

The Tartan

The Clan MacDougall Society of North America
VOLUME 52, ISSUE 2 OCTOBER 2017

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- 2019 Clan MacDougall Gathering
- Tartan Editor Retires
- Divination and Clan MacDougall

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From Our President

The seasons bring changes and it is no different within your Society. As your new President I too am part of this cycle. We have new officers learning to be of service and others retiring after years of doing so. Most relevant to The Tartan newsletter has been the June 30 retirement of your distinguished Editor of many years, Peter Clepper of Maryland. In this issue you will read about Peter in an article written by his friend and fellow editor, our Past President Malcolm MacDougall.

Before you read further I must make one important request. After every issue of The Tartan newsletter, copies are returned to us undelivered by email or by post for those without email. This happens when members have changed their postal address, email address, home or cell telephone service but have not advised us to update the information in our records. Without sufficient information we cannot make follow up contact to ask you where you would like us to deliver your returned issues. You may update your contact information at any time by sending an email to us at records@macdougall.org

This month we are mailing out our annual postal letter covering dues, donations, and member contact information. It only takes a minute or two to note any changes in your telephone numbers, email, or postal information and place the letter into the self-addressed return envelope.

We want to serve our members well, please help us to do so.

Scott MacDougall
President



MacDougall

2019 Clan MacDougall Gathering

As we go to press the Chief of Clan MacDougall has announced the dates of the next Clan MacDougall Gathering to be held at Dunollie Castle in Oban from Tuesday July 30 to Sunday August 4, 2019. These memorable events are attended by clansmen from many countries. Though the 2019 event programme has not yet been announced, activities in past years have typically ranged from a choice of sea based tours and overland bus trips to our clan historic sites, to a fine social evening. More information for our 2019 Gathering will be communicated as plans are developed. However, you may start planning to attend now by visiting some of Scotland's excellent web sites for visitors including these two for the Oban area www.visitscotland.com/info/towns-villages/oban-p235801 and <https://www.oban.org.uk/> For the news on activities happening now at Dunollie or scheduled for the future, please visit the Dunollie web site at www.dunollie.org

Clan MacDougall Gathering

*Dunollie Castle in Oban, Scotland
from 30 July to 4 August 2019*

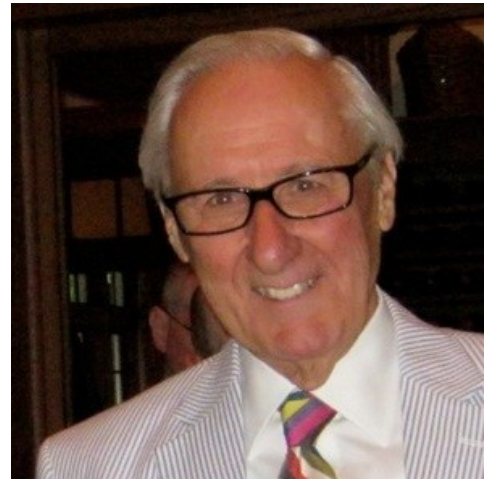


Peter Clepper “retires” as Tartan Editor

He says it’s time to pass the responsibility to someone else. With that decision, Past President Peter Clepper is once again moving to another chapter of his long, active membership in Clan MacDougall Society. This issue marks the start of the 53rd year of continuous publication of The Tartan and the first since 2010 without Peter as editor.

During his seven years as editor, including two while he also served as president, Peter presided over significant change. He oversaw The Tartan’s transition from a paper-based newsletter to primarily an online magazine-like journal featuring more in-depth feature articles.

Peter is the first to say that he built on an excellent tradition. One of the benefits of active membership in our Society is access to the complete Tartan archives on our website. These past issues offer a journey through time, with fascinating news items and historical articles that make interesting reading. They also demonstrate how Peter’s predecessors were devoted to establishing and maintaining a quality newsletter.



