

Winter 1993
From the Seannachie's Archive

The Non Oblitus



Clan MacTavish * Thompson
Journal published in the Interest of the MacTavish * Thompson Families.

Thomson * Thomas * Todd

The Non Oblitus



Winter
Edition
1993

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The Search for Dunardry

On June 8th 1993 ancient ruins were discovered on the ancestral Clan MacTavish estate that may reveal information about the earliest MacTavish land known as Dunardry.



Picture "A"



Picture "B"

1994 Officers of the Clan

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Editor's Notes

Greetings and Happy New Year!

As the newly appointed editor of the Clan journal, *The Non Oblitus*, I look forward to presenting you with information which will include history, current events, new discoveries, folklore, anecdotes and future events. This issue is one of three per year that you can expect.

Also included in this issue is an insert showing some of the Clan merchandise that is available through *The Non Oblitus*. I've seen these pieces and they are quite beautiful.

I would also like to invite you to write in with any stories, questions or comments.

Please address your letters to:

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Bear End Message from the Chief



Dunardry with his dogs Duke and Baron

First of all I would like to extend Seasons Greeting to all. To those of you who have sent cards and greetings, I thank you, it is much appreciated.

After our first full year as a Worldwide Association our membership has expanded to 110 strong. With members from Canada, Australia, USA and the UK, our membership truly spans the globe.

The figures are as follows:

	Canada	USA	UK & Aust.
Life Members	1	3	-
Charter Members	41	34	1
Annual Members	6	11	7
Associate Members	-	4	1
	48	52	9 =110

Since the last issue of *the Non Oblitus* I have appointed two *High Commissioners*, *Kenneth McTavish* of *Calgary* and *Gary M. Thompson* of *Prince George Virginia* and two *Commissioners*, *Malcolm MacTavish* and *Jack McTavish*. I am also very happy to announce that *Tim Skinner* has agreed to be *Editor in Chief* of the journal *Non Oblitus*. Tim did a marvelous job on our inaugural edition. Maybe now we will have our journal out on time.

I am happy to announce that we are making a change to the Charter Members dues as of January 1 1994. A new Charter Membership will still be \$35.00, however this amount will drop to \$25.00 annually after the first year. Current members for whom dues are due, please note that your rate has also been reduced to \$25.00. Don't forget to get your dues in as soon as possible, this will save us postage for reminders and ensure that your membership continues.

You will be sent a new decal for '94 to be put on your membership card or certificate.

Take a look at the insert in this months journal, a number of you have inquired about kiltwear prices and clan collectables this may be of interest to you.

Thank you all for your efforts in 1993

P.S. my new years resolution for 1994 will be to get the Non Oblitus out on time, the next one in March.

Dunardry

The Search for Dunardry

JUNE 8 1993. Suddenly he said, "Look stop the car!" We were driving up a one lane dirt trail road on *Dunardry Hill*, it was early afternoon and we were exploring the *Crinan Canal* area for we knew that this canal ran through our ancestral land, *Dunardry*.

