



OTAGO SCOTTISH HERITAGE COUNCIL

Welcome to the November 2021 newsletter

Edited by Dene Mackenzie



*Otago Scottish Heritage Council president Dr Royden Somerville*

The council this month held its annual meeting by Zoom, a first for the council but something we may have to get used to if we cannot meet in person next year. The next committee meeting will be held on Zoom on December 7 and a notice will be sent out the week before.

Comments on the Zoom annual meeting ranged from “good” to “I will not be doing that again”. Most people were comfortable with the technology, once we were online and could see and hear each other. With a few tweaks, I am sure we can meet online when necessary.

If you did not catch up with the minutes, Dr Royden Somerville remains as council president, Bruce Nicholson remains treasurer and I remain your secretary.

**Below is Dr Somerville’s report to the 96th annual meeting.**

I am pleased to present the annual report for 2020-2021. The Annual General Meeting also covers Queen o' the Heather Inc reports. The officers of the OSHC are also officers of that organisation.

## **Activities**

The Council's activities were severely impacted over the last 12 months due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of our monthly meetings were cancelled during imposed Alert levels when there were limitations on meeting sizes and a requirement for separation distances between attendees.

On November 22, 2020, the Kirkin' o' the Tartan was held at Knox Church, one of Dunedin's splendid heritage churches. This event was well attended and many celebrated their Scottish heritage by wearing their clan tartans. I wish to thank Alison Thornton for organising this service with the Minister of Knox Church.

The St Andrew's Day celebrations were held in the Octagon on November 29. This event results from the sterling work of the Dunedin-Edinburgh Sister City Society. It was a very successful celebration with many activities. The Octagon looked very festive with all the stalls, and it was a wonderful occasion.

On St Andrew's Day, November 30, the traditional luncheon organised by the Tairi Scottish Society and the past president of the council, Frank Brown, was successfully held at the Rope and Twine.

The first main event of 2021 was the Toitu Burns Supper on the Bard's birthday, January 25. Seán Brosnahan and his team are to be congratulated for organising a wonderful event. The theme of the supper was 'Burns & Ireland', to celebrate Burns' Irish connections. The guest speakers were the Irish Ambassador, Peter Ryan, and the Eamon Cleary Professor of Irish Studies, Sonja Tiernan, from the University of Otago.

The OSHC is a major sponsor of the very successful Robert Burns Poetry Competition. The Council's prize for the best published poet is a significant contribution to Scottish culture and the activities of Dunedin as a UNESCO City of Literature organisation.

At the Council meeting on January 2, Frank Brown was awarded a Life Membership to mark his lengthy and dedicated service to the Council in

a number of capacities, including as president. The City of Edinburgh Perpetual Challenge Trophy – Edinburgh Quaich, was presented to Duncan Todd Wall (president) and Sheila Wall (treasurer) on behalf of the Otago Combined Clans & Societies Group Otago. The Trophy is awarded annually to the club, clan or society that has done the most to promote our Scottish heritage during the previous year.

On March 23, the Otago Anniversary Day Dinner was held at the Dunedin Club and the OSHC was represented. Nicky Page, the Dunedin UNESCO City of Literature Director, was a very informative and entertaining guest speaker.

### **OSHC meeting speakers**

October 6, 2020 (AGM) – Ron Macintosh, an Otago broadcaster, spoke about Robert Burns.

December 1, 2020 – Christine Powley as its Librarian, spoke about the Dunedin Athenaeum Library and Mechanics Institute.

May 4, 2021 – Michelle Moffat spoke about “The Tartan Front: Daily Life in Scotland during the Second World War”. Michelle is a PhD student at the University of Otago.

June 1, 2021 – Sam Moncur spoke about Shetland Islanders in Wellington and other parts of New Zealand. Sam is a postgraduate at the University of Otago.

Thanks to Professor Angela McCarthy for organising these speakers.

August 3, 2021 – John Stinson presented an extended report on his excellent research for the OSHC history which is to be published at the time of its centenary in 2025.

I am very grateful to the committee members of organisations belonging to the Council who have managed to organise functions during these difficult times.

The Combined Clans & Societies of Otago group has had a number of meetings during the year. These have been well-managed gatherings to ensure compliance with the Alert Level requirements. A very successful and enjoyable mid-winter Hogmanay was held by the Combined Clans & Societies on July 3.

## **Vale**

The former Mayor of Dunedin, Dave Cull, sadly passed away on April 27, 2021. He had had a long connection with the work of Scottish organisations, including his links with the Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

These were acknowledged at his funeral service in the Dunedin Town Hall on May 3, 2020. His love of Scottish music was evident in the service. He will be greatly missed.

Tragically, Donna Young passed away on October 10, 2021. Donna was heavily immersed in Scottish heritage and culture. Her address to the haggis at the Burns' Supper in 2019 in the Town Hall was a very memorable occasion. As an author and former winner of the Robert Burns Poetry Competition, she has been an ideal competition judge. Donna will be greatly missed.

## **Thanks**

I wish to thank Dene Mackenzie for his significant work as secretary, and also for preparing the very informative and enjoyable newsletters during 2021. These have been a rich source of information and play an important part in continuing to keep people informed about all matters Scottish during a time when we have not been able to meet on a monthly basis.

I also wish to thank Charmaine Mundy for her work compiling the newsletter in past years.

Thank you to Bruce Nicholson for his excellent work as treasurer. The Society's finances are in a very healthy state. Also sincere thanks to Lyn and Bruce for designing and producing the Council's splendid new banner.