Peter Clepper, Retiring

Founding editors Wylie and Mary McDougall set the bar high from 1965 to 1976 with extensive research, excellent writing and wide-ranging news reporting. Walter Macdougall, who served as editor from 1977 to 1984, communicated news as well as thoughtful articles on our emerging policies and goals. His essay on why it is appropriate for the MacDougalls to join with the MacDowalls in one Society has often been used as a background position paper.

A later editor was Nancy Van Valkenburgh, 1991-1995, who continues to play a prominent role in the Society as a member of the Board of Directors and is currently retiring from being our V.P. for Membership. Pat McDougal was Peter’s immediate predecessor and brought a passion to the role for 15 years (1995-2010), the longest of any editor’s term. Pat often published brief articles about our members, many of whom she knew personally, and the publication featured exceptional printing qualities exemplified by her change from black and white to color pages. Her member-focused news concept continues, but now in the timelier monthly e-newsletter.

In 2010, although he was President Elect facing a full platter of responsibilities, Peter accepted then-President Sandra MacDougall’s request to step into the vacant editor’s position. Soon the launch of the new monthly e-newsletter, with its more current news content and announcements, led to a new role for The Tartan as a journal with longer articles by knowledgeable and quite literate contributors. It is now published two or three times a year and distributed primarily electronically. This was a change driven by budget concerns and technological advances. The reduced printing costs have freed up funds for other Society initiatives, especially scholarships.

The Clan MacDougall Society of North America

President:	Scott Allan MacDougald president@macdougall.org
President Elect:	Kyle Jones kyle@macdougallmn.org
Tartan Editor:	Vacant editor@macdougall.org
Associate Editors:	Malcolm MacDougall mpmacd@yahoo.com John McDowall john.d.mcdowall@gmail.com

For more information: www.macdougall.org



MacDowall

Peter Clepper “retires” as Tartan Editor (cont)

Perhaps it was inevitable that Peter would one day be instrumental in keeping our communications at a high level and our media current. After college and military service, Peter moved to the Washington, D.C. area, where he found employment with the Federal government. His life was busy with his marriage and children but he found time to be an active member in several Scottish societies including ours, while he pursued his interest in the Gaelic language.

A family visit to Scotland brought back his memories of his Scottish grandmother and her stories of growing up in Ayrshire. But the Clan MacDougall is a highland clan, so he credits his later visits to Oban, Dunnollie Castle, and especially Iona for inspiring his love of our Scottish heritage.

“This inspiration did not, alas, lead to much understanding of Gaelic, in spite of numerous attempts,” he says. But his love for our heritage did lead to years of effort which improved our Society in many ways. Peter we wish you a long and happy retirement.

Editors of The Tartan, 1965-2017

1. Alexander Wylie McDougall & spouse Mary - Founding Editors (1965-1976)
2. Walter M. Macdougall & spouse Judy (Judith) (1977 - 1984)
3. Howard W. MacDougall & spouse Marjorie (1984-1989)
4. Malcolm A. Macdougall & Co-editor Walter M. Macdougall (1989-1991)
5. Nancy W. McDougald Van Valkenburgh (1991-1995)
6. Pat McDougal (1995-2010)
7. Peter Clepper & Associate Editors Malcolm MacDougall & John McDowall (2010-2017)



Second Sight and Divination Involving Clan MacDougall

NOTE: This is the season of the Celtic New Year, the predecessor of our modern Halloween celebrations. We thought that this edition of The Tartan would be a good time to learn more about these ancient traditions, especially where they involve the history of Clan MacDougall.

Our ancestors, the Celts, were fascinated by the grey areas: the twilight time between day and night, the dream state between awake and asleep, the edges between land and water, the hours bridging the end of one season and beginning the next. The Celts believed that at such intersections the veil between life and death was thinner thus allowing communications to pass through, and for spirits to return to walk the earth. This veil was thinnest as one year became another at their New Year, called *Samhain*. It fell on November 1 at their end of summer but celebrations began at the prior sunset on the *Eve of Samhain* with offerings, costumes, bonfires, and attempts to foretell the future. The early Christian Church tried to end this night of pagan celebration by celebrating the day earlier religious feast date of *All Hallows Eve*; today we call October 31 Halloween. Though we no longer fear this night of returning ghosts and goblins other Celtic beliefs do endure.

