



February 2017– Issue 27

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Oor Wee School

Oor wee school's the best wee school,
it's made of bricks and plaister.

The only thing that's wrang wi it,
is the baldy-headed maister.

He goes tae the pub on Saturday night,
he goes tae the kirk on Sunday.

And prays to God tae gie him strength,
tae belt the weans on Monday.

Dance Tae Yer Daddy

This song has been known in Scotland for a very long time but some people say it came from Newcastle. A 'whippie' was used to whip a wooden top so it would spin and a 'souple tam' is a wooden doll with limbs that move.

Dance tae yer daddy,
Ma bonnie laddie,
Dance tae yer daddy, ma bonnie lamb!

An ye'll get a fishie
In a little dishie,
Ye'll get a fishie, whan the boat comes hame.

Dance tae yer daddy,
Ma bonnie laddie,
Dance tae yer daddy, ma bonnie lamb!

An ye'll get a coatie,
An a pair o' breebies,
Ye'll get a whippie, an a soople Tam.

Hi everyone – our first newsletter for 2017. I hope that everyone had a great festive season and I look forward to your company during the 2017.

Our first meeting will be held on the 11th March and we hope to see you all here.

I will be attending the Bundanoon Highland Games on the 1st April so if you are the come along and see us in the Clan Donald Tent.

This year Glen Innes is holding its 25th Anniversary and it is the Year of the Irish. Clan Donald Queensland will; be there along with Clan Donald New South Wales.

Scotland in the Park will be held 25th June 2017, and Tartan Day 15th July.

The Kirkin o' of the Tartan this year will be held at a different venue, St Andrew's Uniting Church, Creek St, Brisbane on the 9th July 2017. Please see the Diary Dates for further details of events.

We look forward to another great year.

Until next time

Moran Taing

Neil Macdonald

DIARY DATES 2017

26 MARCH 2017 – BRISBANE BOYS COLLEGE – BAND COMPETITION
19 MARCH 2017 – GEELONG HIGHLAND GATHERING VICTORIA
1 APRIL 2017 – BUNDANOON (NSW)
14-15 APRIL 2017 – MACLEAN HIGHLAND GATHERING NSW
6-7 MAY 2017 – GLEN INNES CELTIC FESTIVAL
6 MAY 2016 – REDLANDS HIGHLAND GATHERING – QLD
20 MAY 2017 – SUNSHINE COAST GATHERING – YANDINA
3 JUNE 2017 – BONNIE WINGHAM SCOTTISH FESTIVAL NSW
17 – 18 JUNE 2017 – CLYDESDALE SPECTULAR – BOONAH QLD
25 JUNE 2017 – SCOTLAND IN THE PARK
1 JULY 2017 – ABERDEEN HIGHLAND GAMES (NSW)
9 JULY 2017 – KIRKIN OF THE TARTAN – ST ANDREWS UNITING CHURCH – 131 CREEK ST BRISBANE –
15 JULY 2017 - TARTAN DAY – KING GEORGE SQ, BRISBANE

CLAN DONALD MEETINGS 2017

11 MARCH 2017
10 JUNE 2017 (AGM)
9 SEP 2017
9 DEC 2017 (CHRISTMAS LUNCH)

DIARY DATES 2018

MARCH 2018 - NZ conference 22 March 2018 – 25 Mar 2018

CLAN DONALD CASTLES

Caisteal Uisdean

Caisteal Uisdean, or Hugh's Castle, is one of the less famous castles of Skye. Its history is interesting though, and it makes a good destination for a pleasant coastal walk of under 3km return. Much of the route has been made into a vehicle track, so navigation is easy. By the point where you have to leave the track, the destination is in sight.

The castle is on the shore of Loch Snizort, between Portree and Uig. It is an impressive and very heavy construction from early in the seventeenth century. One peculiarity is that it has no door, with access having been by ladder to the upper floor. It is possible to get inside by squeezing through a window, so long as you have not dined overly well in Skye's restaurants.

There is a great story to go with the castle too. Apparently Hugh (Uisdean MacGillespig Chleirich), who built it, was plotting to become chief of the clan in place of his uncle, Donald Gorm Mor. He planned to invite Donald Gorm to

the castle and arrange for his assassination while he was there. Sadly for Hugh, his letter to the assassin and the invitation to dinner were each sent to the wrong person, thus giving Donald Gorm all the details of the plot.