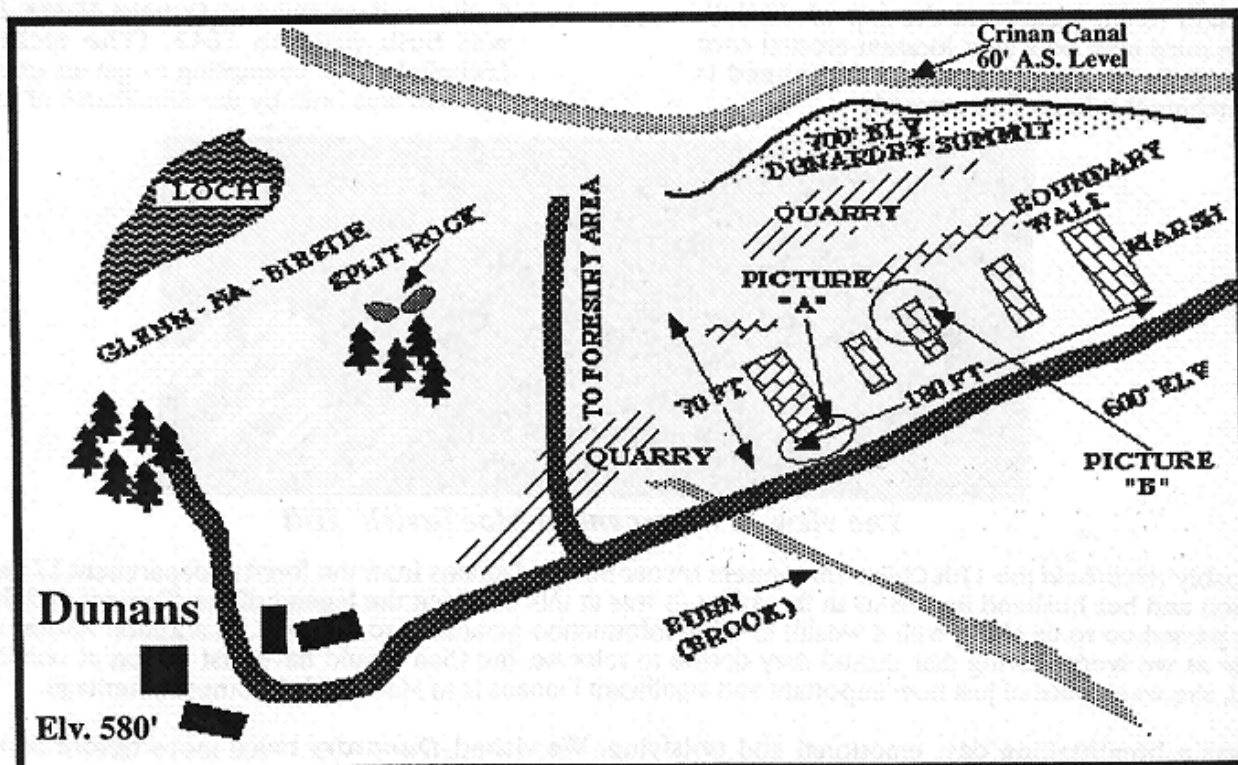
Earlier, when we had stopped at the *MacTavish Loch*, (the highest loch on the *Crinan Canal*) to take pictures, Lt. Aux. Stevie Thompson had said, "Well Dugald, this is the land of your forefathers, how does it feel to stand here?" Little did we know about what would be revealed to us 30 minutes later.

We then proceeded to travel the curving trail to the top of the hill. The view of *Dunardry* from there would presumably be quite beautiful. It was at this point that Stevie sounded his alert.

As I hit the brake I looked where he was pointing, some ruins, I could see the remains of a two foot thick outer wall jutting out from the bushes. (See 1 on map) We got out of the car and with our kilts on, jumped across a ditch and carefully picked our way through the knee high bushes and nettles. (I can say first hand that the nettles made my knees feel like fire!)

The ruins were granite stone of dry wall construction and were so laid that not a breath of air could get through these walls. As we examined the ruins it became apparent that this was not just a small building but rather a well planned community/communal area. The dimensions of the remaining walls were 180' by 70' (see map). A small burn (creek) feeds through the area in relatively close proximity to the stone structure.

Due to the elevation of these ruins, (150' below



The Search for Dunardry

...continued



Dunans House dates back prior to 1642

the summit) it is believed that these ruins are not the original *Dunardry*. The original *Dunardry* was said to be located at the top of the hill. These ruins may be a later location erected circa 1400-1500. The archivist in Lochgilphead is researching this latest find currently.

Following the road from the ruins, we passed a second quarried area. (Map location #). A little further and we came to *Dunans House*. *Dunans* was built prior to 1642. (The archivist at Lochgilphead is attempting to get an exact date) *Dunans* was built by the *MacTavish* of the time,



The view as we ascended MacTavish Hill

probably *Archibald* the 11th Chief. The present owner bought *Dunans* from the forestry department 17 years ago. Allison and her husband invited us in for coffee. It was at this time that the legend of the "Serpent and the Boar" was passed on to us along with a wealth of other information pertaining to this area. In addition Allison revealed to us as we were leaving that should they decide to relocate, the Clan would have first option at obtaining this land, she was aware of just how important and significant *Dunans* is to *MacTavish/Thompson* heritage.

