

THE SOUTHERN CROSS THE JOURNAL OF CLAN MHICNEACAIL IN THE ANTIPODES

CHIEF: Iain MhicNeacail of MhicNeacail and Scorrybreac.

BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL CLAN GATHERING.

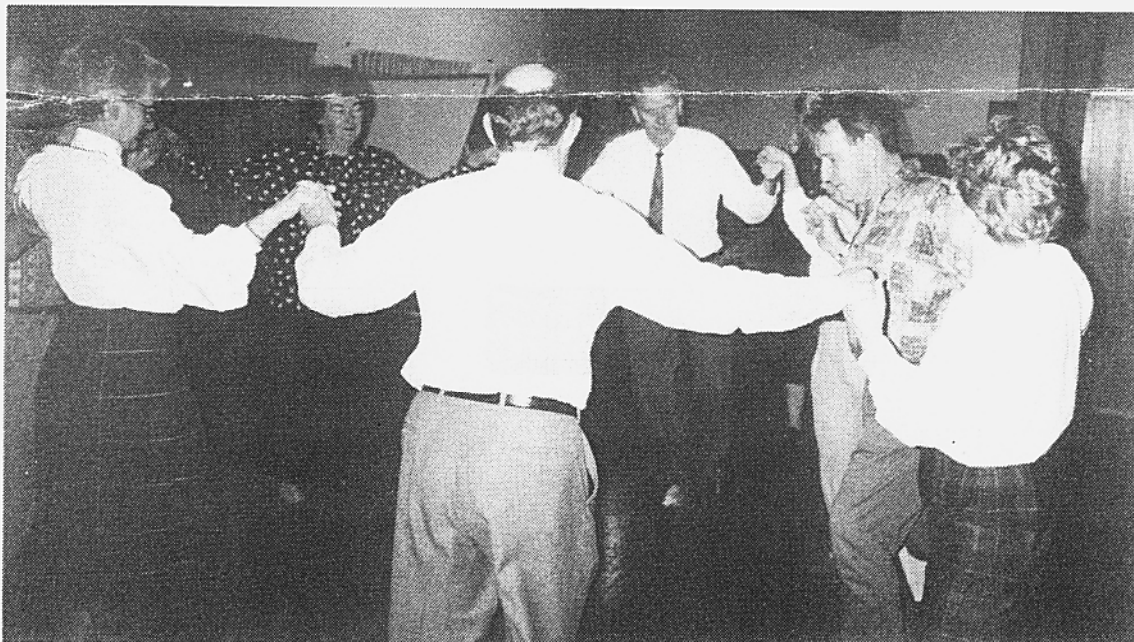


CLAN MACNICOL ASSN. OF MORETON QLD. COMMITTEE.

BACK ROW: DR. PETER NICOLL, GRAHAM NICOLL, LEN STANLEY, RAY McNICOL, DOROTHY NICOLL, ROBERT NICOL.
FRONT ROW: JENELLE ARNOTT, TERESA McNICOL, JOYCE NICOL, JUDY NICOL, BRONWYN STANLEY, BOB NICOL.

They stood still long enough to have a photograph taken!!! Above is a photo of the very energetic committee who are working very hard to ensure that everything will come together just right for the International Gathering in Brisbane later this month.

Graham Nicoll, Publicity Officer, is justifiably proud of their efforts and we share his confidence that everyone will enjoy the results on arrival in that lovely city.



THE BEST SET IN THE HALL?

As anyone who frequents Caledonian Society socials will be aware, it's not unknown to hear the cheery boast "Best Set in the Hall" at the end of a set dance. To ensure they can hold their own, these folks have been practising dancing. What they may not know is some New South Welshmen (Welshmen? How about New South Scotsmen?) have also been practising, and Commissioner Murray and Barbara Nicolson from the USA are keen dancers! You don't know any set dances? Whatever you do, never, ever let that stop you getting up and giving it a whirl. You will always find willing tutors at every dance and truly most dances are really very easy to master.

The Ceilidh should be quite (definitely not quiet) a night - the music will be lively, the entertainment great and the company really grand. This is a rare opportunity for the Aussie members to

meet our fellow clansfolk from within our own country, let alone from overseas and the members who will be there are, understandably, excited.

We know of the tremendous effort being put in by the committee and we extend our congratulations to them on a job being well done.

Whilst applications to attend the gathering were to be lodged by 30th June, if you now find yourself able to attend it may be worth a phone call to Lyn Robinson, Group Travel, Queensland Government Travel Centre, (07) 221.6111 to see if there are any vacancies to give you the chance to join in the fun and to meet the many clansfolk for overseas and interstate.

It would be really great if you can come along too!!!!

CONGRATULATIONS LINDA!

On behalf of all the members of Clan MacNicol we extend our congratulations to Linda Carnegie on her graduation from University of New South Wales. Linda gained her Bachelor of Engineering in Manufacturing Management with 1st Class Honours. Well done Linda!