He was less than impressed. Hugh was "invited" to Duntulm Castle where he was force-fed salt beef and salt fish, allowed nothing to drink, and then walled up in a dungeon to die an agonising death.



Watercolour by David L Roberts – shown during the bitter winter of 1620 when parts of Scotland sheep-flocks were reduced from thousands to handfuls. Its appearance is much as we see it today except the upper floor has been supplied by the artist and a corbelled-out merlon has been added as the likely addition to the defence of the first floor entrance and conjectural wood steps.



The interior of Caisteal Uisdean from the south-east angle. The entrance, with its stair to the floor above, lies in the far well.

JAMES SHAW ROSE MACDONALD

8 Nov 1894 -31 Jul 1917



James Shaw Rose Macdonald was born in Brisbane on 8 November 1894, third youngest of nine children to Alexander Rose Macdonald (cane grower, police magistrate and assistant land agent) and Nancy Ayrey Macdonald (nee Armitage), of 'Hill View', Greenslopes in Brisbane. He was educated at Bowen House School for four years and two years at Brisbane Grammar School where he won track and field events. When he left school he was employed by the Bank of New South Wales.

Macdonald spent three years in the senior cadets and three years in the militia (Australian Field Artillery), and was appointed second lieutenant on 16 June 1913.

After the news of the Gallipoli landings reached Australia, he applied for commission in the AIF and was appointed as Lieutenant, 3 Field Artillery Brigade (3 FAB) on 1 May 1915 and reached HQ 3 FAB on Gallipoli on 3 September onboard the Royal Mail Steamer "Persia".

A few days later he was attached to 3 FAB Ammunition Column (3 BAC) for three days, returning to Egypt to join 1st Division Ammunition Column (1 DAC) on 21 September. The terrain at Gallipoli prevented the deployment of more than one battery of 3 FAB's guns, so there was probably little need for a full complement of officers in the ammunition column and he was sent back to Egypt to gain more experience and to reduce the resupply burden and/or reduce the chance of unnecessary casualties.

(Second Lieutenant Macdonald joined the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in Gallipoli and survived. After evacuation from the peninsula, he returned to Egypt where he spent the final weeks of the year 1915 in the Helwan Australian General Hospital, Cairo for treatment of jaundice. In March 1916, Macdonald proceeded to join the British Expeditionary Force in France and Belgium. He was transferred to 22nd Battery 1st Division Australian Field Artillery and promoted Lieutenant. Lieutenant Macdonald was engaged at the First Battle of the Somme, taking charge of his battery when his Commanding Officer was disabled by wounds at Flers. From an article written by Noel F Adsett May 2015)

He sailed to the Western Front with his unit, disembarking at Marseilles on 2 April 1916. He was posted to 21 FAB on 15 May 1916. Captain Macdonald was in battle with 21 FAB at the major battles at Pozieres in July 1916, where Australian and German shelling and counter-battery fire was very intense and prolonged. 21 FAB supported the action at Pozieres from 20 July to 7 August despite 1st Division being relieved by 2nd Division on 26 July. (Artillery provides support for all units within range regardless of their divisional affiliation.)

Macdonald was also involved in the battles around Flers (November 1916, when 1st Division artillery supported 5th Division), including a period when he took charge of his battery when his commander was disabled by wounds.

21 FAB was rotated into and out of battle over some months in these battles, and was returned to the line from 16 to 23 August, from 17 September to 14 October, and from 26 October to 18 November 1916. He was promoted to Captain on 21 January 1917. When 21 FAB was disbanded as part of the artillery reorganisation he was posted to 2 FAB a few days later, on 24 January 1917. During the period February to June 1917, he was in battle with 2 FAB supporting the advance/pursuit from Bapaume to the Hindenburg Line and the attacks at Bullecourt.

On 23 June 2 FAB returned to the Ypres sector, firing interdiction missions until 6 July when its guns were withdrawn for service/replacement. From 19 to 30 July it

began a program of bombardments to support British attacks in the Third Battle of Ypres. On 30 July 1917 it moved forward to Dickebusch (2.5 miles from Ypres) and then further forward again, to the vicinity of Sanctuary Wood, on 31 July. However the earlier reports of the success of the British infantry in securing the area were incorrect and the batteries came under severe German artillery and machine gun fire as they deployed and they suffered heavy casualties.

