

The Tartan

The Clan MacDougall Society of North America
VOLUME 53, ISSUE 3 DECEMBER 2019

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- From Our President
- Christmas Greetings
- Old-Fashioned Letter
from Dunollie

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From Our President

This is the season for traditions. We bring you Greetings from our two Clan Chiefs for the Holiday season and for the coming year. We are also bringing you a special article about Dunollie and its tradition of preserving heritage. We hope you enjoy reading and sharing these offerings with friends and family.

In my final message of the year I would also like to provide you with a brief year-end update on progress we have made on four projects since we mailed our September issue of The Tartan.

1. At our October 28 Board Meeting we approved the transfer of \$5,500 of Funds donated this year by our members for further support of Phase III of the Dunollie Castle work.
2. We have created a system to make Online Donations to Society Funds. This new Online Form feature is available on the top corner of our web page or at <https://macdougall.org/donationForm/>. A Red Button link is below for eNewsletter recipients who wish to click on it to access this new feature.
3. Page 4 of this issue of The Tartan describes a new option for electronic subscribers to elect to receive paper issues of The Tartan newsletter by postal delivery, if they wish.
4. At our October 28 Board Meeting we approved a new and more casual get together at a new venue on Friday July 10, 2020 in place of our formal Annual Dinner. For our July events at Grandfather Mountain tartan dress will be optional. More will be said about this in future newsletters.

We have had a successful year for our Society, and we are looking forward to another, but for now it is time to enjoy the holiday season, and perhaps take some time to read.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and your family from all of our volunteers at your Clan MacDougall Society of North America.

Scott MacDougall
President

Kyle Jones
President-Elect

Donate Here



MacDougall

Message From the Chief of Clan MacDougall

A very Happy Christmas to all our Clans folk in North America.

We hope that those of you who were able to travel will have pleasant and rewarding memories of the Gathering at Dunollie last summer. It was a joyful occasion and a delight to meet so many of you able to come back to the heart of the ancestral homeland. We would like to thank you for the contributions you have made to our clan and Dunollie in so many ways -- your friendship, enthusiasm and keenness to see Dunollie progressing as a sustainable centre for clansfolk and visitors alike.



In particular, we appreciate support for the proposed extension of Dunollie by opening up and converting the stable yard buildings into a whole new experience based on my Aunt's Museum --- this to be done stage by stage and starting with the vital Museum Storage building so much needed. Your support is much appreciated for the Castle restoration, work has now started on Stage III and we aim to get people to where many would like (not available just yet!) which is a viewing point at the very top -- eventually.

The journey to these achievements may seem slow as we have to raise the considerable sums of money needed to make every part sustainable and safe for visitors. It would be a harder struggle without your support and we do thank you.

Finally, can I thank you again for your visit to us at the Gathering (in addition to those visits throughout the year) along with your President, Scott MacDougald, and also with a surprising number of your Past Presidents and a future one! Not forgetting those who were with us in spirit, but unable to cross the ocean.

We wish the Clan a fruitful and Peaceful New Year.

Morag MacDougall of MacDougall.

Dunollie.



Season's Greetings to Clan MacDowall



Clan Chief Professor Fergus D.H. Macdowall with his three Grandsons (from left to right) Garnett L. H. Macdowall, J.A. Dougal Macdowall, and Elliott R. Macdowall

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all MacDowall and MacDougall clansman around the world.

J.A. Dougal Macdowall

Grandson of Clan Chief Professor Fergus D.H. Macdowall,
Chief of the Name and Arms of MacDowall

The Clan MacDougall Society of North America

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MacDowall

News About *The Tartan*

The Tartan newsletter began in 1965 as a four page black and white paper edition created and mailed to members twice a year by our Editors A. Wylie McDougall and his wife, Mary. Much has changed since then.

As one of the benefits of your membership in the Society you may read that first issue, and all the subsequent ones, on our web site www.macdougall.org by applying to our web master at webmaster@macdougall.org to obtain a password which allows access to our web site page containing all of our past newsletters.

Now, most of our Members receive The Tartan as an eNewsletter in color format by email. In our September issue of The Tartan, we said that some of our members who now receive The Tartan by email would like to receive a paper copy.

"Some of you have told us that you would like the opportunity to receive The Tartan newsletter in paper format by postal mail. We could not provide it in paper format to everyone without a substantial dues increase to cover the estimated additional cost of about \$8000 per year to deliver it to every current member. That is nearly half of our annual budget. "

At our October 28 Board Meeting, our Board of Directors reviewed this question. We have decided to offer a new option for Members who now receive The Tartan by email and who would like to voluntarily pay for the cost of printing and postal delivery to receive an additional paper copy in black and white paper format.

For those who voluntarily request to pay for this subscription, black and white paper issues of The Tartan newsletter currently issued in April, September and December will be delivered to them by postal mail. Electronic copies of The Tartan and the other eNewsletters in color format will continue to be delivered to them by email free of charge as done currently.