It was a breathtaking day, emotional and satisfying. We visited *Dunardry* twice more before leaving the *Highlands*.

The Boar and The Serpent

On our most recent trip "back home", to Dunardry, many wonderful facts were found re: our clan. The ruins of Dunardry, Dunans House, built prior to 1640 by Archibald MacTavish, the chief of that time. Among all these, we learned of a "legend" from the present owner of Dunans House. As we know, legends are passed down from generation to generation. Soon after acquiring "Dunans", 17 years ago, this legend was told to Mr. & Mrs. White.

In a farm building on the ancient estate of Dunardry, a "serpent" had taken residence in the roof/loft preparing a nest. (Serpents today are assumed to have been dragons.) One of the chiefs sons dared to investigate. This angered the serpent and the monster chased the boy. He fled as fast as he could in the direction of Dunardry, no doubt seeking his father's help.

The chase went on over hill and glen with the serpent steadily gaining on the boy. Suddenly, a passing boar saw the shepherd's despair. Head down, the boar ran at the serpent. Crash!! The boar rammed the serpent broadside with such force that the serpent and the boar hit against a large rock. The impact split the rock cleanly in half, killing the serpent and, alas, the boar, outright.

The chief came to the scent, and saw the split rock. He proclaimed the boar should be honored for saving his son and from that time onward, the boar's head will appear on the Clan's crest.

It is worthy of note that 200 yards N/E of Dunans house, lies a split rock, separated in two clean halves.

Also, in the glen below is a dark wooded area, an area today called "Glenn Na Biestie", Glen of the Beast.



MacTavish/Thompson
Crest

The Tartan

The very thought of the tartan is enough to gladden the heart of the Scotsman in a distant land. Be he Highlander or Lowlander, he feels a glow of emotion when he beholds the dress he may have worn when he roamed the lonely glens or climbed the heathery hills of his beloved Scotland. To the Highlander especially, there is no name so dear as that of his clan, no garb so grandly beautiful as that in which his ancestors fought against the invader in the renowned days of old. In fancy he marches under the banner of his chief; the pipes ring out their wild and thrilling music; the old familiar war/cry makes the mountains tremble, and the tartan is perhaps steeped in the blood of the brave.

To the Celt the tartan is far more, however, than the gallant trapping of martial pomp. It is the symbol of an ancient and revered state of society, when to be head of a clan was to be known and loved as a kind and considerate father by every dependent, however poor and lowly. It revives the devoted loyalty of the clansmen to their chief; it recalls the memories of an exiled Royal race; it opens the floodgates of Scottish patriotism, and makes the wearer proud to think he yet may breathe the free air in the "land of the mountain and the flood".

Impossible though it be to fix the date of its origin, there is a reason to believe that the Highland dress is of extreme antiquity; sculptured resemblances of it are to be found on ancient stones in various parts of the country. The dress in its oldest form was kilt and plaid in one. The favorite custom of marking the cloth was stripes and spots, and thus producing what, in the language of the Gael, was called "Breacan," may have been practised in very early times.

The system of clanship cannot, however, be definitely be referred to

a very distant date. According to some authorities, the original population of the Scottish Highlands and Islands consisted of tribes who occupied extensive districts, and were governed by powerful chiefs called Earls. The Head Earl, or Supreme King, was called Ard Righ. (* See Note) To him the others gave unquestioning allegiance. The manner of governing was akin to that of clanship, by which, according to Skene and Robertson, it was superseded in the thirteenth century. The new rule was more compact, every member of the same tribe, or subdivision of a tribe respectively, had a common surname and untitled homage and unswerving service in peace or war were freely given to

the chief, who was the protecting head of all. A clan was thus a family which might have its branches called septs or dependents, who though of the humblest rank, claimed equal ancestry with the chief. Thus welded together, this warlike race attained a pitch of passionate patriotism which has never been surpassed. Ever ready and united to repel the invader, the clans preserved their individuality in times of security. Wearing the Highland dress in common, they were distinguished by the markings on the cloth from which it was woven; they had their distinctive badges - some native plant or flower - in their headgear; while their respective war-cries were chosen from the name of some notable feature of nature in the landscape in which they dwelt. They were proud, fierce and fearless, and stepped exultingly to the field of death.