Linda studied for her Higher School Certificate at the Mosman High

School before beginning her tertiary studies. An active lass, Linda's favourite sport is water skiing, but this activity may take second place to snow skiing after her holiday in New Zealand last month!

Linda is now working with Proctor and Gamble on the Central Coast and we wish her every success in her chosen career.



REBECCA, CHRISTINE, LINDA AND RON CARNEGIE.

FROM THE CHAPLAIN'S DESK.

Dear Kinsfolk,

An Army Chaplain in Italy told about a sermon that he had given to a little group of soldiers and sailors in a hut. He had noticed that they happened all to be Scotsmen and so he said he would speak to them about the emblems of Scotland.

One is the Thistle, that fine purple flower with a hard ball of sharp thorns round its base. Underneath the thistle is set the Latin motto, *Nemo me impune lacessit*, which might be translated "I'll jag you if you touch me". Now, he said, we may be proud of the Scots thistle, but too many Scotsmen imitate it. They are jaggy, quarrelsome, quick to take offence. One would not wish Scots to have that kind of disposition or reputation.

Another emblem is the Lion Rampant on the Scots flag, a lion on the rampage, with lashing tail and claws outstretched, a fine emblem for an army; but people should not always try to be like lions on the rampage. One Sunday School was having a picnic, and as a banner for the march to the field they had a Scots flag. Because if was a Sunday School they thought it should have a text, so underneath the Lion Rampant they had the words printed, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me". They did not go very well with the flag!

Then he told them of the other Scots emblem, the White Cross of St. Andrew on a blue background. St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, it remembered in the gospels as the disciple who brought people to Jesus. He brought his own brother Simon; and he brought the lad with five barley loaves and two small fishes; and he helped Philip to bring the Greeks who wished to see Jesus. Tradition says that after preaching in Russia and Poland he died a heroic death as a martyr in Greece. Many Scots besides David Livingstone have shown the missionary spirit that was in St. Andrew. It would be good for all Scots if there was less of the thistle and less of the lion rampant in them and more of the brave yet friendly character of Andrew and more of the spirit of heroic love for which the cross stands.

That was the sermon. Here is the story about it. The day afterwards, one of the sailors, an



engineer, came to the Chaplain and said, "I have been thinking about that sermon of yours, Padre, about the Thistle and the Lion Rampant and the White Cross. It was a jolly good sermon. And if any of the others says it wasn't I'll bleed his ugly nose and black his eye."

So the Chaplain wondered if the sermon had done any good at all. What was the use of listening to words about gentleness and kindness and then beginning to think about punching someone's nose?

It is an old trouble this, that good words often go in at one ear and out at another. In Ezekiel, chapter 33, verse 32, we read, "They hear your words but do not put them into practice."

God bless you,

Yours in kinship,

Archie MacNicol.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE TASMAN.

HAMILTON BRANCH, New Zealand.



Aubrey Kinn tries his hands at quoits watched by members of the Hamilton Branch.

The members of our very active Hamilton (New Zealand) Branch held a mid-year Christmas party at the President's (Isabella Hutcheon) home recently and as you can see from the photo it was a great success.

The evening started at 6pm with a festive pot luck tea - the usual Christmas fare including steam pudding which went down well at this time of the year because of the cooler weather - and was very acceptable.

As usual, after a meal, there is always plenty of dirty dishes to

be done, but with plenty of willing helpers, they were soon cleaned and put away.

When everyone was together again, the entertainment commenced with the playing of the piano accordion. In fact they had two people playing, Aubrey Kinn and a new member who had just joined us. They were very good. There was also games, which everyone took part in, including two young children.

The evening finished with supper and singing Auld Lang Syne.

Alan Nicholson of Christchurch (see May newsletter) continues to mount up special academic credits and has been granted a Fellowship to lecture at London University for nine months! Congratulations Alan.

Bob and Isabella Hutcheon and Jack and Eileen Nicholson are among the New Zealanders who will be attending our International Gathering in Brisbane - it will be great to see you there folks.

Wedding Bells for Heather and Ian.

The Church of the Good Shepherd, Museum of Transport and Technology, in Auckland was the setting for the marriage of Heather Rose Hutcheon and Ian Robert Wallace on the 28th November, 1992.

As befits such a happy event the sun shone on a most colourful wedding party. The brides' dress featured the red MacNicol tartan sash, whilst her bridesmaids, Judith Hutcheon and Bethany Hutcheon looked charming in their lovely dresses highlighted by modern hunting MacNicol tartan.

Parents of the Bride, Robert and Isabella Hutcheon continued the Scottish flavour with Isabella's sash and Robert's tie being in the ancient hunting MacNicol tartan.

Flower girls, Heather Lorny and Sarah Gilligan (both three-years-old) almost stole the show in lovely long dresses which featured their respective hunting MacNicol and dress Wallace tartan ribbons around their waists and tied in a bow. However, ringbearer, Ewan Robert Lorny, aged 5, was not overawed by these two charmers and held his own throughout the ceremonies.



Heather and Ian with Piper Scott Nicholson.

