



CLAN EWEN SOCIETY

Bulletin

No. 11 M A Y 1984

TO ALL CLAN MEMBERS

A PIONEER AND SIXPENCE

McEwens in Canada and America, in fact anywhere outside of Scotland, will have many stories as to why their forefathers set sail and forsook their homeland for an uncertain future, will be interested in the following story told to me by my father.

Our branch of the Clan had been Grocers in the Stirling-Callander area since about 1800. About the middle of the last century a young clerk, employed in one of the stores, asked for an interview with my Great Grandfather, — Old Dan, who managed the Callander Branch.

“What do you want?”, growled the old man. “A rise in my wages, sir”, said the young man. “Why?”, said old Dan. “Because I want to get married”, said the young man. “By how much do you expect me to raise your wages?” “A shilling, Sir”. “A whole SHILLING?”, bawled his enraged employer. “What do you think I am made of — money?. You can have an extra sixpence: that’s final, and you aren’t even worth that amount”.

But the young man stuck to his guns and held out for his shilling but, not getting it, he said. “I’m sorry Sir, please accept my notice”. “Where do you think you will get as good a job as this?”, demanded old Dan. “I’ll emigrate”, said the clerk. “Then you are not only a fool but mad as well”, was the retort.

The story is that this young clerk did indeed go to Canada, finishing as one of the early chiefs of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Who he was or what his name was, I know not but, he was “Typical of his Breed”.

His fate hung on a sixpence. Had he got his shilling he may have settled down to the douce life of a clerk in Callander for the rest of his days, but, he had the tenacity to hold out for what he knew he was worth. He made a fortune and became a great industrial pioneer — by holding out for a sixpence.

Such were our fathers, in the not too distant past. While they appreciated the comfort of the plains, they went forward to the challenge of the mountains.

Reviresco,

REV. PETER MacEWEN

OBITUARY — Mrs. W. E. J. H. WILLIAMSON

It is with regret that the Editor has to record the loss by death, after a short illness, of Mrs. W. E. J. H. McEwan Williamson, on 12th January, 1984.

Mrs. Williamson, Ella to Clan Ewen Committee and other close friends, was a founder member of this Society and, from its inception, accepted, jointly with her daughter Eleanor, responsibility of all Secretarial duties. These have been consistently discharged with the systematic care and attention to detail which was her way with all she undertook.

During those formative years, on all the holiday excursions which mother and daughter made throughout their native Scotland, no opportunity was lost in making contact with potential new members for Clan Ewen, with satisfactory results.

The Committee understands fully what has been accomplished over the past years and appreciates Eleanor's assurance that she will do her best, within the confines of an otherwise busy life, to continue with those secretarial matters, as they relate to the United Kingdom, while being relieved of all overseas matters to another.

Daughter of the late Duncan McEwan, in respect of whom there appeared, on Pages 61/63 Bulletin No. 8 of November 1982, under the sub-title, "Old Starry", a most interesting article by Mrs. Williamson. Ella was born in the environs of the City of Glasgow.

Following various moves, some of which are referred to in the foregone "Old Starry" story, Ella finally settled in 1948 with her own family at Bellcairn Cottage, Cove.

In the life of her adopted village and her church, Craigrownie Church of Scotland, her numerous artistic talents were shared and received eagerly. Her water colour paintings, Shetland knitwear, one ply lace shawls, items of which could be found to this day around the world, dressed dolls, etc. etc.

Over thirty years membership of the National Trust for Scotland led to many demands of Ella's time, giving much sought after illustrated lectures on Trust properties, particularly the many colourful gardens. Her intimate knowledge of the Isle of Iona, gained over 30 years of annual visits was likewise shared generously. Founder and Life Member of the local branch of the Woman's Rural Institute and a fully committed Christian with a strong active church connection in all its spheres, came peacefully to a close on 12th January, 1984.

