



CLAN EWEN SOCIETY

Bulletin

NO. 7 JUNE, 1982

THE EDITORIAL WORKING GROUP

Members of the Clan will observe that the Bulletin has a new format. This is a consequence of our Editorial Working Group's effort and the professional assistance of one of our Committee members, David McEwan, who is principal of the Glasgow College of Building and Printing.

The Group hopes that members will find the contents of this issue of interest and will be pleased to receive articles for possible publication in future issues of the Bulletin. These should be sent to the Clan Secretaries. The delay in production which has caused great concern to the Committee is regretted and the Working Group is resolved to improve the frequency of production which will now be carried out in Scotland.

It will be appreciated that production costs and postages continue to escalate and the continued solvency of the Society will depend on regular payments of members' subscriptions — £3 sterling or the equivalent exchange rate.

TOUR TO CAISTEAL MHIC EOGHAIN (CASTLE MACEWEN)

A coach tour to the Clan territory took place on Saturday, 6th June 1981. Mrs. Anne Ewen Noble, one of our members from Pennsylvania, who joined us with her sister, has written to our Treasurer as follows:-

"It was a memorable day — lovely scenery, suitable weather and such a kind welcome, from our fellow members. The visit to Castle McEwen was well worth the scramble over the rocks. We appreciated your help in scaling some of the boulders — we hope you weren't

exhausted! It was a pity my husband had to miss the outing because of his back trouble, but my sister enjoyed it immensely."

"We felt the Outing was very well organised. For us it combined historical associations with a trip through a beautiful, wild area that we shouldn't otherwise have visited. We thank you very much for all your hard work."

The following extracts are compiled from the taped commentary by Charles Ewen:

Leaving the congestion of Glasgow we travelled west on the M8 motorway with the River Clyde on our right. On the opposite bank stands Dumbarton Rock and Castle, a natural fortress the Romans are said to have occupied but due to continuous assaults by the Caledonians the Romans eventually left Scotland altogether.

Mary, Queen of Scots, stayed in the Castle until she left for France in 1548.

Below the rock the famous sailing ship the "Cutty Sark" was built.

Continuing west via the shipbuilding town of Port Glasgow we reached Greenock, the birthplace of James Watt, inventor of the steam engine. Here on the opposite bank of the Clyde stands Helensburgh. It has many claims to fame, Henry Bell designer of the first paddle steamer was born here, so was John Logie Baird, inventor of the first television system.

At Gourock we boarded the ferry for Dunoon, the frontier of the ancient Scots Kingdom of Dalriada (AD 500). It is the centre for the Cowal Highland Gathering.

We proceeded along the Holy Loch with its American Naval Base and travelled through Glen Lean to the head of Loch Striven on the B836 climbing very steeply until we reached the A8003 road, built in 1969, which passes through some of the most idyllic scenery in Europe giving memorable panoramic views of the Kyles of Bute and beyond.

After lunch in Tighnabruaich we proceeded along the B8000 to Fearnock Farm, just north of Kilfinan where, with the farmer's permission, we visited the Castle ruins situated on a rocky point on the north of Kilfinan Bay.

The return route for cars can be by continuing along the B8000 from Otter Ferry via Castle Lachlan, (but we were unable to do this because of the width of the coach), to Strachur where Loch Fyne opens out and Inverary and its castle can be viewed on the left bank.

Tea was had in the Inn at Cairndow where John Keats, the poet, stayed on his walking tour of Scotland.

Passing through Glen Kinglass on the A83 we reached the famous scenic point—'Rest and Be Thankful' (860') with a fine view of Glen Croe, and many mountains including the famous 'Cobbler' (Ben Arthur) so called for its peculiar shape.

From the village of Arrochar we crossed from the head of Loch Long to Loch Lomond. It was in this area that King Haakon of Norway landed in 1263. He was defeated by Alexander III at Largs in 1266.

Loch Lomond is the largest loch in Great Britain and one of the most beautiful. It is a small world in itself. It has thirty islands.

The return to Glasgow was by Vale of Leven to Dumbarton.'



Picture of presentation of Clan Plaque to Mr. Martin Bergius, Farmer, Fearnoch Farm, Kilmartin on 6th June, 1981.

*Left to Right: W. E. J. H. Williamson, Allan Ewing, Peter MacEwen,
Mr. Bergius with baby, Charles Ewen and Archie McEwan*

The Society are indeed grateful to Martin for his courtesy and willingness in giving members access through his pastures to the Castle ruins.

THE MUSEUM OF SCOTTISH TARTANS

The museum of Scottish Tartans is situated in Comrie, Perthshire, where tartans have been woven since the early 1600's. The Museum houses the best known collection of tartans and highland dress and possesses a unique record of every known tartan (over 1300 patterns). Many famous old collections were brought together in 1963, when the Lord Lyon King of Arms inaugurated the Scottish Tartans Society in Stirling and its Museum was finally founded in 1977 at Comrie. In its first year the Museum won the prestigious "Special Commendation" of the British Tourist Authority for an exciting new Visitor Facility in Britain, and "Museum of the Year" award for the Best Small Museum in Scotland.

