelling round Scotland by roads, that it is difficult to visualise how our ancestors might have used the sea as a highway,*



Stained glass window given by Clan Maclean Atlantic to the Chief showing a birlinn in front of Duart Castle.

connecting communities across these maritime landscapes."

The boats used by the clan were adaptations of the Viking longships, and were called birlinns

or galleys. The Hebrideans modified the longship to make it more suitable for the local conditions, - rough seas, cross currents, reefs, sandbanks, unpredictable currents, and powerful tides. The Hebrides have few protected harbours, and many narrow rocky channels. To suit these conditions, boats had to be agile, fast, and able to ignore wind direction. The two major changes made were to deepen the hull, and add a rudder. John MacAulay tells us that while "...a deeper draft may have impaired speed, (Continued on page 4)

Grants



The Mull Museum, which houses the Heritage Trust archives.

The Lady Maclean Fund was established, within the Heritage Trust, in order to direct donations made in memory of the Chief's first wife, Mary, to certain specific causes, especially those relating to children.

In the financial year to 31st March 2014, there was one payment from the Lady Maclean Fund to Broadford Primary School, Isle of Skye to help them compete at the Mull Mòd.

A grant was also made to the Mull Museum, which maintains the Trust Library and Archives. Friends of the Heritage Trust may access the Archives on request.

Charitable purposes

“it commemorates famous events in the history of the Clan by erecting cairns on relevant sites”

The Pitreavie cairn, erected in 2001.



Our purposes, as recorded in our Deed of Trust, are the promoting and advancing the education of the public in the history, traditions and music of the Clan Maclean.

In furtherance of these purposes the Trust undertakes the following activities:

(a) it commemorates famous events in the history of the Clan by erecting cairns on relevant sites;

(b) it records and publicises the significant contributions of Macleans in various fields by installing memorial plaques on buildings associated with them;

(c) it contributes to the restoration of important buildings associated with the Clan;

(d) it acquires, restores and preserves books and manuscripts about distinguished members of the Clan and its history, and makes them available to the public;

(e) it produces publications, and maintains a website, that educate the public in the history and traditions of the Clan Maclean, as well as promoting other educational activities relating to the history and culture of the Clan;

(f) it funds a piping bursary for young Macleans at the College of Piping in Glasgow; and

(g) it sponsors competitions in the playing and composition of pipe music and in Gaelic choral singing.

The Trust pays particular attention to activities aimed at younger members of the Clan and children generally.

Angus MacLean of Prince Edward Island



l to r: Ian MacLean, Trustee; Darlene Compton, Belfast Historical Society, Rob MacLean, son; Wilbur MacDonald (seated), Caledonian Club of Prince Edward Island; George MacLean, President of Clan Maclean Atlantic Canada; Gwen MacLean (seated), widow; Allan MacLean, son

A full version of this article can be found in the clan website -www.macleans.org

In September 2013 the Trust provided funding for a plaque and storyboard commemorating the life of Angus MacLean. He was born and died in Prince Edward Island and during his political career he was the Premier of Prince Edward Island and a very distinguished MacLean in Canada. This dedication was jointly funded by local groups including members of Angus MacLean's family and Clan Maclean Atlantic Canada Association.

Dr James McLean, 1922-2015

Dr James McLean, who died on 16th January 2015, gave a life-time of service.

Born on 8th August 1922, he was the son of a doctor, William McLean, and grandson and great-grandson of Aberdeenshire ministers. Through this connection, he liked to call himself a 'Maclean of the North'.

After service in the RAF in Africa, he completed his medical training in 1951 and joined his father's practice in Haddington, East Lothian. A short time later, his father died, having been a doctor for 32 years. James continued to serve the community as their doctor for a further 32 years before retiring to Argyll.

His pastimes included flying, gliding, sailing - and driving fast cars.

In Argyll, he was an Elder at Kilbrandon Kirk and Chair of the local housing association. And he was now to give 30 years service to Clan Maclean, serving on the Council.

Latterly, Dr James, as we knew him, served as Treasurer of the Clan Maclean Heritage Trust for 13 years.

He is survived by his second wife, Carol, and son, William.



