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"THERE IS NO PEATS HERE"

LETTERS FROM HIGHLAND EMIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA

To a 19th century Highlander, thinking of emigration, one of the most persuasive factors must have been a first-hand recommendation from relatives and friends who had already "taken the plunge". Letters home, urging loved ones or neighbours to join the emigrant in the Land of Plenty, were perhaps not a "cause" of emigration, but must have given it an added stimulus. They are also delightful to read - poignant, sad, funny, and above all full of hope. The following extracts, supplied by our member Mrs O.P. Gillingham, Kerang, Victoria, Australia, were written between September and December 1852, by emigrants from the Isles of Skye and Raasay. They were published in the Inverness Courier, and later in booklet form under the title Letters from Highland Emigrants in Australia. Mrs Gillingham has also compiled an index to the personal names mentioned in the letters, which follows these extracts. Their style and tone suggest the letters were spontaneously written, and not solicited for propaganda purposes and, as the booklet's preface points out: "It must be borne in mind that the writers think and ordinarily speak in Gaelic, and that the letters are therefore virtually translations of Gaelic modes of speech and habits of thought."

From John Mackinnon to Donald Mackinnon, Benefeler, nr Portree.

Bush Station, Geelong,
 September the 29th.

Dear Brother - I take the opportunity ... to let you know that I am in health at present; but I cannot pass the sore news I have to tell you in the beginning, that my little boy, Charles, died on the passage, after eight weeks' sailing 1000 miles west Cape of Good Hope; and it was very sore news to me indeed; but his mother was worse; but we must obey the Lord our God in every thing he will lay on us. The measles was in the ship and he got it, and died after being ten days sick. And little Ann took it, but she came safe from it. But I ought to bless God that I have the rest safe, for there was plenty along with me that lost all their children. ... All that came with me from Rasay lost their youngest child. ... We were thirteen weeks and two days between the two lands, and we got a fine passage, for John Macqueen's ship would do as he was saying. ... I am very pleased with the place. ... I am five miles from the town, and I never got a rest to my body till now. And I think, if myself and all I have of the family be spared, that I will be a fortunate man yet, for this is the place for plenty gold and silver. But I will not advise any man

with weak children to come here, more than two under six years, of up, for the passage is dangerous for children, and they will get no food but for them that can work. They must keep the rest up themselves. There were not many deaths among big people, only one man and four women, and the man and two of the women were sick before they came, and another one died in the family way, and another went overboard on a washing-day. She was putting up clothes, and she fell over. ... Any good working man here will get from 8s. to 10s. per day; but that is nothing besides the gold. The gold-digging is sixty miles from here, and there is a great expense to take a family to it; but any single man, or man and his wife, who would travel themselves, would not be at much expense. ... One man I advise, Duncan Campbell Rasay, the wright, and John Bethune, if his wife was in health for the passage, for they would soon make their fortune here. ... And any strong family, if they are wise, will do good here. ... But if John and Donald, Charles' sons, did not come as yet, I know you and your sisters would do well. ... Now, Donald, I tell you the truth, and no more, according to all I see and hear. Now, this country is a pretty country, not very cold or hot as I see yet. You would wear any kind of clothes, chance of our keeping together the first year, for all the people that came with me from Rasay and Skye scattered through the country, here and there, none of them nearer me than 20 miles, and every one a shepherd; but me and them expect to meet yet. I got the station where Archibald MacIntosh was, and he and his brother went to the gold; and his wife and sister stopped in the town. Now I tell you any one will make a shepherd here. Big Rory in Fearn's Rasay would make a good shepherd here, and now any one would do. I have 2000 sheep to herd; but I do not get out any day till after breakfast, and I may come home to dinner. I bought a dog from McIntosh, and I paid £1 for it. My master is a Free Church man, and he sent a Free Church minister to my house; and after speaking of spiritual things we spoke a good deal about the world, and he told me the more people that will come to this country the better. Now, Donald Maclean, you would get £60 a-year here for shepherding, and your meat, but I am afraid your children are very weak for the passage - for 82 children died in our ship; but other ships come very safe from death. Your father's family would do well here. Any one who will come here let him take him a bottle of castor oil and some baking soda for the passage. ... I do not bid you to write me because it is a chance of me getting it, for I am hired for six months; but if you will come yourself, you will write me by chance to the care of my master [John Armstrong], he will know where I will be. Catherine sends her blessing to all friends, but her mother and iristy above all. ... I am your dutiful brother till death, ...

