NEW CLAN SECRETARY & NEWSLETTER EDITOR

At the Clan MacRae Society of Australia and New Zealand’s AGM our long-time secretary Elma McRae relinquished her job as secretary as she had indicated last November. Roslyn MacRae from Vittoria, near Bathurst, was elected to the position. It will take a few meetings for Roslyn to get used to the job and Elma will be at hand to explain things if required.

In my President’s report I said of Elma, “Your enthusiasm, loyalty, devotion and perseverance, would be the envy of most Scottish Societies in what you have done as Secretary over the last 22 years. You have managed the minutes and correspondence, kept the lines open to keep in touch with members and handled most enquiries over the years. Further to this you have managed to produce the newsletters again this year as you have done for many years. Whilst your travel arrangements to gatherings have been somewhat disrupted in recent times you have been there in spirit. It seems that the Clan MacRae Society of Australia and New Zealand has become part of your life over the years and the admiration that both members and other societies extend to you is amazing. Again thankyou Elma for all you do, and have done.”

Elma is a life member of the Society and will continue attending gatherings where possible.

Our new Secretary is Roslyn MacRae, 2513 Mitchell Highway, Vittoria NSW 2795 6368 7284 Fax 63687206 Email learn@vsr.com.au

I have taken on the newsletter to systemise the process, so for the time being please sent any contributions to: - Alan McRae, F.I.A.H.A., P.O Box 151, Bathurst. N.S.W. 2795 Ph. (H) 02 6331 5404 or email to amcrae@lisp.com.au

NEXT CLAN MacRAE MEETING

It was decided at the AGM meeting that there would be only three meetings per year as this would now coincide with the number of newsletters each year. Meetings will take place on the third Wednesday in February, June and October. Unless otherwise notified meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of the nominated month at The Combined Services Club, 5 – 7 Barrack Street, Sydney (close to Wynyard Railway Station) at 1pm. Lunch is available in the Club’s Bistro from 12 noon.

UPCOMING EVENTS

28th May – 4th June 2017 - Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival at Wingham.

21st June 2017 - Wednesday – Clan MacRae meeting on the 2nd floor Conference Room at Combined Services RSL Club, 5 – 7 Barrack Street,
Sydney (not far from Wynyard Railway Station) at 1pm. Note – some members attending have lunch in the bistro at the club from 12 noon.

1st July 2017 – Saturday - *Aberdeen Highland Games* - Jefferson Park, Aberdeen. Info: 02 6540 1300


16th September 2017 – Saturday - *Clans on the Coast Gathering* at Tomaree Sports Complex, No. 1 Oval, Nelson Bay. Info 0418 495 336 or [www.clansonthecoast.com](http://www.clansonthecoast.com)

7th October 2017, Saturday - *Canberra Highland Gathering* will be held at Kett Street Oval, Kambah, Canberra. Info: [www.canberragathering.com.au](http://www.canberragathering.com.au)

18th October 2017 - Wednesday – *Clan MacRae meeting* on the 2nd floor Conference Room at Combined Services RSL Club, 5 – 7 Barrack Street, Sydney (not far from Wynyard Railway Station) at 1pm. Note – some members attending have lunch in the bistro at the club from 12 noon.

27th January 2018, Saturday *Quirindi Military Tattoo*.


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CLAN MACRAE AT BATHURST

Scots School’s Highland Gathering and Country Fair took place on Sunday 19th March in beautifully fine weather. With a magnificent replica castle as the backdrop the various pipes and drums went through their routines and displays. The highland dancers kept patrons entertained though there was just one Scottish stall. The historic car display was again in attendance.

Roslyn MacRae and I were on hand to keep an eye on the Clan MacRae display of historical articles for the Scotties and public to see. Organisers put us inside a larger tent this year so we were not in the main ring.
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The afternoon concluded with all the pipes and drums bands playing together for the magnificent closing ceremony. Ironically Carolyn MacRae organised the event, having fairly recently arrived from New Zealand with her husband Shane.

