



# Clan Munro Australia

Newsletter of the Clan Munro (Association) Australia

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Have you visited our Website at <http://clanmunroaustralia.org>

## Chat

### This Month

**It's all about the Gathering and the marvellous time we had.**

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### Next Newsletter

**At this time I haven't a clue what will be in the next newsletter – everything has been a bit hectic**

**Hopefully I will have conjured something up by then**

**Don**

The Gathering is over for another year and what a success it was. The weather once again was great apart from a little precipitation on our visit to Fort George but that cleared up for the dinner in the evening. Without fail, everyone I talked to really enjoyed themselves but I will leave you to read all about it in Quentin Munro's report on the Gathering. The one thing that caused a slight disappointment to our members was the fact that in Our Chief's welcoming speech, he welcomed our American and French cousins for their attendance but there was no mention of the poor relations from the far away antipodes!! However Chief Hector had a lot on his plate and he did a marvelous job.

It was so good to at last meet so many of our members all at the same time and all were so pleasant and welcoming. We all enjoyed meeting each other and as they say in Inverness, "having a good crack" We may even have gained a new member from a Queensland couple who sat with us.

Our new website is up and running - [clanmunroassociation.org.au](http://clanmunroassociation.org.au) and it looks great. Our grateful thanks go to my good friend, Ken Betjeman, who designed it all at no cost to us, apart from the cost of purchasing our domain name and some other connected items. Make sure you look at it and let me know if you think it can be changed for the better in any way. Constructive criticism is very welcome.

At the Gathering Brooke Munro and husband Colin offered to set up a Face book page and that is now up and running so you check that out at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX It is constructed on the same basis as their own Facebook page and links to their business website, so ours will link to our website.

## Welcome To Our New Members

This will have to wait until I get back home and check my records

## *The 2014 Gathering*

*Quentin Munro prepared this report on the gathering. Quentin has such good connections with Ross-shire and the Clan Munro – his uncle Finlay Munro MBE was not only Chief Constable of Ross-shire but also Secretary of the Clan Munro in the very early days and had a long time, close relationship with our Chief's family.*

### **A MEMORABLE HIGHLAND FLING**

Imagine attending a big birthday party with your extended family and closest friends, well, that's what the 2014 Gathering was like. Except bigger. There were 350 or so close mates from all over the world, each with a common bond.

The notion of a common bond was mentioned several times by the Clan Chief Hector Munro in his addresses. When you think about it, there is almost nothing like the bond that not only connects people to the homeland of their ancestors, but also to the unique link of having the same name.

This year's Gathering, held over 3 days at Castle Foulis near Inverness, was a great success. The effort put into the planning by Hector and the Gathering Committee really paid off. We were treated to fun and games, fine food, exhibitions, music and dancing and Scottish history with a Munro slant...and whisky! Perhaps that should be "Slainte."

But what stood out was the warmth of welcome and genuine friendship of the Clan Munro members. This started right at the top with Hector and his family. Forget the idea of a stuffy Lord of the Manor or Highland Laird, all of Hector's family are warm and approachable. So if you have ever contemplated going to a Gathering but have backed off at the idea of being alone in a sea of internationals, forget it! You will be welcomed, have lots of fun and learn a lot.

There were about 350 people at the gathering. The largest contingent was from America, but surprisingly the next largest group by far were from France. Many of the French were "Monroes". (Notice the feminine spelling). Hector told me that they were all descendants of a Highland Scot who was Marie Antoinette's body guard. He must have been a busy fellow to start a whole clan of French Monroes! They have a very active Association over there and their Head extended a warm invitation to any Australian who may wish to join one of their Gatherings and functions in France. (Contact Don Munro for details). There were 28 of us from Oz with the rest a mix of Canadians, Kiwis and Irish.

2014 MUNRO CLAN GATHERING

### **"ROYAL TOUR"**

After the official welcome by Hector from the top of the steps at the entrance to the castle, one of the highlights of the Gathering, was a tour of the traditional lands of the Munros. What made it so special, was that the Tour Guides doing the commentary on the 3 buses were none other than the Clan Chief, his brother "Jock" (who now lives in Copenhagen) and their wonderful witty mother, Timmy. Each was a fountain of local knowledge and Clan history and kept us entertained with very funny anecdotes.

Timmy turns 90 later this year and her memory was prodigious. She also has a wicked sense of humour. Any wonder she remained a close personal friend of the Queen Mother. She told us she arrived in the Highlands at the start of the war as a WREN when she met Hector's father and married him before he set off to war. She then regaled us with funny stories about her time during the war and admitted that she was "somewhat naughty" and got up to some tricks.