To Roderick Mackenzie, of Heatherfield, Benefeler, by Portree.
From Donald Mackenzie

Killembet, by Port Phillip
Nov. 6, 1852

My dear Father and Mother - ... Myself and Archibald Mackinnon, from Cairnescross Sleat, is hired for shepherding, and we are hired for 12 months, and my wages is £75 with rations and dwelling. ... I do not know nothing about none that left home with me, but Sandy McInnes, who left Waternish; his father is in Gedintaler; he is 28 miles from me, and all the family is at the one man, and he is a good master. His wages is coming to £160 a-year. We was complaining for being so long on the passage. ... There was a great number of children died on this ship, but we did not lose one, and they stood well to the sea. All the children that was on both sides of us was taken away, and our two was left, and the doctor child that was aside us. ... The measles was aboard the ship, but of him, though he was doing his best towards them. The provision was sufficient; they were getting in the morning porridge for the children, and biscuits and tea to themselves, and their rice and pork, on supper, as in the morning, and beef every Saturday. We was allowed more than we could eat. ... We did not feel any hunger since we left home, and we have every fortnight, and sending the rations home to them every fortnight. A doctor is to come to the station every month, and the master pays him so much a year for it. I cannot give you any illustration on the country, the country. ... This place is very dry, but there is no scarcity of water for drink, or cooking, and washing too. There is lakes of salt water in this country, and in the summer time they will dry up as salt-rock, and the tenants is taking it home with their carts, and it is as tasty as any salt you would get at home. This is a very good place, but the grass is not growing so good as it is in our place, it is so scarce in the ground. So we are content in it at this time whatever; and it was the leading of the Almighty that encouraged me to come to this place, besides being at home starving and in slavery, as many one behind me is; ... I would advise John, my brother, to come to this place. Murdoch and Kenneth would be very good with the sawing in this colony. As for John and Sandy, I would be afraid for giving them any consent to come, in fear that they would lose the children, as they are all too weak for the sea, as it is a great hardship for weak children. ... But if you would risk the chance as I risk

... and if you would arrive safe in this colony you would be better off than the gentlemen that you would leave at home. ... All what they have of money in our place is nothing besides the money and gold in this colony. ... I would advise Donald Mackenzie in Lethalt to come ... he would be much better in this place. If any one intend to come, let him bring as much as he can of clothes and shoes, for they are very dear in this place. ... Tell John to come though he would not bring none but himself; and if the whole family would come, my father would get £50 a-year for herding sheep, if he could move his foot out of the house. ... I would wish that all my friends would come for it would be to their profit, and it would soon bring them to a better way than another man's service. If you will believe that, let you do what you like. ...

From John Mackinnon, formerly Labourer and Cartwright
at Roag, Dunvegan, Isle of Skye,
To Alex. Mackinnon, Sheriff's Officer, Roag.

Melbourne, Port Philip, Victoria.
Nov 8th, 1852.

Dear Sir - ... we made passage in 68 days. Ann was sea-sick the first 12 days. As for myself I did not feel as much as a sore head since I left home; and she was in good health ever since. But, oh, Sandy! throwing out my two boys into the deep sea; it will never go out of my heart. The youngest died with the measles at crossing the line; and the other 6 days after with a bowel complaint, a disease raged greatly in our ship among children; 53 children died, and 2 women in childbed, and one sailor. ... I am working at my old trade, cartwright, one mile out of Melbourne, at a place called Lower Collinwood, on the banks of the river Yarra-Yarra. We are not scarce of water. I am paying 10s. a week for my room and fire wood; there is no peats here. Now, Sandy, it is no profit to me to tell you lies. That I will not. I heard at home good accounts of Australia; but I never believed it till I saw it with my own eyes, and I think more of it than I ever heard at home, partly green and partly thickly wooded. Now I think this is the richest town of its size in all the world; all the go is gold! gold! gold! They do not care about a sovereign here more than you of a penny at home. ... But, oh, Donald Campbell, what are you doing in Roag with your strong family; ... Now I have to tell you that I live with as little fear as I would in Roag. They will be speaking at home that a person would be in danger of his life day and night; but it is not true. I saw some of the natives going bare naked, but they will hurt no person; and the people here are as kind and free as ever I saw. ...

From Donald MacCaskill
To his Sister [Effy]

Devil's River,
November 17, 1852.

My dear Sister - We had the voyage 15 weeks and 4 days, from anchor to anchor, from Liverpool to Geelong, Port Philip. We had the most of the time very coarse weather on the voyage. ... Little Donald, he took the measles, but it was for no trouble to him. He was only two days in bed, and that was all. All the rest took it before. We lost 27 children, and two of the sailors; 8 born. There were families that lost 4, some 5, and some 2 and 3, but I, Donald Campbell, Malcolm Macleod, and Donald Macdonald, took all our families all alive to this colony, in a good state of health. ... Our master has two stations, his home station is 18 miles from Geelong, and the other station is 150 miles up the country. ... Meron and I, and the young ones of the children, are in one place, Duncan and Kenneth in another place; John and Peter are in the manager's house. We are all shepherds, except John, he is about the house after the cattle, milking them, because Mrs Diggins, the Manager's wife, has no servant but him. She is a Highland woman herself. ... dear Sister, you can easily understand by this account that I left the starvation behind. I can give as much to my dogs now, as I was getting to my family at home, to keep them alive with. ... This is a very wholesome country. It is not too warm nor too cold either. We have the summer here now, and I am using the Highland cloth I took from home. ... Now give my news, with my best respects, to all my friends and acquaintances, and it is my advice to them to come to this country for as far as I know there is no other place under the stars like this place, for poor people to live in; certainly there are many difficulties to meet with a man before he will arrive, but he will soon forget them. ... Tha mi beo, slan, lan tolichte, ann an fasach Australia [I am alive, well, quite happy, in the wilderness of Australia].