After the Arrival of Christianity

The coming of Christianity brought changes. The local sacred places of the Gaels became sites for Christian churches, sacred wells and pools, or sites for open air preaching. St. Columba, a Gael himself, took over their sacred isle of Iona for his monastery. Because the Bible contained examples of accepted prediction and prophecy, St. Columba's Celtic Catholic Church accepted some, but not all, of the old practices.

The Gaels had a terminology to describe their shadowed world, how it worked, and ways use it properly. To them seers, specters, visions, omens, and augury were part of a spectrum of natural ways of "seeing" the world and the future. One such phenomenon is *second sight* which may be thought of as a "*waking dream*". It is the seeing of a vision of a person or a scene which then disappears but may come true later. St. Columba himself is recorded as having had 52 *second sight* visions and prophecies.

The early Celtic Church imposed a demarcation between what was to be judged acceptable and what was not. In their view, if the vision came naturally and spontaneously without aid of artificial inducements such as charms, amulets etc. then it was to be considered a gift from God; but if induced with the aid of anything then it was considered an evil. Later this demarcation would be blurred by the invading Norse culture of fatalistic belief in omens, dreams, and use of divination to ascertain outcomes before undertaking any enterprise. *Second sight* remained a "gift" taken for granted until the successor Roman Catholic Church rule equated it with "superstition"; a view that prevailed in Gaelic areas of Scotland until the Scottish Reformation began to take hold in the 1530s and 1540s.

In 1563 witchcraft became a capital crime in Scotland and remained so until 1736. In such an environment it was dangerous to be too public about one's "gift" of *second sight* lest you be accused of acquiring your vision by witchcraft with amulets or charms. Yet the old "superstitions", fears, and the hunger to know the future never died out. Occult practices to seek protections, or to foretell the future, or to attract good fortune flourished alongside the darker arts. In the Gaelic areas at least, a social knowledge network of "Wise Women", called spae-wives, and seers continued to weave "protective spells" and to perform rituals following traditions, customs and practices that had evolved over generations to ensure the survival of the social group.

It was Protestant Ministers of the new Reformed Church who initially began to docu-



MacDougall

Second Sight and Divination (cont)

ment unexplained occurrences of *second sight* and to seek logical explanations for them. Though evidence of *second sight* and gifted seers were being honestly documented in their research, their rational approach later fell out of favor. By about 1760, with science on the rise and the Church in decline, those who had the “gift” were considered to be practicing sinful superstitions. *Second sight* became an unwanted “gift”. In these situations it was something to be discussed quietly among trusted friends and family members lest you be publicly shamed or worse. It is against this historical backdrop that we will review instances involving our own clan history.

Year 1296 - The Rock Crystal and the *Battle of Allt Dearg* on the String of Lorn

The story of the Battle of the Red Ford is an excellent example of the changes brought to Argyll by the invading Norse culture of fatalistic belief in omens, dreams, and use of divination to ascertain outcomes before undertaking any enterprise.

Southwest of Oban are the Highlands of Nether Lorn, an area of high hills deeply carved by streams and eroded into a rough countryside. Across Nether Lorn stretches the demarcation line long known as *Sreang Lathurnach*, the *String of Lorn*. This high pathway follows the upland watershed dividing Loch Awe from the lochs to its north. The year was probably 1296 though some say 1294 when the Chief of the MacDougalls, accompanied by the powerful local MacDougalls of Raray from Nether Lorn, set out to meet the Chief of neighbouring clan Campbell who lived near Loch Awe east of the *String of Lorn* demarcation line. The two groups were supposed to meet at a stream still called *Allt a Chomhlachaidh*, the “*Burn of the Meeting*”, to discuss their disputed boundary lines running along the *String of Lorn*.