The brigade remained in action throughout the day, but at 9.30am Captain MacDonald was killed by artillery fire while in action with his battery near Sanctuary Wood outside Ypres. He was only 22 years old when he was killed by shellfire near Ypres on 31 July 1917. He is one of the eight members of USC who were killed in action on the Western Front.

Captain Macdonald now lies in Dickebusch New Military Cemetery Extension, Kerkstraat, Ieper (Ypres) Belgium. His Commanding Officer wrote: *"I cannot express to you in writing the personal, altogether apart from professional, sorrow and regret that I feel in the loss of your son. He was such a splendid chap, quiet and unassuming, with a fine firmness of mind and character. To say that he was popular with all ranks is understating the facts, as he was genuinely loved by everyone in the brigade. As an officer I looked upon him as one of my most efficient, and I had no hesitation whatever in entrusting him with the important command of his battery on the eve of a most important engagement, and in which we had a most important part to play. On behalf of myself, my officers, N.C.O.'s and men, I desire to offer you and your family our most sincere sympathy with you in your great loss. In doing so we trust and hope that it will be some slight consolation to you that he died a most valiant death in the service of the Empire, and for an ideal which we trust is now not far from complete attainment". Unm.*

James Shaw Rose Macdonald's grandfather was REV. DONALD MACDONALD 1812-1892 Minister of the High Church of Inverness. James is the great uncle of Clan Donald Queensland member Hector Macdonald who has given permission for this article to be printed. Within this Church there is a memorial to Capt James S R Macdonald.

The headstone reads:
CAPTAIN
JSR MACDONALD
Aust FIELD ARTILLERY
31ST JULY 1917 AGE 22
QUI ANTE DIEM PERIIT
SED MILES, SED PRO PATRIA



The Lands of Clanranald

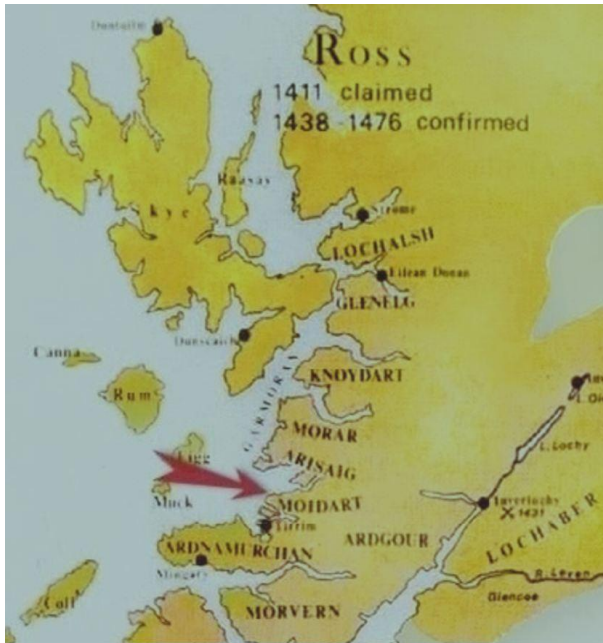
The crest of Clanranald is an armoured bent arm bearing a sword rising out of a castle. The clan motto is "My Hope is Constant in Thee", words spoken by Robert the Bruce to Angus Og Macdonald and his Men of the Isles at Bannockburn in 1319. The Bruce reserved the Islesmen until the initial forces had engaged and then sent them into the fray with their famous Highland charge which won the day and Scotland's



independence. This crest can be worn by anyone who has traced their ancestry to Clanranald branch of Clan Donald. The history of the Clanranald branch is [so entwined with the land](#) that it is impossible to learn about this branch without first becoming familiar with the land. The Names the Celts (and Norse) gave these lands tell us much about both the lands and customs of our ancestors.