From Donald MacDonald, formerly shepherd at Borline,
To his Brother Duncan MacDonald.

Geelong,
22nd November, 1852.

Dear Brother - I now do myself the pleasure of intimating to you, that we all arrived here safe, after a passage of 91 days. Thanks be to God for his wonderful mercies. I am sorry to tell you, that my wife, Isabella, was indisposed during all the voyage. She was delivered here about a fortnight ago, of a female child, who only survived nine days. ... I am

glad to tell you, that we were well-used, and treated most kindly, by the captain, officers, and crew of the ship [the Georgiana]; indeed, in one word, we were dealt with far beyond our expectations. We have had one death, and one birth, so I think we were the only exception that arrived with so few deaths, in this colony, for a series of years. But a most unfortunate affair happened before we came ashore. The sailors conspired to take a French leave, i.e. without the Captain's permission. It was on a Sunday when the crew prepared to leave the ship, and, awful to relate, the captain shot the cook through the head. I hope I shall never witness such a scene during the rest of my sojourn in this vain and transitory world. For my part I have not travelled much of the country as yet, being in the Emigration Depot for the last six weeks; but one thing I am safe in saying, that this is the country for the poor working man. ... I expect to leave here today, and is going 100 miles to the interior as a general servant, at the rate of £70 per year. ... The diggings just now is not so brisk; some are getting gold, but the most are not. I advise you once more to follow me here. ... P.S. Advise John or Alex Cameron to come; prevail upon them to come, and the whole of my friends.

From Margaret Macleod

[Her mother, Mrs MacPherson, with a large family of married sons and daughters, from Dunvegan, Isle of Skye, sailed at their own expense in the Warrata]

Melbourne,
December, 1852.

My dear Brother and Sister - ... Roderiche is working in a smithy in town, and is getting £3 a week, and Donald is in a lemonade shop and is getting £3 a week, and Angus is waiting in a publick house, and is getting £1-5s a week along with rations. ... I wish that you and Margaret would take the courage to come out here, for you would both do very well. Margaret would do very well in washing. ... Mother, Emily and I are all living together yet Roderick and Donald are along with us. We have got two rooms and are paying £2 a week for them. Rents are very high here - every thing is dear in this place. ... The Free Church is as near as twenty yards to our house and there's service in it twice day on Sabbath; but they are not like the ministers comparing to those we have left behind us; but who came here about a fortnight ago, but the Reverend Norman Macleod, from America; he is very old now, he is just like old Norman Macleod in your own place. ... There is Galick sermon preached every Sabbath once a-day here, so that the place is not so bad off as what we heard of before we left home, for the want of the means of grace, if a person wishes to attend them; but this

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is a very wicked place, and people given greatly to drink here, especially women. I never saw a town yet where there is more women given to drink than this town is. ... your mother is enjoying good health since she came to this colony, and says that her mind is far easier than what she was at Herebost, and the colony is agreeing with her very well. This is a beautiful country, and always fine weather, but it is very hot sometimes, but I suppose it is never very cold. ... You can tell John MacPherson that he was very foolish he did not come out here with his family; he could get a situation for every one of them, and drivers get the highest wages that goes in the colony. ... I hope you would have got the letter Thomas wrote you out of the harbour; ... I dare say he mentions about the death of our dear little boy, who suffered a great deal before he died. Poor John Mackinnon, that left Roag, lost all his family; the only one that was living after coming on shore, died last week. ... I wish you and Margaret would take the courage of coming out here ... for every person here has plenty to eat and drink. ...

From Alex. Cameron, former shepherd at Talisker,
To John Cameron, Esq., Tacksman of Talisker.

Wardy Yalleck

My dear Sir - ... we left Greenock on Tuesday, and 13 weeks from that day we anker at Port Phillip, after a save passage; none died but one child, belongs to Ewen Robertson, from Strathaird, near Doctor Macalster house. We had the best doctor that ever I saw. ... There was plenty wanting servant of every kind, so that I take my chance of being a shephard; I was hired at one John Gordon McMillan, Wardy Yallock, 50 miles from Geelong. ... I am writing this letter on my knees. I have to rise now and then to follow the sheep through the wood for it is very plentiful about me. I have 3000 in my flock; Ewen about 2000. Our master hath 18,000 on this farm, and not paying but £10 of rent for that; they told me that he is one of the richest in this colony, but he hath a large estate about the town of Geelong. ... he is a native of Argyleshire ... I wish you was married to his sister, she is both rich and very bonney. ... I must tell you that all our sailors flee away from the ship first Sunday after we come - when we was at our dinner; we ran up when we hard the noise; they went down to the quarter-deck and began to loose one of boats, the captain asked what they mean, they told him that they was going to the digging, and if he would not behave, that he would be on the worth of the play; he run down to the cabin an out a pistle that would shot 6 shots at once; he keep that to the ear of there own cock and he fall down dead, then he shot 3 shots as quick as possible, he wounded another too, but none dead but the one;