Dr James McLean,

Eilean Amalaig (continued)



The author on the replica galley 'Aileach'

(especially when depending on oar power), - stability and sailing performance, particularly to windward, would have been greatly improved". These changes were effective. He tells us that; "It is gen-

erally held in Scotland that Alexander III defeated the Norwegians at Largs thanks to the reputed superiority of the Hebridean birlinn over the Norse longships". MacAulay also points out that the rudder was more effective in a deeper drafted boat, so the two (innovations) went together. These "hybrids" depending on size, were called birlinns, (the smaller) or West Hebridean galleys. They were embraced by the Macleans, and by other clans who lived on the west coast of Scotland. They varied in size, and were multi-purpose. A major strength was their ability to enable a fighting force to land, attack, and retreat (if necessary) quickly. Like the longship, they were fast, and could provide the element of surprise.

Macleans castles were close to the shore to protect these boats and the sea-lanes. In a report written about Breacachadh (a Maclean castle on Coll) in the late 16th century it is described as 'ane great strength' that has "...any uther wall about that, within the quhilk (which) schippis and boittis are drawin." Islands offered excellent protection from land attacks, and with control of the sea, were easily defended. The noted Maclean historian, Nicholas Maclean-Bristol, suggests that, "The importance of sea power is fundamental to understanding the fortunes of the Macleans."

Galleys stayed in use in the Hebrides long after they became passé with other societies. They depend on oarsmen. Such vessels were only fea-

sible when men were available, and could be counted on, to perform the difficult task of rowing. Not many societies successfully used oared ships. Romans used slaves. Vikings used the incentive(s) of shares in loot, women, and other fringe benefits. However the clan system was uniquely suited to support the use of galleys, as they could rely on clan/family loyalty, and duty to their Chiefs and Chieftains. Conversely, "...the use of galleys (also) had considerable influence on the social organization of the people who were so dependent on them". A specific example of the importance of these vessels was when, - under extreme duress, in 1608, Maclean of Duart surrendered his castle. Nonetheless he persuaded Ochiltree (King James VI's representative) not to execute "...that parte of my commissioun, in destroying lumfaddis, birlingis and heyland gallayis". In the last analysis, the ships were even more important than the castle!

By the mid 17th century information obtained by the Scots Privy Council seems to indicate that the numbers of galleys and birlinns owned by the West Coast Chiefs was surprisingly small. "...Duart had two galleys and eight birlinns and his brother one galley...Coll had one galley...and two birlinns, and Maclean of Ardgour had a birlinn." I suspect that all was not revealed to the investigating lowlanders! Even so, of the clans listed at that time, none of the other chiefs were listed as having even this many. "In fact the only Highland chief who had a substantial naval force was Maclean".

Logic would say that the galleys should have disappeared sooner than they did. But their strengths, still "worked" in the Hebrides. The treacherous sea conditions, their relative independence of wind and currents, and their utility for raiding, made them competitive. Even against the vaunted English navy, their speed could prevail. "There is good evidence from the English naval boats ranged against them in the North Channel, that the galleys had the advantage of speed." (16th century) Also while the English navy had to rely on "press gangs", the clan system continued to provide men who

were proud to serve their Chief and clan. In the long run, they couldn't compete with cannon carrying warships, so their decline was inevitable.

For all the medieval period, galleys were critical to the Duart Chief. Duart Castle is located in a superb position to control three major waterways, i.e. the Sound of Mull, Loch Linnhe and the Firth of Lorn, not to mention its visual contact with other castles and Loch Etive. There was a hitch. Boats could be anchored in Duart Bay, **but**, that bay is far too open to provide shelter for lengthy stays, or for bad weather. Very close to Duart is a site called Port na Birlinn. According to Dr Colin Martin, the marine archaeologist who was the primary researcher in the exploration of the Cromwellian shipwreck off Duart Castle, this site would have been suitable for one or two galleys at best, as one or two could be pulled onshore if necessary. He suggests that Duart, like most castles, would keep one or two boats for quick access.

This does not alter the fact that large numbers of galleys could not be kept in Duart Bay. (In a phone conversation he also mentioned that in more recent times Port na Birlinn was where coal was offloaded for the castle.) Where then were the

other Duart galleys kept? RCAHMS, Argyll, Volume 3, suggests Craignure or Tobermory. But, Craignure, in medieval times had no protection from bad weather, and Tobermory was just too far away to be viable. So, then, where?