Not to be outdone, the Groom Ian Robert Wallace and best man Howard Lorny looked most smart in their dress Wallace kilts.

The Groom's parents David and Marilyn Wallace are from Mount Maunganui. Mindful of the Scottish flavour Marilyn wore her Scottish brooch.

In keeping with the colourful party, the happy couple's Piper, Scott Nicholson of Auckland, looked resplendent in his ancient muted hunting tartan kilt.

Following a reception at the Colonial Arms, Heather and Ian honeymooned at Rarotonga.

We send our warmest congratulations to Heather and Ian and wish them every happiness in their future together.

South Island Commissioner Jack Nicholson's wife Eileen has recovered from the injuries she sustained in a car accident and won the "Best Hat" at the Scottish Week fete at Glenfalloch last month. Eileen, whose ability with the needle is to be envied, certainly met the challenge and created a chapeaux deserving of the win. Congratulations Eileen - well done.



By Barbara Fountain

Tartans, scotch thistles, miniature bagpipes and heather adorned hats in a competition at yesterday's Scottish Week fete at Glenfalloch.

Winners in the competition, judged by Mrs Bernice Barnett, were, from left, best Scottish hat, Mrs Eileen Nicholson, of Clan MacNicol, best man's hat, Mr Bob Sammes, of Clan Murray, and best novelty hat and

best hat overall, Mrs Julie Marshall, of Clan Marshall.

Wet weather forced the garden party, organised by the Otago Scottish Heritage Council, indoors to Glenfalloch's chalet.

N.S.W. BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The NSW branch AGM was held in the home of Mrs. Grace Nicoll Given on Saturday 3rd July 1993 at 1.30 p.m. This meeting was well publicied in the May newsletter including a circular letter to appropriate members.

It was, therefore, most disappointing that the attendance was limited to three members - Grace Given and Penny and John Nicoll.

There were genuine apologies tendered and received.

As there is, at present, no constitution for the NSW Branch and therefore no quorum problems, the meeting was held and several matters resolved.

The most important of these resolutions was that a constitution be drawn up by John and Penny Nicoll for the next AGM.

The new committee for 1993/94 is:

President:	Mr. John Nicoll.
Secretary/Treasurer:	Mrs. Penny Nicoll.
Committee Member:	Mrs. Grace Given.

VICTORIAN NEWS.

Thelma and Peter Ashton and Beth Bell, with some relations and friends, attended the Council of Clans Theatre night at the Trak

Theatre, Kew. The evening was well supported by most Clans, and a most enjoyable night was had by all.

Thelma, Peter, Beth, together with Elizabeth and Arthur Newman, attended the Kirkin' of the Tartan at Scots Church on 4th July. It was the largest support of Clans members since the inaugural Kirkin' some four years ago.

Thelma and Peter have been bus touring during July, going to Darwin down to Brisbane then home. They stayed with their sons and families at Darwin and Brisbane.

Thelma won't be home long before she is off to Brisbane again, when she will accompany Beth Bell to the International Gathering. Beth will be going onto Cairns to stay with an old school friend for three weeks.

The Victorian Branch Annual General Meeting and BBQ, which was scheduled for 1st August was postponed a week to enable David Nicol from Texas USA and his ladies to attend.

The St. Andrews Day Ceremony will be held at the Shrine of Remembrance on Sunday, 28th of November at 1.30pm. It would be appreciated if as many of the members as possible could attend and make it a record attendance. If you want any further information about it please ring Thelma or Beth on (03) 754-21809.



Peter and Thelma Ashton.

The following dates can be entered into your diary: 4-5th December, 1993, the Daylesford Highland Gathering; and 27th March, 1994 the Ringwood Highland Carnival. These are both well worth attending and we will be having a tent at Ringwood. If anyone is interested to have our tent at Daylesford we would be glad to hear from them.

Beth Bell.

GET WELL SOON.

We are sorry to report that Pam MacNeacail, Scorrybreac's lovely wife, suffered a delay in the recovery from her facial surgery when the eye lashes turned in onto her eye causing great discomfort. Temporary measures have been taken to give relief and a more permanent solution will be followed in the near future.

Also "in the wars" at the moment is Chief's Piper, Bill Macnicol, who has been quite ill for the past few months. Sorry to hear it Bill, we wish you a speedy recovery - haste ye back into action, dear friend.

A SURPRISE REPORT FROM TASMANIA!

On the 24th May, 1993 (my birthday), when walking along a street in Launceston, I came to a sudden halt in front of a gift shop. In the window there was a cushion covered in a familiar tartan - Hunting Nicolson! The colours were rather bright, but the sett was certainly correct.

My investigation inside the shop revealed another cushion, a tablecloth and serviettes, and a rug, all in Hunting Nicolson tartan. A cover on the tablecloth labelled it as "Handwoven in India". The tartan was not named on the articles themselves or on relevant papers received by the shop.

I wonder why the weavers chose

(Hope your plans come to fruition, Alison, and we have the pleasure of your company at Brisbane - Ed.)

Further to the above and to try and prove the language difficulties of British servicemen in India, your co-editor, John Nicoll relates the following.