Though much has been made of the presence of Norse names in these parts of Scotland one need only look at the Celtic legends and local folk lore to realize many of the Norse personal names are retained because they recall the bay or landing where *Somhairlidh* DEFEATED and SLEW that Norse Viking's army such as *Acharacle*. [The original Gaelic is Ath Tharracaill](#) meaning *ford of Torquil* (a Norse name). But the local legend is that this is where *Torquil* was slain by *Somhairlidh*! It is just 3 miles (5k) south of castle *Tioram*. *Glenborrowdale*, just 9 miles (15k) further is where *Borodil* (another Norse name) was slain. There are other Norse names that are still in use for this area such as *Knoydart* from the Norse name *Cnut's* bay, but that is also where you will find place names such

as *Sourlies* which is how *Somhairlidh* is pronounced in *Gaelic*. Aberdeen University acknowledges W.F. H. Nicolaisen's work as the foremost authority on Scottish place-names so his work is our primary source for place-name meanings.



Gaelic word meanings

gleann = glen, a narrow valley, used in many lands that Scots have settled.

loch = body of water either a lake or a bay

tir = land.

art = ort derived from Norse fjordr from which Scots derived firth meaning bay.

aig = from uig which is another word for bay when it's in a cove.

ard = high place, point, or cape.

mhòr or **mòr** = big.

dobhar = water.

muir = sea.

bhearn = gap.

eilean = island.

aber = mouth (same as inver)

ath = ford or crossing point.

Clan Donald Lands Gaelic & Norse Placenames

Lochalsh: Loch = bay, alsadh to one side = "bay to one side"

Glenelg: Gaelic gleann = glen, eilgin = new Ireland = "glen of New Ireland".

Knoydart: Norse Cnut's = name, art = from fjordr, firth, or bay = "Cnut's bay".

Morar: Gaelic mor = big, dobhar = water = "big water".

Arisaig: Gaelic Aros = name, uig = bay = "Aros' bay".

Moidart: Mundi's = Saint, Norse art = from fjord, firth, or bay = "St. Mundi's bay".

Ardgor: Gaelic ard = high place, point, or cape, ghober = goat = "goat point".

Ardtornish: Gaelic ard = high place, or point, Thori = name, nish = point (Ironically modern Scots refer to Ardtornish point which literally translates into "point of Thori's point point"!)

Morvern: Gaelic muir = sea, bhearn = gap = "sea gap" or Gaelic mhor = big = "big gap".

Lochaber: P-Gaelic aber = mouth (Q-Gaelic inver) = "the loch where rivers Lochy & Nevis meet".

Eilean Tioram: Gaelic eilean & tir (tior) = dry island or dry land island

Mull: Gaelic mul = mound

The *Gaelic* words paint an accurate picture of the multiple peninsulas and bays of the west coast of Scotland. This is the reason the Viking longboats gained inland access so easily in this area. And this is why the *nyvaigs* of Clan Donald inherited these lands because they could out maneuver the longboats. Not only were the *Nyvaigs* shorter, but *Somerled's* invention of the central, fixed rudder made them more maneuverable than the Viking longboats.

See the lands of Clanranald in the [Armada video](#)

Clanranald

This powerful branch of Clan Donald supported the Lordship of the Isles with *nyvaigs* and warriors. The Lords of the Isles always considered themselves a sovereign kingdom in the Celtic sense. They considered themselves "children of the soil" and the Saxon Scottish Kings and Norman English Kings as foreign invaders with no right or claim to the land or thrones. They were "loyal" to whatever king recognized the Lordship of the Isles as a sovereign kingdom (be it Norse, Scottish, or English). Scotland had attempted invasion of the Lordship several times increasing Clan Donald's allegiance to England. One exception was Angus Og who befriended Robert the Bruce before either man rose to their eventual positions of power. Angus Og brought 5,000 clansmen to Bannockburn and the Bruce sent them into battle on his right flank with the words, "My Hope is Constant in Thee" which became the motto of Clanranald. The lands of Lochaber, were granted to Angus Og by Robert the Bruce after Bannockburn. Angus Og's son, Good John of Islay, became the next Lord of the Isles. Good John's eldest son, Randal by Amie MacRuairi, was the chief of the Clanranald branch (see [Ancestry](#)). The clan chief in the ancient Celtic culture was selected from the ruling family and governed all the families associated with that branch. So the chief of Clanranald had responsibility for much more than just his his own immediate family. Those whose ancestors lived within the area governed by Clanranald, fought to defend Clanranald, and gave their allegiance to Clanranald are "of Clanranald".

