

# CLAN EWEN SOCIETY

## *Bulletin*

No. 14 NOVEMBER 1985

### *THE REAL MacEWEN*

*From the Chairman*

Most of us know the expression – The Real McCoy. It means of course the Genuine Article, the Real Thing. Various attempts have been made to explain the origin of the saying.

For instance, Collins Dictionary tells of an American Boxer called Norman Selby whose professional name was 'Kid McCoy', and they say that he was known as the Real McCoy to differentiate him from another boxer of the same name. However, I feel that properly the expression should be read as the Real *MacKay*. This is the way I have always taken it and I've often wondered who this regular guy could be to earn such a niche in history all to himself. Was he perhaps a Royal MacKay using the word 'real' in the old sense as in 'Real Tennis'? Or was he a MacKay of such stupendous proportions and character that all others were just wee bauchles by comparison?

The answer lies probably in the MacKay country away up in the North West corner of Scotland in the Durness-Cape Wrath area. We spent a holiday there some 20 years ago and – anyway in these days, there were MacKays everywhere: sneeze and you blew at least ten worthy MacKays into the sea. However, the main Estate in the region was not known as The MacKay Estates, but as the Reay Estates Ltd., and one saw that name painted on signs and on the backs of lorries. So here is probably the origin of that expression. Reay is pronounced Ree and it is not a very big jump from the Ree MacKay to the Real MacKay. At least, that's how it seems to me. Of course, one could always write and ask Clan MacKay . . . .

Whatever the origin, the expression means the Genuine Article, the Real Thing, someone or something of particular merit. It takes us to a consideration of men and women who in their own way have earned such a title as The Real MacEwen. People like Samuel McEwen whose heroic death as a Covenanter we noted last year, or Colin McEwan, our Seannachie, who died recently and who was a member of the Special Operations Executive in the war out in China and Hong Kong. Such men are worthy to join the 200 fighting men the clan could at one time muster. For what it's worth, I put forward the suggestion that we gradually compile a list of people who, in their own day and generation, have brought lustre to the clan and whether in Battle, Hospital, Professorial Chair or in any other way, can lay claim to the title of The Real MacEwen.

*REV. PETER J. MacEWEN*

## EDITOR'S NOTES

In this bulletin we all have had the sad task of recording our Seannachie's sudden death.

Colin McEwan was a man of "many parts". Most have come to light in his obituary, written by Colvyn Haye, Commissioner for the Hong Kong Government, and copied herein.

Colin had an extensive file of notes, correspondence and parts of "Family Trees". He was very knowledgeable on Scottish and Clan History and wrote to numerous friends all over the world. Any member who was waiting to hear from him can now contact any committee member, who will try to help in whatever way they can.

May I also ask anyone at all interested in the task that was Colin's — he always managed a "Scribble" for each bulletin — to contact us. He or she will be made welcome, helping on the committee and with further bulletins.

My husband John is very interested in his "roots". His sister Cathie has written their parents' love story for him. Everyone loves a love story and I have condensed this one for our members to read. Isaac and Martha were ordinary, everyday people — but, were marriages 'made in heaven' then?

We have an interesting article from our Vice-Chairman and a photograph taken when "The Clans met in Glasgow" — quite an auspicious occasion.

Thank you Dorothy Fuhlhage; the letter you had sent to Colin with other information has been passed to Charles Ewen.

*From MRS. BETTY McEWAN, Your Editor*

## OBITUARY FOR COLIN MCEWAN, M.B.E.

Colin McEwan's many friends and admirers in Hong Kong will be sad to hear of his recent death in Scotland.

Older residents will remember the tough Young Scot who arrived in Hong Kong in April, 1939 to teach Physical Education at King George V School.

Born 20th April, 1916 in Minishant, Ayrshire, son of the local headmaster, Colin Mitchell McEwan was educated at Carrick Academy (Ayrshire) and Edinburgh University (where he took an MA in Latin and Greek). He attended Jordanhill School of Physical Education in Glasgow and taught in Ayrshire for two years before joining the Hong Kong Government.