the sailmaker, a strong, able man, jump to him and give him a plow that
 rock him down as fast as the man that he killed, and they tye him on his
 back till they got away; he was flate on the deck, and the sailmaker
 waiting, before any of his mates would loose him, he was able to put them
 all out on the sea if he would begin. ... Every ship that came lost there
 crew. I don't think that they will ever get home. ... I will send another
 letter to Mrs McAskill along with yours, and another to my brother at Soa.

From the same Alex. Cameron,
 To Mrs MacAskill

Wardy Vallock

My dear Mrs Mac Askill - ... I got a fiddle in Greenock, that kept me
 very busy playing every night that we could stand on deck dancing. The Dr.
 and the Capt. would force them to dance every night, and they was very few
 the nights they would not try it. I was in opinion before I left home
 that the passengers would not be allowed to be on deck always, but that
 was not true, for all the passengers was ordered ... to be playing them-
 selves on deck all the day, to keep them in active. The Capt. would go
 down under deck now and then, slashing them up, and he would be larning
 them many kinds of playing that I never saw. ... It was the flying fish
 the greatest wonder that I saw; they was so numerous about the ship for 4
 or 5 weeks; 3 or 4 of them jump on board although the ship was very high.
 I saw shirks near the Cape. ... I am weel in health since you saw me, very
 bussy with my floock. I must rise as soon as the sun, and go home at
 sunset. I have nothing but following them; and when they reach the
 bountarys, they will turn there - they will not leave the station to any
 place. John Matheson is near me the same. We have not but small houses,
 but we have plenty to eat and drink. We are getting the best mutton that
 ever I saw; very seldom I saw in Sky so good as the worst we get here. I
 don't see any of the natives since I came; but Mary and Ann Matheson is
 afraid of them. ... I think this is the best place in the world - so bonny.
 ... We are not far from the gold diggings. They are saying that there is
 plenty of it in all this farm. They are desiring us to looking sharp for
 it. ... I write a letter to Dr. Talisher, that I mention the riots that we
 had the day that the sailors went away; you will see it in the newspapers.
 I saw it here, but there was not 5 words of true. ... Mind and write as
 soon as you get this. Excuse hurry - the sheeps is away. ...
 P.S. ... Many a night I will be minding old lang sighn, play the fiddle in
 such a private place, none to hear me but the fowls of the wood. ...
 I remain yours truly till death - Alex. Cameron, your old Fiddler.

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N.B. The names of emigrants from the Strathaird estate in Skye, who took
 assisted passages on the "Araminta", "Georgianna" and "Ontario" in 1852
 are listed in Neil J. MacKinnon's paper "Strath, Skye" published in the
Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness (Vol.LIV, 1984-6, p222-4)

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THE BLACK ISLE FARMERS SOCIETY

In November, our speaker was Mrs Betty Graham, Secretary of the Black Isle Farmers Society, and wife of the then President Mr Larry Graham. She traced the history of the Society from its formation in March 1836 by "proprietors and gentlemen connected with the Black Isle", and the growth of their annual Black Isle Show, now established as the premier agricultural event in the Highlands. To commemorate the Society's 150th anniversary, the 1986 Black Isle Show was attended by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. The event now attracts about 25,000 visitors each year. Until the 1880s, the show was held on the "soft green sward" surrounding the ruins of Fortrose Cathedral, and thereafter at individual farms in the area, until a permanent showground was established at Mannsfield, Muir of Ord, in 1957. Appropriately enough, this was where the old Highland drovers had stanced their cattle in the days when great droves descended on the Muir, from north and west, bound for the markets of the south.

The Society's records are fairly complete, and show that the first members to join paid a subscription of 10 shillings - more than was paid to a farm labourer in six months. The records make a clear distinction between the landed "gentlemen" (e.g. James Cameron of Drumderfit) and the tenant farmers (e.g. James B. Fowler at Raddery). The records contain little personal detail, however, and farm names - many of them now swallowed up by larger units - crop up more often than family names. A complete list of Society Presidents has been published in their 150th anniversary booklet, and they include:-

- 1836 Captain Sutherland of Udale.
- 1837 Thomas Mackenzie of Ord.
- 1838 James J.R. Mackenzie, Scatwell.
- 1839 James B. Fowler, Jnr., Raddery.
- 1840 Thomas Mackenzie of Ord.
- 1841 John McEwan, Riverford.
- 1842 William Murray, Kilcoy Mains.
- 1843 Henry Fowler, Raddery.
- 1844 Patrick Maclean, Hawkhill.
- 1845 Henry Fowler, Raddery.
- 1846 Roderick Mackenzie, Flowerburn.
- 1847 Sir Ewen Mackenzie of Kilcoy.
- 1848 Wm Trotter, Sen., Garguston.
- 1849 Thomas Duncan, Muirhead.
- 1850 John Wilson, Coulmore.
- 1851 Patrick Maclean, Hawkhill.
- 1852 James Cameron, Balnakyle.
- 1853 G.W.H. Ross, Cromarty.
- 1854 Wm Trotter, Sen., Garguston.
- 1855 G. Munro, Poyntzfield.

