

CLAN EWEN SOCIETY



BULLETIN

No 59
First Qtr 2014

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1. Letter from the Chairman

Greetings to all and a Happy New Year from everyone at the Clan Ewen Society!

This should indeed prove a happy year for the Clan as we seek to have a Commander recognised by the Lord Lyon at the Family Convention on June 6th. Please come if at all possible and bring the family! (Details of the event and the AGM can be found elsewhere in this bulletin / website.)

As this should lead to our having a Chief for the first time in more than 500 years, we can safely say that 2014 should become one of the most momentous years in Clan history.

Best wishes and ... REVIRESCO!

John McEwen
Chairman of the Clan Ewen Society

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2 Derbh Fine

On Thursday 11th October 2012, the Lord Lyon published the following notice on the website of Lyon Court about the appointment of a chief to the clan

MacEwan/Ewing Family Convention Appointment of Supervising Officer

The Lord Lyon King of Arms has appointed the Honourable Adam Bruce, Marchmont Herald of Arms, to be the Supervising Officer for the MacEwan/Ewing Family Convention. It is for the Supervising Officer to agree the procedure for the Family Convention with the interested parties, including a reasonable fee for acting.

The long anticipated Derbh Fine or Family convention will be held on Friday the 6th of June 2014 at 2 pm. at the Beardmore Hotel and Convention Centre in Clydebank near Glasgow Scotland. The purpose of this event is for the nomination and recommendation of a Clan Commander to the Lord Lyon. This event is open to all interested members of the clan and is anticipated to draw a large following. Each interested party will be able to nominate their choice and plead their case.

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3. Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting for 2014 will be an international gathering to coincide with our historic Derbh Fine. The AGM will be at 2 PM on the 7th of June 2014 at the Beardmore. We will be having festivities throughout the weekend of 6 Jun 2014 including a formal dinner and ceileidh.

The prices will be as follows

Friday Evening Buffet and open Mic Night
£25.00

Saturday Evening Formal Dinner and Ceileidh
£40.00

Saturday Night Ceileidh only £10.00

For both Evening Dinners and Ceileidh £60.00

Additional excursions to the Cairn and Castle Mac Ewan and Glasgow area will be available on request.

Additionally we have negotiated with the hotel to provide discounted room rates from £82.00 per night B&B based on double occupancy.

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Other Accommodation and Campgrounds are available near by.

For further information please contact Sean or Sandra at clanewenuk@live.co.uk

4 Schedule of Events for the Gathering Weekend

Friday 6th June

13:00. – Welcome/ Meet and Great in Hospitality Room

14:00- Derbh Fine

18:30-22:00- Buffet Dinner and Social Hour to follow, Clan Ewen has talent/informal open mike nite.

Saturday 7th June

8:00-10:00 – Breakfast the Waterhouse Room

10:00-14:00 – Tours of the local area/ Hospitality room open for casual chat/ history of the clan

14:00-1600- AGM

18:30-20:00 Formal Dinner, Piping of the Haggis, best dressed competition

20:00-0100 Ceileidh

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Sunday 8th June

08:00-09:30 Breakfast in the Waterhouse Room

0930 Depart for Kilfinnan, Kirken the Tartan , trip to the Cairn, Hospitality Room open for casual chat/Clan History

16:00 return to the Hotel

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5. Poems by Steve Ewing

a. For All

For All	All our pain
For all we have	For all the love
Not all we think we need	That blesses us with peace
For all the mountains	We pray for strength
Broad valleys, deepest seas	Sustain us as we seek
For all our dreams	To praise this force
Our hopes	That graces us in need
The friendships that we gain	And pray for peace
For all our loss	In every word and deed
Our heartache	Steve Ewing

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b. SUN STAND

Sun Stand	Crispness
I build stone circles	Of the winter
To watch	Solstice sun
The sweep	Sliding down
Of year	Perfectly
The fan of rises	Across the
The arc	Frozen field
Of settings	To pinch
The stretch	The shortest day
Of day	I build stone circles
The first of May	To plug in
To midsummers	My connect
Warming march	With sky
Towards the bountiful	Marking
Balance	Points
Of falls'	Year to year
Fading light	I feel
The crunching	Earth roll