Whilst serving with the British Army in India in early 1945 as a "Driver/Operator" with the Royal Artillery, I was the only British soldier in our unit at the time with a vehicle under my charge. The other vehicles of the unit were being driven by sepoys (Indian soldiers). These sepoys had come from remote Indian villages and could not understand English. They tried to communicate with the white "sahib" driver in the car park but it was very difficult. Eventually it was

this sett. During the mid-1850's Brigadier-General John Nicholson was well known in India (he was killed during the siege of Delhi in 1857). According to my former neighbour, a retired British Army Major with long service in India, "NIKKAL SEYN" is still remembered in parts of that country. However, a link between this notable 19th century British Officer and tartan woven in the 1990's seems unlikely. Perhaps the makers simply liked the pattern.

P.S. I did not acquire a cushion as an extra birthday present!

Best wishes,

Alison Green.

obvious to me that they wished to know my name. In my naivety, I told them to "Just call me Jock", and that is exactly what they called me - "Just call me Jock, sahib". What a predicament! What to do about it! Perhaps learn a little Urdu!

Down to the market and buy a book on Urdu. "Tumara nam kya hai?" - "Your name, what is?" - "Hamara nam Jock hai" - "My name is, Jock", soon had beams of delight among my new found allies.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

Your "new" editors have decided to include advertisers in "The Southern Cross" newsletters. This is to enable us to keep costs down and at the same time endeavour to keep improving the standard of the newsletter. The article on Highland Cattle on page 10 was solicited by Penny Nicoll after seeing the display of Highland Cattle by Mrs. Allister and Davina Stewart at the 1993 Royal Easter Show in Sydney. Allister and Davina have subsequently asked to advertise in our journal. After thinking the matter over your editors decided that limited advertising could assist in keeping costs down. It was therefore decided to allow four quarter page adverts (or equivalent) per issue. The costs will be \$10.00 per quarter page advert per issue or \$30.00 per quarter page advert for four issues.

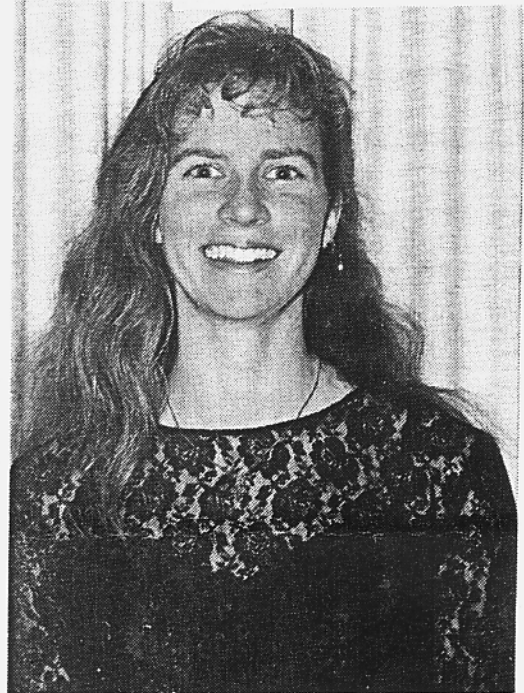
HAPPY BIRTHDAY KERRIE.

Charming Kerrie Nicol will be celebrating her 21st Birthday with family and friends on 21st September, 1993.

Kerrie is single and is employed as a trainee accountant in a large firm of Chartered Accountants in Sydney. She is studying part time at the University of Technology for her Bachelor of Business Degree which she hopes to complete at the end of next year.

Between working and studying she does not have much spare time, but is involved in a Church Youth Group, teaches Sunday School and is treasurer of her High School Old Girls' Union.

Scorrybreac and his wife, Pam, join the Clan in sending you every best wish for a great celebration and a long, happy and successful future, Kerrie.



BIRTHDAY CALLS.

Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to our members who will celebrate birthdays in:

September: William Nichol; Neville Butterworth; Raymond McNicol* Terri Petfield*; Robert Nicholson; Donald McNicol*, Gregg Nicholson*; Irene McRae; Daphne Nicholson; Thomas Rowe; Alan McNicol*, Nancy Butterworth*; Linda Bain; Margaret Howell; Val Nicholson; Irene Mitchell; Rowena McNicol*, Kerrie Nicol*, Robert Nicol*; Christina Carnegie* Ronald Carnegie*; Phillip Nicholson; Ian Nicholson; Betty Nicol; Meg Nicol.

October: Roslyn Nicol*, Wayne Petfield*; Katie Dillon; Joy McNicol; Daphne Robinson; Joyce Nichols*, Henry Nicholson*;

Ellis Nicholson; Arthur Nicoll; Sonya Petfield*, Bill Clarke*, Margaret Nicolson*, Reuben Bain*; Dorothy Gavin; Lachlan Nicolson*, Alan Nicholson*; John Sheldrick; Meg Nicol;

November: Lachlan Nicolson*, Helen Brown*; Christine Nicholson; Dr. Peter Nicoll; Joan McNicol; Judith Bergin; Mark Nicol; Debbie Petfield*, Lock Nicholson*; Donald Nicol; Bobbie Allan*, Amelia Nicoll*; James McNicol; John Nicoll; Donald Nicolson; Kate Nicolson; Neville Petersen*, Richard Nicol*.