- 1856 John Wilson, Coulmore.
- 1857 William Smith, Belmaduthy Mains.
- 1858 Major Wardlaw, Belmaduthy.
- 1859 Sir James Mackenzie, Scatwell.
- 1860 Alexander Smith, Munlochy.
- 1861 Alexander Thomson, Tarradale.
- 1862 J.E. Ross, Mains of Tore.
- 1863 D. Mackenzie, Mulchaich.
- 1864 John Holehouse, Mount Pleasant.
- 1865 Frank Harper, Torgorm.
- 1866 J.E. Ross, Tore Mains.
- 1867 D.D. MacLeod, Coulmore.
- 1868 Alexander MacLennan, Ord Distillery.
- 1869 J. McK. Allison, Redcastle.
- 1870 P. Grant, Fortrose.
- 1871 William Murray, Kilcoy Mains.
- 1872 James Cameron, Balnakyle.
- 1873 R.G. Mackenzie, Flowerburn.
- 1874 Jonathan Middleton, Davidston.
- 1875 James R. Mitchell, Drumderfit.
- 1876 Robert Trotter, Garguston.
- 1877 D.D. MacLeod, Coulmore.
- 1878 Rev. John Gibson, Avoch.
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- 1880 Captain Scobie, Mid-Fearn.
- 1881 D.M. Ross, Cromarty.
- 1882 William Murray, Bellfield.
- 1883 Capt C.M. Cameron, Balnakyle.
- 1884 C. Lyon Mackenzie, St Martin.
- 1885 A.S. McQueen, Coulmore.
- 1886 J.D. Fletcher, Rosehaugh.
- 1887 Robert Trotter, Garguston.
- 1888 John Henderson, Fortrose.
- 1889 Jonathan Middleton, Fortrose.
- 1890 G.H. St Quintin, Kincurdie.
- 1891 Archibald Cameron, Killen.
- 1892 James Scott, Belmaduthy.
- 1893 Donald Jack, Auchterflow.
- 1894 J.F. Mackenzie, Alliangrange.
- 1895 Robert Trotter, Garguston.
- 1896 J.E.B. Baillie, MP, Dochfour.
- 1897 A.A. Middleton, Rosefarm.
- 1898 J.W. Lumsden, Navty.
- 1899 James Urquhart, Shantullich.
- 1900 Colin Munro, Tullich.

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THE HISTORY OF CELTIC ART

In January, we were given a talk about the History of Celtic Art, by Mrs Evelyn Sinclair, Muir of Ord. Her interest in the subject was kindled by the tombstones of the Scots Kings and Clan Chiefs on the Isle of Iona, and she went on to study the meaning of the symbolism in the Celtic designs. Interlacing knotwork - "the high point of Celtic art", and often seen on War Memorial crosses - represents eternity, being a continuous line with no beginning, and no end. Our own logo is an example, the three-pointed design also representing the Trinity. The latter concept is also seen in the "three-legged" emblem of the Isle of Man. Religious factors also gave rise to the contorted shape of the animals depicted by Celtic artists. It was their way around the taboo against realistic portrayal of anything created by God.

Cont. on p.

CLAN SUTHERLAND

Mr Daniel J. Sutherland addressed a small gathering of members on 28th October 1986, on the subject of Clan Sutherland.

Mr Sutherland was born in Holland, a direct descendant of a member of the Scots Dutch Brigade that served in the Netherlands from the sixteenth to eighteenth century. For many years he has been interested in tracing Sutherlands, of whatever spelling, in Holland, and pointed out that many names with Scots Brigade connections appear in current Dutch telephone books.

He spoke on the Clan Sutherland Society and the history of the Clan. Although a Clan Sutherland Society existed in the nineteenth century, there is little information on it, and it was the Gathering of the Clans which revived interest in it. The Clan Sutherland Society will be ten years old in 1987, and it has a membership of 700 at present. The Clan Centre is at Dunrobin Castle, with printed source material, much of which is also held in the Inverness Public Library's reference collection.

The Clan Society organises a Summer Outing, the Annual General Meeting, a Clan Tour every year, and publishes a Newsletter. There is also a Clan history working party.

To illustrate the history of the Clan from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries, Mr Sutherland had a detailed genealogical chart showing the descent and relationship of the Earls and Dukes of Sutherland. Accounts of the lives of members of the Clan were given, and the relationship with Gordon of Gordonstoun explained. The sources for much of the detail were Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun's Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland (1813), and The Sutherland Book (1892) by Sir William Fraser.