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Away with rocks

Suns' bearing

I sight

Lighting the wide field

Or filtered

And sheltered grove

In this small

Of sassafras

Repeat

And moss

Each year

I build stone circles

I build stone circles

To show

Because I like

My kids

Stone

These things

Its' lasting

To share

Comfort

With grace

Warm in summer

And how

It holds the heat

These marks

Late

Of solar time

Into the fall

Steve Ewing

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6. Learning to See

Learning to Sea

When I was small, I thought that all grown-ups could draw, certainly all grown-up men. My uncle Rory painted leaves and flowers and roots, less botanical illustrations than portraits of each individual plant. His pinks and carnations hung in the drawing-room, brilliant in scarlet and soft rose. My uncle Jamie painted birds with equal skill. When I asked, at ten or twelve, if he would contribute something to my autograph album, he sent me a beautiful hand-painted hummingbird, with jeweled head and slim, snow-spattered wings. My father's specialty was the swift, incisive sketch, an almost cartoonish likeness appearing with startling speed under his hand. Once or twice, when the local fete

was held at our house, he set up an easel on the grass, offering his services as artist for 2/6 (about fifty cents). Sketches of the six of us, in faded felt-pen, still adorn my mother's bathroom walls.

I used to wish that I could draw and paint myself. But when I look at my early efforts – a lone piper, a sad little line-up of smudgy watercolour thistles – I can see that I was right to stick to words. I kept a diary from the age of

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eleven, and wrote quantities of poems and stories, as well as the obligatory school essays. But by my late teens I also spent much of my time just looking. I had another uncle to thank for this, my uncle John, then just starting out as an art critic in London. We would eat lunch in some pub, and then wander together round the big museums and galleries, strolling and looking and pointing things out to each other. Perhaps it was this that gave me the courage to go to Paris, walking, as I saw it, in the footsteps of Rilke and Gwen John.

I'd been reading Rilke's poems for a couple of years by then. I knew he had acted as a secretary for the sculptor, Rodin, and that it was Rodin who had advised him to visit the Jardin des Plantes to teach himself to see. Gwen John, the English painter, was also part of Rodin's entourage. They became lovers in 1904, soon after she moved to Paris, and she also posed for him, modeling for his "Monument to Whistler" (never finished). She and Rilke knew each other well, and continued to correspond in the decade after Rodin's death.

In the fall of 1977, I made my way to the Musee Rodin: a large, mild house with gleaming parquet floors. A violet-tinted chandelier hung overhead, and the wooden panelling was edged in gold. I was struck by

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the green and white of the marble mantelpieces, “strange spinach-colored jewels,” I noted. But it was the

sculptures themselves that I was trying to befriend: the little orphan from Alsace with her clear, bold gaze, her bald head swathed in its clumsy veils; the “Old Man with the Broken Nose”; the lovely Juliet. I wandered among them, light-hearted and ardent, making spiky notes in my black notebook. “The coolness of the rooms and their fraîcheur, airiness. Shadows on the floor. The slow noises of people walking and pausing. Outside in the garden, old ladies in a row.”

I did my best to draw Balzac with his great pot-belly, and Nijinsky too, caught in the whirl of his dance. Like Rilke, I was overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of Rodin’s accomplishment. At the same time, the sculptures seemed very real to me, humanly and sensuously real. “There’s so much more to love in the human body than the inside of a woman’s thigh. Rodin’s Orpheus – the space between waist and hip, the tender stomach.”

What did it mean to write in this way, to try to draw and notice and observe? I wasn’t sure. I found a bench in the garden, and let my eyes fall on the lime-trees and the chestnuts, the prim pink roses and clipped triangular yews,

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then turned back to gaze at the house itself, its pale yellow walls and gray roof, its arched windows with their creamy frames, hoping to paint in words what I could not paint on the page.