Tradition tells us that Loch Spelvie was the place where the boats were kept for lengthy stays, for bad weather, and to marshal galleys before major expeditions. Martin Coventry in his *Castles of Scotland* agrees, and identifies Eilean Amalaig as the "castle" which protects the Duart galleys.

When describing this island, RCAHMS, Argyll, Volume 3 (pointing out that there is no "recorded history",) comes to no conclusion about who built or used Eilean Amalaig. They do state that "The structure on Eilean Amalaig, ... appears to have served a defensive purpose," and conclude that the fortifications are of medieval date. They also suggest that given the existence of drystone walls and cleared boat landings, that "the remains are those for a small fortification erected to guard the nearby anchorage at the NE end of Loch Spelvie." The website of RCAHMS, suggests that the island was a sacred island of the Macleans, and that the ruins might be a chapel. This does not fit with anything I have seen, and I am not clear where this idea came from. However it also does go on to say that Eilean Amalaig was the galley anchorage of the Macleans. The website also questions if the boat slips are medieval, or of more recent origin.

The information on the website seems to indicate that the RCAHMS is now convinced that

Eilean Amalaig is directly connected to the Macleans. Maclean histories all indicate that this area of Mull was clearly controlled by Maclean of Duart in medieval times. The island is only about 3.5 miles from Duart by foot, and although there were no roads per se, there certainly



Duart Castle, with Port na Birlinn to the left

were tracks, and this short distance would have been no problem for fit clansmen. As a matter of fact highland clans were known for their "running ghilles", who we are told could travel quickly over rough terrain for many miles when needed.

In Clan Gillean, the Rev. A Maclean Sinclair, a Gaelic scholar, says that "According to Dr. Norman Macleod's *Cuairtear non Gleann*, (this book is available on the internet, but unfortunately for me it is in Gaelic, and I (Continued on page 6)

Eilean Amalaig (continued)

Eilean Amalaig, showing the landing place — and a yacht where the galleys would anchor.



“I’m sure you’re right about the loch being a galley gathering place”

can’t read it!) the Macleans, before starting on an expedition, were in the habit of walking sun-wise (clockwise) three times around a small island in Loch Speilbh (Loch Spelvie)”. Eilean Amalaig is the only island of any size in Loch Spelvie, so this must be the island in question. This superstitious custom was meant to ensure the success of the expedition. Maclean Sinclair also suggests that Lachlan Mor (before heading off to death at the battle of Traigh Gruinart on Islay) defied this superstition; and the advice of a witch, and walked around the island counterclockwise. (Nicholas Maclean-Bristol thinks this event happened in front of Duart Castle).

Both these stories (walking or sailing) support the idea that Eilean Amalaig was the place where men gathered to board their ships to head off for an adventure!

Dr Colin Martin, in a recent email says, “regarding Eilean Amalaig in Loch Spelvie. I am indeed aware of the site, having walked the shoreline and taken some aerial photographs. I’m sure you’re right about the loch being a galley gathering place...”. It seems reasonable to conclude that Eilean Amalaig, was the base for men to protect Duart’s galleys.

My friend and former (Clan Maclean Heritage Trust) Trustee Brian McLean from Australia, was able to arrange with a local fisherman to take him to the island in 2006. He subsequently wrote an article on Eilean Amalaig for the Western Australia Clan newsletter. He noted that the fisherman, Douglas Wilson, called it Castle Island. He also found that not only is there a

Local fisherman, Douglas Wilson inspecting the wall, on the islet



wall on the north east of the tidal islet (please see pictures), but also a similar stone wall on the larger part of the island on the west side. Eilean Amalaig has a small islet which is part of the island at low tide, but separate at high tide. The RCAHMS website describes a footing of a rectangular building measuring 6 m by 3.4 m. It goes on to say that is unlikely to have been the remains of a chapel, but its age and purpose cannot be identified. I would suggest that it could well have been a defensive structure to house guards for the galleys, but without further evidence, this can't be proven.

In 2009, I tried to get a fisherman to take me to the island, but was unsuccessful. I was able to walk, with great difficulty, via the shore to a point directly opposite from Eilean Amalaig. Brian subsequently told me that there was a much easier way to drive, and then walk to this vantage point, via "...a sandy track which leads to the Killean house and chapel, then cut through the bracken when opposite the highest point." Brian's route actually illustrates the ease of getting from Duart to Eilean Amalaig and vice versa.