R.H. Richardson

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CELTIC ART: (cont. from p.11)

The geometric patterns of Celtic art were the product of a highly developed and cultured people, Mrs Sinclair said. "They are not just random scribbles, there is a very firm mathematical basis behind them".

John Durham rounded off the evening with a demonstration of his instantly up-datable, computer-generated pedigree chart.

NEWS

GO-AHEAD Aberdeen and N-E Scotland FHS have taken the plunge and bought their own premises. Their new home is in what they boast, with justifiable pride, is Britain's first "Family History Shop". Decorated, furnished, equipped and staffed by local members, their new centre was opened to the public in January this year. It acts as a library and research centre for members, and an information and advice centre for the general public, whose enquiries are encouraged. Non-members may use the facilities for a small fee. Their own publications are on sale, along with other books and leaflets of interest to those researching Scottish ancestors. The centre will also act as an archive for information on North-East families. It is equipped with three readers and a reader-printer for use with their collection of microfiche indexes; and two microfilm readers for their proposed collection of OPR films (starting with Aberdeen City). The address, to which all their correspondence should now be sent, is:- Aberdeen Family History Shop, 152 King Street, Aberdeen AB2 3BD. Tel. (0224) 646323. The shop is open to the public Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm; and Saturday 10am-12.30pm.

DIRECTORY: The Anglo-Scottish FHS has produced its first 'Members' Interests Directory, and has sent us a copy for our library. It is available from their Secretary, Mrs D.F. Ramsbotham, 10 Blantyre Road, Swinton, Manchester M27 1ER. Price £1.50; UK post £1.70; surface mail £1.80; airmail £2.35.

M.I.s: London genealogist Mr Michael Gandy has transcribed the Monumental Inscriptions in the following Highland burial grounds, and kindly deposited copies with our library:- Lochcarron Old; Plockton; Arnisdale; and Duror. "FAMILY ROOTS" is the name of a new Family History Group formed at Eastbourne, Sussex, with a quarterly Newsletter of the same name. Secretary is Mrs Phyl Webb, 22 Abbey Road, Eastbourne, Sussex BN20 8TE.

MOLYNEUX: A Molyneux Family Newsletter has been launched for researchers in Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the UK. Further details from:- Mr D.L. Molyneux, 42 Keswick Road, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT23 4BH, England.

GO LISTEN TO THE CROFTERS. By A.D. Cameron.
Acair Ltd, Stornoway. Price £8.95.

No one with crofting ancestors can afford to ignore the Minutes of Evidence given to the Royal Commission on the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (the Napier Commission) in 1883. It is arguably the single most important source of information about 19th century crofters and their way of life. The Commission was unique at that time for its efforts to go to the people in their own communities (public hearings were held at 61 different venues), and listen to the people describing their own situation. More than 700 of them gave evidence, often as spokesmen for entire townships, and every word was translated from Gaelic (if necessary), written down in shorthand, and eventually published along with the Commission's report. Their report led to the passing, in 1886, of the Crofting Act establishing security of tenure for crofters, and this liberally illustrated book has been published to mark the centenary. Next to reprinting the Minutes of Evidence in full, it is the next best thing, quoting extensively from this remarkable social record to offer a glimpse of what life was like, and had been like, for crofting folk a century ago. As Sandy Cameron says in his introduction: "There must be few of us today who know anything at all about what our great-grandfathers thought or felt or said on any subject, yet here we have the words uttered by hundreds of ordinary men from Baltasound in Shetland to Tarbert on Loch Fyne, men who had been chosen by their fellows to speak for them on their conditions as crofters and who, but for this Royal Commission, would have passed away, unrecorded in the pages of history. Happily, they were not required to confine their remarks to grievances about the land and their landlords, but were often encouraged to speak freely about their lives and experiences. As a result, they gave details about their methods of farming and fishing, their stock and their crops, seasonal work and other work, their homes, their food and their fuel, family relationships, their community the township and, all too frequently, unfortunately, their poverty. What they said as individuals could be of interest to people searching for their ancestors; collectively their testimony is a uniquely precious body of evidence about crofting as a way of life which deserves to be better known. ...The men who feature here have not been chosen for any part they played in the land agitation in the 1880s, but for the vividness of their descriptions..." Some of the most vivid were given by the older crofters, recalling childhood memories of earlier evictions.

