



# Clan Munro Australia

Newsletter of the Clan Munro (Association) Australia

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## Blether

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Good news – First, our Clan Munro Website is up and running. Check out Webmaster Allan’s instructions on page 3.

Second, the next Clan Munro (Association) UK Gathering will be held at the beginning of August 2025. I had hoped to get the final details - cost, number of days, etc. for this Newsletter but we did not quite make it.

## Welcome

Two new members to welcome. Casey Munro from NSW and Annette May from Tasmania.

Annette’s grandmother was Anne Munro. Anne had 8 siblings and was born in Inverness. She was 2 when she arrived in Tasmania with her mother Isabella and father Alexander. One of her brothers, William, was born on the ship Royal George on the way to Tasmania.

Her father and mother were married on 6th December 1851, in Kirkhill, Inverness. Isabella’s maiden name was Johnston. Alexander was killed in a bullock wagon accident on 4th September, 1864. Isabella remarried and had another family.

## From the Eagles Nest

Dear Cousins,

Now that the weather is becoming cooler after a very humid summer, particularly on the coastal regions of NSW and QLD, we can look forward to a plethora of Gatherings around the country. We are slowly moving towards representing our clan at as many Gatherings as possible but available finances are a problem.

### Governor Macquarie’s Birthday Dinner.

Hosted by the Scottish Australian Heritage Council, on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. February, 2024 was the dinner commemorating the 262<sup>nd</sup> birthday of Australia’s Founding Father. We duly attended the function

held at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel in Sydney and which, of course commenced with the Address to the Haggis followed by the main course.

Following dinner our MC introduced the Guest Speaker, Mr. Wal Walker an interesting character who is an economist with a long- standing interest in the history of NSW and QLD. Although born in Sydney he lived in QLD for ten years and several years in the Northern Territory. He has published two volumes of early Australian history centred on life in NSW under its first seven Governors. His writings include energy and environmental issues, international economics and literature.



Piping in the haggis

Mr. Walker spoke of Governor MacQuarie's achievements in the colony from the 1<sup>st</sup>. January, 1810 when he took office. These included extensive public works, reformation of the financial system, establishment of the first bank and post office. MacQuarie had critics such as a group of free settlers and government officials who objected to convicts being appointed to public office. However, MacQuarie was supported by the majority of the colony.

Meanwhile back in the UK the Secretary of State for War and Colonies, Lord Bathurst was forced to make a decision on the future of the penal colony of NSW. This being brought about because some members of the UK government thought that the Governor was not strict enough with the convicts. The upshoot of this was that Bathurst appointed John Bigge\* to conduct a Commission of Inquiry into all aspects of the administration. This resulted in the controversial "Bigge Report" of which there were three. The Bigge reports unfairly undermined MacQuarie's reputation, and his health declined. He returned to Scotland in 1822 and passed away on the 1<sup>st</sup>. July, 1824. MacQuarie's response to the Bigge Reports was eventually tabled in parliament, thanks to his wife Elizabeth. Transportation ended in 1868 with still no decision on how the colony should be run.

\*There is a Bigge street in Liverpool, NSW, and of course Lady MacQuarie's Chair at Woolloomooloo. Following Mr Walker's talk, we all participated in renditions of Loch Lomond, the Skye Boat Song, The Road and the Miles and finishing with Auld Lang Syne.

#### The Munro Pavilion.

This year I needed to visit the Royal Easter Show to examine some of the judging taking place. It just so happened that my younger son and his family were attending the same day, so I arranged to meet up with them. Apparently, before I met up with them, they were walking near the cattle pavilion when my seven- year- old granddaughter drew her parent's attention to the Munro Cattle Pavilion sign.

The Munro involvement in the cattle industry in northern NSW is legendary. It all began with Douglas Gordon Munro of Cromarty, who was the second son of Hugh Robert Munro of Keera, Bingara. They were descendants of Donald Munro who emigrated from Scotland in 1848. He made his money from transporting gold from the NSW goldfields then settled in the Moree district then at Keera, a property he purchased in 1858.