I was able to discern a cleared "path" or slipway for boats on the mainland, directly opposite Eilean Amalaig, as well as a corresponding cleared slipway on Eilean Amalaig.

Similar slipways can also be seen at Breacachadh Castle (mentioned above) and at Moy (Lochbuie). These are clearly manmade, and intended to make the beaching of boats (galleys?) much easier, - not to mention less destructive of wooden vessels. I believe that these were from medieval times, but there is an alternate suggestion that they are of more recent origin, - perhaps from the kelping industry.

Given the importance of sea power to our clan, and the continuing improvements in marine archaeology (see article about The Viking shipyard on Skye), I hope that Maclean historians and the Trust will continue to honour, and investigate sites like Eilean Amalaig.



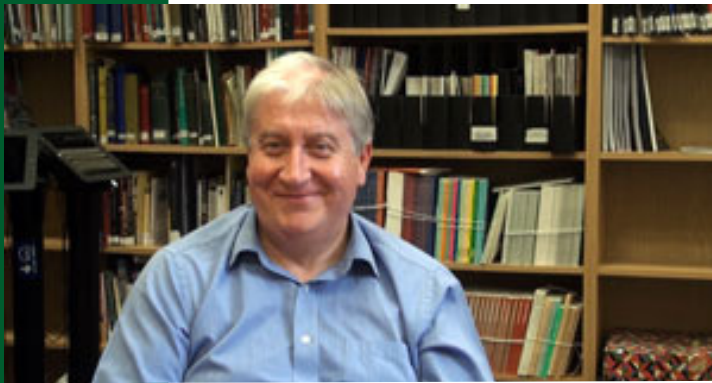
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Photography by:

- Ian and Marjorie Maclean, Nova Scotia
- Brian McLean, Australia,
- Dr Colin Martin

James Beaton



James Beaton retired as a trustee during the year.

In September last year James Beaton, the Librarian at the National Piping Centre in Glasgow, completed his term as a Trustee.

James was an enormous help to Colonel Donald in producing *Pipe Music of the Clan Maclean*, launched at the 2012 Gathering.

Being a Gaelic speaker and a piper his contribution in both those areas, including his valuable work on the Gaelic in *Death or Victory*, has been very much appreciated by all the Trustees. We thank him for his input over the last 8 years.

Friends of the Heritage Trust

It is usual for the number of Friends to drop between Gathering dates and 2014 was the low point between the Gathering in 2012 and the next

Gathering in 2017. There were 48 paid up members in the year starting in April 2013.

The Trustees are aware of the impor-

tance of keeping these Friends involved in the Trust as well as encouraging young people to be involved with the Trust's activities.

Friends in 2012 received a signed photograph of the Chief, his son and grandson



Benefit to Friends

The Trustees have decided, after consultation with the Friends, to stop the Benefits to Friends. The main reason is that the cost of the Benefit was becoming disproportionate to the subscription paid. When asked, the majority of Friends did not consider

that the Benefits were necessary. It was however agreed that an annual paper would be produced on matters of historical interest, which would be sent to all Friends in the early part of the year - hence this Newsletter.

Fort Dewart, Pennsylvania



I to r: Ian MacLean, Trustee; Peter Folen, Folmont Property Owners Association; re-enactor; the Chief; Montgomery Highlander; Fr Patrick Maclean, Clan Gillean USA

At the end of September 2013, the Chief with Trustees Ian MacLean and Judge Sandra McLean unveiled a cairn and storyboard at Fort Dewart in Folmont, Pennsylvania. The Fort had been built by Sir Allan Maclean with

highlanders, many of whom were Macleans from Mull and the surrounding Islands.

The site was dedicated by the Rev Patrick Maclean, President of Clan Gillean. As well as the

Heritage Trust funding funds came from Clan Gillean USA, and many local people. The Fort, where the earthworks are still intact, was the first Heritage Trust project in the USA.

Fort Dewart was a redoubt built on the summit of the Allegheny Mountain in Pennsylvania in 1758 by Captain Sir Allan Maclean, 22nd clan chief, and his men.