Despite the Bruce's recognition of the crucial role the Lordship at Bannockburn, subsequent Scottish kings sought to subjugate the Isles. In 1493 James IV required the forfeiture of the Lordship. This occurred after another Angus Og Macdonald was assassinated in his sleep just as his ancestor *Somhairlidh* had been.

Ironically, 250 years later Bonnie Prince Charlie would seek and obtain the lion's share of his support from Clan Donald.

Clanranald often found themselves at odds with Glengarry and Sleat especially after the Scottish King required the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles. If James IV thought removing the Celtic threat would secure his Scottish crown he found just the opposite occurred.

Without Celtic leadership the Highlanders & Islanders were even more defiant of Scottish government. Clanranald became one of several Celtic clans that were in a constant state of rebellion. The story of Clanranald is very much the story of its chiefs. Like *Cuchulainn* of old the greatest clan leaders were its victorious warriors.

Alan was the chief of Clanranald who supported Angus Og right before the loss of the Lordship. He supported Alexander of Lochalsh in his bid to recover Ross which led to the forfeiture. Alan was on James IV's list of rebellious chiefs. Alan's son Ranald *Ban* (fair haired) was the next chief of Clanranald. Ranald *Ban* did not join with other Clan Donald branches in support of restoring Donald *Dubh* (dark) as Lord of the Isles after the forfeiture. The Scottish crown rewarded Ranald *Ban* with lands, but a new term came with the lands. A Merk was a value of 13 ½ pennies. Lands were granted as "Merklands" indicating the amount of rent due the crown. From this time on the crown granted the right to occupy so many "Merklands" on condition rent was paid. The Celtic response to this Saxon idea was to ignore it. When the clans fell behind on their "rent" certain "Earls" were charged with collecting them. Alexander, Earl of Huntly and Sir John Campbell of Cawdor were two given this charge from the King. Ranald's son Dugall was not liked by his clan because he submitted to both of the King's men.

Dugall had many sons from which Clanranald selected John of Moidart as their chief. In 1539 Donald *Gorm* (blue/green) of *Sleat* launched his unsuccessful attempt to restore the Lordship. John of Moidart was imprisoned as a result and the crown tried to appoint Ranald *Gallda* (foreigner) as their own chief of Clanranald. This was another example of the government's attempt to impose Saxon Feudalism with its appointed leaders on people who for over a millennia had elected their leaders. The Celts have a special contempt in their voice when they refer to *Sasunnach* (Saxon). The clansmen would not accept Ranald Gallda. When the crown became concerned with Campbell of Argyll gaining too much power they released *John of Moidart* in 1542 knowing he would challenge Argyll's authority. This is another example of government policy of managing the clans by turning them against each other.

GEORGE GORDON – LORD BYRON

“When the Herons Leave the Tree, the Laird of Gight will landless be” – a Scottish Legend

The Legend came true and the Herons flew away to the neighbour's property.

It was 1786 when Catherine Gordon inherited the estate which her husband "Mad Jack Byron" soon squandered away – three thousand pounds in cash, another eight thousand borrowed on the mortgage, the Salmon fishing shares and the old Oak woods, which were stripped bare. Landless and penniless, the pair left Scotland just one

step ahead of the Bailiff. Catherine Gordon was pregnant when they fled, first to France and then to England where George Gordon Byron was born. Their son would have been born in Scotland had his parents not been fleeing their debtors.

They named their child after her side of the family, the Gordons of Gight, of which she was extremely proud. Jack Byron soon left his wife and Catherine returned to Aberdeenshire to raise him on her own ancestral soil on the bank of the Dee. George Gordon Byron was sent to a remarkable old school that dates to 1256, its ancient roof was thatched with heather.

George Gordon loved the Highland landscape, the mountains and the wild beauty of the Dee. He himself wore the Highland plaid and bonnet and felt himself a Scot through and through.

The Legend had come true – the Herons had left - can we blame the Legend for this turn in history??



Catherine Gordon



Lord Byron



Gight Castle



Traditional Scottish Recipes Whisky and Chocolate Crunch

What a deadly combination - whisky and chocolate! Who could resist? In the ingredients, chocolate digestive biscuits are known as Chocolate Graham Crackers in North America.