After completing his education in Sydney, Donald's youngest son Hugh Robert Munro returned to manage his father's property in 1879. Hugh was a well-known grazier becoming a Councillor of the Grazier's Association and a pioneer of chilled beef shipments to the UK. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup>. century he increased his land holdings and founded cattle studs in several of his properties. Among his many interests were horse racing and polo where he was a member of many of these clubs. One

son of Hugh Gordon, took over the management of Keera and the other son, Douglas, purchased Cromarty in 1925, where he bred shorthorn cattle.

The two brothers together with their cousins, Rowland and Roy, formed a well-known district polo team between the wars. Douglas was the captain of the Inverell-Harden team and later of the Hunter River team.

Grace Munro the mother of Douglas and Gordon was a very remarkable woman. During World War 1 she worked with the Australian Medical Corps and the Australian Red Cross Society. In 1917 she helped provide facilities at the Sydney Showground for country volunteers as well as running the show's post-office. Working with the St. John Ambulance Association she gave first-aid classes at Keera and was a member of the Bingara Hospital Board. She is best known as the Country Women's Association founding president from 1922 and was awarded an MBE in 1935 for her extensive community services.

Douglas was a member of the RAS Council from 1938 to 1954 and Vice-President from 1954 to 1966. The family has had a long association with the Show and were awarded many prizes for their award-winning beef cattle.

#### News from Scotland.

Over 12 months visitors to Scotland's attractions have increased by 17.2% and total numbers to over 48million.

Make a note that a most important date is coming soon. World Whisky Day, the 18<sup>th</sup>. May. (*Ed. That's quite a dram in Webmaster Allan's Toast to Whisky!!*)

Found about forty years ago in a peat bog the Glen Affric Tartan has undergone testing by the Scottish Tartans Authority. As a result, it is believed to date between 1500 to 1600 AD; the oldest ever found.



Webmaster Allan's Toast to Whisky

### *Webmaster Allan*

#### **WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA**

Webmastmaster Allan has the new website is up and running at [www.clanmunroassociation.org.au](http://www.clanmunroassociation.org.au). Everyone that we had an email address for should by now have received a login to view newsletters and if you are a 1 or 3 year member, to manage your membership details. Please email [website@clanmunroassociation.org.au](mailto:website@clanmunroassociation.org.au) if you are a member and haven't received a login.

We've also launched a new Facebook page, so if you are on Facebook, please visit [www.facebook.com/ClanMunroAssociationANZ](https://www.facebook.com/ClanMunroAssociationANZ) and like and follow the page. Here we'll keep you updated as to upcoming Highland Games, Gatherings and events in Australia and New Zealand and any Clan news from home and abroad.

For those on Instagram, we also have an account there where we're networking with other organisations and Clans to share information and promote our Scottish heritage. Follow us here [www.facebook.com/ClanMunroAssociationANZ](https://www.facebook.com/ClanMunroAssociationANZ)

**Daffodil Tea**  
at Foulis Castle

In aid of  
**Sight Action**  
charity services

Entry: Adults - £5;  
Concessions (over-60 and 8 to 12-year-olds) - £3;  
Under-8s - Free

- Live music
- Highland Dancers
- Face painting
- Highland Inflatables

Saturday, 13 April, 2024

2pm-4.30pm

Arts & Crafts • Baking • Stalls

Pick your own daffodils



If anyone attends a Highland Games or Festival and takes some nice photos or wants to write about their experience at a recent event, or sees any articles of relevance to the Clan, please send your photos or story to [website@clanmunroassociation.org.au](mailto:website@clanmunroassociation.org.au)

If you were lucky enough to be in Scotland on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April you could have attended the Daffodil Tea at Foulis Castle. This spectacular annual event was, this year, held in aid of Site Action UK. You can check them out at <https://www.siteaction.org.uk/html>