Whatever be the date of introduction of the Highland dress, early enough mention is made of it under the foreign but forceful name of "Tartane" to entitle it to veneration. James III. of Scotland had his "gowne of cloth of gold" lined with "ane cline and ane halve of Blue Tartane." In the same entry in the Treasurer's book for 1471 we are told that "halve ane cline of doble tartane" was used "to lyne riden collers to her lady the Queen;" while, probably to please his Highland subjects, as well as out of love for its picturesque charm, James V. wore the tartan when in 1538 he went a-hunting in the Highlands. Later there are allusions to the "Tartane" in several Acts of Parliament. In 1662 a special tribute was paid to it by Royalty. At his marriage in that year, Charles II. adorned himself with tartan ribbons of Royal Stewart pattern.

The earliest reliable list of clans in the "Highlands and Isles" is given in an Act of Parliament of the year 1587.



Typical Kilted Highlander

The Tartan continued

Until the dramatic and disastrous outburst of 1745 hardly any change was made in the Clan System, but after that fruitless endeavour to restore Bonnie Prince Charlie to the throne of his fathers the old ties of clan kinship were cruelly snapped by the rigidly repressive Acts of 1746 and 1748. By the former Act the clansmen were forbidden to wear the tartan or carry arms. For the first transgression of this enactment the offender was imprisoned; for the second he was banished. In 1748 a determined attempt was made to destroy the feudal power of the Highland chiefs by an Act to abolish heritable jurisdiction. The Clan System in the old familiar sense was shattered by these merciless measures. Henceforward until 1782, except by stealth, the tartan was unseen upon the Highland hills and in the Highland glens, where it had been a people's pride. In the year mentioned the Duke of Montrose fought nobly for the repeal of the hated Disarming Act, and was successful. During the melancholy period when the tartan was banned by Government, the oppressed Highlanders dourly and silently endured their wrongs. They brooded upon the loss of their ancient heritage, but were powerless to reclaim their privileges. The wings of their martial ardour had been completely clipped at Culloden, and, in the words of the ballad, "the clans were all away, away." This, in a very literal sense, was soon to be. Their pride humbled, their hopes blasted strangers almost in the land of their birth, the men of the bens and glens at last tore themselves from their ancestral soil, and sailed with their wives and families across the wide Atlantic. Between 1763 and 1775 not less than 20,000 Highlanders found a refuge in America; Canada received many of them, and a new Celtic race sprang up to nourish the children on the traditions which the pilgrims had brought with them overseas.

The scattering of the clans,

though partly the outcome of the Disarming Act, was also due to the altered relationship between the chief and the vassal. When the clan links had been loosened, the chiefs began to leave their homes and settle in the more luxurious South; they gradually forsook the ancient duty of protecting their people; some even evicted their vassals, and turned their land into sheep-runs. This final act of ingratitude was too grievous to be borne by home-loving Highlanders. Sorrowfully they turned them away from the desolate homesteads and departed. The flood of emigrations again began to flow freely westward in the opening years of the 19th century. By the middle of that century it seemed that the Clan System was almost forgotten but though exiled, the "Children of the Mist" has still a consuming love for the homeland they had left behind. They delighted and inspired their children with stories of the clans in the days of their greatness; they told them of the bygone race of chiefs, who would have died for their people; they set the young hearts yearning for the heather hills, the rushing torrents, and the wind in the pine. But above everything beautiful, and grand in nature, the glamour of the tartan had taken an immovable grip upon the imagination of the Celts. The love for the old dress was in his blood, and this love grew stronger and deeper with years of exile.

When the pioneers had gone to their long rest, their sons and daughters still cast a longingly look toward the old clan country from which they drew their origin. Instead of being the forbidden garb of the outlaw, the Highland dress won renewed favour in the new home, and at every reunion of the scattered race it was the special token of long and honourable descent from heroic ancestors. Clan Societies grew up and multiplied in the new World and in Colonial Britain; then gradually, wherever Scotsmen dwelt, the sym-