Ingredients:

6 oz chocolate digestive biscuits (Graham Crackers)
1 pint whipped cream
3 tablespoons whisky (vary to suit your taste)
1 oz caster sugar (granulated sugar)
2 egg whites
2 drops vanilla essence (extract)
1 oz toasted split almonds
Grated chocolate for decoration

Method

Finely crush the chocolate digestive biscuits and spread equally in the bottom of six sundae dishes. Whip together the cream, whisky, sugar and vanilla until stiff. Separately, whip the egg whites until they are also stiff and then fold into the cream mixture. Spoon equal quantities into the dishes over the biscuits.

Chill and finally decorate with the toasted almonds and grated chocolate.

John MacDonald, Glasgow Police (1898-1988)

To the Gaelic speakers, he was *Seonaidh Roidein*. To the rest, he was John MacDonald of the Glasgow Police, or John MacDonald, South Uist. But to all, he was a larger-than-life piping figure: an upper echelon soloist, superb composer, one of the greatest Pipe Majors in the history of the pipe bands, and 'a true Highland gentleman.'

He was born in South Uist off the west coast of Scotland in 1898. His great-great-great-great grandfather was John of Moidart, Chief of Clanranald, who fought at Inverlochry in 1645. His father, Donald (1863-1945), was the twin son of Roderick and Anabella MacDonald, and was born in 1863.

Donald and his wife Bella McDonald (1868-1959) lived near Daliburgh, South Uist, where Donald was a piper and taught Highland dancing. He was still dancing in his 60s at the Askernish games in the 1920s. His twin sister was not a piper, but two others were (they later emigrated to New Zealand), as was his older brother Ronald (1852-1921) and a brother, James, said to have been piper to the Marquess of Bute.

Donald introduced his son John to piping and dancing at a young age, and he quickly became renowned as a superb piper for dancing. In these days, the great dancers were men, and it was common for young pipers to be taught to dance. John's brother Roddy excelled at it and would later dance on the Glasgow Police dancing team. Many of the dances these boys learned, such as "Over the Water" and "The First of August," are rarely performed today.

After primary instruction from their father, young John and his brother Roddie met another John MacDonald – this one the great John MacDonald of Inverness, widely regarded as the premier piobaireachd player of his generation. Young John was nine, and the great man held classes in Daliburgh. Later, when young John moved to Glasgow, he would come under the tutelage of another piping giant, Pipe Major Willie Gray (1885-1962), then pipe major of the Glasgow Police Pipe Band.

John himself would later teach many a piper, and by all accounts, although one of the kindest gentlemen you could meet, he would be honest in his appraisal of a young piper's playing so that no time would be wasted by either teacher or pupil. He was well known to be a contemplative man – a "deep thinker" in those very words – and while he was the best of the two brothers as a player, Roderick was known as the better teacher for his ability to connect more closely with less experienced pipers.

John's niece, Ishabel T. MacDonald (Roderick's daughter), recalls that John and Roddie had a huge repertoire of old traditional Uist strathspeys and reels. John used to play at dances with his father, who learned the tunes from the old pipers and taught them to his boys. Years later the brothers would bring many of these tunes into the mainstream of piping through the Glasgow Police Pipe Band.

When his father Donald was leaving to serve in the Great War, John was keen to enlist too, so he falsified his age and joined the Cameron Highlanders. He was a big boy, and muscular, and it has been said that such was his enthusiasm that he walked cross-country from Mallaig to Inverness to join the 3rd Camerons. He was 15, and initially he stayed behind as personal piper to MacIntosh of MacIntosh. He would see action later in the conflict, serving with the 6th and 7th Camerons in France and Belgium.

In 1920, at age 22, he left military service and joined the Glasgow Police force. As a beat cop, patrolling the same street on foot day after day, he was well known as a kindly constable who befriended and aided the elderly and infirm wherever he could. He was a gentleman, always eager to help out beyond the call of duty.

In 1942, he was promoted to Inspector.

Of course, very shortly after he had joined the force in 1920, he was recruited into the pipe band

Arguably the greatest and most storied pipes and drums ensemble of all time, the Glasgow Police Pipe Band began as the Govan Burgh Police Pipe Band, the first pipe major being a Constable Bremner. The band would be absorbed into the greater Glasgow force and led by Willie Gray from 1920 until 1932 when John MacDonald took over. One of John MacDonald's great compositions – "Pipe Major Willie Gray's Farewell to the Glasgow Police" – would mark the retirement of his predecessor. It was first published when a copy in Gray's stylistic hand appeared in the February, 1941 issue of the *Piping and Dancing* magazine.