EDITOR'S NOTES: Everyone will be sad to read of Mrs. Williamson's death earlier in the year, as she had been such a wonderful worker and secretary for the Clan, from one of the earliest meetings held at Gartocharn. She shared this task with her daughter Eleanor and I am pleased to say Eleanor has offered to carry on with the secretarial work meantime and Colin, our Seannachie, will be helping with this demanding role. Our thanks to both for being willing to share this arduous task.

There are two venues in this edition which members can look forward to later in the year.

The first is the World Pipe Band Competition, held as always at Bellahouston Park, Glasgow — follow the noise to find the park — on Saturday 11th August. The 'Stand' will again be supervised by Col. Alan Ewing and Charles Ewan. Please look for our sign and tartan — we did show this in a previous bulletin.

Mae McEwan from Troon has put a lot of effort into arranging a social finish to the evening at the venue chosen for our next A.G.M. Could I suggest that anyone wishing to make this a week-end, please let Mae know in ample time, especially if she is required to make bookings for anyone.

Overseas visitors, or indeed any member can get in touch with any office bearer at any time. Names and addresses are once again printed at the end of this bulletin.

We have two entirely different but interesting stories on McEwan's Castle (which isn't) in this issue, followed by an article from David McEwan on a commodity very closely associated to and with Scots The World O'er.

Link-ups are beginning and hopefully will continue. Anyone who can help, please do so and remember we are always pleased to receive interesting articles for future bulletins.

I am sorry to say that Ian McEwan, from Paisley, had a bad accident early in the year, which will make Ian incapacitated for some time. "Best Wishes from us all go to Ian". I especially miss Ian as he was my 'link' with the lady who so ably can take my efforts and eventually give us back our next neat bulletin for distribution to all our members.

YOUR EDITOR

McEWAN'S CASTLE

To help our overseas members, some of whom have in the past told me of the difficulty they experienced while trying to find the Castle on Loch Fyne-side in Mid Argyll, we are including a few notes in the current bulletin to help any of you who, while on holiday in Scotland, may be trying to reach it by yourselves. We do try to organise a group visit each year, preferably in the summer months but with the uncertainty of numbers interested, this is not always possible. If however, you are planning ahead, please drop me a note as I am normally up in that part of Argyll for a good deal of the summer and with a bit of warning, could probably arrange to meet you and take you over.

One important thing. Please remember that it is NOT a ruined castle such as you will pass if you come down Loch Fyne – that belongs to our ancient relatives, the McLachlans, with whom we share a common Irish ancestor. Our castle which has been excavated by archaeologists on whose considered report we are waiting is in fact, a site of what was at some time a defended fort on a site which probably served the same purpose in pre-historic times. It is not visible from the main road – indeed since only the remains of the site still exist, it is not apparent till you are quite close by. So, if this is your first visit, please don't expect to see an ancient pile with towering battlements and the odd dungeon or two, but you will have a magnificent view of lower Loch Fyne and across to the hills of Knapdale to the West.

You can have a very pleasant day's outing either from Glasgow or, if you are already in mid Argyll, from Inverary by turning off the A83, the main road from Loch Lomond at a point between Arrochar and Inverary, on to the A815 for Dunoon, which is well signposted, and after crossing a hill you carry on down the shores of Loch Fyne to Strachur where, instead of crossing the hill to Dunoon you carry on down the Loch side on the B8000, which involves a right hand turn some three miles South West of Strachur. This brings you more or less immediately into Strathlachlan and in another three miles or so you will see Castle Lachlan on the sea side of the road. You are now well and truly in Clan Lachlan territory now and continue in it for some seven miles or so till you reach Otter Ferry, which brings you into the old Clan Ewen territory. The road is well surfaced but as it is the old Loch Fyne-side road, it is not so much

used these days and still has passing bays at narrow passing places.

There has not been a ferry here for many a long day, but if the tide is a bit out you will see quite clearly the long spit of sand which runs half way over the Loch with a beacon at the tip, which made it such an ideal crossing of the Loch. Incidentally, it is this long spit of sand (Oitir in the original Gaelic) which gives the modern Otter, its name. Looking West at this point you are looking at another part of Mid Argyll which till the last century, had more than its share of McEwans who like the Kilfinan ones, had by that time, become mainly small farmers and fishermen. While digging into McEwan families of that era I was delighted to come across a namesake of my own, one Colin McEwan, who was born on the west side of the Loch but came across to the Otter side on marriage. Colin married three times, the last time when aged 74, and when he finally died in 1866, aged 89, his Death Certificate reads – "*Cause of death – Old Age*", and "*Duration of Illness – Two Weeks*". I only hope I can do as well.