We hope you all have an extra special birthday.

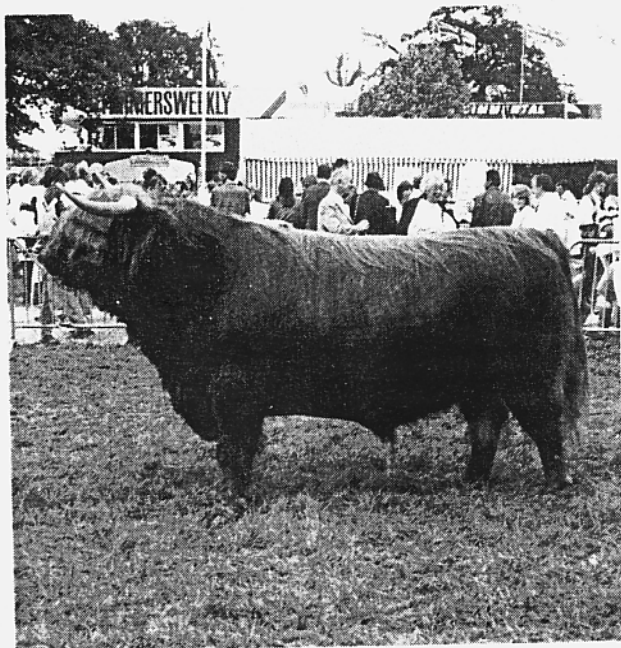
* = Birthday Twins.

HIGHLAND CATTLE - THE HIGHLAND STORY.

The following information is re-printed with the kind permission of Allister and Davina Stewart of "Ardvorlich", of Terang, Victoria.

The origins of these cattle are obscure but they are probably the only British breed of cattle that have retained the exact similarity to their ancestors over the past 500 years.

During this period they have descended from two distinct classes, namely the West Highlander often called "Kyloe" and the Mainland Highlander. The Kyloe was mainly found in its greatest purity in the Western Islands of Scotland. The normal colour of the Kyloe was black, but this colour is rare in Highland Folds (Herds) today.



The usual colours of the breed are: black, brindle, red, yellow, dun and white, with blacks and whites being very rare.

The breed has a long and distinguished ancestry and is found, not only in Scotland, but in many parts of the world including Europe, Scandinavia, North America and The Peruvian Andes and now in Australia.

In recent times (1950's) two

cows and a bull were imported to South Australia and Davina Stewart imported the first Highland cattle semen into the country and began a breeding up program using this semen (Callum of Pollok) over whole coloured jersey cows.

Each new generation of heifers were joined to new imported semen so that by now over 450 females have been bred at "Ardvorlich" with no in-breeding. Because of their majestic appearance and their beautiful lean, palatable beef, the Highlander has become very popular in recent years with both hobby and commercial farmers.

The demand for these cattle overseas is so great that the price in the UK has trebled in recent years. The UK society is the fastest growing breed society of any cattle breed in Britain.

Highland cattle are amongst the hardiest in the world enabling them to withstand extremes of temperature. They rarely need more than routine dosing keeping veterinary bills to a minimum.

Highlanders are great foragers and will make the most of whatever feed is offered. The female of the breed takes great care of her calf. Combined with easy calving this means high survival rates with minimal attention. Highlanders regularly produce 14 to 15 calves.

With a long thick hairy coat to keep them warm, Highlanders produce lean, palatable beef and dress out at about 60%

The hide when tanned makes a beautiful floor rug. Horns too, can be polished and mounted.

DEATH OF MR. W. A. NICOL.

The following obituary was taken from an old copy of the Sydney Morning Herald at the Mitchell Library, Sydney, and forwarded to us by our NSW member Mrs. Irene Myers, 6/164 New South Head Road, Edgecliffe, 2027, who would be delighted to hear from any relatives who may recognise her great grand-father, William Alexander Nicol.

At the time of his death, William was aged 55 years and was living at 100 Carabella Street, North Sydney. His father was William Nicol and his mother was Jane Alexander and he was born in Paisley, Scotland.



Irene Myers.

"In the death of Mr. W.A. Nicol, Superintending Engineer of the Port Jackson and Manly S.S. Company, which took place on Wednesday evening of last week, May 13th 1914, after a short illness, has caused deep regret to the whole of the large staff in the employ of the Company, both on Boats and Works, and a numerous circle of friends.

He was a man who was esteemed by all whom he came in contact, and the Port Jackson Company has lost a painstaking, and trustworthy official in the gentleman's death. His sole aim and delight was in having the great fleet of Ferry Steamers in perfect order for the work required of them, and in this important matter he never failed, the machinery being seen to as first care, and that the boats were as clean as paint and varnish can make them. He had been in the employ of the Company for over 12 years.