pathetic feeling of kinship was kindled, and the tartan became symbolic not of the Highlands alone, but of Scotland as a whole. Ardent Scotsmen began to inquire if they also were not historically entitled to wear the tartan of a clan from which, perchance, they were descended. Historically many were disappointed; clansmen they were not, but what they could not wear as a birthright they wore out of admiration for the dress which typified the heroic qualities of the Scottish land. Among the clansmen themselves there was confusion as to the accurate choice of the tartan which would show the clan to which they lineally belonged; confusion upon confusion had followed the terrible time of the Rebellion; the ingenious methods of inweaving the patterns had been in some instances entirely lost. Minor families has lost their identity, and the riddle of the correct tartan for clan, for sept, and for dependent was not an easy one to solve. But fortunately the tangled skein of Celtic genealogy was unravelled by degrees. By patient, painstaking industry Celtic scholars and antiquaries at last produced a tolerably accurate account of every clansman's lineage.

From the chaos of the past the tartan has been restored to its rightful place of honour, and the interest which it evokes is both national and world-wide. Many are the Scottish men and women who still wear it for love of the long-gone days. It is a gladdening glimpse of the clan-glory that has departed. Clad in kilt and plaid, in bonnet and feather, the Scottish soldier acquitted himself with magnificent daring on many a stubborn field of battle. Many a thehero who, his last fight fought, has laid him down to die with his blood-wet tartan wrapped about him. Its beauty is unequalled; it is the imperishable badge of bravery; it is the dress that has won a deathless renown. *Also see Postscripts for more kilt information * More information on this definition to follow.*

Postscripts...

Additional Kilt Information

The Blue Dress Thomson tartan was registered in 1958 by the Lord Lyon office for Sir Thomson of Fleet, (the newspaper tycoon) as a family tartan. Because the Lord Lyon was aware that Thomson was a sept of MacTavish, he insured that the Thomson tartan was the MacTavish SETT (thread count of each colour)

MacTavish and Thompsons, correctly should wear the red dress MacTavish. Thomsons could wear the blue Dress Thomson or the red Dress MacTavish. The Clan will re-register the blue Dress Thomson as an official Clan tartan.

1994 Membership Renewal

To renew memberships fo 1994, membership numbers from 0001- 0081 are due. Remember, Charter members drop to \$25.00 for the year. Annual memberships are \$10.00 a year. Your Decal for the current year will be sent with your next *Non Oblitus* so you can affix it to your certificate.

Geneology Note

Many Charter members have yet to return their geneology forms. When you have them completed, please send them in. Also many have yet to return the questionnaire form re: our first Highland Gathering back on Dunardry soil planned for 1995. Please send them in.

The Bagpipe - A History

The Celts are said to have come originally from Mesopotamia, located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The Mesopotamia civilization was the first to urbanize, which means some segment of society were able to feed not only themselves, but another segment that made tools and weapons. The area was the first into metallurgy and led the world in both the Bronze and Iron ages.

The reason for the Celtic migrations both east and west can only be left to conjecture, but they had the advantages of having iron swords and horses. So armed, the migrations, begin about 1000 B.C., influenced most of Europe until about 400 A.D.

The Celtic migrations left bagpipes of different sorts in at least twenty countries throughout North Africa and Europe, and east to India. The number of different bagpipes that became ethnic to the twenty countries is as divergent as the music composed for them, but of the different types, two are worthy of mention: One is the French musette which reached a zenith with sophisticated qualities that gave it great musical capability. The other is the Great Scots-Irish War Pipe, concerning which there was a strange turn of events making it what it is. Nearly half of those twenty or so countries are now playing the Great Scots-Irish rather than their own ethnic pipes - some with their own ethnic styles, others have adopted the Great Scots-Irish cuttings.

Many Celts migrated to the British Isles long before the Roman invasion in 55 B.C. The Roman influence on the Pipes also must be left to conjecture, but a Greek statue in Rome represents a piper with a pipe that resembles the Great Scots-Irish, dressed quite like a Scottish Highlander. The same figure is shown on Roman coins.

Although bagpipes were probably in Britain before the Roman invasion, little written records of bagpipes exist before 1291 when Edward 1st of England "Longshanks" invaded Scotland with Irish troops on his side with their war pipes. The next written record of Scottish pipes was at the Battle of Balrinnies in 1513, and from then on we can read of them in great numbers in Scottish events - battles and military campaigns.