Hector and Jock also demonstrated their skills as stand up comedians and historians on the tour. Other activities included mock battle enactments with burly highlanders in traditional costume slogging it out against

dastardly Red Coats; a sheep dog herding demonstration and an exhibition of birds of prey. Children were also catered for with a play area and child minders.

### **GORGEOUS FORT GEORGE TOUR**

Located on a promontory jutting into the Moray Firth at Ardersier (about 18 km North east of Inverness), Fort George was the last true "fortress" built in the United Kingdom. Construction was started in 1745 after the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden and took 20 years to complete. It is star shaped and was designed primarily, to keep the Jacobites under control, which is why many of the cannons face inland as well as out to sea.

We were given a detailed tour of the fortress by an ex Commander of the Queens Own Highlanders (also a Munro) as well as the official historical architect of the fort and all of northern Scotland. There was little about the history and construction of the fortress that they didn't know. From a military strategic sense, the fortress was outmoded before it was completed due to the advances of artillery and mortars. It now functions as the headquarters and barracks for the Highlanders, a combination of the Seaforth, Camerons and the Gordon Highlanders.

For those who did not know, the first Commander of the fort was a Munro and he had the privilege of selecting the tartan for the regiment. He chose the Munro hunting tartan, the "Black Watch".

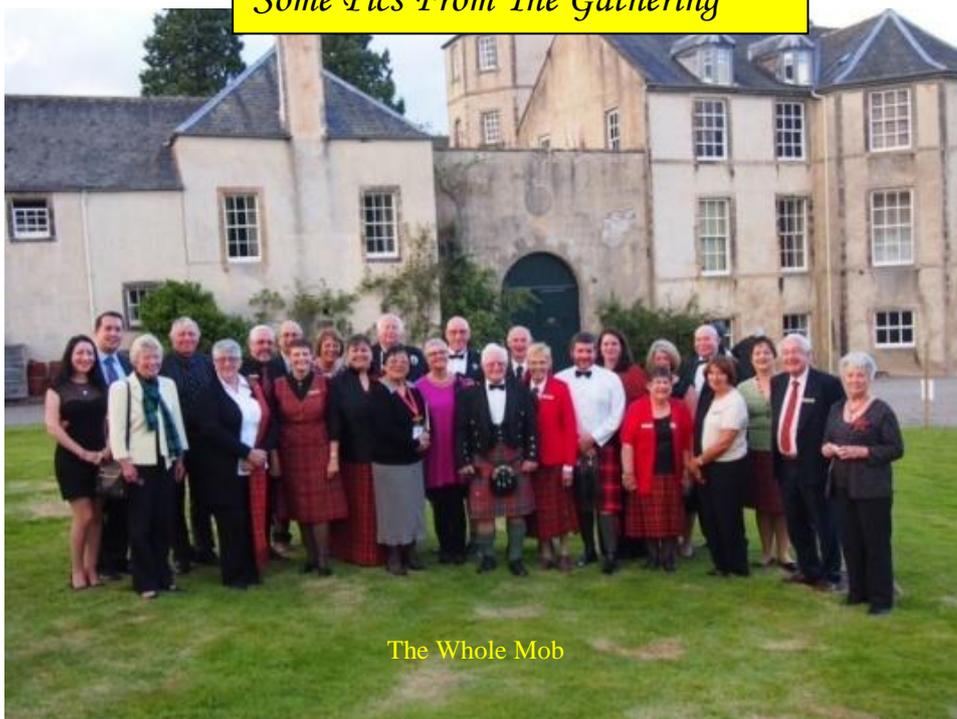
### **THE OFFICIAL DINNER – GREAT FUN**

On the Sunday night, over 200 of us gathered under a very smart marquis in the castle grounds. It was a great function with a lot of table swapping and good food. The meal was preceded with a tasting of Glenmorangie whiskies. NOTE: It is pronounced like "orange". They started with a dram of the "New Make" raw spirit drawn from the initial distillation which was 63% pure alcohol and almost stripped the enamel from your teeth! The whisky is transferred into different types of oak casks and continues to age for 10 - 15 years... and some for even longer. We tasted the "Original" Glenmorangie, an extremely rare 18 year old version, and as a special treat, the "Ealanta" Private Edition. This had recently won an international competition and was judged "The World's Best Whiskey". A bottle of Ealanta was later auctioned and went to an American for over £400. The money going to a good cause of course!

The reason why Glenmorangie was selected is that Foulis sells a lot of its barley to the distillery and the distillery itself is at Tain, on Munro ancestral grounds.