The flags of the Company were at half mast last week, out of sympathy at the death of their late Superintendent Engineer. Mr Nicol's untimely death came as a great shock to his hosts of friends, being a noble, fine specimen of a Scotchman, and he was the last thing thought of. He was an expert at his profession and was a man of wide experience as a marine engineer. He held the position of Chief Engineer on the steamer "Governor Blackall", when that vessel made a special Island Tour in the South Seas many years ago, with the late Sir Peter Scratchley on board. He also held similar positions in different steamers of the A.U.S.N. Co.

On deciding to take up a shore position

he joined the service of the Port Jackson Company in 1902, the Superintending Engineer became vacant in 1909 the Company recognising Mr Nicol's high qualifications appointed him the position.

Mr. Nicol was held in the highest esteem by the Company's Directors, who gave him full control in superintending the building of the fine fleet of Ferry Steamers now to be seen running between Sydney and Manly.

The funeral took place last Friday, May 15th, the deceased gentleman being laid to rest at Gore Hill Cemetery.

The Company's Workshops were closed, and the employees there besides placing a beautiful wreath on the grave, marched in procession from their late Chief's residence to the burial ground.

Numbers of other wreaths were placed on the grave, one being from the Company and another from the employees of the Company.

Among a large attendance at the graveside were noticed the Directors, Managers and Accountant of the Company, also Mr. King, representing Mort's Dock, Captains Newton and Berliss, from the Department of Navigation, also E.R. Larkin MLA and the members of the North Sydney Football Club, of which the late Mr. Nicol was Vice President.

The deceased gentleman leaves a widow and six children to mourn their loss."

GENEALOGY.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE???

On 2/1/1852 my great-great-grandfather married Rebecca Adam in the town or village of Brechin in Angus. He was William Nicoll; I am not sure of his place or date of birth.

William and Rebecca had at least five children: Elizabeth 1858; William 1856; John 1860; George 1862 and David Croll 1864.

My great-grandfather John married Jane Rae 1882 and they sailed to Australia from Glasgow in 1883 on the ship Warrego, later his brother William also came to Australia. I believe some of Williams descendants lived in the Paddington area of Brisbane.

My task of finding the birthplace in Brechin of John was made easy when my mother remembered him saying "I only have a birthday every four years". He was born 29/2/1860. John was adamant on the spelling of his name; he was a Nicoll with two l's. This however made

finding his arrival in Australia difficult, John and Jane were recorded on the ships record as John and Mrs. Nicol, only one l.

John and Jane had nine children in Queensland, Alexander Millar 1884, George Rae 1885, William 1888, Mary (Ciss) 1890, Isabella Birse 1892, John 1894, Jane Elizabeth 1897, Rebecca (Ruby) 1899 and Violet who died young. Alexander Millar was my Grandfather.

I have the descendants of Alexander Millar Nicoll and George Rae Nicoll, however I do not know what became of the other brothers and sisters from the family. If any members of the clan can help with information on this family both here or in Brechin, I would love to hear from you. Also any clan history in Angus would be appreciated.

Please write to Glen Petfield, Lot 8 Gatton Esk Road, Gatton, 4343 or phone 074-665372.

Where is Morag?

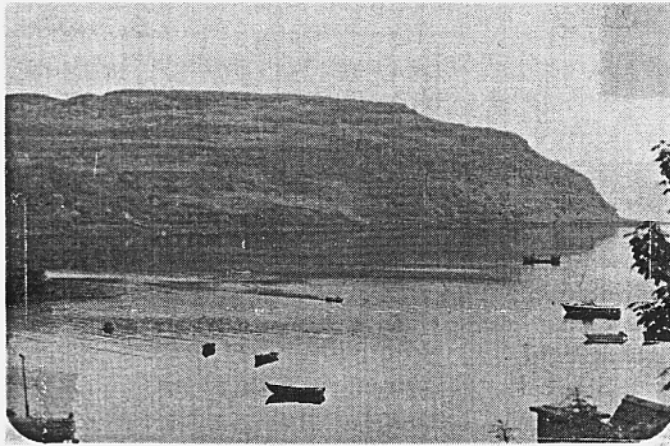
Some years ago I used to write to a second cousin, married to an Australian Air Force Officer in Queensland. She, like me, was born in Lewis. Her name is Morag Sievers and her husbands initials are W.W.. She was a

Nicolson prior to marriage.

I would love to be put in contact with her again if possible. Mary Nicolson, 24 Keeley Way, Girrawhean, WA, 6064.

Sincere thanks for the many contributions to the reforestation of Ben Chracaig - being aware many of you have not had the pleasure of visiting Skye, we felt the following word pictures written by our American Clansfolk would give an insight into the beauty of the area.

Both these articles appeared in Sgorr a Bhreac, The Journal of Clan MacNicol, North America, Spring 1993.



Ben Chracaig
from Portree.

BEN CHRACAIG

by Delane Blondeau, Portal AZ.