Enroute to the meeting point, the MacDougall party reached the west end of Loch Scammadale lying long and narrow between steep hills on the MacDougall side of the divide. There MacDougall of Raray, captain of the clan forces, halted his men by the shore. Then he circulated a rock crystal charm amongst them to divine the outcome of the day. Such a rock crystal was called a *leug* or *clach-bhuaidh* in Gaelic; some were about the size of a pigeon egg. They were thought to induce visions of things to come, especially if first wetted with water. They were also thought to carry powers similar to a Saint’s relic to bring luck, and to ward off disease and plague.

We do not know for certain what the crystal induced its MacDougall viewers to see; stories vary. Tales tell us that it was passed around until eventually someone dropped it, or else it “leapt” from someone’s hands, into the water of the loch. Construing this as an evil omen MacDougall of Raray and his men in the party refused to go farther. A council was then held, the result of which was that MacDougall of Raray and his men returned home while the Chief’s now depleted retinue continued their delayed journey to the *Burn of the Meeting*.

Before sunset a pyrrhic battle would mingle their blood with that of the oncoming Campbells in the waters of *Allt Dearg*, the *Red Stream*. The explanations for the battle of the two clans disagree but the MacDougall version is this. When the MacDougalls had not arrived, the Campbell Chief and his men had kept coming past the designated meeting point and intruded into MacDougall lands. When the late arriving MacDougall force came upon the intruders inside MacDougall territory a battle began. It cost the lives of many outnumbered MacDougalls as well as Sir Colin Campbell, known as *Cailein Mor*, the Chief of clan Campbell who was killed by a MacDougall archer. The battle of *Allt Dearg* is well described in *Records of Argyll*, and in *Journeying in MacDougall Country*. That battle, at a spot a little above Loch Scammadale where two streams unite near a considerable waterfall, was the outcome of the

Second Sight and Divination (cont)

MacDougall party's late arrival. They had delayed too long at Loch Scammadale performing the *second sight* divination ritual and disputing its meaning.

Year 1647 - Shoulder Blade Divination

The events during the retreat of the MacDonalds and their MacDougall allies in Kintyre in May 1647 reveal how the old Gaelic practices had never died out. In Argyll, nearly a century after witchcraft had been banned, the occult practices still flourished. The hunger to know the future preserved the ancient rituals to foretell what was to come. One ancient method of divination used by the Gaels was the reading of the shoulder blade of an animal. This was called *Slinneanachd* (pronounced *sleenyanachk*) from *slinnean*, the word for *shoulder*. The shoulder blade of a sheep, cow or pig was boiled until the flesh fell from it. The seer then studied the unblemished shoulder blade for marks and spots which would indicate gatherings of people at gatherings, weddings or battles.

In late May 1647 the Royalist force of Alasdair "Colkitto" MacDonald with its large contingent of MacDougalls and their allies was in retreat southward along the Kintyre peninsula. Colkitto knew that the Earl of Argyll with General Leslie and his larger force of Covenanter troops were coming after him but he was unsure where they were. To learn their location by divination, one of Colkitto's men, a seer, looked at the shoulder blade of a cow. He warned them that they were being pursued. Another seer said "*Yes, indeed, and they are at this moment crossing a bridge made of stone and lime.*" Colkitto assumed this was the stone bridge at Arrochar, many miles away. This would give him the time he required to evacuate his force by boat in order to avoid being trapped on the peninsula. Thus informed Colkitto did not deploy a strong rear guard.