### *The Muslem Cameleers*

*Muslem Cameleers and their camels played a big part in the opening up of inland Australia. What follows is an extract from Philip Jones and Anna Kenny's book "Australian Pioneers of the Inland, 1860s – 1930s"*

When the Victorian Exploration Expedition Committee decided that camels would be important in Burke and Wills' attempt to cross the continent, they realised that experienced cameleers would also be necessary. Thus it was that the first Muslim cameleers were brought to Australia. Over the next 50 years at least 2000 cameleers would arrive in Australia from Afghanistan and northern India and make a substantial contribution to the exploration and settlement of inland areas. However, their story, their culture and their artefacts have, until quite recently, been given little attention.



In the Summer of 1952, behind the high walls of the mosque in the run-down south-west corner of Adelaide, a group of six or seven aged, turbaned men sat or lay on benches, shaded from the strong sunshine by vines and fruit trees. The youngest was 87 years old, most were in their 90s, and the oldest was 117 years old. These were the last of Australia's Muslim cameleers, who had plied the inland routes before the era of motor vehicles began.

From the 1860s to the 1920s, it is estimated that at least 2000 cameleers reached Australia from their homelands in Afghanistan, Baluchistan and other provinces in the region of north-western India (now Pakistan). During this period, 'Afghan' and European entrepreneurs imported more than 20,000 camels, supplementing those being bred in South Australia's north.

Descendants of these camels run free today in the arid interior. The great majority of the cameleers returned to their homelands after fulfilling short contracts of two or three years. Of those who remained for longer periods, a small proportion formed relationships with Aboriginal or



European women. Perhaps no more than one hundred of the cameleers had families here, but it is these families who retain living memories of the contribution made by the pioneer Muslim cameleers.



A group of Cameleers

Camels had long been considered a way of penetrating the interior, and had been proposed by South Australia's Governor Gawler as early as 1839. In 1846, the Horrocks Expedition, which travelled to the west of Lake Torrens in South Australia, was the first Australian exploring expedition to use a camel, although no cameleer accompanied it. During the expedition the camel, christened 'Harry', nudged John Horrocks as he prepared to shoot a bird, and the gun misfired, fatally wounding the explorer.

By 1858 after the noted engineer, scientist and explorer, Benjamin Herschel Babbage, had found himself unable to undertake effective exploration within a drought, and prominent members called for the

introduction of camels.

The Muslim Cameleers arrived on June 9 1860 to participate in the Burke and Wills Expedition. The men had been brought to Australia, because, according to the Victorian Exploration Expedition Committee, "the camels would be useless unless accompanied by their native drivers".

Despite its tragic outcome, the Burke and Wills Expedition demonstrated that camels provided the mobility and endurance needed for inland exploration. Subsequent exploration parties came to depend heavily on the cameleers, who cared for the camels, loaded and unloaded equipment and provisions, located water, and hunted game.

Five years after the Burke and Wills expedition set out from Melbourne, South Australian pastoralists, Thomas Elder and Samuel Stuckey imported 124 camels and 31 cameleers on three- year contracts to cart wool and supplies. Cameleers' depots were established on Elder's and Stuckey's stations at Beltana in the Flinders Ranges and Umberatana, near Lake Hope in South Australia's north.

Over the next decade, small groups of cameleers were shipped in and out of Australia, at three-year intervals, to service South Australia's inland pastoral industry.

In comparison with their livelihoods in their own countries, they earned small fortunes carting goods and wool bales.