Dominating the collection is the portrait of John Brown, which forms the centrepiece of a corner of the Museum, set out like one of the small parlours at Balmoral Castle. Though Brown himself wears a kilt of sombre grey, the ornaments, picture frames and vases are all in various tartans in Mauchlineware. The portrait was commissioned in 1883 from Carl Sohn, a court painter, for £300. The Prince of Wales, who never liked John Brown for his influence over Queen Victoria, is said to have slashed the portrait with his stick and banished it to Brown's brother in Crathie. In 1944 it was sold in Aberdeen for £4. 12. 6., by now in a dirty and dilapidated state. It reappeared at a sale at Christie's in London and sold for five guineas and two years later the Scottish Tartan Society bought it for £30 and spent a large sum to have it cleaned and restored. Present value is estimated at over £10,000.

Another gem is the large domestic tartan blanket woven in 1726 by Christina Young. The year and the initials C. Y. are embroidered in one corner of this beautiful plaid measuring 16' 7" x 6' 7" in delicate vegetable dyes of blue, pale magenta and a soft yellow.

The Museum houses a large selection of the commercial correspondence of William Wilson of Bannockburn which is of high value because the letters and their scraps of tartan cloth can be dated precisely. Just outside the Highland area, after the Forty-Five, they were not restricted by proscription and continued to make their tartans from the 1720's until 1924. Their correspondence is social history; for instance: "Please send 200 yards of Lindsay to the enclosed pattern". As it is for negro wear, it must be low priced, not

above 1/-d. a yard if you can ”. The explanation for this is that plantation owners in Jamaica liked to dress their slaves in tartan; it made it easier to see them when they escaped!

An unexpected and most valued gift arrived in 1981 when Mr. Alex Cook, from Ontario donated a complete Highland dress outfit of the Royal Stewart Tartan. It had belonged to his maternal forebear who emigrated in 1817 and consists of kilt, jacket, plaid diced hose with elaborate garters and a sporran. Alex Cook relates that the suit was lovingly cared for by his family for 163 years, taken from its case and examined yearly and now he has decided that it is time for the family treasure to come back to Scotland and it has received a place of honour at the Museum.

The Society's immediate plans include staging an exhibition commemorating the Repeal Act of 1782 at Blair Castle under the auspices of His Grace the Duke of Atholl. Requests have been made for the exhibition to visit Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Japan. It is also hoped that an International Day of the Tartan will be recognised on July 1st this year. On that date in 1782 the Repeal of the iniquitous "Dress Act" gained the Royal Assent.

Although the number of visitors continues to grow the Museum has not as many sponsors as would be desirable. A small but dedicated staff run the Society and the Museum. The daily mailbag testifies to the worldwide interest in the finest heritage of this country — the tartans and we can be thankful that so much of the history and research of the plaided cloth is maintained and encouraged at the Museum of Scottish Tartans.

Alas I cannot claim Scottish Ancestors, being Swedish, but I feel that the kilt and the tartans — in spite of occasional ridicule — are really worth preserving and cherishing and I hope that if anyone from the Clan Ewen Society find their way through Comrie they will visit the Museum and I promise they will come away with more knowledge and appreciation of the tartans.

*GUDRUN MacEWAN JOYCE,
Ballaig, Comrie, Crieff,
Perthshire*

FEBRUARY, 1982

GENEALOGY CAN BE HABIT FORMING

Published by James R. Williams

WARNING: *GENEALOGY POX*

(Very Contagious to Adults)

SYMPTOMS: Continual complaint as to need of names, dates and places. Patient has blank expression, sometimes deaf to spouse and children. Has no taste for work of any kind, except feverishly looking through records at libraries and court houses. Has compulsion to write letters, swears mail man doesn't leave mail. Frequents strange places such as cemeteries, ruins and remote desolate country areas. Makes secret night calls. Hides 'phone bill from spouse and mumbles to self. Has strange far away look in eyes.

TREATMENT: Medication useless. Disease not fatal, but gets progressively worse. Patient should attend genealogical workshops, subscribe to genealogical magazines, and be given a quiet corner in the house where he or she can be alone.

REMARKS: The usual nature of the disease is — the sicker the patient gets, the more he or she enjoys it. For this disease there is no known cure.

Our thanks to Mrs. Dorothy V. Fuhlhage, of Kansas, U.S.A.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held this year in Perth at the Isle of Skye Hotel, Queens Bridge, Dundee Road on Saturday, 9th October, 1982, at 3.00 p.m.

Bar lunches will be available from noon and afternoon tea will be served during the meeting.

The Committee will meet at 12.30 p.m.

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continued

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