With the outbreak of war, Colin joined the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps and was one of a group training in and later carrying out undercover acts of sabotage. He escaped from Hong Kong on the night of surrender to the Japanese, with the official party from Telegraph Bay, making his way into China where he spent much of the rest of the war with Special Force 136. Colin was very reticent about his military exploits which included periods of parachute training in India, but he did admit to being one of the "Boarding Party" at the incident in Goa, described in Leason's book of the same name which later became a celebrated film featuring David Niven and the heroes of the Calcutta Light Horse. During the siege of Hong Kong he swam out with a limpet mine and sank a ship in the harbour which was acting as an observation post for the Japanese Artillery in Kowloon. This operation was masterminded by Canadian Mike Kendall, then in charge of special operations in Hong Kong, and Colin was helped by his good

friend, Monia Talan, who covered him with diversionary machine gun fire from the roof of the old Hong Kong Electric building. His military services were recognised by the Award of the M.B.E.

After the war Colin returned to Hong Kong with the liberation forces and was briefly Governor of Stanley Gaol, before going on leave to Scotland where he married Betty MacMillan, a primary school mistress. They came out to Hong Kong in the summer of 1947 and lived happily there until Colin's retirement to Scotland in 1963. Their three daughters, all born in Hong Kong, were educated at Diocesan Girls' School.

Colin McEwan's service in the Education Department was distinguished by his being the first Organiser of Physical Education. On retiring to Scotland, this man of many parts qualified as a top chef, did some part-time teaching, worked with a shepherd and developed an interest in genealogy before becoming the official archivist to "The Clan Ewen Society". Ever an active man, Colin was an enthusiastic canoeist and sailor, interests he had developed in Hong Kong.

He died in his town flat in Cumbernauld, near Glasgow on 22nd August, 1985. The bare facts of Colin McEwan's life and times in Scotland and Hong Kong do not pay sufficient tribute to the man. For this, one must look to what some of his friends said about him, and prominent among them must be Sir Donald Luddington, who had this to say on hearing of Colin's death:

*"Shortly after I arrived in Hong Kong in March I applied to join the newly established Hong Kong Defence Force (later to be granted the title "Royal"). As I was stationed in the New Territories Platoon which was largely made up of ex-members of the British Army Aid Group including Major C. M. McEwan, M.B.E. Colin was in command of the Unit during the first annual camp in November, 1949 and he really introduced me to village life in the New Territories. Gradually during that camp and later I learned something of his military background which had earned him the M.B.E., when it was still an unusual Award. In 1940 Colin had been one of a group of Volunteers from the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps selected for specialist training for operations behind the enemy lines in the event of an invasion of the Colony. Other members of the group, known as Force Z, were Eddie Teasdale and Ronnie Holmes. In the event the Japanese attack on Hong Kong in December 1941 moved so swiftly that there was little opportunity for special sabotage activities. Colin was one of a small group that accompanied Admiral Chan Chak in the last minute escape on an M.T.B. just before the surrender (see page 185 of "Hong Kong Eclipse" by Endacott and Birch). Colin eventually joined the British Army Aid Group under Colonel Ride and spent most of the rest of the war in an intelligence role in Kwangtung Province. He obviously learned to adapt to the Chinese way of life and was always quite at home with Chinese. As far as his massive frame allowed him to do so, he blended into the Chinese village background. During the Korean War training for the Intelligence Platoon in particular, we were out on exercises almost every other weekend. It was during this time that I learned to admire Colin's capacity to accept what came whatever it was: a typhoon, a major cock-up or the loss of the rations. He could sleep anywhere and at any time; on a sampan, on the rocks, wet, dry, hot or cold. Eventually with increasing commitments to the Education Department, and with some deterioration in his health, Colin had to withdraw from active participation in the Defence Force. However, he never lost interest in the unit which he had commanded and we had many a cheerful reunion chow. All who had served with him were sorry to say farewell*

**when he left Hong Kong in 1963. All who knew him will miss Colin. He was a big man in every sense. One does not often meet such as him".**