Ben Chracaig was framed in the large picture window of our dining room. A swath of calm blue bay was in the foreground with houses of Portree curving along the left edge of the scene. Morning sun was moving in and out of friendly clouds.

Rene and I were finishing a "full" breakfast at Almondbank B&B in preparation for an exploring walk on Ben Chracaig. We departed as relatives of our Nicolson hosts began to arrive for a nephew's wedding on the morrow.

Nicholson was Rene's mother's name. She was from Edinburgh, but the homelands of her MacNicol clan were the Isle of Skye. We had come from Arizona to feel his "roots".

Following directions, we drove through the bay-edge streets of Portree to a boat ramp, a big cement slide into the water. The tide was out and gray strands of seaweed draped the rocks. The air was

fresh on our faces. Crows called, seabirds screamed in a chorus and some small bird sang a sweet song in a bush by the trail. We crossed over a little wooden bridge with a plaque on it inviting us to MacNicol territory. A gate a bit farther on, felt like the doorway to "our" land. The path curved around the base of the headland bringing us to a grassy knoll on the side of the hill.

We walked to the top of the knoll. In a flat, park-like area stood a monument made of stones. A brass plaque, large and shiny, was mounted on its vertical face. The names of Nicolson clan donors who helped purchase Ben Chracaig were engraved on it. It was a strange feeling to see us there; we'd been such a small part of it, lived so far away in another country, never planned to see this ancient clan home. But we stood in person, Rene and Delane Blondeau, reading our names on

posterity's record, proud we were a part, grateful, happy, surprised we were here. Rene and I walked down a hill a bit to benches facing the bay. Two arms of green land encircled the bright waters in a protective hug. Beyond, the dark blue island of Raasay lay hiding in clouds. It must have looked the very same when those first MacNicol's lived on this hill. Exactly where?

Back on the path, we looked up at the steep slopes of Ben Chracaig covered with grass and small bushes. Where, we thought, should the clumps of trees the clan is planning to grow be planted to best effect? It needs trees. Even in the desert of Arizona where we live, the mountains have trees. There will be at least two from us and two from Rene's cousins, Susan and husband David Nicholson, both gone, now, and not aware they have given a gift..of life...to their land of origin.

A little wishing well formed of rocks has been built alongside the path where a spring runs out of the hillside ... Murdo's Well. We toss in coins. Does it mean we will return some day?

Our walking path curves around the foot of the hill to give us a new scene of another part of the bay. We had passed people walking dogs in this direction. There, clean, white and huge, was a cruise ship. It was from Germany, we were informed by a dog walker. The first German ship in these waters in fifty years. Something to come out and see. Little boats (lighters?) came to the hull, filled with colourful dots of people and departed for Portree. Quickly, another boat was there filling with more vacationing German dots. Another boat was returning from Portree for its new load. Money in the coffers

of Skye. New discoverers who will like it, too, perhaps a Nicholson-Muller among them ...who would know?

Two fishing boats are beyond the cruise ship. They have an "I-belong-here" air about them. The larger one is anchored still and stolid. The smaller one makes lovely circular swirls in the water as it goes out and around. We know nothing about fishing and what the boats are doing, but we enjoy their ballet.

The path is wet with past rains, muddy in places, crossed by trickling rivulets. We clamber over rocks in the worn trail, being careful. A sheep on the hillside is looking at us..a ram with huge snail-shaped curls of horns, chewing and looking and bending to eat more grass. We notice other sheep on the hill, isolated white designs on the green. Heather in purple bloom is at our feet.

The path ends at a rock wall with a sagging wooden gate, old, weathered, closed. The end of MacNicol land.

We return as we came. More people are coming to see the ship. They come with spouses, not dogs. This return trip we know our Ben Chracaig. We know landmarks and favourite places. And, we know its soul.

Standing by our car parked near the ramp, we look out over the bay. We smell the air, listen to the water birds, look at the waves rocking, the configurations of the land. We are committing it to memory. Maybe we will come again. Maybe we never will, but we want to keep this first memory forever. Almondbank is across the bay. The dining room window faces us. We are now a part of the framed picture of Ben Chracaig.

REMINISCENCES OF WALKS AROUND BEN CHRACAIG.

by Alex Nicolson, Glendale, CA.

I grew up less than half a mile from Ben Chracaig and became acquainted with its topography from an early age. I loved to take the family pet, a small cairn terrier, short on size but big in his zest for walks and exploring all the sounds and smells of the plant, bird and animal life around the Ben, near the town of Portree on the Hebridean Isle of Skye.

You might be interested to know that the origin of the name "Portree" was from the French "Port de Roi", or Port of the King, and 50 years ago the bay harboured a large herring fleet who fished the North Sea. With the tremendous pressure from international fleets, the fish population declined to the point of near extinction. Encouraging steps have been taken recently, to restore this industry.

Herring were an important staple of the island folk for generations, and I still cherish a fond childhood memory of fresh herring, pan fried in homemade butter covered with an oatmeal batter with boiled new potatoes from the garden, creating a simple, but mouth-watering, meal.