CLAN MACRAE AT BUNDANOON

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the Bundanoon Highland Gathering and I had been booked in at Moss Vale which is nearby to Bundanoon. On making my booking I found out that Moss Vale has a McRae connection with one of their public buildings which was designed by Government Architect George McRae. The Moss Vale Court House was built in 1923 at a cost of £7,826. The most important landmark underwent a $250,000 makeover several years ago.

Bundanoon’s 40th annual “Bundanoon is Brigadoon” Scottish Festival took place on Saturday 1st April with a very good contingent of MacRaes/ McRaes in attendance for much of the day. Secretary Roslyn MacRae and her husband Colin from Bathurst took the marquee and the displays and other memorabilia to Bundanoon. “Brigadoon” began with the sound of bagpipes drifting across the village from first light in preparation for a day of celebration. Our day started with a number of members erecting the Clan tent on wet and soggy ground with a clear blue sky above. Despite the grounds being wet underfoot and parking in chaos and truly inconvenient most clans and other stalls managed to get set up.

Three Clan MacRae members carried our banner and walked in the Street Parade which was led by the Chief for the Day Jimmy Barnes and his wife. The Street Parade also featured some of the Pipe Bands from all over the State accompanied by a large variety of decorated floats and marching Clan Societies. We had a photo taken with him and the six members (above) who ‘manned’ the tent on the day. Jimmy, well-known Scottish-born Australian rock singer-songwriter, was
gracious enough to sign our visitor’s book. Jimmy received an A.O. this year for his service to the performing arts.

The Clan tent was busy throughout the day informing the public about our Clan and over 34 MacRae descendants signed the Visitors Book. Four MacRae descendants joined the Clan at the Gathering. The members who helped on the day were Roslyn and Colin MacRae, Andrew and Rhonda MacRae and Ray and Judy Hines.

There were about 20 pipe bands in attendance and along with the Highland Games, the Tartan Warriors, dancers, stalls and with numerous other clan representatives the event looked as colourful as ever.

Spectators could try their luck at “Tossing the Caber”, “Shot Putt”, “Haggis Hurling”, “Kilted Races”, “Egg Throwing” and “Water Toss”. Throughout the day there were Highland and Scottish Country dance demonstrations. Some thirty other Clans and Societies were kept on their toes with enquires about their Scottish heritage and ancestry. Photos of Bundanoon courtesy Barbara Gurney.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

A grand welcome to our recent new members - Mr Kenneth J McRae, New Zealand; Mr. Gordon MacRae, New Zealand; Mr. James Salvestro, NSW; Ms. Sharon Mountain, NSW; Mr. Greg MacRae, NSW and Mr. Kenneth Clark, NSW.

CLAN MEMBERS RECOGNISED - 2017 AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

Rev. Alistair James MacRae, A.O. – Former President of the Uniting Church Reverend Alistair MacRae was honoured with an Officer of the Order of Australia (A.O.) on Australia Day this year. His citation says, “For distinguished service to the Uniting Church in Australia through executive and
ministerial roles at State and National levels and the promotion of ecumenism, interfaith dialogue and reconciliation.” When asked if he had set his sights on an Australia Day Award when he entered the ministry, he replied, “No, I went into it for the money!” Mr. MacRae believes the award recognises the work of the whole church! If a leader is honoured, that honour flows to the whole community. He is currently Minister at the historic Wesleyan Church in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. Extract from “Crosslight”- newspaper of the Uniting Church of Australia. Contributed by Flora McRae of St. Arnaud.

Kim Brennan, O.A.M. of Canberra who won a Gold Medal at the Rio de Janiero’s Olympic Games in women’s single sculls rowing had her success recognised with the award of a Medal of the Order of Australia. Kim, a descendant of the McRae family who settled in the St. Arnaud area of Victoria, had spent many months training, much of it overseas and her dedication to her chosen sport and her Olympic success were rewarded.

Our congratulations are extended to both recipients.