Another three miles brings you to Kilfinan where you will find the old Parish Church and Graveyard and since the West side of Kilfinan Parish corresponds roughly with the ancient McEwan lands, both are worth a visit. Recent changes in ownership in the area have simplified the problem of getting to the Castle site and advice here is to look in at the Kilfinan Hotel and consult the Hotel staff about the path to Kilfinan Bay. The path itself runs down Kilfinan burn to the Bay and then a walk along the beach brings you to the small headland on which traces of Caisteal Mhic Eoghainn (I am quoting the Ordnance Survey map) stand.

It is not a strenuous walk – some two odd miles there and back and I suggest that if you make the trip you allow yourself plenty of time and take it in a leisurely fashion. It is, and here I quite cheerfully admit personal bias, a very lovely, unspoilt bit of the West Highlands and I am only sorry I cannot guarantee the weather, but the Hotel is always there for a meal or some form of refreshment after you have made the pilgrimage or to strengthen you before you set out.

After your visit you may care to carry on, on the B8000 round by Tighnabruaich where you take the A803 round the head of the Kyles of Bute and into Glandaruel where incidentally I was pleased to find in my researches some of our Clan engaged in the 19th century in the well-respected trade of private whisky distilling. I have never liked the official Government term, '*illicit*'. Carry on up the Glen (the road now becomes the A866) and from the top you can enjoy a magnificent panoramic view of Loch Fyne from the top before dropping down, back to Strachur. Incidentally, picnic spots abound wherever you go, so keep in mind the old Argyll saying, "*When God made time, he made plenty of it*" and allow yourself time to enjoy the area and feel at home. After all, you have been all around what the Clan books claim is your ancestors' home.

* * * * *

As announced in our last bulletin, the venue for our 1984 A.G.M. will be Irvine, on Saturday, 6th October. The convener of Cunninghame extends a personal welcome to the Clan Ewen Society and we have been assured a civic reception will be accorded to us.

The format will be as follows. Members can arrive at any time convenient to themselves on that day at No. 10 Glasgow Vennel, the home of the Ayrshire Writers and Artists Society, where a warm welcome will await them. A history and display of the Scottish Clans will be on Exhibition. These premises are linked to the Heckling Shop, where our National Bard, Robert Burns, lived and

worked during his stay in Irvine. This has been fully restored and only opened to the public this year. The A.G.M. will be held there. Afternoon tea will be available.

After the business is concluded, the members will then be welcomed at Wellwood, the home of the Irvine Burns Club, the oldest continuous Burns Club in the world. Dinner will be served there after the premises are viewed. As last year's meeting at Symington left our members with a wish for the evening to be extended, a ceilidh has been arranged.

Irvine is easily accessible by train or car but if overnight accommodation is required this can be arranged by contacting Mae McEwan at Irvine 75059. Cunninghame District Council have also kindly offered a tour of the Magnum Leisure Centre on the Sunday morning to any members who have decided to extend the A.G.M. into a holiday weekend. This is the largest centre of its kind in Europe and is second only to the Tower of London for daily visitors in the United Kingdom.

The morning's visit there will conclude with coffee, again with the compliments of Cunninghame District Council.

SEANNACHIE'S SCRIBBLES

The more your seannachie digs into Clan Ewen history both ancient and the more modern family history of our members, the more I am convinced that whatever our failings may be, the desire to see what is on the other side of the hill is not one of them. The ability to move and settle elsewhere seems to have been one of the strong characteristics of the Clan.