The evening concluded with an exhibition of Scottish dancing to the music provided by a great local traditional band...and then we all pitched in on the dancing. I can report that the Clan Chief and his brother are very nimble on their feet...and despite some very vigorous turns and twists in the reels, we still cannot report if they were wearing undies!

### *Some Pics From The Gathering*



*The Whole Mob*



The Chief's Address



Whisky Tasting Set Up



Ray & Helen Ready For The Tasting



A Happy Azzac Combination



Timmy Munro – Tour Guide  
Extraordinaire



Don & Bet Enjoying  
The Evening



Colin Munro Looking  
Very Smart



Reception at Inverness  
Town Hall



Finnian Striding Out  
The Back Gate

## Tom's Folly!!

Our winemaker, Tom Munro, keeps us up to date with his winemaking exploits but this is a very special story about his vision for the planting of a Pino Noir vineyard. All of the hard work has been done and 2015 will bring forth the fruits of his labours.

In 2009 I conceived of planting a vineyard on an impossibly steep block of land behind Woodcutters Cottage where I was then living in Basket Range in the Adelaide Hills, a block so steep that only an absence of seagulls prevented it from being confused with a cliff. It was a block so steep that my neighbour's goats used to stop chewing and stare across the valley at me when I was out there in the early days mapping out where I would put the boundaries of this now locally well known "vine garden". The steepness of the site was only important in so much as it was also a south/south-east facing site (and thus ideal for the heat-fearing Pinot Noir), 500 metres up in the Adelaide Hills and because I truly believe there is a direct link between the beauty of the view and the wine quality that issues from almost any vineyard site. And the view from the block above Woodcutters Cottage is a gobsmacker!



Equally concerned by the level of enthusiasm that I was showing for this quixotic project were my sympathetic Pinot Noir-loving friends, (and, at that time, landlords) Edwin and Patricia Michell, who felt I should be supported in this undertaking perhaps if only to purge the notion from my system, and thus on their account an order was placed for 1500 Pinot Noir and 1000 Gewurztraminer vines along with Edwin and Patricia's blessing to make the vine garden grow so that we would one day be able to "drink the view". The vines were planted into the deep "chocolate soil" (as this first quality of soil is referred to in Basket Range) in the spring of 2010 (around October) with the first heatwave of the year only a few weeks away, little did we know it. One of my chief foibles had been the belief that if I planted each sapling vine in the bottom of a 70-100cm deep hole then, as I explained it enthusiastically to the man who worked at the machine-hire store in nearby Stirling, they would be impervious to the effects of drought and heat. "That may be," he said, smirking, but how many holes was I intending to dig in the 48 hours during which I was to hire from him the hole-digging machine? You could tell by the way he laughed like a kookaburra on helium that I had somewhat exceeded his expectations with my reply of "oh, around 2,500". He gave me a free pair of gloves and an extra can of fuel and sent me on my way.

When I had dug the first hole, satisfied with my work, I got down on my knees and strained my back to allow me to get my nose right down into the hole and inhale the cold, wet, muddy, leafy air that rose up from the



darkness below. Smells show themselves keenly in cold air, and the surprisingly compost-y smell of this soil that had been fallow since the apple and chestnut trees had been grubbed up decades before confirmed me in the lonely belief that I was on to a winner but I also realised that if I got down and smelled each hole that I would never finish! With the help of two German backpackers who were already suffering from the 'flu when they arrived and half dead when they finally left, and another friend who soon regretted flying down from Sydney to help for the weekend, the job was eventually done. Each vine was planted and cocooned in a shiny new protective tube called a Groguard, which was in turn attached to a 6' wooden stake, and so the hillside at Woodcutter's Cottage was now clearly visible from every corner of Basket Range, if not from outer

space, being situated as it was on such a high and exposed slope. It's strange the way gossip works in small communities and how it was that I came to learn what other people were saying about "Tom's folly" but suffice to say that rumour bounces off the valley walls in Basket Range and echoes down its gullies.

Summer 2010 seemed to start in early spring and even though I had deliberately chosen the coolest site on the property for the vine garden, the early sunlight that year pricked and the heat was dry and you could tell that the vines were as concerned as I was. "Not to worry!" I thought, "I'll use my two watering cans to give them all a little drink."

Question: If each watering can carries ten litres and each vine requires one litre of water and if Tom can carry two watering cans at a time, how mad would he have to be to walk up and down the hill to water all his vines?!?!?

This watering of every vine had to be done around 20 times in the course of the first summer and there was a vertical difference of about 50 metres between the top of the vineyard and the tap next to the house where I was filling the watering cans. It was a punishment fit for the unrepentantly wicked.