ANNUAL SHERIFFMUIR COMMEMORATION IN SCOTLAND
Saturday 18th November 2017

Clan MacRae members gather each year to remember the many clansmen who fell on 13th November, 1715, at Sheriffmuir. The nearest Saturday falls on Armistice Day so Clan members will gather at the Clan MacRae monument on Saturday, 18th November at 12 noon to avoid clashing with Armistice Day ceremonies. A wreath of Jacobite Roses is laid at the monument, during the ceremony. Those who attend retire to the Sheriffmuir Inn afterwards for lunch and companionship. Should any members be planning a trip to Scotland at this time, please note the date. Those attending are asked to advise Secretary Jim McRae at secretary@clan-macrae.org.uk

JIMI THE PIPER WEDS

Jimi McRae, christened James MacLean McRae, well known to all who have visited Scotland for our Clan Gatherings as Jimi, the Piper, recently married his sweetheart, Carole, in a traditional Scottish wedding at the Smithy at Gretna Green, near the border with England. Near a giant anvil the couple exchanged their vows. Clan MacRae is privileged to have such a talented piper who has played at Eilean Donan Castle many a time. Best wishes for their future happiness are sent from MacRaes Down Under to Jimmi and his bride Carole.
VALE - Heather McRae Howie

On 21st February, 2017, Heather McRae Howie passed away at Avalon Nursing Home after a short stay. Hers had been a very long and fulfilling life. At the age of 93 she had travelled extensively and made friends in many parts of the world.

Heather Howie was very proud of her Scottish heritage and had enjoyed a trip in 2005 to Eilean Donan Castle to celebrate with members of the MacRae/McRae clan from all over the world. For many years she attended meetings of the Clan MacRae Society of Australia and New Zealand.

She was very excited in 2003 when a contingency of her nieces and nephews accompanied her to the sesqui-centenary celebrations of the arrival of the McRaes, in Armidale. She was descended from Alexander McRae whose family settled in Armidale in 1853.

She was a dynamic, independent woman who excelled in her career as an outstanding educator. Whilst teaching in the ACT she was recruited by the government to travel to Zambia to implement teacher training courses. This was in recognition of the excellence of her teaching expertise and the high esteem with which she was regarded. On her return, after teaching again in the ACT at Forrest, Heather was asked to return to Zambia to provide more teachers’ training. In 1951 she travelled to the UK and Europe for two years. She taught in Abernethy, a small village near Perth in Scotland, making lifelong friends. She retired in 1978 from Lindfield Demonstration School which trainee teachers visited. Then began the next episode of her life; satisfying her desire to travel. Some of the countries she toured included Russia, China, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada and parts of Europe and of course, Australia.

One of the great joys of her life involved family gatherings. She loved to socialise with her nieces, nephews and the next generation. She enjoyed their cheeky behaviour and loved to listen to them. She loved the attention they bestowed upon her. Easter and Christmas on the northern beaches gave her great joy; as did meetings of the Howie clan in Newcastle. Heather was renowned for her generosity and devotion to her church. Up until late in 2016 she was regularly being driven to nursing homes in the Epping area to play the piano for the nursing home residents. She still had her driver’s licence and drove about Epping until November 2016.
GEORGE McRAE, ARCHITECT – COMPLETED SYDNEY TOWN HALL

The first idea to build a ‘town hall’ was suggested by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1813, though little came of it until the Sydney Incorporation Act was passed in 1842, officially declaring the colonial settlement a township. As happened in almost every large town the first elected aldermen met in public inns or hired private rooms.

Unfortunately, where the aldermen wanted to put their Town Hall was being used as a cemetery at the time. When they heard that H.R.H. Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, was coming they invited him, as Sydney’s first Royal Visitor, to lay a foundation stone on 4th April, 1868. What they didn’t tell him was that there were no building plans and, in fact, negotiations were still underway for the transfer of the site.

This encouraged the colonial authorities in Macquarie Street to finally capitulate and pass an Act of Parliament to close and remove the cemetery. A few months later the burial ground was exhumed and cleared so the Municipal Council could announce a public design competition. The winning entry was submitted by architect Mr. John Henry Wilson in 1868. Wilson did not live to see the completion of the first stage in 1880 which was overseen by the Council’s City Architect, Alan Bond.

Built in stages, the first stage of the Town Hall took from 1868 to 1884 and encompassed the Vestibule and Aldermen’s offices on the ground floor, the Council Chamber and retiring rooms and a proposed library on the first floor. The clock tower was completed in 1873 though the clock wasn’t installed till 1884. From the start it was plagued by long delays and controversy. By 1883 City Architect, Thomas H. Sapsford and his assistant John Hennessy, had produced designs which became the basis for the second stage. After
Sapsford’s death it was completed by City Architect George McRae and architects David McBeath and John Hennessy.