During the Second World War, the Glasgow Police Pipe Band was heard at home and abroad in regular radio broadcasts. John's brother Roderick and other prominent pipers of the day such as John Garraway and Charlie Scott also filled the ranks.

John MacDonald enjoyed his first successes as a solo competitor as early as 1913, competing along with other pupils of John MacDonald of Inverness at South Uist games. He kept his hand in competing even during the Great War years, winning the 15th Divisional Championships in France.

But the best was ahead, In 1926 he became one of only a handful of players to win the Oban and Inverness Gold Medals in the same year. In fact, his competitive success

that year during the Oban-Inverness week was almost unparalleled. At the Argyllshire Gathering at Oban on Day 1 he won the Gold Medal and Open Piobaireachd events. On Day 2, he won the Strathspey & Reel and was 2nd in the Former Winners March, Strathspey & Reel. The following week, at the Northern Meeting, he won the Gold Medal as well as both the March and the Strathspey and Reel. It was a stellar week for the 28-year-old from South Uist.

He was of course a regular in the prize lists at the games around Scotland, and was also known to win the best-dressed prize on occasion.

As pipe major of the City of Glasgow Police Pipe Band, his success was equally impressive. Under his direction, the band won no less than 8 World Pipe Band Championships -- 1936, '37, '38 and '39, 1946, '47*, '49 and 1951. (*The 1947 title at Cowal was disputed at the time, as control of the World Pipe Band Championship was in transition.)

He composed a small but lasting number of fine pipe tunes. "Burnside Cottage" was named for his croft house. "Ishabel T MacDonald" was named for his niece. "The Pipers Controversy" was written when he had overheard some pipers in the pub debating who should have won what that day. He interpreted the different views and opinions as up-and-down melodic fragments which he incorporated into the tune. "Willie Gray's Farewell," the superb jig "John MacDonald's Exercise," and the "Glasgow Police March Past (The Sands of Loch Bee)" are all now staples of the Highland piping repertoire.

After more than 25 years as pipe major of the Glasgow Police Pipe Band (plus another dozen years under Willie Gray), John MacDonald retired from the band and the force in 1958 and promptly returned to the family home, Burnside Cottage, on South Uist. Built in 1903, the croft had walls four feet thick as protection against the harsh north Atlantic gales. The windward side had no windows, better to preserve the heat. Beyond the house lay the ocean, next stop America.

It was a comfortable abode where the old Pipe Major welcomed pipers with a dram. A pupil coming for a lesson might be asked to bring a few groceries from the shop. Visitors might see the hens, a duck, the cats and dogs wander in the back door and out the front. He kept some sheep and cows, and was said to be very fond of all the animals. Friends and relatives still recall his kind and generous nature, and pipers from the mainland and elsewhere would make special trips to South Uist to visit John even when he was well into his eighties. He loved these visits, and revelled in the talk of piping and pipers. He continued to pipe, often playing for local functions in and around Lochboisdale.

Tragedy struck near the end of his life. His sight hampered by cataracts, he was trying to light the peat fire one day when stray sparks set the couch alight. The croft was quickly ablaze and he was forced to retreat outside.

The devastation was total, and old John lost his music, piping memorabilia and medals, three sets of pipes, and a striking portrait of himself painted by an American artist. All of his worldly possessions were consumed. But he moved forward and never complained about his losses.

Subsequent surgery greatly improved his eyesight, and during his recovery, he travelled by train with his niece Margaret, to stay with her in Glasgow. She vividly recalled how keen he was to reach the next station, and the next one again – simply to marvel at how clearly he could read the place names on the station signs. He commented with surprise and delight how the sheep were so white and the grass so green.

In the mid-1980s, he secured a pensioners house in South Uist near the main road. Here, he was more accessible to pipers than ever, and his last two years were full of visitors whom he received eagerly and gladly.

The rest of his two brothers and three sisters had found their way to various locales in Scotland and overseas. Many years earlier, sister Bella had married in South Uist on a weekday, and by the weekend was sailing with her new husband to Canada on 'The Marloch.' "I can hear father playing on the pier," she wrote in a postcard as she described her heartbreaking departure from home, a ritual so often repeated in the previous centuries.