The name was chosen by Captain Sir Allan and pays homage to the three companies of Macleans who had been recruited by him and had erected the fortification. They formed three companies of the 77th Regiment of Foot (Montgomery's Highlanders).

The earthworks remain intact.

The Trust, with Clan Gillean USA, provided a plaque and a storyboard.



The plaque at Fort Dewart

Financial report



Income

The income for the Trust for the year ending 31st March 2014 was £4,321. Friends' subscriptions dropped by 40% as some Friends did not renew their membership. Gross trading receipts also showed a decline from £5,611 to £1,908. Sales of Fiona Maclean of Ardgour's book *Death or Victory*, published in 2011, are beginning to fall off, as expected, and *Pipe Music of the Clan Maclean*, published in 2012, has been a slow seller. On the other hand, sales of the Clan maps have been strong, which is encouraging.

Reserves

The result for the year ending 31st March 2014 was a small surplus of £950, reversing the deficit of £7,723 in the previous year and increasing our reserves to £9,449. Although the Heritage Trust income has dropped so have the Trust's expenses. The Trustees are confident that reserves are adequate to enable the Heritage Trust to bring to fruition a significant number of projects in the Gathering year of 2017.

Piping

Part of the Trust's policy of taking the Clan's heritage into the future has been the founding of a Piping Bursary for a young Maclean at the College of Piping in Glasgow. The bursary is awarded every five years and helps to pay for tuition and accommodation.

The third bursary was awarded in 2012 to Jamie MacLean from Hillend in Midlothian, who completed the course this year.

In 2011 the Trust sponsored a competition, administered by the National Piping Centre in Glasgow, for the composition of a new piping tune.

Most recently, the Trust completed the compilation of the first new book of Maclean pipe music for more than 100 years.



Opposite:

Jamie MacLean
playing at the
2013 Gathering

New media

The Clan Maclean Heritage Trust has had a presence on the internet for some time, with our own section on the clan website: www.maclean.org.

To reach our section, it is just a matter of clicking on the link on the menu to the left of the page.

Here, prospective members can join the trust and existing members can

re-new their subscriptions.

But the website is also a medium for us to share our achievements, review events and purchase from our bookshop - and much more.

New in 2014 is our Facebook group. Designed with the young in mind, the page seems to be attracting interest from

'silver haired surfers' as well.

Still developing, and learning as we go, we recognise that there is a need for help with genealogy, for which those involved with the site do not have the expertise. The Trustees will be giving consideration to how to address this at their next meeting.



“there is a need for help with genealogy”

Trust Representatives

In the course of the last year the Trustees decided that Trust Representatives should be appointed to represent the Trust in those Associations in which the Trust is not represented by a Trustee.

The role of a Trust Representative is to assist the Trust in the achievement of its objectives by:

- (a) Recruiting new Friends, encouraging donations and legacies, and promoting the sale of Trust books, maps and other merchandise, thus generating revenue for the Trust enabling new projects to be undertaken.
- (b) Identifying suitable projects in which the Trust could become involved, including watching for endangered Maclean heritage where protective action may be required.

The Representatives have now been appointed and are as follows:

Peter MacLean (Western Australia),
 Marcus MacLean (New South Wales),
 Pat McClean (Pacific North-West),
 Gordon McLean (Clan Maclean Association in Australia)
 Dr. Leslie H. McLean (Clan Gillean USA)



Clan Maclean Heritage Trust

Trustees

Current Trustees

Hon. Sir Lachlan Maclean of Duart and Morvern (Chairman)

Mr Nigel Alington LVO

Very Rev Allan Maclean of Dochgarroch

Mrs Fiona Maclean of Ardgour

Mr Hector McLean

Mrs Vera MacLean

Mr Ian MacLean (Canada)

Mr Alan McLean (France)

Judge Sandra McLean (USA)

Mr Noel Robinson (New Zealand)

Other Trustees who served during the year

Mr James Beaton, whose term of office expired in September 2014.

Secretary and Treasurer

William Douglas has continued as Secretary of the Clan Maclean Heritage Trust.

The work of Treasurer is still being undertaken by Nigel Alington and William Douglas until a new Treasurer is appointed. This extra work undertaken by them has been very much appreciated by all the Trustees.

Principal address

The Gables, Station Road, Balfron, Glasgow G63 0SX

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