A couple of years later, I came upon a book that helped me understand what I was doing. *A Life of One's Own* is still in print even now, though it was originally published in 1936. It was written by a British psychoanalyst called Marion Milner, under the pseudonym of Joanna Field. In it she outlines, in gentle unpretentious language, that same "apprenticeship in looking" I'd been trying to pursue, something she achieved, in part, by keeping a diary.

Milner had always been drawn to pictures, in a general way. But she had felt uncomfortable too, because so often she could not explain what she admired. Then one day, she happened to stop in front of a Cezanne painting: green apples, a white plate, a crumpled cloth. Because she was tired and restless, and distracted by the crowds of Sunday sightseers, she simply sat and looked at it, without bothering to interrogate her own response.

Slowly then I became aware that something was pulling me out of my vacant stare and the colors were coming alive, gripping my gaze till I was soaking myself in their vitality. Gradually

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a great delight filled me, dispelling all boredom and doubts about what I ought to like... Yet it had all happened by just sitting still and waiting. If I had merely given a cursory glance, said, "Isn't that a nice Cezanne," and drifted on with the crowd, I would have missed it all.

Scientists testify that anxiety and fear (both highly primitive emotions) actually help improve one's visual focus – a fact that would have served our long ago survival. Given the weight of our contemporary neuroses, this can benefit us even now. Certainly Milner's encounter with Cezanne came to seem like a parable to me. It taught me to be patient, not to try too hard, taught me, above all, the power of the pause, of receptivity. Suspending one's judgment, that was the key, learning (that tender phrase, so frequently abused), "to take one's own sweet time."

Christian McEwen

[This is an extract from Christian's book *World Enough & Time: On Creativity and Slowing Down* (Bauhan Publishing, 2011).]

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7. The Scottishness of Andy Murray

The Scottishness of Andy Murray

While each of us is a poem, as Ian Mackenzie beautifully expressed it in *Scottish Review* recently, every Scot, every human, must also count as a dogged work of prose, not just a scientific record of evolution and ancestry but an embodiment of her country's story/essence. There's no escaping it – we reflect and belong to one another and to our time, and Andy Murray, for example, cannot help being both history book and portrait of 21st-century Scottishness.

Murray might be, with Jim Clark, one of our two greatest sportsmen of all time and is certainly an unusual specimen of Scottishness, i.e. a winner. Heroic failure is normally the best we can hope for and therefore (?) what we get. Argentina 1978 seemed to set the tone but it goes far further back than that. Throughout the Wars of Independence Scotland was never comfortable when tipped to win; all the victories, from Stirling Bridge to Bannockburn right up to Ancrum Moor, were against the odds. Almost all the defeats –

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Flodden, even the worst defeat of all at Halidon Hill – followed installation as the bookies’ solid favourite.

Favouritism, in the collective mind of an under-the-weather nation characterized by defiance rather than the will to conquer, appears to let in too much space for thinking: why do this? would this be happening if no one was watching? is life but a mad god’s dream? You could almost see the thought-bubbles emerge above the players’ heads – “what, after all, is football?” - as defeat against Costa Rica loomed, and then the fans started singing, “Whatever will be, will be”, and those watching agonized on telly saw that this was not so much a game as an exercise in applied philosophy, and regained inner peace.

This metaphysical bent presumably explains, at least in part, why Scottish thinkers, Scottish inventors and Scottish writers provided the world with so much of what makes it modern as well as a brand-new set of mythic archetypes (common sense, the phone, Jekyll & Hyde, Peter Pan, Sherlock Homes etc etc) but it is a propensity which does not help on the field of battle or play; there, a certain brutal unthinking focus on the job in hand is required.

Drunkenness, melancholy, suicidal behaviour of one sort or another: these are also taken to be

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typically Scottish outlets and might also be seen as the consequences of too much thinking. Leading out from such introspection is – one must assume – the derangement which sometimes leads to horror. We have raised up far more than our share of committers of utter monstrosity;

their nationality cannot be separated from those whose names will live forever in infamy.

One of those desperate wrong-headed evil-doers, or justified sinners, had crossed paths with our beloved future US Open tennis champion several times before March 13th 1996. Thomas Hamilton was known about by any local parents of energetic lads. The suspicions about him had emerged slowly; the resentment they fostered then festered and burst forth in the horriblest act of stupidity ever witnessed in Scotland. Andy Murray, aged eight, hid beneath a desk until everyone was sure the shooting had stopped.

