



CHIEF: ROBERTSON OF STRUAN

**NORTHEAST DONNACHAIDH DOINGS**

CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY OF THE NORTHEAST

Volume XXXV    Number 4    Winter 2011

# Save the Date for a Fun Social Evening in April

## Spring Event

Clan Dinner Party and Annual Meeting

Wachusett Village Inn

Westminster, MA

Mark your calendars for April 2, 2011. The Annual Meeting will be held prior to the Social Hour. Actual time will be on your invitation. It is important to have as many of you there as possible. There will be a slate of Officers and State Representatives to be voted on as well as updates on Clan activities. It's vital to have input from the membership and for you to take an active roll in the decisions that affect our Northeast Branch. Your attendance is strongly urged.

**The Dram Boys** will be returning this year to entertain us. Jordan Cannady and Richmond Cargill are a duo specializing in acoustic Scottish and Celtic folk music.

They have performed in festivals and Scottish events throughout the United States and Canada and individually have performed in England, Wales and Scotland. Their repertoire showcases the best of Scotland's musical heritage.

*Info taken from Dram Boys web site.*

We also look forward to the annual auction, our largest fundraiser, with master auctioneer, David Duncan. He has a special talent of persuading the Scots to part with their money. To make this successful, however, we need donations from you of Clan or Scottish related items. Please notify Sue Newton in advance at: [dlnewton@roadrunner.com](mailto:dlnewton@roadrunner.com)

*Additional information about the evening will be included in your invitation.*

This is a fun evening and the only Social Event of the year. We look forward to seeing you all there.



**The Dram Boys**

### **OFFICIAL NOTICE**

**The Annual General Meeting**

of the

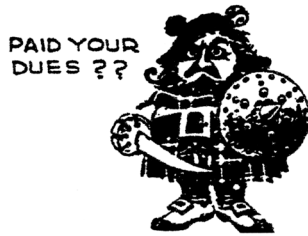
**Clan Donnachaidh Society**

**Northeast Branch, Inc.**

will be held prior to the Spring Dinner  
Wachusett Village Inn, Westminster, MA

Saturday, April 2, 2011

All members of the Society in good



**Keeping your dues current saves the Society the  
cost of mailing reminders  
Your mailing label will tell you the story,  
“2010” means renew now for 2011**

**Clan Donnachaidh Society Northeast Branch  
Clan Council Meeting  
November 6, 2010**

At 11:40 the meeting was called to order. Those in attendance were Herb and Mary Ann Dobbins, President and Treasurer; Doug and Sue Newton, VP and Secretary; and State Reps: Scott Duncan, CT; Robert Torrey, VT; Bruce Couturier, NH; and Beverly Duncan, MA, our hostess.

**Agenda**

1. Nomination of officers

President Herb Dobbins is stepping down and Doug Newton was nominated to replace him. Bob Torrey was nominated to take over the VP position. The Secretary and Treasurer are willing to continue in their positions, and the State Reps up for reelection this year are Richard Duncanson, ME; Henry Reid, RI; Scott Duncan, CT; and Bob Torrey, VT. Those not present at the meeting will be contacted to see if they want to continue in their positions.

2. Creation of an Association of American Clan Donnachaidh Branches

This idea has been brought forward by a member and the Council discussed its feasibility. It was moved and passed to explore having a Nationwide Clan Donnachaidh organization which our Branch would initiate. Other Branches will be contacted, and if there is interest it was suggested to try an East Coast meeting of the Branches. The membership will be kept informed of progress in this area. Herb and Mary Ann Dobbins and Bill and Cheryl Robertson volunteered to work on this committee, and if others would like to be included, please contact Herb Dobbins.

3. Program for hosting a visit from our Chief

There is interest in having our Clan Chief come to the US and the Council discussed this. It was decided to get a better idea of a time frame (he is an apple orchardist and needs to be on his farm at critical times) It was put forward that his visit might be a good idea for an East Coast Branch meeting, rather than just coming for a single Branch activity. It was suggested that we would aim for 2012 for both the Branch Association meeting and the visit from the Chief.

4. Entertainment for the Banquet April 2, 2011

We will all search; Scott suggested The Bell Family - he and Beverly have heard them at MA Games and they are

quite talented. They have also been our Clan Dinner entertainment in past years! Scott will contact them for cost and availability. We try to keep the entertainment at \$500 or less.

5. Critique of Games

Financially the Games as a whole didn't bring in the money that they usually do. Also, the Auction at the Annual Dinner didn't do as well as in the past. We went to a couple fewer games due to cancellations. We did gain 9 new members and 17 Games Special members.

6. Inventories of sales items from tent hosts

Scott has offered to make large banners for all three of our tents - ours are getting old and faded. Herb has found another Tartan book that he would like to have with each of our tents.

At 1:00 we recessed for lunch, then resumed at 2pm.

7. Discussion of the Scholarship Program

After discussing how much more smoothly the scholarship disbursement went this year at Loon Mtn Games, it was moved and passed to divide the scholarship money slightly differently this year: \$300 to Loon and \$100 each to 3 of the smaller Games. This will also depend on our income and without more support, we may have to cut down or even eliminate our Scholarship program.

A suggestion was made that we solicit contributions to the scholarship fund at the games by having a jar (or something) at the clan tents labeled for the fund. We would also have a small flier available to explain it to those interested.