**My own memories of Colin McEwan are coloured by early acquaintanceship with him in the fifties in Hong Kong when he served briefly in the Education Department Headquarters as Registrar. He was tempted to come into the Office largely because of a mischievous desire to make the bureaucrats sit up and he did this characteristically in shorts and an open-necked shirt. His sworn enemy was the Deputy Director at that time who insisted that Colin wear a suit, or at least a tie, to direct meetings. Colin eventually conceded by wearing a tie with his short-sleeved shirt and shorts. Tiring of bureaucracy, Colin returned to Physical Education and the outdoor life he loved. Befitting a man of many talents, the athlete and scholar, Colin McEwan wrote for Blackwell's magazine. At least one of his published stories described a true incident in which he and a group of like-minded adventurers took on a gang of pirates preying on Hong Kong shipping in the unsettled waters around the islands immediately after the war. One dark night they stormed the pirate ship which turned out to be a Royal Naval warship. The exploit, which caught the Navy completely by surprise, was suitably celebrated in the ship's wardroom.**

Colin McEwan will always be remembered in Hong Kong by his many friends of all nationalities. He will be particularly missed by many of the Chinese he befriended during the Japanese Occupation and immediately afterwards. This is the sort of immortality he would have wished.

*COLVYN HAYE, Commissioner*

*A.G.M.*

The A.G.M. of the Clan Ewen Society was held in the Black Bull, Hotel, Killearn, Stirlingshire on Saturday, 5th October. Once more we were lucky to have a dry, sunny day and all present were delighted to meet again in the comfort of this hotel set in the pretty countryside of the Campsie Hills.

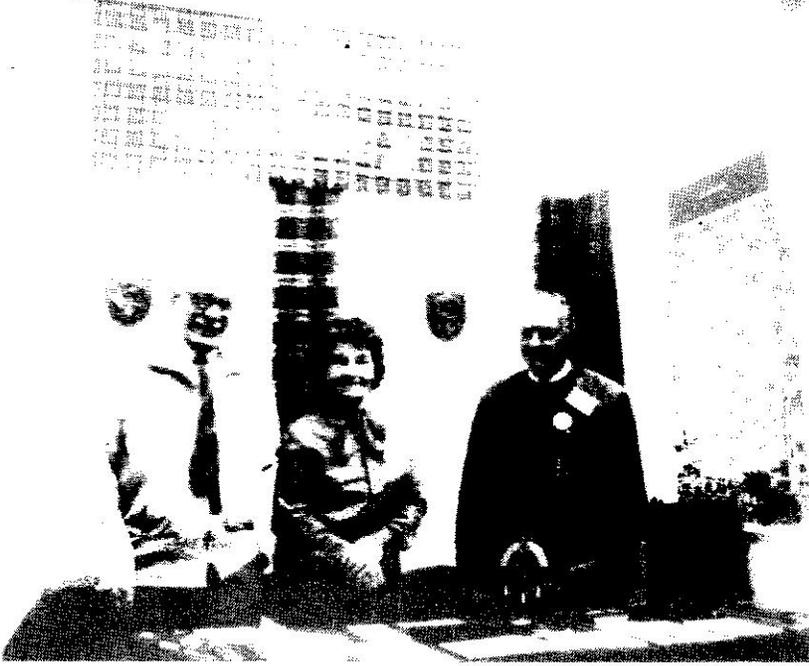
Twenty-one members were welcomed on this occasion by Alan Ewing our Vice-Chairman. The Rev. Peter McEwan, our chairman was present, but owing to his recent illness had decided to leave the running of this meeting to his depute.

The Clan members were all saddened by the recent loss of Colin McEwan our geneologist and all stood in silence for a few moments as a tribute to his memory. Alan Ewing then read out some notes on Colin's remarkable career and interests and paid tribute to his work for the society.