Andy Murray knows as few others can know that tennis is just a game. His ferocious competitiveness is uncomplicated by contemplation; unlike our dreamy footballers, when faced with an underdog, he wallops him. Tennis is a discrete, sealed-off activity: it does not actually matter. The same went for Jim Clark who started racing for fun and wondered

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why the other fellows drove so slowly. Formula One was exciting and well-paid and sad when your pals got killed, but it was not serious; the Kelso Ram Sales, the harvest, the family – there was the serious stuff of life.

Serious need not mean solemn; and scowling and grunting need not mean serious. Those who say they find Andy Murray hard to like cannot have seen the lad walking about Dunblane in mellow triumph following his American victory. This was serious! Love, kindness, humility and humour: what a sweetheart he showed himself to be, among his own people, giving forth the whole man, the rounded Scotsman who has at last succeeded in

compartmentalizing his mighty brain and achieved focus, who knows what matters and knows that success is not necessarily it.

Every country has her own duende, Lorca's word for the spirit of the place, originally a goblin but defined by him as, "These dark sounds of the mystery, the roots thrusting into the fertile loam known to all of us, ignored by all of us, but from which we get what is real in art ... the mysterious power which everyone senses and no philosopher explains". Scotland's duende, expressed by Andy Murray as by a pint of beer or the Eildon Hills, is a remarkable and cussed critter; other countries'

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goblins might be as remarkable but we can never know them so well; this is our own “mysterious power” and we are required to love it.

J.R.H. McEwen

[This article first appeared in Scottish Review, an on-line magazine
{<http://scottishreview.net/>}.]

a Links between the names of MacEwen and MacCowan

{I am interested in the associated families of Clan MacDougall. The following are short, lightly edited, excerpts from two essays that I wrote on the subject, one on evolution of forms of the name MacCowan and the other on the location of Kilchoan parish. A version of the first essay can be found at www.dunollie.org. The second essay was privately circulated last autumn.}

MacCowan and Saint Comgan

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The traditional derivation of the name MacCowan is from Gillecomgain or GilleChomgain, meaning servant (gille) of Saint Comgan (also Congan). St Comgan, Brother of Saint Kentigerna and uncle to her son Saint Fillan, emigrated from Leinster in the 7th or early 8th century and founded a monastery on Lochalsh.

The Christian name Gillecomgan probably came into use in the last centuries of the first millennium. A Gillecomgan, who became Mormaer of Moray in around 1020 AD, was the first husband of Gruach, later Lady MacBeth, and the father of Lulach who succeeded MacBeth to the throne of Scotland. I assume that the Christian name, Gillecomgan, was widely used by the time surnames began to be assumed. Thus those adopting, say, Mac 'illeChomhghain as a surname need not have had a close genetic link with, nor have lived close by, each other.

The name MacCowan is the result of both a grammatical and a historical process of lenition which softens (or makes more breathy) some Gaelic

consonants. The internal lenition that changed "comgan" into "comhghan" is a historical process that I do not fully understand, although the process can be seen in other names, for

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example the Cowal peninsula whose name is derived from Saint Comgal. Mac Ghillechomhghan can mutate to either Mac ‘illechoan or MacCòmhghan. (A more grammatically correct version would insert an i before the final n.) There are records of 19th century Lorn families in which the last name is interchangeably spelled MacCowan and Mac illchoan. Comgan forms a part of a number of place names of which Kilchoan, or Cille Chòmhghan (Comgan’s cell or church) is the best known.

MacEwen/MacEwan

Eòghan is a very old Gaelic name. It appears in the Ulster cycle and can be found on one of the earliest stones recovered at Iona. It is Anglicized as Ewan or Hugh (although Hugh most often translates Uisdean nowadays.) In medieval times Eòghan was sometimes been used interchangeably with Eòin, the name John as it appears in the Gaelic Bible.