The Beltana camel depot served as the starting point for several important inland exploration expeditions such as that of Ernest Giles in 1875. During two of his expeditions, Giles relied heavily upon a cameleer name Saleh Mahomed. After his 1875 expedition he wrote:

*I named this fine watering-place Saleh's Fishponds, after my Afghan camel-driver, who was really a first-rate fellow, without a lazy bone in his body. The greatest requirement of a camel caravan is someone to keep the saddles in repair; and so avert sore backs. Saleh used to do this admirably, and many times in the deserts and elsewhere I have known him to pass half the night at this sort of work. The management of the camels, after one learns the art, is simple enough; they are much easier to work than a mob of pack-horses; but keeping the saddles right is a task of the hardest nature. In consequence of Saleh's looking after ours so well, we never had any trouble with sore-backed camels, thus escaping a misfortune which in itself might wreck a whole caravan.*

As they gained experience in the Australian bush, learned how to read European society's needs, and discovered how the new country's economy worked, the cameleers saw business opportunities and began to forge their own destinies. Initially these ventures were not always successful; some 'Afghan' syndicates importing camels to Australia in the mid-1880s went bankrupt and several cameleers became destitute. However, within a decade the

cameleers had found their own roles in Australian society and operated effectively in the English-speaking business world, in several cases forming partnerships with Europeans. Brothers Faiz and Tagh Mahomet began importing camels and cameleers, and pioneered new transport routes to the Western Australia goldfields. Abdul Wahid employed dozens of cameleers throughout inland New South Wales. In 1891, an expedition funded by pastoralist and camel entrepreneur, Thomas Elder, set out from Warrina at the end of the railway in northern South Australia with the objective of exploring western South Australia and Western Australia.

Accompanied by naturalists and geologists, the expedition travelled for more than 6800 kilometres, supported by four cameleers and 44 camels from Beltana. The leader was David Lindsay, who later formed a partnership with camel merchant Mahmoud Massan.

There were other expeditions to follow, some exploratory, some scientific, and many relied on camels and their cameleers for successful outcomes. The arrival of camels and the Muslim cameleers enabled greater areas of the inland to be opened up for sheep grazing. Bullock teams had not been capable of dependably delivering wool to ports and railheads during drought, but the cameleers made this possible. Strings of as many as 70 camels, each carrying two large wool bales with a combined weight of 400 kilograms or more, plied inland tracks and roads.



Cameleers Moosha & Guzzie Baloosh

During the 1880s and 1890s cameleer firms played a key role in carrying essential supplies to remote stations and townships, charging by the ton, per mile. The deliveries were usually coordinated, so the cameleers returned with a full load of wool or mineral ore.

Some cameleers, mostly Sikhs or Hindus from merchant backgrounds, became licensed hawkers, selling a variety of goods from camel-drawn wagons or small strings of pack camels.

As they travelled through the inland, the Muslim cameleers encountered many Aboriginal groups and exchanged skills, knowledge and goods with them. Some cameleers assisted Aboriginal people by carrying traditional exchange goods, including red ochre or the narcotic plant pituri, along ancient trade routes such as the Birdsville Track. They also brought new commodities such as sugar, tea, tobacco, clothing and metal tools to remote Aboriginal groups. Some cameleers employed Aboriginal men and women, and this resulted in some enduring partnerships and several marriages.

By the 1890s, the camel business in Australia was dominated by Muslim merchants and brokers who often travelled between the Indian subcontinent and Australia to import camels and goods and to visit their families. As trading and communications networks spread into the arid regions of Australia, small Muslim settlements developed around inland railheads. Iron and earth-walled mosques were built in these remote places, and from 1890 substantial mosques were erected in the hearts of Australian cities.

At least 2000 cameleers and 20,000 camels arrived in Australia during the period from 1870 to 1920. The 1893 gold discoveries at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie greatly increased demand and a vast network of camel routes spread across the inland.

Camel camps and townships grew up at the edge of towns like Broken Hill, Marree, Oodnadatta, Coolgardie and Bourke, next to open spaces where the camels could graze. These settlements

allowed the Muslim cameleers to live and work according to their own religious and social conventions.

Relations with the European neighbours were usually marked by tolerance, although some conflict arose over issues such as water or grazing rights.



The camel industry in Australia was, however, to be short lived. By the late 1920s, motor transport had penetrated the bush, and the cameleers' traditional livelihood disappeared. In successfully laying the foundations of the outback's transport and communication network, the cameleers had paradoxically ensured their own demise. Some had managed to accumulate some wealth and retired or returned to their homelands. Others turned to different trades, becoming shopkeepers or working as loggers and miners. And some of the more elderly cameleers had to turn to the charity of the city mosques.