Those philosophic thoughts have been engendered by recent looking into family backgrounds in Perthshire and Aberdeenshire with a side look at Galloway in South West Scotland. At the same time going a little farther back to what are known in Scotland as "The Killing Times" of the 17th century I find members of the Clan being transported to the States and, of course, while history is vague there does seem to be a certain amount of truth in the old story that after the original West H. Clan gave up their ancestral lands in Argyll, groups of the Clan did, in fact, move out to other parts of Scotland. The one story I can find no backing for (*as yet*) is the one which has a group of the Clan up in the Island of Skye. On the other hand I am beginning to wonder if we have not links with the MacDougalls in the Lorne part of Argyll.

However ancient history is a subject for the long winter nights and I find myself becoming more and more immediately enthralled by members' family histories and while it will take time I am beginning to see the possibility of setting up a Society set of family records so that family links may be established. So if you are interested in your family background please let me have any information you have and remember family stories even if you are not too sure about their authenticity turn out often to be based on fact and give a base for research. I have experienced the truth of this personally as while doing my own family history I have found several of the family stories which we had always assumed were wishful thinking or told to cover up some family history which in the eyes of a generation or so back did not bring too much credit on the family were based on fact and the fact often proved more interesting and informative than the story.

I would like to make it clear that I am not a professional genealogist but simply someone who is a member of the Society and has developed a deep interest in the various ramifications of the Clan and, as a retired schoolmaster, have now

time to indulge my hobby. As I have said already, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us. And, if you have any information as to when, or why, your ancestors left Scotland, do let us have it. When I started on this I was, I admit, thinking mainly of our overseas members, but it has been brought very forcibly to my notice that my requests for information apply equally to our home based members.

We are already receiving letters which are full of interest and information from members in the States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand and through a family of Ewens originally from a small Parish in Aberdeenshire might well be on the way to establishing a link between a Canadian member and a member in the South of England.

Never mind how you spell the name – I have records varying from McQn to Ewing – and every variable you could possibly think of, in between.

COLIN'S DRAM

As he reported himself in the last Society Bulletin, our Seannachie is fond of foreign jaunts, and one of his traveller's tales last winter was of seeing 'McEwan's Whisky' in a bar near the Mediterranean on the South coast of France. Fellow committee members were sceptical – no one had ever heard of the brand – and Colin's sobriety at the time of the alleged sighting was even questioned!

However the investigative need raised a challenge, specially when the writer found himself sitting beside a whisky broker at a trade dinner a few weeks later. The broker confirmed that there was a whisky company named John McEwan and Company, based at Leith, and that this was linked to a large distillery group.

Further research came up with more information, with great co-operation from the company itself. It had been established in 1863, and had a small distillery just South of Elgin in Morayshire, called Linkwood, near a farm of the same name. The firm claim great age for the distillery, and that it was built officially in 1821, though local legend has it that there was distilling carried out illegally on the site as early as 1790.

Peats to flavour the malt are cut from Rannoch Moor, a few miles away, while the water used rises from springs through granite and flows over the peat mosses into Millbuies Loch and Whitewreath Spring, from where the waters are drawn for the distilling processes.

LINKWOOD

**UNBLENDED
SINGLE
HIGHLAND MALT**

The main final product is Linkwood Highland Malt whisky itself. This malt also forms the heart of a very special blended whisky called Chequers De Luxe. Both are over 12 years old when finally bottled, after spending that unusually long mellowing and maturing time in wooden casks.

PRODUCT OF SCOTLAND

CHEQUERS

SUPERB DE LUXE
BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY

An Especially
*Harmonious Blend of 100% choice
Scotch Whiskies.*

DISTILLED AND BOTTLED IN
SCOTLAND

JOHN McEWAN & CO., LTD.
ELGIN & LEITH, - SCOTLAND

750ml 86.8 PROOF

PRODUCT OF SCOTLAND

CHEQUERS

BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY.



Lartier generatiblis
came by a certain individual process which made
an unusual Scotch Whisky, unlike any other.
We have kept what they gave us, departing little
from the old ways. As to whether this is a virtue
in us, you must seek the answer, if you will,
in our product, Chequers.