Thomas Sapsford had passed away at the end of 1886 and George McRae was appointed as City Architect. McRae had been previously appointed temporary architect when Sapsford was suspended in December 1885 until he was reinstated in January 1886. George carried most of the load in the following year though his inexperience may have contributed to the slow progress on the building. This took another three years before it was completed.

On 27th November, 1889, a public holiday was declared for the opening of the Town Hall. Some Sydneysiders went to the beach, but thousands flocked to the city to witness the momentous occasion. The day was fine, the choir of 400 sang stirringly and the crowds in George Street were loud and cheerful. The etching (page 8) was printed as part of a special illustrated supplement of the Sydney Mail to celebrate the Town Hall’s opening.

In 1888 George McRae (right), still the City Architect, prepared plans for a new building that would match the scale and grandeur of the Town Hall to replace the old market buildings across the road. In 1893, George McRae was asked to prepare another four designs for a new building on the former markets site, based on his earlier plans. His ‘Romanesque’ design was chosen and adopted. Construction began in 1893 on the monumental, three-storey sandstone structure we know as the Queen Victoria building, and was completed in 1898, the same year he also became the City Building Surveyor. George’s building was regarded by engineers, architects and builders as a feat of technical ingenuity, because of his innovative construction methods and use of materials.

George McRae was born in Edinburgh in 1858, arriving in Sydney in 1884 and was appointed Assistant Architect in the City Architect’s office. He held his City Architect and City Building Surveyor positions until 1897 when he was appointed Principal Assistant Architect to Vernon in the Government Architect’s Branch. He succeeded Vernon as Government Architect in 1912 and held the office until his death in 1923.
I am trying to get in contact with the McRae family who owned the Machinery Merchants in Collins Street, West Melbourne in the 1890s. Hopefully we can bring you a story at a later date. If you have a suitable photo and a 300 word story it would be considered for inclusion in the newsletter. Contact the President of Clan MacRae on amcrae@lisp.com.au

McRAE BROS LTD, WALCHA

Frank and Don McRae worked for Errats in Walcha before deciding to buy out a Mrs. Murphy when it came up for sale in 1910. They called themselves McRae Bros and they had painted across the awning “Cash & Carry Market”. They employed a young lad with a bicycle and the two brothers ran the store between them.

On one occasion they decided that a cane basket would be handy for customers to select some of their groceries. They ordered just one basket from
the wholesaler in Sydney as money was short then, however when the order arrived the wholesaler assumed that the McRae boys meant one dozen, after all who would normally order just one. Well, the McRae brothers were horrified when they realised twelve baskets had arrived and there was not enough money to pay the invoice for them all.

By 1917 wages were up to 7/6 a week (75 cents in today’s money). As time progressed more and more sheds were added until there were about 13, each for specific products. One had lime and cement, another oils and kerosene, another empty cartons, another fencing and tie wire and so on. Another department opened to sell suits and the business sold lots of suits. They carried ‘suit lengths’ to measure and then have them sewed up by a local tailor, Val Lofburg. Alec Hoy called on customers on horseback Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to take grocery orders which would be delivered next day.

Bruce McRae (Clan member), Don’s son says they had one petrol pump and recalls pumping up petrol. Before starting to pump one had to set a lever to a mark to select 1, 2 or 4 gallons, then pump like the dickens.

Nearly all goods came on the train and the horse and cart had to travel to Walcha Road siding to collect them and bring them back. Later, Harry Brooks walked to work every day and drove the store’s 3 ton International truck to collect the freight and goods from the train. He would often unload the railway carriage, drive back to the store and unload everything and put it away, generally by himself.

In 1925 Frank McRae (my grandfather) saw an opportunity to go out on his own however, before commencing his new project in Uralla (about 25 minutes drive from Walcha) he agreed to manage the General Store of Dean and Smiths Pty in Barraba whilst the owners sailed to England to visit relatives.

Thanks to Bruce McRae Wahroonga for added information.
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