### ***Douglas Pringle Munro (1912-2011)***

A Scottish correspondent, Colin Munro, would like to hear from Australian descendants of a particularly talented Munro family. Robert Munro (1833-1889) was the son of a market gardener from Torryburn in Fife who qualified in medicine and married Margaret Pringle, daughter of the founder of the famous knitwear company Pringle of Scotland. Their son Neil Gordon Munro (1863-1942), also a doctor, lived for 50 years in Japan, and is famous for pioneering anthropological studies of the indigenous Ainu people of Hokkaido.

Ian Thomson Munro, another scion of this Fife Munro family, served in British military intelligence during the Second World War. At Trent Park, where high ranking captured German officers were detained, he impersonated a fictional Scottish aristocrat called Lord Aberfeldy, hoping to gain their trust by appealing to their arrogance. (The story of Trent Park is told in *The Walls have Ears* by Helen Fry.)

Neil Gordon Munro had brothers Harry Dykes Munro and Robert Pringle Munro, twins, who both emigrated to Australia. Harry's son Douglas Pringle Munro lived in Moonee Ponds, Melbourne and died there at the age of 99 in 2011. He is believed to have family in the Melbourne area. Colin would like to establish to which branch of Clan Munro this interesting family belong, and would be pleased to hear from any descendants, via the editor

### ***Tartan Day***

*Did you celebrate Tartan Day on April 6? I found this story on the internet*

On April 6 every year, people across Scotland and beyond take part in this annual celebration. Tartan Day is all about Scottish heritage and the cultural contributions of Scottish people throughout history. If you have never heard of Tartan Day, don't be too hard on yourself. Despite being entirely dedicated to Scotland, its origins actually lie outside of the country. First celebrated in Canada in 1987, nowadays countries all over the world take part in Tartan Day celebrations. Australia, the United States, and of course Scotland itself are among the places where the holiday is the most widely observed.

It is no coincidence that Tartan Day is held on April 6, as it is also the day that Scotland's Declaration of Arbroath was signed all the way back in 1320. This important letter was penned by the barons and whole community of the kingdom of Scotland and was addressed to Pope John XXII.

The origins of Tartan Day can be traced back to 1320, when the Declaration of Arbroath was signed. The document asked the pope to formally recognise Scotland's independence, as well as acknowledge Robert the Bruce as the country's rightful king. It survives to this day, and is in the possession of the National Records of Scotland.

Jumping ahead to 1987, the first Tartan Day was held in Nova Scotia, when it was proposed during a meeting of the Federation of Scottish Clans. After a few years, the Clans and Scottish Societies of Canada successfully got their government to formally recognise April 6 as Tartan Day.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK - APRIL 09: Pipes and Drums groups participate in the annual Tartan Day



Parade along Sixth Avenue on April 09, 2022 in New York City.

The Tartan Day Parade returned after a two-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic. (Photo by Alexi Rosenfeld/Getty Images)

Of all places, Tartan Week is arguably the biggest in New York, when a massive parade is held every year to celebrate Scotland.

Today, countries from New Zealand to France take part in

Tartan Day celebrations. The holiday is particularly popular in the United States, especially New York where an entire Tartan Week is held culminating in a Tartan Day parade.

As the name suggests, the most common way to celebrate the day is by wearing tartan. Whether you go all-out in a kilt, or opt for a tartan scarf or tie, there is no better time to don some colourful tartan.

Another good way to honour Tartan Day is by eating some traditional Scottish food or drink. Haggis is a classic, of course, but other good options are stovies, Cullen skink, cranachan, and Dundee cake.

### *Membership*

Annual:	\$25.00	Spouse or children of member under 18 years	\$8.00
Three Years:	\$55.00	Spouse or children of member under 18 years	\$20.00