THE NUMBER OF THIS
BOTTLE IS:
C 475027

J. McEwan

JOHN McEWAN & CO., LTD.

To mark this great age for whiskies, both the single malt and the blended de luxe have special bottle labels — in the case of LINKWOOD a neck label shows the year of distillation, while CHEQUERS has a small rear label with an individual bottle number.

But what about McEWAN'S whisky? The company's other main product is a blended whisky, The ABBOT'S CHOICE, which is widely available in both home and export markets and has a distinctive yellow scroll-like label with an abbot's head as a symbol.

The
ABBOT'S CHOICE



43%vol 75cl

Finest Old
Scotch Whisky

PRODUCT OF SCOTLAND PROPRIETORS ESTABLISHED 1863
John McEwan & Co., Ltd.
LEITH - SCOTLAND

The company's French importer and distributor however apparently felt that this name would not go down well in his sales area. Maybe the senior works in France usually choose brandy, or perhaps they are even teetotal! The firm's answer was to produce McEWAN'S Finest old Scotch Whisky, exclusively for the French market.



But if you want to see a bottle, or to buy some, it seems you will have to go to France. The label is reproduced so that you might easily recognise it in that bar or liquor store, and it is amber-yellow in colour with dark brown edging and printing.

And there's no prizes for guessing what brand of spirit will be in Colin's duty-free allowance after his next holiday at Agde. Slange!

D. McE.

WITCHES

Gavin McEwin of Australia wrote that the last witch to be burned in Scotland was one Elspeth McEwen. I thought that members might be interested to learn more about Elspeth and quote now from John F. Robertson's "History of Galloway".

"From the time of Knox, the Church of Scotland had been particularly vicious in its attitude towards witchcraft. (It should be mentioned perhaps that the Episcopalians in Scotland had a comparatively clean record in this respect, but perhaps this was simply because they were too busy hunting Covenanters to be bothered with witches). The last witch to be burned in Galloway was Elspeth McEwen from Cubbox in the Glenkens. She was condemned by her minister and kirk session, imprisoned for two years in Kirkcudbright Talbooth and tortured to make her confess. In the end her condition became so wretched that she begged her tormentors to end her life. Her last request was granted, and she was burned to death at Kirkcudbright in 1698. Witch-hunting continued well

into the 1700's but the victims were no longer killed, only banished from their parishes. The session records of both Kirkcudbright and Twynholm contain several examples of the ridiculous evidence offered by ministers and elders by way of proof against women accused of witchcraft.”

Jennifer Sellars

My thanks to Jennifer Sellars for her additional notes on Elspeth the Witch. Her reference to the hunting of Covenanters comes at a very apposite time in my digging into Clan history as Michael McQuown of Philadelphia has as an ancestor one John McQuown, who seems to have been transported to the States after being on the wrong side (The Covenanters) at Bothwell Brig in the late 17th century and I see with great interest in a letter which has just come into my keeping, from Mrs. Cassius McEwan of Palo Alto, that her McEwans in the States, stem from a Robert McEwen, who appears to have been on the same ship, the Henry of France, which sailed from Leith, (the port of Edinburgh) on the 5th September, 1685. There was also a Duncan McEwan on the ship, although since the first two are reported as being from Dundee, while Duncan came from the Island of Islay, he would hardly be a close relation. But it seems more than likely that John and Robert might well be connected and both finished up at Perth Amboy, New Jersey.

Michael's family history has it that before the arrival of the reluctant Covenanting emigrants, the town was simply Amboy, and took on the Perth addition from the McEwens' home area in Scotland. Or perhaps did the whole ship's load come from the Dundee/Perth area? This is another fascinating piece of history I must clear up. Ah well, all I need is time to pick the brains of people who are a good deal better versed in Scottish history than me.

Any more of our members with a Covenanting background?