The meeting proceeded to the business which was conducted efficiently — the secretary explained some of the contacts she had made over the year and the treasurer gave his report which presented a fairly healthy state of the finances and the membership now being 140. Members enjoyed their afternoon tea and as is usual on these occasions, meeting and talking with one another. It is a pity however, that even after advertising we do not have a few more old or new clan members at our Society meetings. It is proposed to have the next A.G.M. in Luss — the area publicised by the T.V. series — "Take the High Road". Perhaps this venue may encourage more to attend. Details of meeting will be announced in a future Bulletin.

*ELEANOR McEWAN WILLIAMSON, Secretary*

## INTERNATIONAL GATHERING OF CLAN & KINDRED SOCIETIES



*An excellent photograph of (from l. to r.) the late Colin McEwen, M.B.E., Irene Ewing and Vice-Chairman, Lt. Col. Alan Ewing.*

1985 was the year for the International Gathering of Clan and Kindred Societies, and Glasgow was chosen as the host city. To this end, a committee was formed in June 1984 to organise the Clan Booth Centre in the McLellan Galleries in Glasgow.

We were fortunate in that Glasgow District Council allowed us the use of the Galleries free of charge. They erected all the structures for the booths and provided sign-written name-boards for the societies also free of charge. Over sixty Clan and Kindred Societies took part, including a booth each for The Earl Haig Fund Scotland and Erskine Hospital.

The opening ceremony which was conducted by the Lord Provost of Glasgow, accompanied by Mr. David Buchanan, Prime Minister of Nova Scotia, was followed by a tour of the booths where a fine photograph was obtained of the latter visiting Clan Ewen booth where he met Martha and Charlie Ewen, both of whom had visited Nova Scotia. Photographs were taken by Alan Ewing, Jnr., who was appointed official photographer for the event.

The booths were open six days from 10 a.m. till 5 p.m. followed by evening entertainments during five of the evenings.

At the de-briefing meeting in September, which was attended by representatives of most Societies which took part, everyone expressed themselves entirely satisfied with arrangements and declared the event a success. As a result, the com-

mittee was voted to continue extant in the form of a Ferderation of Clan and Kindred Societies, with a view to bringing societies together for the purpose of exchanging views and information, and to give help to less strong societies to arrange or participate in entertainments and items of common interest.

The one disappointing aspect of the McLellan Galleries' week was the shortfall in attendance, from that which we had been led to expect by S.I.G.T. Edinburgh.

## *ISAAC AND MARTHA*

Isaac was a McEwen, one of the seven sons of Anna McEwen who farmed "Cocklehill" in Tullyniskey, Co. Down. They were a well-known family, left fatherless when the youngest was an infant. They had to grow up quickly and grow up they did — tall, good-looking lads who worked hard on their own place and anywhere else they were needed. Their mother, Anna, could and did hold the reins. The lads teased her, protected her and loved her all their lives. It was always sure there would be at least one of them at every event that happened in the district.

On March 25th, in the year 1887, it was Isaac who was at the Mill for the scutching of the flax. Every farmer around was there. It was a hard job but a sociable one, where all the news of the district was passed on. The main news that day was of Bill Graham, farmer of Maybrick, whose wife Kate was expecting her fourth child. His neighbours had promised to let him know as soon as the baby arrived and Bill cast many an anxious glance up the Auchnaskeogh road on the look-out for the messenger. It caught on and most of the men at the Mill took a minute off to look up the road. When there was a shout, "Here's someone now", the entire workforce waited for the news. "It's a daughter, Bill, and your wife Kate's fine". There were congratulations and much back-slapping and when young Isaac McEwen, sixteen years of age, put his hand on Bill's shoulder and said, "Save this one for me Bill, I'll marry her some day", it got hilarious. It was repeated in many homes that night when the men were passing on to their wives all the news of the day. It was generally agreed young Isaac was a card. That evening Bill Graham and his wife decided to call their new daughter Martha.

The years passed bringing their changes. The McEwen boys became men and Isaac came to Scotland. Meantime, Martha Graham was growing up. One incident happened at this time which was to be told over and over again in later years.