Ben Chracaig is a promontory of land about 300 feet at its highest point and covering an area of almost half a square mile and forms the east side of Portree bay. It is almost devoid of trees except for some groves on the west side, near the shore line.

To the people of Portree, the Ben has been the favourite place for walks for many generations as it is easily accessible from the town by the shore road and affords a picturesque view of the bay and the surrounding hills and islands.

You enter the land through the new bridge and gateway built by the Clan Association and walk up a path which is bordered on both sides by hazel trees and other wild plants. A few steps takes you up to the Nicolson Clan Monument with a view

looking over the entire bay area and the mountains to the west. Just below the monument is Murdo's Well, a small stone well, built at the same time as the monument, which captures the run off from a small burn and forms a pool near the side of the trail.

The path then follows along the west side of the Ben, close to the water line and bordered by trees on both sides for much of the way, up to the southernmost tip of the promontory. This wooded area is one of the few places on the island where snakes can be found. I recall, as a young lad, finding some of those harmless snakes and taking them to school in my jacket pocket.

Proceeding on the path, you soon reach the turn at the southernmost point of the Ben. From this vantage point you can see the island of Raasay to the east, with its flat topped mountain, Dun Caan.

Just offshore at this point lies the Black Rock, a small island which juts out at the entrance to Portree Bay and which can be reached at low tide to explore its interesting plant and bird life. I can still hear the cry of the oystercatchers who come each year to rear their young on this haven, safe from all but inquisitive youths like myself who clambered over the rocks during the neap tide to explore this fascinating spot.

I recall fishing in an open rowboat across the bay from the Black Rock when suddenly, a school of whales breached straight out of the water, about half a mile away, and came crashing down on the waves throwing plumes of water into the air. My immediate reaction was to drop the fishing lines and head straight for shore, but the old fisherman I was with, looked at me and said, "They're just ridding themselves of sea lice," which allayed my fears a little.

I had earlier come across a giant squid which had been washed ashore near Ben Chracaig and remember

being very impressed with its size...over 20 feet long. I later discovered that these monsters lived in the deep ocean, feeding on fish and were themselves the main diet of sperm whales.

Continuing the walk to the east, takes you to another scenic point where the island of Rhona, reputed to be some of the oldest exposed rock formation in the world - billions of years old - comes into view. If you turn and look up the side of the Ben at this point, you will see, close to the top of the hill, the entrance of Macoiter's Cave, where the more hardy can enter and with the aid of a strong rope and flashlight, can scramble to the bottom.

Continuing on the coast walk takes you into areas of rougher going where the main path runs out, and you find yourself walking through fields of bracken towards the east side of the Ben. Down close to the shore, you will come across a small graveyard where a sailor who died at sea was taken ashore at this remote spot for burial.

It was in the Sound that I recall a local fishing boat found a giant turtle tangled in its net. The turtle was set free after an attempt to pull it into the boat showed its weight to exceed at least a ton. This fascinated me as I imagined this turtle travelling on an ancient migratory path following the Gulf Stream which reaches the coast of Europe and Scotland from across the Atlantic. In fact, the Gulf Stream causes some interesting climactic anomalies on the coast of the mainland, immediately across from Portree. In the area known as Applecross, there are gardens containing fig trees, bamboo groves, palm trees and other tropical plants which would normally be found a thousand miles to the south.

Returning to Ben Chracaig and the eastern side of the hill, about 400 yards further east, you can see a sloping outcrop of sandstone....the remains of an ancient raised beach which contains fossilised remains of ammonites, belemnites, trilobites and other preserved denizens of those

prehistoric seas.

Returning to the west, you can take the farmers' road up to the top of the Ben. From there the view extends to the Cuillin Hills to the south and mainland Scotland to the east, behind Raasay.

Turning north, the Clan seat can be reached where a monument stands marking the spot. The Clan seat, as you may know, was inhabited up until 1815 when the Chief and his immediate followers left and emigrated to Canada, then to the island of Tasmania south of Australia.

My father, an island building contractor, placed a monument at the behest of Dr. Nicolson from Edinburgh who funded the project.

The return walk from the Clan seat towards the bay is across moorland typical of much of the land on Skye, turned acidic by the leaching action of steady rains that fall all year round in the Hebrides. But on those days when the sun shines, the air is so clear and bright, the views are breath-taking and the clarity with which distant vistas can be seen makes this place a magical spot, indeed.

The Clan's activities have already breathed new life into the area and there is a definite feeling of revival evident as you walk around the Ben. The Clan's new tree project will go a long way towards reviving the area further and endowing it with indefinable quality that always shows in land that is loved and cared for. The signs of neglect will fade away with our conservation efforts and custodianship.

It is not by chance that our Clan motto is "Generositate non Ferocitate" or "generosity, not anger", which I suspect was not a survival motto for a clan in the harsh, treasonous politics of the past 1,000 years in Scotland, but curiously, a befitting motto for the new Age when healing of the planet must now begin in earnest. The Nicolsons who chose that motto were definitely ahead of their time. Let us work together to make their vision come true.