However General Leslie had a contingent of fast moving cavalry. The pursuers were actually crossing a bridge many miles closer than the one at Arrochar, the recently built stone bridge at Water of Douglas south of Inveraray. On May 24 Leslie's advance cavalry caught up and surprised Colkitto's force at Rhunahaorine Point on the Kintyre peninsula opposite the isle of Gigha. That night Colkitto evacuated those he could by boat in the time he had. He had to leave behind 300 to 500 of his Irish and Scots to continue their retreat southward to the very bottom of the Kintyre peninsula where they were trapped inside Dunaverty castle on the sea cliffs. When their only water supply was captured a week later the force surrendered with terms and was imprisoned in Dunaverty castle. Three days later The Covenanter army massacred them. Those murdered included 49 MacDougalls and 41 of their clan supporters whose names were recorded, as well as hundreds of unnamed others, many of whom were from Colkitto's Clan Donald. Portions of this account are from *A History of Clan Campbell, Vol. 2* but the original papers documenting these events are contained in *Highland Papers* Vol. 1.

Year ca. 1785 - Spectral Hounds

A century later, with science on the rise, those who had the "gift" were considered to be practicing sinful superstitions. *Second sight* had become an unwanted "gift" to be discussed quietly among trusted friends and family members lest you be publicly shamed or worse, as we shall now see.

On the shore of Loch Awe stands the azalea-surrounded Ardbreknish House (*Rockhill* in English). The home sits on an estate that long ago belonged to MacDougalls before it passed into the possession of a Campbell family through marriage. Today you can rent rooms in Ardbreknish's old West Tower which was the original fortified tower house. Circa 1785 a spectral apparition was witnessed here in the old West Tower.

One summer hay harvest morning Alice Campbell and her friend Miss Lindsay were washing the breakfast dishes in the sink of the small kitchen on the ground floor of the old West Tower. They were startled by a sudden noise coming from the chimney of the fireplace recessed into the wall about twelve feet behind them. They looked to see its cause.



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Second Sight and Divination (cont)

To their surprise they beheld two huge bloodhounds rise as if from the hearthstone, stretch themselves, and then trot across the floor and pass through the closed window to their left. The ladies were so astonished that they were silenced until Miss Lindsay could say:

"Sin coin Mhicdhùghaill is bi'dh feòil 'g a reubadh"

"These are Macdougall's dogs, and flesh will be torn."

The ladies agreed to share their vision with as few as possible, "*dreading danger to their friends*". The vision known as a "*taibh*", pronounced "*ty*", was thought to be a warning.

Since the middle ages large hounds had been used in Argyll to hunt animals and men. Apparently in the locale of Ardbreknish House there were also spectral bloodhounds associated with the MacDougall family, the estate's long ago owner. These spectral bloodhounds were the terror of the land for many centuries. A sighting of was believed to foretell the death of someone close, but no deaths were mentioned here. When the women did confide their vision to a respected friend who had *second sight* he interpreted the sighting to be a forewarning to them to have no dealings with the owner of the adjacent estate. The story is told in *Journeying in MacDougall Country*. A longer version is recounted in *Records of Argyll* as: *Apparition of the Bloodhounds of the MacDougalls*.

Second sight and divination have long been part of the heritage of Gaelic clans. These three stories are considered to be true accounts. In each instance something was seen clearly but its meaning was not well understood. As the Gaels well knew, it is one thing to have a vision and another thing to have the skill to interpret its true meaning.

By Scott MacDougald

Author's Note: Excellent research sources for this article were:

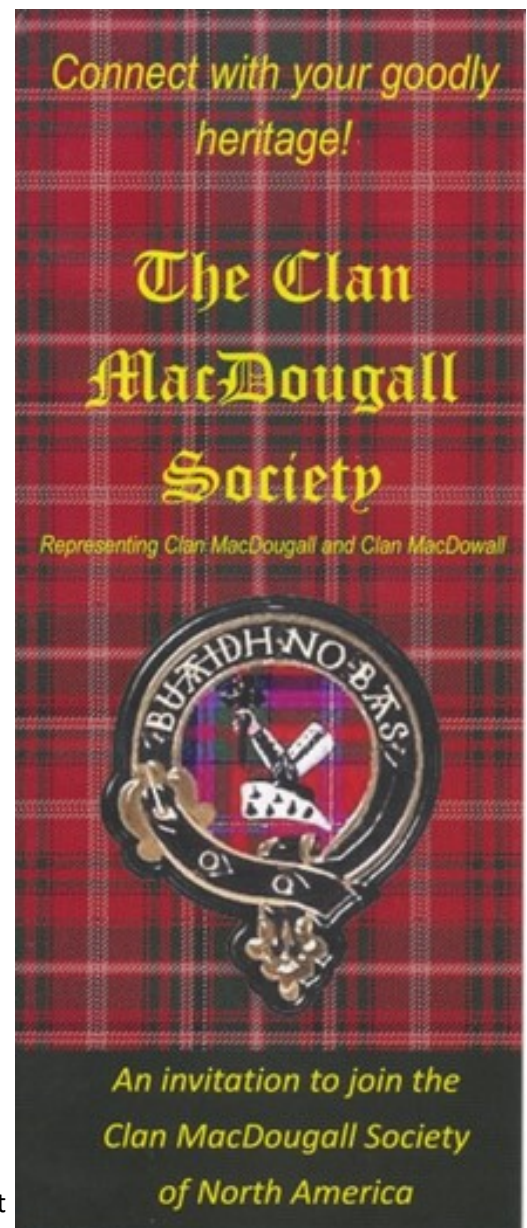
1. *A History of Clan Campbell*, Vol. 2 by Alistair Campbell of Airds. Published by Edinburgh University Press Ltd., ISBN 1 90930 18 5
2. *Highland Papers*, Vol. 1 Edited by JRN MacPhail. Published by Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1916
3. *Journeying in MacDougall Country*, Second Edition, by Walter M. Macdougall, Clan MacDougall Society of North America Inc., 2008, ISBN 978-0-6151-7789-2
4. *Memorials of the Earls of Haddington*, Vol. 2, Digitized <http://archive.org/details/memorialssofarv100fras>
5. *Ravens and Black Rain* by Elizabeth Sutherland, Published by Corgi Books, 1987, ISBN 0 552 13181 4
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8. *Witchcraft & Second Sight in the Highlands & Islands of Scotland*, sub-titled "Tales and traditions collected entirely from Oral Sources", by John Gregorson Campbell, originally published by James Maclehose & Sons, Glasgow, 1902
9. *Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the Gàidhealtachd*, by Lizanne Henderson, University of Glasgow, <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/7708/>, Glasgow, 2008

President's Report to the Membership for 2017

Perhaps this will be the first Membership Report you have seen written through the eyes of a member. When I visited Dunollie House with my family in 1991, Dr. Hadfield, father of our current Chief, said to me: "Did you know there is a Society for MacDougalls in America?" Then he handed a red brochure. Like many others before and since, that attractive little red brochure was my introduction of the Clan MacDougall Society and was the reason I joined the Society upon my return home to Montreal. This year we will be reprinting that little red brochure again so that others may learn of our Society too. Of course some of these new brochures will be headed to Dunollie for more visitors to learn about our Society too.

After mailing in my membership application I began to receive The Tartan newsletter, the one you are reading right now. At the time the Society was very fortunate to have Walter Macdougall in his final year as Editor before he became President. Walter was known for the quality of his articles and for bringing forth the history and heritage of both of our clans to our membership. It is a tradition we are continuing in the present edition and it is a tradition we will continue when we appoint our next Editor. We know the value of our newsletters to our members and that is why we ask you for your own articles, photos and contributions to them. Members can help other members in this way.

As I was reading The Tartan I would sometimes have questions. I thought "Who better to ask than Walter?" I knew no one else in the Society and did not know the organization. President Walter Macdougall took the time to correspond with me in the days before email. That showed me the importance of being able to communicate with members. Today we have email and web sites and Facebook pages but the most effective to an individual member is still the ability to speak and discuss with a knowledgeable person. That is one of the reasons we have clan tents at Scottish events all over North America and that is why we are increasing our budget for them again this year. That is also why we provided every Society Officer and Representative with an updated Handbook last year to make them even more knowledgeable. Anyone of them who does not have the current 2016 version can contact me for a copy. And that is why President Elect, Kyle Jones and I told our Board of Directors at our July Annual Meeting that we would be increasing the personal contact we have with Officers and members. You might just get a call from us asking to chat about how things are going.