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Like Donald MacLeod (78) who remembered Mr George Rainy clearing 14 townships in Raasay, to make a sheep farm, "about 30 years ago". The people - "hundreds, young and old" - went to "other kingdoms" like America and Australia. "The only inhabitants of that land today are rabbits and deer and sheep." He went on: "The people Rainy cleared did not go of their own accord. They were sorry to leave. They were weeping and wailing and lamenting, taking handfuls of grass that was growing over the graves of their families in the churchyard, as remembrances of their kindred." Recalling the events of August 1851, John Mackay, Kilpheader, South Uist, said: "I saw a policeman chasing a man down the machair towards Askernish to catch him in order to send him on board an emigrant ship lying in Loch Boisdale. ... I saw another man who lay down on his face and nose, hiding himself from the policeman, and the policeman getting a dog to search for this missing man." Donald Nicolson (78) was himself evicted from Totescore, Skye, for refusing to pay an instantly doubled rent. "When the summer came, the officer came and ejected me. He put everything I had out of the house. ... The tacksman told the rest of the crofters that anyone who would open door to me would be treated the same way as I was. ... My son's wife was in with her two young children, and we were that night in the cart-shed, and our neighbours were afraid to let us in, and crying over us." Landlords gave evidence, too. In Orkney, Lt. Gen. Frederick Burroughs, a veteran of the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny, scoffed at the old idea of the 'commonalty' belonging to the people. "The people have as much right to my common as I have to their clothes. The land is mine and their hats and coats are theirs". He refused to give the customary assurances about not victimising his tenants, and later evicted two who had given evidence against him. And in Balmacara, Wester Ross, Sir Alexander Matheson considered the folk with only tiny crofts should try to better themselves elsewhere. "I would be glad if half of them would go to America, or somewhere." In Dervaig, Mull, John Campbell was an ex-soldier who had also been through Crimea and the Indian Mutiny. He was asked whether many young men from Mull joined the army today. "Bless you, no. There are no men in our parish - nothing but sheep and game." Crofters were, and sometimes still are, accused of having an idle streak, but Alexander Nicolson, Digg, Skye, protested: "Will you say 'lazy man' to a people who carry 200 to 400 creels full of sea-weed every spring time to spread on the arable land?" And in Shetland, Walter Williamson of West Burra, pointed out: "The poor women work a good deal harder than many of the rich men's horses." Just a selection (an unashamedly subjective one) of what 'Listening to the Crofters' can tell us.
D.R.R.

Fishing out of Peterhead, by A.R. Buchan. Aberdeen & N-E Scotland FHS. Price £1. Based on a talk given to the Society by the author, it deals separately with the history of whaling, herring fishing and white fishing from Peterhead. Includes some lists of names, e.g. roll of curers, 1879, & list of winter fishermen, 1830-31.

Craig: Angus, 1788-1791, by Gordon Johnson. Aberdeen & N-E Scotland FHS. Price £1. Comprised a List of Parishioners in the Angus parish of Craig in 1788 (virtually a 'census' record), transcribed from the original in the Scottish Record Office, with notes of births, deaths and marriages, and a surnames index; plus a facsimile of the report on the parish in the first Statistical Account of Scotland, dated 1791.

A Dictionary of Scottish Emigrants to Canada, Before Confederation, by Donald Whyte. Ontario Genealogical Society. Price \$26. A second major compendium from Donald Whyte, following his earlier volume for the USA (to which he has now added a supplement). The Scots were the third largest ethnic group to arrive in Canada, and this work lists about 30,000 of them - explorers, fur traders, pioneers, preachers and ordinary settlers, who contributed more than their share to the emerging Canadian nation.

Catalogue of Sources for Genealogical Research, Ireland. Caraher FHS. Price £3. This 'one-name' society have produced a most useful list of sources, alphabetically arranged, for research into any family of Irish origin. The author's eccentric prose style is worth struggling with, to reach the wealth of information within.

Scottish Family Histories, by Joan P.S. Ferguson. National Library of Scotland. Price £10. A revised edition of this essential bibliography (first published 1960), incorporating works published in the interval, from 1959-84, and for the first time the holdings of the National Library of Scotland. It locates works on Scottish family history (printed and manuscript histories, and articles from some periodicals) in more than 50 libraries.

The Origin of the Scottish Surname Traill, by R.C. Trail, Melbourne. The author. Nine-page booklet on the Traills/Tirels in Scotland, England, France and Italy.

Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair: The Ardnamurchan Years, by Ronald Black.

The Society of West Highland & Island Historical Research. Price £1.95. Sketch of Alexander MacDonald (c.1698-1770), Ardnamurchan parish schoolmaster, cousin of Flora MacDonald, Jacobite 'political agent', author of the first Gaelic-English vocabulary (1741), and one of Gaeldom's greatest bards. The Presbytery of Mull deemed him "an offence to all Sober Well inclin'd persons as he wanders thro' the Country composing Gallick songs, stuffed with obscene Language."

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History of Duncan Bain, Esq., "Letterewe", Hastings River, [N.S.W.], by Hazel Sutters. The author. Price A\$12. History of a Bain family who emigrated to the Wauchope area of New South Wales, where the author still lives. Her great-grandfather, Alexander Bain, came from Letter Ewe in Wester Ross, and gave the same name to the 3000 acres he purchased in Australia. The family left Cairloch in 1839 on the "James Moran".