Brother Roderick of course became a leading soloist and piper with the police pipe band. The third brother, William, stayed on at the croft in South Uist for many years. Sisters Mary Ann and Harriet went to the mainland and Glasgow.

Seonaidh Roidein slipped peacefully away in hospital in 1988 at age 89 after a bout with the flu, his niece Margaret by his side. He considered himself to have had a good life and good health. His final conversation was of having just listened to some dance music. "You know, they didn't get that tune quite right," he said, surely a piper to the very end.

August, 2010
Janette Montague and Jim McGillivray

From private conversations with Margaret Macpherson and Tony Macdonald, and information from Ishabel T. MacDonald, John Finlay, Hector Russell, Willie Morrison, Jeannie Campbell and notes from the [College of Piping, Glasgow](#).



John Macdonald



With his father 1916



With the Queen 1950

*Under the patronage of
the High Council of the Chiefs of Clan Donald*

High Commissioner Clan Donald Australia
Lachlan Macdonald

Commissioner
Neil Macdonald
29 Pinewood Street
Geebung 4034
08 32654765 / 0412090990
clandonaldqld@optusnet.com.au

President:
Jim Macdonald

Secretary/Treasurer:
Judy Macdonald
29 Pinewood St
Geebung Qld 4034
07 32654765
clandonaldqld@optusnet.com.au

Committee Members:
Alexander James Macdonald (Jim)
James Keith Macdonald
Noel Denning
Heather Denning
Jim Mair
Rod Macdonald
Mark Allan

Honorary Piper:
Alex McConnell

0417 783 740. alexmcqoz@gmail.com

Postmaster General for Scotland



Sir John Inglis portrait by Allan Ramsay, who twice held the position of Deputy Postmaster General for Scotland

The **Postmaster General for Scotland**, based in Edinburgh, was responsible for the postal service in the Kingdom of Scotland from about 1616 until the Act of Union merged Scotland with England in 1707, creating a new state called Great Britain. From 1711, the posts in Scotland were the responsibility of the **Deputy**

Postmaster General for Scotland, until in 1831 that position was subsumed into the duties of the Postmaster General of the United Kingdom.

History

The Union of the Crowns took place in 1603 and on 5 May a public postal system was approved by the Parliament of Scotland's Act William III c.31, to be set up between Berwick, just south of the Scottish border, and Edinburgh. At some time after 1603 the post of Postmaster General for Scotland was established by the Privy Council of Scotland with the first appointment mentioned in 1616 as Sir William Seton. From Privy Council records, Seton appears to have held the position until 1631, or 1633, though a 1641 Act of the Scottish Parliament ratifies his appointment for life as "His Majesty's cheefe post maister of all his Hienes postmaisteres ..." at a salary of £500 per annum. No new appointment was made until 1649 when the Commonwealth took over the post in Scotland.

Following the 1660 restoration of the monarchy, one Patrick Grahame became Postmaster General for Scotland under the Privy Seal of King Charles II from 14 September 1662 for his lifetime at the same salary of £500 per annum: *officium precipui magistri cursoris lie Postmaster-Generall et Censoris omnium cursorum dicti regni Scotie*. Grahame's son John obtained the position after his father's death in 1674 at a new salary of £1,000 per annum and held the office until 1689

In August 1695 an Act of William III again established a General Post Office in Scotland to be set up in Edinburgh:

“ from whence all letters and pacquets whatsoever may with speed and expedition sent into any part of the kingdom, or any other of his Majesty's dominions, or into any kingdom or country beyond seas, by the pacquest sealed to London. It is also enacted, that a Postmaster-General shall be appointed by letters patent under the Privy Seal ”

The Post Office Act of Anne, 1710, repealed the 1695 Act of William and united the Post Offices of England and Scotland under one Postmaster-General as the Postmaster-General of Great Britain; from 1711 in Scotland the office was managed by a deputy postmaster general. The first Deputy Postmaster General for Scotland was George Main who held the office of Postmaster General for Scotland until 1707 and between then and his appointment as deputy he was the Post Office Manager for Scotland During his tenure between May and September 1707 he is described as the Postmaster of North Britain.