The vines survived better than expected but you couldn't say that they flourished, not until Greg Cramond – the Michells' estate Manager – and his crew got involved in 2012/13 to slash the weeds and uproot the blackberries that were making life very hard for the vines. That was the turning point and the moment at which Tom's folly became fact. Greg, Patricia Michell and I met at Woodcutters Cottage when I was in the Adelaide Hills for vintage and bottling in April this year (2014) and under their tutelage it is clear the vines have fired upwards. The shoots are noticeably hard and woody, they are tenacious, twisty and gnarly-looking for youngsters, and they clearly have a grip on their land now and, if Mother Nature smiles (although nobody's assuming she'll do this) and if Greg's crew can stay on top of the weeds, and if the birds don't eat it first, and if disease doesn't strike, then there's a definite chance that we could, maybe, have a crop in 2015, perhaps just enough to make a half-barrel - but that would be enough to taste the view and *that* will be a landmark moment. The plan is to prune each vine for the first time late this winter so that next year each vine only produces two or three fruit-bearing shoots. The shoots will be gathered together and tied to their post and maybe, just maybe, the wine tasting history of this extraordinary site will begin in 2015, if nature permits it. Touch wood!



### **Highland Magic**

*Some time ago I had an item called Highland Magic in the newsletter. Events at the gathering have caused me to revive it.*

So let me tell you of a few of my Highland Magic moments at the Gathering. The first was at a whisky tasting at the Castle Stewart golf course, which, by the way, is beautiful and high on the list of top British golf courses. Anyway, I was speaking to Scott Fraser who was running the tasting and told him that we were going to the Munro Gathering. He replied that his grandmother was a Munro and that her brother was the Chief Constable of Ross-shire. I said that this was very strange as one of our member's uncle was the Chief Constable of Ross-shire & our member's name was Quentin Munro. He replied "oh yes, Quentin is my father's cousin" What are the chances of travelling half way round the world and meeting a cousin of one of our members at a golf club house just outside Inverness?

The second was when two of our New Zealand members, Diana and Norman Maclean from Invercargill, needed a lift to Foulis on the first day of the Gathering and we were glad to oblige. During conversation, we mentioned that my niece, Alison, was married to Andy Caughey whose family farmed in the south of New Zealand's South Island and you guessed it, they knew not only Andy's parents but also, because Diana and Norman are both doctors, they also knew and worked with Andy's grandfather, Professor JE Caughey, a well known neurologist.

Number three also involved Alison Caughey. She had come up from Derby to see her Mum and when we told her that we were going to Fort George and would be welcomed by Major General Seymour Monro, she said "Oh, give Seymour a big cuddle from me!!" Alison and Andy had spent some time in Italy where Andy was selling New Zealand merino wool to the common market and during that time had become friendly with the Major General. I did give him a big cuddle and he sent one back via me to Alison. But the connection did not end there for, although I did not know it at the time, Alison's sister Noreen is married to Frank Philip and when he was in the Army as Major Frank Philip of the Gordons/Highlanders, served with major General Seymour Monro.

That's all of my "Highland Magic" stories, so if any of you had similar experiences, let me know and I will use them in the next newsletter.

## Old Obituaries

*From time to time I publish old obituaries and this one is for the death of Mr John H Munro in the Clarence and Richmond Examiner, Grafton, NSW, Saturday 30 January 1909. We can learn so much about our ancestors from these obits and this one has so much information, let me know if this is one of your ancestors.*

Universal regret was expressed throughout the city and district on Tuesday at the announcement of the demise of Mr. H. Munro, which took place early that morning in the Grafton Hospital, where he had been admitted about a fortnight previously. Deceased, who was in his 72nd year, could be well termed one of the public men of Grafton, and took a lively interest in all movements for the progress of the district since his arrival about 35 years ago. He was a native of Scotland, and was very much attached to his country and its associations. For years he was the President of the Clarence River Caledonian Society, and was a foremost figure at its gatherings and those of a kindred nature held by the other societies on the North Coast. He attended the gathering at Maclean on New Year's Day and those who remember the excessive heat of that day can imagine how trying it was to attend for one who was not in the best of health. After his arrival in Australia Mr. Munro went west, and was engaged in squatting pursuits in the Tableland districts, but his home was on the Upper Hunter. From there he came to Grafton and started an auctioneering, stock and station agency business. One of his first important sales was the Eatonsville subdivision, and for a time he was the leading auctioneer of the North Coast. He opened branches at Casino and Lismore, under the management of Messrs. J.B. McDougall and E. W. Mackay respectively, and he conducted the first Tomki sale, which was the opening sale of the big estates on the Richmond. He established a very extensive business connection in stock and land, and many properties of great value passed through his hands. But like many engaged in business pursuits, he met with reverses. He met these most heroically, and continued in business till the last.