As an email recipient of The Tartan, it is your choice to add paper delivery. The cost is \$14 U.S. per year to pay for the cost of printing and postal delivery of 3 black and white paper issues annually.

Your free emailed delivery of eNewsletters will be continued as well.

For those interested in this option, an application has been included on page 3 of this year's annual Letter to Members which was mailed in November.

We know this option is not perfect for everyone but we are making it available for those who now receive eNewsletter email delivery and who wish to have this opportunity.

The Editor



An Old Fashioned “Letter from Dunollie”



By Mike Robertson

We have recently celebrated what has probably been the most successful MacDougall Clan Gathering ever, with the over 300 participants from all over the world enjoying a wide variety of events, blessed by beautiful weather; making it an event of happy memories for all.

I would like to take you for a look behind the scenes, to what has made the event possible, and to the continuation of Dunollie as the hub of it all. Back in 1991 “the lands and estate of Dunollie in the county of Argyll”, were formally conveyed to the now 31st Clan Chief, Morag MacDougall of MacDougall, to use her proper title. Along with the assets came the very considerable responsibilities of a historic house; not one but two castles, and a collection of artefacts dating back 1,500 years to the first kingship of Scotland. I have been lucky enough to have worked with Morag, not quite for 1,500 years, but certainly for the last 20 or so; as solicitor, then Factor (estate manager), and now as a retired volunteer helper. Previous occupants of Dunollie House had, very reasonably, looked on it as their private home. The people of Oban hardly knew anything about the building or its history. Morag however realised the importance of it all to the wider public and to the worldwide clan in particular. Along with her Aunt, Hope MacDougall, and her parents, Dr. and Mrs. Hadfield, she first became involved with a project to conserve Gylen Castle down at the south end of Kerrera. I too helped out with that in a small way. I remember flying up and down to the castle by helicopter, because that was the most effective way to get materials down there. (There is still a telephone line all the way down the castle which would make it possible to have a web cam scanning the castle and its wonderful scenery.)



1745 House wing housing Hope MacDougall Museum

For hundreds of years Highland estates have relied on funding from wealthier parts of the world to keep going. In Victorian times they were bought up by English industrialists following the example of the Queen buying Balmoral. Admiral Sir John MacDougall, the 25th Chief of Clan MacDougall, beat them to it in 1825 by marrying Sophie Timmins, a young lady of fortune from Cheltenham. Dunollie House as it looks today is largely thanks to Sophie’s modifications.

Morag took a very different approach. She determined to work for the preservation of those elements of Dunollie most important to the clan, the community of Oban, and the wider public. In March 1998 she set up the official charity “The MacDougall of Dunollie Preservation Trust” (DPT for short!), with the objects of advancing the heritage of the historic castles and property, artefacts and paintings, and education through public display and interpretation. Into that charity she has made over (by 99 year lease or outright gift) most of Dunollie House, the 2



MacDougall

An Old Fashioned “Letter from

castles, the stable yard buildings, a huge collection of historic artefacts and paintings, including the “Brooch of Lorn”, and the bronze horse, ---of which more anon. She also gifted several properties and substantial investments, aimed at giving an income to help cover the costs of managing the charity.

The first manager of DPT was historian Catherine Gillies (who will be familiar to many clan members by way of her talks at the Gathering).

She set about creating the muse-

um and cataloguing the collection. That museum now mainly occupies the 1745 wing of Dunollie House and exhibits a mixture of items from the family collection, and the Hope MacDougall collection.



Brigantine Lady Avenel at Gyleen Castle



Sophie Timmins, wife of 25th Chief

I should say that what is on display is only a tiny percentage of the treasures which have come to light while being catalogued. In the course of this process she, and others of us, encountered the one time residents of Dunollie. Sheets of glass left in the hall would shatter without reason, an envelope was opened containing a black silk scarf; next morning the same scarf appeared on the floor outside the door. A digger driver refused to work on the site again after he returned to his machine, which he had left locked, to find the lights full on and the radio blaring. When working on the landing looking at items belonging to Sophie, Catherine had the overwhelming feeling of being watched. So many things happened that eventually people would not work alone in the house. To this day, my black Labrador, Bruce, refuses to climb the stairs, and waits for me at the foot; why?

I am telling these stories not to titillate, but to make the point that there is something very special about Dunollie which captivates all of us who are involved. I was talking to the castle contractor in the kitchen when he looked down at the floor and said “I recognise that slab. It comes from the top parapet of the castle”. A tartan expert came to look at some cloth, spotted the curtains in the hall, looked more carefully, and after careful research pronounced them the earliest complete plaid in the world, in a pattern which pre-dates clan tartans. That tartan is now re-created and available in the Dunollie “Draper’s Shop” as “Heritage,” a tartan pattern which predates the MacDougall Modern and Ancient Tartans. If my wife talks about needing new curtains, I just mention the Heritage ones at Dunollie!