I am very conscious of the difficulties of maintaining the programme for the Council during these challenging times over the past year, and thank representatives of our member organisations that comprise the Council for their ongoing support and encouragement of its work.

I wish members of the Council all the best for the next 12 months and sincerely hope that we are able to hold meetings again in the Athenaeum Library so we can engage in person to conduct the business

of the Council. In the meantime thank you all for persevering with a virtual meeting.

Dr Royden Somerville QC, President

## **St Andrews Day**



*With St Andrews Day approaching, it is a good time to discover more about Scotland's patron saint. What did he do that was so saintly and how did he get the honour of becoming Scotland's patron saint? Dene Mackenzie investigates.*

There are plenty of stories about St Andrew. He has been celebrated in Scotland for many years but it was not until 1320, when Scotland's independence was declared with the signing of The Declaration of Arbroath, that he was officially named as Scotland's patron saint. Since then, St Andrew has become tied up in so much of Scotland. The flag of Scotland, the St Andrew's Cross, was chosen in honour of him. Also, the ancient town of St Andrews was named due to its claim of being the final resting place of St Andrew. (Something to think about when driving north to Timaru)

It is believed St Andrew was born between the years 5AD and 10AD. According to Christianity, he went on to become one of the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ. The disciples were 12 people chosen by Jesus to closely follow him. Andrew's brother Simon Peter, was also one of the disciples. They both lived in Galilee where they were fishermen.

There is no clear answer to why St Andrew became the patron saint of Scotland. One story says that as King Angus in Scotland was preparing for a battle against the English, St Andrew appeared to King Angus in a dream promising him victory. On the day of the battle an X symbol appeared in the sky, the symbol of St Andrew.

The king vowed that if he won, St Andrew would be made the patron saint of Scotland – and that is what happened. Apparently, this is why the Scottish flag has the X-shaped cross on it as it is the sign of St Andrew.

St Andrew is also the patron saint of Romania, Greece, Russia, Ukraine and Poland.

While we will not have the big St Andrews Day celebrations in the Octagon this year, it is interesting to note that it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century the popular celebrations of his day became commonplace.

What may surprise you even more is the tradition of celebrating on November 30 was not even technically started in Scotland. Instead, a group of ex-pat Scots in the United States were keen to connect with their Scottish roots started what has now become a worldwide tradition.

It all began with the creation of “The St Andrew’s Society of Charleston” in South Carolina, founded in 1729 by a group of wealthy Scottish immigrants. The organisation is the oldest Scottish society of its type in the world. They became famous throughout the region for their work assisting orphans and widows in that era.

Another society, the St Andrew's Society of the State of New York was founded in 1756 and is the oldest charity of any kind registered in New York. It was founded by Scots looking to relieve the poor and distressed in the town. From those early days, St Andrews societies have spread around the world.

However, St Andrews Day on November 30 has become special to Scots and ranks as one of the three major dates during the winter period. The day is usually marked with a celebration of Scottish culture, including dancing, music, food and drink.

Combined Clans & Societies Group of Otago Christmas function



*The Top Table . . . (from left) Combined Clans & Societies Group of Otago president Lyn Nicholson, Raymond Goodfellow, Bruce Nicholson, Ian MacKenzie, Qwenton McKenzie (Clan MacKenzie piper), and Duncan Todd Wall.*

The Combined Clans held a successful Christmas function on November 12 with 54 in attendance. Seven clans and societies were represented along with the Gaelic Society and the Ceilidh Scottish Country Dance Club.

The function marked the end of what turned out to be a relatively successful year for the group, despite covid. Unfortunately, the Otago-Taieri A & P Show will not have spectators in January, preventing the group from once again promoting all things Scottish to the public. The group is actively seeking more opportunities to promote Scotland in the South.

## **History**

Historian John Stinson has this month provided another side to Arthur MacDonald who was a Dunedin Burns Club Delegate to the Council for over 20 years.

John writes the amusing part is that this is the same Arthur MacDonald who, during a particularly stormy meeting involving the fierce rivalry existing between two Dunedin Pipe Bands, was accused of being a “Traitor and a Collaborator with the Enemy”.

Otago Scottish Council AGM 1948: Acknowledgment of Mr Arthur MacDonald. Moved and Seconded that a Special Minute be drafted and placed on the Minutes in recognition of the valued services rendered by Mr Arthur MacDonald.

“We the Members of the Otago Scottish Council desire to place on record an appreciation of the valued services rendered by Mr Arthur MacDonald over many years as a Delegate representing the Dunedin Burns Club. For the past twenty years this Community has enjoyed many associations with Mr MacDonald and his renderings of the Scottish National Songs has ever been a delight and inspiration to all who have been invited to listen. Not only did Mr MacDonald correctly interpret the National Songs but he was generous in his renderings at all functions.

“As an organiser of anything pertaining to Scottish interests Mr MacDonald’s time and ability was freely given and both Local and Country organizations have benefited by his untiring efforts.

“The Otago Scottish Council will ever remember in the kindest manner the pleasant companionship associated with Mr MacDonald’s Membership and it is the desire of every Member that the subject of this Minute should live long to continue the good work of distributing joy to those who love the sincerity behind the Song.”

In the December issue of the newsletter, we will look at some of Scotland’s Christmas and New Year traditions.

In the meantime...

- *Èist ri gaath nam beann gus an traogh na h-uisgeachan.*



- Translation: Listen to the wind upon the hill till the waters abate.
- Meaning: Keep a low profile until trouble passes.
- Quoted by Sir Walter Scott in *Wizards of Waverley Place* (1884)

Dene Mackenzie