



OTAGO SCOTTISH HERITAGE COUNCIL

Welcome to the October 2022 newsletter  
Edited by Dene Mackenzie



Sir George Steuart MacKenzie

It was hard to know whether to applaud or denigrate Sir George Steuart MacKenzie, according to Scottish historian Andrew McKenzie.

Speaking from Scotland via a Zoom meeting to Clan MacKenzie members, Mr McKenzie said Sir George had brutally cleared the people from his land.

He was the landowner responsible for the clearances of the townships of Inverlael and Balblair near Ullapool in the winter of 1819-20, as part of the wider Highland Clearances. The clearances saw hundreds of families moved off land by landowners to make way for large-scale sheep production or other agricultural uses. Some families moved to other parts of Scotland, while others emigrated - many to Canada where their hardships continued. Evictions could be violent, and communities were forced to give up homes and land where generations of people had lived and worked.

Asked why Sir George had so brutally cleared his land, Mr McKenzie said the landowner had evicted between 600 to 800 people from an “idyllic life” to living in caves to survive.

Some had gone on to other estates for agricultural work but others had to leave for other areas. Promised fishing jobs did not materialise for many and they were reduced to poverty or sailed to places abroad, including New Zealand.

Mr McKenzie’s own family was part of the clearances.

However, in his favour Sir George developed sheep breeding and made an incredible difference to the fortunes of Scotland.

“He was one of the first to improve life by the way he ran his estate and that is how he was judged by his peers.

“He improved and innovated by research and reading. He was not all bad, just pretty bad.”



Andrew Grant McKenzie

Mr McKenzie is a heritage consultant and guide in Scotland. More than 30 Clan MacKenzie members from New Zealand, Australia and Scotland signed in to hear him talk about the Highlands: Contested Land.

Between 1783 to 1881, 150,000 Scots were forced from their homes. About 70,000 emigrated between 1760s and 1800s, possibly a mix of unforced emigration or for economic survival.

After outlining his own family history, Mr McKenzie said he believed that even now the Highlands were a contested land - from the forced clearances to his grandfather being sent to England in the 1950s to rebuild the country after the war.

Now, Mr McKenzie works with various groups trying to stop Scottish history being paved over by roads. One of his big projects is at Culloden. Roads are being planned to go through the historical battle site, meaning some of the original stone homes will be demolished. There are some options on the table but he said it is a challenge to get some of those saved.

“The road and bridge seem more important than the houses.”

In 2014, he became the property manager of Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre, taking charge of a five star visitor attraction which is known worldwide due to its intensely strong connections with the development of the Highlands during the early-modern period.

“My aims in that role were clear - to ensure the whole battle site's survival for future generations and to balance commercialism and conservationism to ensure the best management of the National Trust of Scotland-owned battle site and the battle site at large. This led to my continuing efforts against the developments planned at the site, but also led to me creating and implementing management strategies which boosted turnover above £2 million for the first time and reduced expenditure to create a balanced business model at the same time as growing visitor numbers, satisfaction, online audiences and conservation awareness to record levels.”

Conservation successes also included the vital purchase of the Blunderbuss captured during the battle and letters written by Charles Edward Stuart, as well as instigating a LiDAR scan of the entire battle site and advising the Highland Council on the creation of the Culloden Muir Conservation Area (2015).

Mr McKenzie is now the Watchman for Culloden Battlefield for the Scottish Battlefields Trust (SBT) and a Trustee of Castle Leod for the Cromartie Estate.

He can be found at *highlandhistorian.com*

### **Otago Scottish Heritage Council badges**

The council has badges for sale at \$10 each. Please contact Bruce Nicholson on 0274358191 to buy one.



### **Gaelic. Physical characteristics**

Big - Mor (with an accent over the o). Small - Beag

Old - sean. Young - Og (with an accent over the o)

Well - gu math. Ill - tinn

**Board Room Tenancy. Council historian John Stinson finds that Otago Scottish Council members of the past had little trouble finding an excuse to have a good time.**

At the Otago Scottish Council Meeting held on July 5 1951 it was Moved by Mr Oliver Seconded by Mr Caldwell that the Council take over the tenancy of the Board Room located in the T and G Buildings Princes Street and that it be named the Otago Scottish Council Board Room. Mr Kerr made his report on the same and it was left to a Sub-Committee comprising Messrs Kerr McMillan and Secretary to make the necessary adjustments.

At the following Meeting held on August 2 1951 Mr McMillan reported that the Board Room Sub-Committee had met and that the scale of charges had been made out. Mr Sabiston had already been authorised to repair the table. Mr McMillan stated that he would donate the tartan curtains. The offer was gratefully received. Moved and Seconded that the Sub-Committees report be adopted.

The first Meeting in the newly named Board Room was held on September 6 1951. There was a good attendance of Delegates and Members of the different affiliated organisations who were invited to attend the house warming and the introduction of Major Familton (from) the new OC of the Scottish Regiment. Mr T Stuart who was attending his last Council Meeting thanked the Council for adopting the Stuart Tartan for the Windows while reference was also made to those who had got the room in good order suitable for Meetings.

The Meeting adjourned early in order for a Social Evening to be conducted. Moving Pictures, Songs, Stories and the usual Toasts were given.

# COMBINED CLANS & SOCIETIES GROUP OTAGO



## **CHRISTMAS FUNCTION FRIDAY NOVEMBER 11, 2022 ST PETER'S CHURCH HALL HILLSIDE ROAD DUNEDIN 6.30PM FOR 7PM**

**Tickets \$35 from Daphne 476-4958**

**email: [daphne.macleod@xtra.co.nz](mailto:daphne.macleod@xtra.co.nz)**

**Sheila 0274800441.**

**email: [sheila.wall@xtra.co.nz](mailto:sheila.wall@xtra.co.nz)**

**Cash or online to**

**D M Macleod 020 908 0062754 003, Xmas, your name**

## **Council meeting, November 1 at 7pm**

Jim McQuillan will speak to our November meeting about the Friends of Burns Reserve Incorporated organisation currently being set up. The title of his talk is "Burns Park - 216 acres of Scenic Reserve close to the City".

I am hopeful Joanne Galer will speak to our December meeting after two previous attempts. Third time lucky.

***Ceud mìle taing.***

***A hundred thousand thanks.***

Dene Mackenzie