COLIN

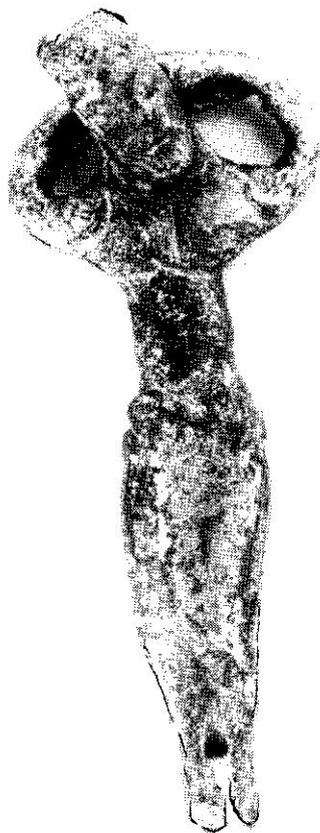
MacEWEN'S CASTLE, KILFINAN, ARGYLL, SCOTLAND

This site was excavated in 1968 and 1969 by the Cowal Archaeological Society and the British Girls' Exploring Society. The excavation was directed by Miss D. N. Marshall with Miss Charlotte Lythe as Assistant Director. This promontory site does not have a "castle" on it as the name would suggest, but is by tradition the seat of the MacEwen's before the 14th century. The promontory was defended by a rampart and inside this were found the remains of two buildings – one with walls built almost entirely of turf and the other of stone. In the stone built house a click mill stone had been used as a hearth. A very interesting 12th century copper Crucifix was found in the turf house. This was, however, an unstratified find. The second season's excavation revealed that the site had earlier been occupied by Iron Age people in two distinct phases. The first group built a wooden palisade round the edge of the promontory enclosing their wattle

and daub huts. The second group constructed a timber laced stone wall on top of the earlier stockade, and their huts would appear to have been larger and more solidly constructed. This stone wall was eventually burned and some of the stones were vitrified.

THE CRUCIFIX

At present the Crucifix is with the Department of Archaeology, The University, Glasgow and is being examined by Mr. Eric Talbot. Eric hopes to complete his report soon, and we are indebted to him for the following photograph and short note.



The Crucifix, 4½ inches long and made of copper/bronze, was found unstratified in the turf of the Turfhouse. The crown, not of thorns, the long hair and ankle-length loin cloth and the feet placed side by side (rather than crossed) are all early features which point to a twelfth or early thirteenth century date of origin. There is a very similar figure on the reliquary from Kilmichael Glassery, now in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh.

The presence of such a figure at MacEwen's Castle is puzzling; even more so is the question of how and when the arms were bent backwards to their present position.

C. EWEN

LINK-UP

I should be most interested to hear from any descendants of:

Edward Place EWEN & Elisha Ann Gordon ELLIS

who were married on 17th MARCH 1827

at Brackley, Methlick, Aberdeenshire

My great grandfather, George Henry Hamilton Bailie Gordon EWEN (2nd son), married Isabella Spence at Millbrox on 24th July 1862 and farmed a small croft, "Tanglan Ford", near Haddo House on Lord Aberdeen's estate. From research I know that several cousins of my grandfather changed the spelling of their name to EWAN and was told several years ago by a great aunt, (aged 90) that way back the name was MacEWEN, but one of the sons fell out with his father and dropped the Mac.

Although my great grandparents had 12 children, my brother appears to be the only male EWEN to have survived through the generations and I am pleased to report that only 2 weeks ago his wife gave birth to a son - James Robert Ewen. My brother has the family bible of George and Isabella and we are all most anxious to add to it.

If any of the above names mean anything please contact me:

*Mrs. J. M. Sellers,
The Bend, Springwood Lane,
BURGHFIELD COMMON,
Reading, Berks. RG7 3DS*

Mr. C. Ewins, 26 Balmanno Park, Bridge of Earn, Perth PH2 9RJ would like to hear from any other member who has come across his family spelling of the name. Clues seem to indicate a possible Ayrshire background, as there was definitely a family using that spelling in Ayrshire in the early 19th century.

Mrs. Vivian McEwen Eskie, 12762 S. E. Royal Troon Court, Hobe Sound, Florida, writes that she is having trouble doing her genealogy, (aren't most of us Vivian!!) and would gladly correspond with anyone who can help.