MacDougall

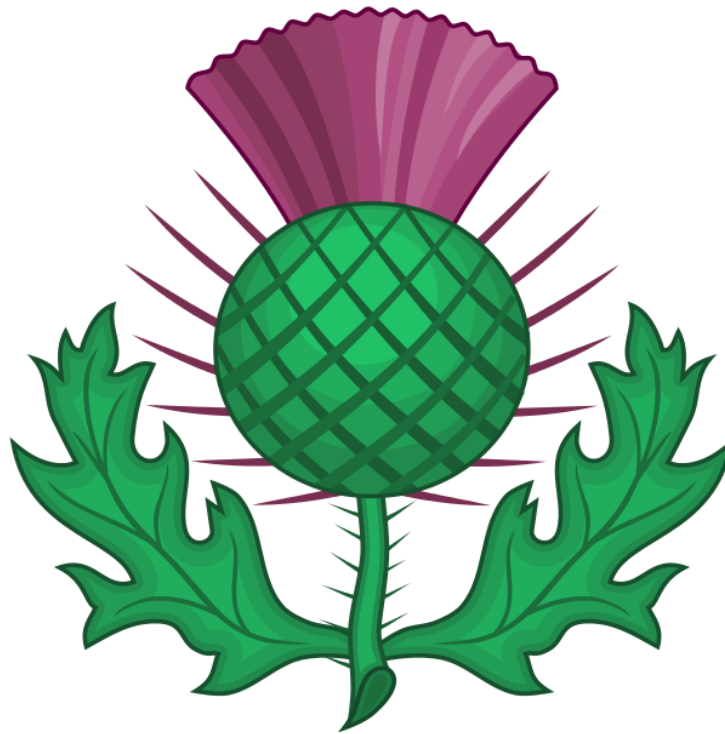
Second Sight and Divination (cont)

My correspondence with Walter led him to invite my wife Marlene and I to travel to a gathering of members which he was arranging in March in the Catskills in New York. I must say that she was not impressed by the winter blizzard we encountered enroute but after we arrived she soon met and became good friends with Walter's sister, Jean. That showed me the value of us actually gathering together to interact socially as a clan family. We can never do as much of this as we should but in May 2017 we moved an Annual General Meeting to Costa Mesa, California. It was nicely arranged by our Southern California Representative Darleen Weisz. Several of our Officers travelled there at their own expense to meet members who had come from as far away as Calgary. We try to hold such meetings outside of North Carolina every two years. When we are in your area please come see us.

Of course we were in Grandfather Mountain, NC for our Founders Dinner social evening in July as well and will be there next July. Then in July 2019 we will gather together in Oban at the 2019 Gathering of clansmen from around the world. I could write much more and tell you about budgets and numbers and such things. But membership is about much more than numbers, it is about our clansmen, our members.

Scott MacDougald

Member and President





MacDougall

Clan MacDougall Society of North America



MacDowall

Reference information for Society members:

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Membership Year Membership Dues are on a calendar year basis ending on 31 December. They may be paid, or prepaid, online for one or more calendar years through Paypal at: http://macdougall.org/membership-information/	Membership Eligibility Membership is open to all who support Clan MacDougall or Clan MacDowall.	Submissions Persons wishing to submit articles or photos of interest to The Tartan newsletter may contact the Editor at: edi-tor@macdougall.org
	Membership Applications and Costs Applications for Membership are available Online at: http://www.macdougall.org/memberApp/ Membership Dues rates are available at: http://macdougall.org/membership-information/	

**Clan MacDougall Society of
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131 Bank Barn Lane

Lancaster, PA 17602

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