The lamented deceased was for years the captain of the first cavalry regiment on the Clarence, which was a strong one, and he was much respected by the members. He made a vigorous protest against its disbandment, and condemned the authorities for their tardy support of the military forces. He was for many years chairman of the Grafton Club, and for many years was secretary of the Clarence River Jockey Club. To this he devoted a good deal of energy, being a thorough sportsman, and at the same time believed only in straight practices on the turf. He had the satisfaction of being instrumental in placing the club on a sound footing and the high reputation it enjoys as a sporting body is very largely due to Mr. Munro's ability as a secretary, and to his discountenancing in any shape or form corrupt practices. He was a member of the Old Age Pension Board at Grafton since the Act came into operation, and his knowledge of the district and many of its people enabled him to render good service in administering the measure locally. He was gazetted a Justice of the Peace some years ago, but declined the honour, considering there was no honour in accepting the position among the appointments of the time. He was an earnest supporter of establishing railway communication with the Clarence, and persistently advocated the construction of the North Coast line. He had the satisfaction of seeing it constructed to Grafton, and was a member of the different leagues and public organisations that were in existence for extending the railway system of the State to Grafton. He was Government valuator at Grafton under the Taxation Department, and assessed in this connection a large number of properties.

In bygone years he was a member of the Clarence P. and A. Society, and there were few local organisations of a public character to which he did not lend a helping hand. Of late years it was seen that his health began to fail, and the death of his wife two and a half years ago was a severe blow, from which he never appeared to have thoroughly recovered. Two daughters also predeceased him, leaving two daughters and two sons living. One of the former, Mrs. Brewer, resides in New Zealand; another, Mrs. P. C. Tibbitts, resides at Coonamble. The sons are Mr. W. N. Munro, manager of the Commercial Bank at Bundarra, and the other, Mr. C. Munro, resides at Coaldale. One of his brothers, Mr. D. W. Munro, is engineer of the Byron Shire, and was for a number of years on the Clarence; another, Mr. R. Munro is a resident of the Tableland. The funeral took place on Wednesday in the Presbyterian portion of the Grafton cemetery, and was largely attended, nearly the whole of the leading citizens and representative men of the city being in attendance. Rev. D. Brown conducted the burial service.

## Scottish Humour

The Rev Jamie McWhachle was, to put it mildly, "humour challenged" and attended a conference designed to better equip preachers for their ministry. One dynamic speaker boldly approached the lectern and began: "The best years of my life were spent in the arms of a woman who wasn't my wife!" The audience was shocked, but after a momentary pause, he followed this up by saying, "And that woman was my mother!" The audience burst into laughter and he delivered the rest of his talk, which went down very well.

The next week, Rev McWhachle decided he'd give this humour thing a try and use that joke in his sermon. As he approached the pulpit that sunny Sunday, he tried to rehearse the joke in his head. It suddenly seemed a bit foggy to him. Getting to the pulpit, he said loudly, "The greatest years of my life were spent in the arms of another woman who was not my wife!" His congregation inhaled half the air in the church! After standing there for almost 10 seconds in the stunned silence, trying to recall the second half of the joke, Rev McWachle finally blurted out, "...and I can't remember who she was ! "

## Can You Help?

Robyn Taylor wrote "I am a descendant of Alexander Munro and Jane Gale who lived in Deniliquin sometime in the 1800's, I know very little about them and their lineage and was wondering if any of your members are connected to them. I would be most grateful for any information. I am particularly interested in finding any siblings of Alexander, where they lived, etc." Robyn can be contacted at [doogs43@icloud.com](mailto:doogs43@icloud.com)

## Membership

Annual Membership:	\$25.00	Spouse or children of member under 18 years	\$8.00**
Three Years:	\$55.00	Spouse or children of member under 18 years (3 years)	\$20.00**
Ten Years:	\$160.00	Spouse or children of member under 18 years (10 years)	\$70.00**
Life Membership is calculated according to age as follows: -			
Up to Age 40:		3 X 10 Year Dues	\$480.00
Age 40 to 50:		2 X 10 Year Dues	\$320.00
Age 50 to 60:		1½ X 10 Year Dues	\$240.00
Age 60 and over:		Same as 10 Year Dues	\$160.00
Age 80 and over:		Half Ten Year Dues	\$80.00

### *Clan Munro (Association) Australia Newsletter*

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