An Old Fashioned “Letter from Dunollie” (cont.)



Dress worn by Mary Jane MacDougall, sister of Admiral John MacDougall, 25th Chief, at the meeting King George IV at Holyrood in 1822. The dress is on loan to the ‘Wild and Majestic’ special exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland

Perhaps the most amazing of all was the discovery by Catherine of the bronze horse, which had been mentioned many times in the Dunollie archive. Searching the attic for textiles she came across what she thought was a Chinese “Tang” dynasty horse figurine, which piqued her interest as the Chief’s family has a history with China. Sadly, it had been damaged, and the rider figure had broken off at the waist; but as she looked more closely realisation dawned that the rider had a lame leg looped over the saddle, and that the saddle itself was Medieval European. She realised the sheer quality of the workmanship, and that the rider was John Bacach MacDougall, “John the Lame”, 5th Chief of Clan MacDougall. The Bronze Horse had been found! Linked to the Plantagenet kings of England, and the great-bronze working traditions of Germany, the horse tells a story which is still unfolding and revealing an astonishing picture of the MacDougall’s in the Middle ages.

Costumes unearthed in the same loft, and miraculously undamaged over time, have turned to be as perfect as the day they were worn in 1822, when the MacDougall ladies went to Edinburgh to join Sir Walter Scott in greeting King George IV in the first visit by an English Monarch to Scotland in nearly 200 years. Ladies, would you expect your party dress to still be looking spick and span in the wardrobe, after just under 200 years?

The DPT also looks after the Hope MacDougall Collection of objects saved from loss by Morag’s aunt Hope. It is recognised as one of the great social history collections of Scotland. Hope herself is increasingly lauded as one of the leading Scottish collectors of the 20th Century. The collection tells the story of ordinary working and domestic lives of the people of the Highlands and Islands. Items of farming and trades tools and utensils; shoemakers, tobacconists, blacksmiths: they are all there, and are supported by a superb archive of papers and photos. There are literally thousands of objects, recording the importance of social history. They are all badly in need of

display space and the right storage conditions. The museum at Dunollie was first opened to the public in 2011. It has grown strongly over the years. Applications are in progress for major public funding to build a museum quality facility to house the collection. In 2012 Catherine moved on to further study, remaining as curator, while Jane Isaacson brought her community development and fundraising skills into the picture, and greatly expanded the business aspects of the museum. An extremely important element of the work at Dunollie over that same period has been “Dunollie Links”, our community involvement with local schools, and voluntary groups such as “Threads & Yarns”, and “New Roots”. Dunollie now has over 45 registered volunteers. When it comes to public



Photo Dunollie team member Flora in period costume for the Living History Day at the 2019 Gathering



MacDowall

An Old Fashioned “Letter from Dunollie” (cont.)

fund raising, it is these community projects with community benefits that the providers want to see evidence of.

The story of Dunollie moves on continually. There are exciting plans being processed, and major challenges to face. The third phase of work on Dunollie Castle, which will much improve public access, has just been approved to take place over this winter. As well, there are ambitious plans in progress to restore and develop the present stable yard in order to form better facilities for visitors and staff, and in so doing release space to allow extended use of the main house for museum exhibits.

I still think in terms of chatty old-fashioned letters like this one to keep in touch. What would we know of the good work done by family Factor Allan MacDougall, who looked after the Dunollie farms so well on the island of Lismore in the 1850s, if it had all been recorded as data on web sites and portals? Fortunately, we have all his letters etc. in our precious archive within the museum. Equally fortunately the team at Dunollie are, unlike me, bang up to date with technology. The Dunollie website, Clan Portal/ Worldwide Clan, at Dunollie.org are all being updated regularly with the very latest news and projects, so please look out for them. In the meantime, I hope that you have enjoyed my reminiscences about Dunollie; and, more importantly, appreciate just how much the 31st Chief of Clan MacDougall has done, and continues to do, to preserve her clan heritage for your children and grandchildren.



Butter moulds and serving platter

An Old Fashioned “Letter from Dunollie” (cont.)



1 - Bed Hanging from 1685 of 21st Chief with 2 - Replica of Brooch of Lorn and 3 - the book “The History of the Most renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth” circa 1600 acquired by Duncan MacDougall, 16th Chief



Copper pudding moulds from the house kitchen. These and other similar items are inscribed “IM” for Iohannes, the Latin form of John; that being John MacDougall 25th Chief



MacDougall

An Old Fashioned “Letter from Dunollie” (cont.)



Spinning wheel belonging to Mary, 3rd child of Alexander, (23rd Chief), and the last family member to be born in the Dunollie Castle, in 1741



Products and tools from James Hutton, shoemaker in Oban



1950s style telephone and other items from Ford Village Post Office which closed in 1983



MacDougall

Clan MacDougall Society of North America



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