A lone gypsy woman came to the Graham's door looking for a night's shelter. This wasn't unusual and they let her stay in the barn. Next morning she was given her breakfast and before she took to the road again, and by way of thanks, told Mrs. Graham's fortune; and said she had a daughter called Martha who was well named as "Martha" and who would marry a man called "Isaac".

At eighteen Martha was a typical colleen, with hair as black as a raven's wing, the real blue-black hair and hazel eyes, as the Irish say 'set in with a sooty finger'. It was at this time she met Isaac McEwen.

Isaac now lived and worked in Ayrshire, and still being a bachelor, was free to go home often — "Cocklehill" was still home. He was home for the harvesting,

repairs to his own home, for every occasion and local event. Now his visits became more frequent but for a different reason. Isaac was courting. Martha was flattered at having an older beau, but was not swept off her feet. At eighteen she wasn't ready to settle down but at nineteen she and Isaac were married and came to Scotland to live.

They had their share of hard times. Martha was thrifty and Isaac was prepared to work hard. They both had to, for eventually they had six children to look after and bring up. Two sons and four daughters. It was a busy house — a happy house — a loving home.

There was another side to Martha. She had '*feelings*'. She seemed to know when any of her Irish people were sick or troubled. She often prepared for unexpected visitors who invariably turned up. However, these '*feelings*' were strongest with her children and 1939 saw her youngest son, John, called up for Army Service. The following years took their toll. Because of her '*feelings*' she knew when he wasn't all right and as for so many other parents, it was a 'long war'.

Martha had a heart condition but it was Isaac who died first, not from any disease. He had 'run his course' and at 81 years his life force flickered out.

In the intervening months, Martha's '*feelings*' recurred in a dream. Isaac as a young man, standing in the middle of a cornfield, the sun shining on his golden hair, calling, "Martha, Martha, I am waiting for you. Please come soon", and she did. Although well looked after by members of her family, Martha joined Isaac fourteen months later.

No, it wasn't roses all the way. Marriages might be made in heaven, but they have to be lived on earth. The silver thread was there and we like to think this one finished where it started — in Heaven.

*Our young ones are interested in their roots, but that is not entirely why this was written — it was written in loving memory of ISAAC and MARTHA McEWEN.*

### 120 NORTH SHORE ROAD, TROON

When my husband Hugh and I attended the first A.G.M. of the Clan Ewen Society we were impressed at the friendships of the various members from "a' the airts and pairts". We were delighted at the impact and the interest shown from so many parts of the globe.

Living in the heart of the Burns country, here in Ayrshire, Hugh and I are avid admirers of our national poet and I was more than pleased to receive by post, a copy of the Newsletter of the Robert Burns' Society of the Midlands, Columbia. This came via Mr. Sam E. McCuen of Columbia, S.C., who had sent it to Martha the hard-working wife of our equally hard-working treasurer, Charlie Ewen. It was fascinating reading and if I ever needed proof that "Man to Man the world o'er, shall brithers be for a' that", there it was in my hands. Fund-raising is always an essential part of any society and can I send my congratulations to all the lads and lassies of the R.B.S.M. who sold their beer at their Mayfest at *two dollars*

when their competitors were selling theirs at 75 cents. No doubt the "McEwan's Edinburgh Ale" helped here. I am Past President of the Irvine Lassies' Burns Club in Irvine and in October we were honoured to have as a guest speaker, David Webster, Director of Leisure and Recreation in Cunninghame. "Highland Games" was the subject of his talk and the audience was spellbound at the wonderful quality of the slides shown and his humorous and very knowledgeable talk which accompanied them. David, as well as being an organiser of Highland Games, made his name as a competitor and is an authority on his subject. His books are popular and you can be sure of a good read. With the Newsletter fresh in my mind, it was wonderful when David's slides changed from local scenes and venues and travelled abroad. The majesty of the American and Canadian Pipe Bands were acclaimed by our Club and we were entranced at the vast numbers of Highland dancers.

I had been invited to propose a vote of thanks to our speaker that evening. Often quite a daunting task but made easier for me on that occasion by quoting excerpts from Sam's Newsletter. Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, Charleston Highland Games, Flora McDonald and Stone Mountain Highland Games, all were places and events known to the guest speaker.