I have been told that the names MacCowan and MacEwan can mutate into one another, in both directions, in Lorn. The MacEwan family of greatest personal interest in looking at names related to MacCowans in Lorn is probably the great bardic family. They lived in Lorn, were significant late medieval Gaelic poets, and were bard-sennachies to both the MacDougalls and

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the Campbells. MacEwans are regarded as a sept, or associated family, of both Clan MacDougall and Clan Campbell.

Derick Thomson, one of the most important Gaelic scholars and poets of the second half of the twentieth century, writes in *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*

of the MacEwen family:

“.... They are designated as a bardic family in 1558, when Colin Campbell of Glenorchy granted a charter to Eugenius McDuncane McCarne and to his son Arnaldus or Arnoldus and his heirs male after him who act as Joculatores (‘wlgariter Rymouris’) giving them the two merklands of Barmullocht in the lordship of Lorne.”

Over two centuries later (1779) Donald MacNicol records the following tradition about the MacEwens:

“The MacEwens had free lands in Lorn in Argyleshire, for acting as Bards to the family of Argyle, to that of Bredalbane, and likewise to Sir John MacDougal of Dunolly, in 1572. The two last of the race were Airne and his son Neil.”

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A member of the family composed a lament for a John of Lorn, Chief of Clan MacDougall, that was reproduced in *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*, the oldest known anthology of Scottish Gaelic poetry. Derick Thomson also wrote that members of this family may have been responsible for translating Calvin's Catechism in 1631, and some poems included therein, as well as the Shorter Catechism in 1652.

Alasdair Campbell of Airds, in his *A History of Clan Campbell, Volume I*, treats MacCowan, MacOwen, and MacEwan as different names of the same Campbell sept. He accepts the derivation of MacCowan from Gillicomgan and notes they, "were the MacEwans who held the lands of Kilchoan (on Loch Feochan, south of what is now Oban) for their services, first to the MacDougall Lords of Lorne, then to the Campbell chiefs." Indeed, Appendix II of MacKinnon's *Descriptive*

Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts in the Advocates Library (1912)) cites a report that the last of the M'Ewen Bards to Argyll was minister of Kilchoan in Nether Lorn.

Kilchoan

It needs to be stressed that no town, church, or parish named Kilchoan can be found on any

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recent map. The name does, however, appear frequently in the speech of people of Lorn – I have heard it myself – and in older descriptions of Lorn. Nineteenth century gazetteers referred to Kilchoan as one of the pre-reformation parishes incorporated into the combined parish of Kilbrandon and Kilchattan.

There is, moreover, fairly solid evidence of a church, or certainly a cemetery having existed near the shore of Kilchoan Bay. An entry, dated July 1970, in the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland's Inventory of Monuments notes that when officers of the Ordnance Survey visited the site now occupied by Kilchoan House "in about 1872, they were told that graves containing human remains had been found during the building of the house".

Kilchoan House stands nowhere near Loch Faochan, but a parish of Kilchoan probably did touch the mouth of the loch. The standard reference to Scottish medieval parishes is *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, or OPS, and it provides valuable insight into the character of Kilchoan:

"In the south of the mainland part of the parish [Kilbrandan] is the site of the old church of Kilchoan, dedicated to Saint Congan the abbot.

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...The parish and a ferry still retain the name
'Cuan' (New Stat. Acc.),

rendering probable the conjecture that Kilchoan was once either the church of the parish of Kilbrandon, or of a separate parish. There is however no record on the subject. In Pont's sketches Kilchoan is the only church marked in the parish."

It is interesting to read: "There is, however, no record on the subject." The existence of this church and the parish it may have served have been maintained by oral tradition for centuries. I have not been able to locate the fragment of Pont's sketches (from the 1580s and 1590s) to which OPS referred as showing Kilchoan to be the sole church in the parish, which image is incorporated into OPS map of parishes. Blaeu's Atlas (1654), which incorporates, but may edit, a number of Pont's maps show Kilchoan as well as other churches in the parish.

Le Tòmas MacCòmhghan // Thomas Ashby
McCown

Betesda, Tìr-Mhàiri // Bethesda,
Maryland

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9. Society Officers

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