Genealogy of the Boies Family of Pennsylvania & Adjoining Counties in Eastern Ohio, by Robert B. Boies Sr. The author. Price \$27.95. Inspired by inheritance of the Family Bible, the author traces his origins back to David Boies (or Boyce) in Ireland, who went to America between 1768 and 1773.

More Sources of World War I Army Ancestry, by Norman H. Holding. The Federation of Family History Societies. Price £2.75. Further lists of sources for this difficult area of family history research, from the author of "World War I Army Ancestry".

Parish Registers, by Eve McLaughlin. The Federation of Family History Societies. Price £1. A handy new guide to the use of Parish Registers, written from the English perspective, but with brief references to registers in Scotland and Ireland. Makes the valid point that, in Scotland, Kirk Session records should also be consulted as they state "which children arrived within eight months of marriage and record penances for bastardy and fornication".

Crofter Power in Easter Ross - The Land League at Work 1884-88, by Rob Gibson. Highland Heritage Educational Trust. Price £2. Written by a local history teacher, and prominent Scottish Nationalist, this booklet looks at the growth of support for Land Law reform in Easter Ross during the 1880s, and in particular at the part played by Donald MacRae (1851-1924), an Alness schoolteacher. A noted Land Leaguer, he was sacked by the Rosskeen School Board in 1886, in what was regarded as a politically-inspired "put up" move, and became known as the "Alness Martyr". He then moved to Balallan school in Lewis, where he played a leading role in a land raid on a deer forest, after which he became known simply as "Balallan".

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WANTED

I wish to purchase the three volume set of books of CLAN DONALD by the Rev. A. MacDonald. Would anyone owning these books and wishing to dispose of them please contact:-

Duncan MacDonald, 268 Bartholomew Street, Brockville, Ontario K6V 2S6, Canada.

LETTERS

The British Columbia Genealogical Society enjoys receiving your publication.

Some time ago you published an article about researching Lt. Col. Angus Cameron of Firhall, Nairn [No 13, Jan '85]. That rang a bell, and for your information I am enclosing a photocopy of an article written in The Beaver Magazine, Winter 1979, pages 14-21, "Fur Traders in Retirement", by L.G. Thomas. [Now in the HFHS Library]. It mentions the retired fur trader Angus Cameron, grandfather of the soldier featured in your Journal, as well as other fur traders who left North America to retire to Scotland. This magazine is now issued six times a year by the Hudson's Bay Company, Hudson's Bay House, 77 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and is a mine of information.

The Hudson's Bay Company archives, 200 Vaughn Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, is a marvellous repository for information on its servants - so many of whom originated in the Highlands and Islands of Northern Scotland. I have enclosed also for your information a brochure listing the types of holdings. [Also in HFHS Library, and see note below]. A full index is contained on two rolls of microfilm obtainable from the archives.

I have spent many hours in that archives, researching my family of Sir George Simpson, Overseas Governor of the HBC, 1821-1860, who was the grandson of the Rev. Thomas Simpson of Avoch, Ross-shire, 1757-1786. This Rev. Thomas Simpson had several other grandsons well-known in the fur trade - particularly, the Arctic explorer, Thomas Simpson, as well as Alexander S.; Wemyss Mackenzie S.; John Wedderburn S.; George William S. and two grand-daughters married to fur traders. It has been most exciting reading the original letters of these people. Although now they are all on microfilm, being too old and fragile to handle often. I am presently attempting to sort into appropriate families all the various fur trade Simpsons. I would also like to hear from the Scottish descendants of the Rev. Thomas Simpson.

Another very useful fur trade source are the publications of the now defunct Hudson's Bay Record Society, 33 volumes. In Scotland, these can be found in

Kirkwall, Orkney, and the University libraries at St. Andrews, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow. I also have a set, and would consult these volumes for Scottish descendants of other fur traders.

Mrs J.K. Stathers,
British Columbia Genealogical Society,
Box 47, Squamish, BC, Canada V0N 3G0.

[The Hudson's Bay Co. Archives date from 1671. Being the oldest chartered trading company in the world, it has exceptional records. They contain the only known documents for numerous 18th c. settlements in Canada. They are of particular value to serious scholars because of their continuity. In its 317 years of existence, for instance, all the Company Minute Books have survived, except for the years 1670-71 and 1674-79].

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I have a book entitled A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland, 1510-1727, compiled by George Black PhD, and published by the New York Public Library. It has two extensive indexes, one of personal names and one of place names. All entries have their source references given, and vary from one line to large paragraphs. I am willing to look up surnames and send typed information from the book, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. I enclose an example of the type of information from the book:-

WEMYSS. June 6, 1626. "Letter from the Privy Council to all justices of peace and magistrates in England, requesting their aid in the recapture of Elizabeth Ross in Wemyss, who had fled to England to avoid her trial for witchcraft, of which crime the rest of her wicked consortis had by their uniforme depositionis fyled hir and raitfied the same the heure of thair deathe." Ref: Register of the Privy Council, 2. series, v.1, p.297-298."

Mrs Michelle Merrick,
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