So the point I am proud to make — even although some of the members of the Clan Ewen Society live on the other side of the world — or down under — 'Reviresco' has certainly meant that if you are a Ewen, Ewan, Ewing, McEwen, McEwan or my unknown — at the moment of writing anyway — friend in the Burns world in Columbia, Sam McCuen, there is a tie which binds us all together in friendship.

*MAE McEWAN*

### *IMAGINE G. I. s IN TARTAN*

Everyone knows Americans love tartan and the swing of the kilt.

But thanks to Arthur Mackie, manager of the Strathmore Woollen Co., Forfar, the Americans at the U. S. Naval Base at RAF Edzell now have their very own tartan.

It's been designed especially to commemorate their first 25 years of living and working in Angus.

Some of the wives from the base helped with suggestions about colours, and had a hand in selecting the best design. The final choice is a blue background to represent the sea, a red overcheck to signify the U.S. Marines, a navy blue check (for the U. S. Navy), and white check to show the crests of the waves.

At the moment, the design is completing its final registration as an

official tartan. It will be called U. S. Navy (Edzell) tartan.

It's so popular at the base, the woollen company is having to run off another batch.

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*ST. ANDREW SOCIETY (Glasgow)*

Ten members of our Clan Society attended the St. Andrew Society Commemoration Dinner in the magnificent Banqueting Hall of the City Chambers in Glasgow on Friday evening, 29th November, 1985.

The evening got under way when the top table was piped to their places under the Chairmanship of Sir Robin MacLellan, C.B.E. Following this, the Rev. Ian C. M. Fairweather, M.A., B.D., Associate Minister of Glasgow Cathedral gave the invocation.

The speeches were amusing, companionship excellent and the MacEwan tartan much in evidence with ladies bedecked in their sashes.

*CHARLES EWEN*

**CLAN EWEN SOCIETY**  
**ACCOUNT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 4th OCTOBER, 1985**

	£
<b>INCOME</b>	
Subscriptions (99) received since 6th October, 1984	271.00
Sale of Clan equipment	22.50
Interest on Deposit Account	10.74
Interest on Clan centre account	3.41
Donations received	<u>159.08</u>
	466.73

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Printing of two Bulletins	172.00
Postage	87.71
Hire of room for meetings	25.00
Sundries	70.22
Purchase of Clan ties	25.88
Surplus of Income over Expenditure	<u>85.92</u>
	466.73

<b>TRADING ACCOUNT</b>			
	£		£
Opening Stock	91.92	Sales	22.50
Profit	<u>9.10</u>	Closing Stock	<u>78.52</u>
	101.02		101.02

<b>ASSETS</b>	
	£
Closing Stock	78.52
Deposit Account	332.43
Clan centre account	100.74
Current account	108.12
Cash on hand	<u>5.45</u>
	625.26

*Signed* CHARLES EWEN, *Treasurer*

**AUDITORS' REPORT**

I have today examined the books and accounts of the Clan Ewen Society and have found all in order and expenditure sufficiently vouched for.

*Signed* IAN McEWAN, *Auditor* *26th September*

**MEMBERSHIP**

Members on Roll    140 Paid Up Members    129

It was agreed at the A.G.M. that the yearly subscription should remain as it has been for the last three years, i.e. £3 for a single member and £5 for a family.

OFFICE-BEARERS OF CLAN EWEN SOCIETY

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Cheques should be made payable to CLAN EWEN SOCIETY, Scotland, U.K.  
crossed and forwarded to:

*Miss E. Williamson, Bellcairn Cottage, COVE, By Helensburgh, G84 0NX*

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CLAN EWEN SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM

SESSION 1985/1986

Member/s Name: .....

Address .....

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SUBSCRIPTION : SINGLE — £3.00 : FAMILY — £5.00

Additional Contributions (*Optional*): To operating Acc. ....

To Clan Centre Acc. ....

NO RECEIPT WILL BE SENT UNLESS REQUESTED