8. Discussion of Scotland's dues reduction and whether or not the Branch will again process memberships to Scotland

After discussing Christy's report of the AGM stating that Scotland has reduced its dues from \$40 to \$25 to members outside Great Britain - a direct result of the many members who did not renew with Scotland after they raised their rates from \$20 to \$40 last year, it was moved that we begin processing Scotland memberships at a cost of \$25 plus the price of the transaction fee. We will also ask Scotland to communicate to us the names of members from our Branch and Branch area who apply directly to Scotland.

Sue will rework the Renewal Form to include Scotland dues and Doug will draft a letter to be sent with renewal forms to explain why we are including Scotland once again.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:20

The Council once again wants to thank Beverly for graciously hosting our meeting, inviting us to use her pleasant, comfortable and conveniently located home and making delicious soups for our potluck lunch! Thank you so much, Beverly!

**Northeast Donnachaidh Doings** is published quarterly by the Clan Donnachaidh Society Northeast Branch. To contribute to the newsletter, please send articles, pictures, and any interesting items to:

Joan Young  
83 Oak Avenue  
Belmont, MA 02478  
[jsyoung@mac.com](mailto:jsyoung@mac.com)

All material for next issue **must** be received by Joan no later than **April 15, 2011**

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## Clan Excavations at Dull Kirk, 2002 and 2003

Clan legends tell us that our first chief, Duncan ReamhaIr, was buried at the small kirk in the tiny village of Dull, near Aberfeldy, in Perthshire, Scotland. Documentary evidence indicates a very early monastic settlement here, founded by St. Adamnán (624 to 704) and thought to be the first church in Highland Scotland.

The present kirk dates from at least the 1600's and probably much earlier. It was deconsecrated some twenty five years ago and bought by the lady living next door, for possible use as a studio. The wooden floor of the nave had dry rot and was removed and I was asked to inspect the surface revealed below. This was covered in rubble which may have come from an earlier building, and conscious of the possibility of it being on the footprint of an earlier church, I recommended an excavation.

With help from my professional archaeologist friend, the Society excavated the nave for ten days in 2002 and again in 2003. We were not particularly looking for evidence of "Stout Duncan" as, according to latest research he probably died about 1370 – 1380, it is unlikely that any evidence remains. Our Chief's sister, Jean Robertson of Struan, remembers being taken many years ago by the then curator of the Clan Museum, the late Alex Macrae, to Dull and he pointed to an area outside the east end of the church where he said Duncan is supposed to be buried. I don't know his sources but a publication of 1797 states that " - - - his grave is still to be seen and much admired for its extraordinary length". A 1974 graveyard survey locates three or four graves in this position dating from 1793 to 1875. A 20<sup>th</sup> century path now cuts through part of this plot.

As to be expected, the excavations revealed a considerable amount of human remains but these were all dis-articulated, presumably disturbed by later burials being inserted. Where

possible complete burials appeared they were not disturbed and were covered over. A forensic anthropologist examined the disturbed remains to assess numbers, age and sex and data that might be population specific or relate to habitual activity

Items found included handmade nails, presumably from wooden coffins, probable shroud pins, and a large flat stone approximately 5ft. x 2ft with a plain cross engraved on it, probably marking an undisturbed grave. This was left in situ. At the west end of the nave as the excavation got deeper, we found the remains of an early clay bonded wall running north-south, evidence that the current building covers a much earlier one, possibly St. Adamnán's original monastery. Another interesting find was a coin identified as a silver groat minted at Dumbarton between 1403 and 1406, and worth at that time four pennies.

During our second excavation I lifted a largish flat stone whilst clearing at the west end of the nave and on turning it over was amazed to find on the other side an elaborate engraved cross with a name across it, "becli". This caused great excitement and was photographed by visiting archaeologists for examination at Glasgow University. The following day we received a phone call to tell us that the initial thoughts were that it dated to the first quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (which sits well with the establishment of the monastery by c. AD 700), the form of the cross indicates Irish influence (Christianity entered Scotland mainly from Ireland), the name is probably a Gaelic personal name and probably marked the grave of a bishop as only a bishop would have such an elaborate gravestone, and finally that it is the only one of its style found on mainland Scotland. A comprehensive article on the cross was later published in the Scottish Archaeological Journal Vol. 25 with analysis by several experts in different fields.

It was a very satisfied group of volunteers that finally backfilled the nave and tidied away our tools. It had been a great experience for us all.

By Donald G. Reid, Museum Trustee, Clan Donnachaidh Society. Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland (F.S.A.Scot.) Associate of the Institute for Archaeologists (A.I.f.A)

*For further information on this subject, please see the 2003 Clan Annual, pages 8-9, "Excavations at Dull Church, June and November 2002" and the 2004 Clan Annual, pages 9-10, "Dull Church: 2003 Excavation Report".*



## **Clan Donnachaidh - The Robertsons**

The Robertsons of Clan Donnachaidh are the oldest family in Scotland, said the Historiographer Royal W.F. Skene in the middle of the 19th century. Since every family is as old as every other one, this is Victorian shorthand for the family that can trace its origins back the furthest. And Clan Donnachaidh - pronounced Donnachy - stems from the rulers of the ancient Pictish kingdom of Fothla, now Atholl, which lies at the centre of Scotland. This family gave the last Celtic kings of Scotland in the line of King Duncan, killed by MacBeth, and, from the last of the Celtic earls came Duncan of Atholl, considered the first chief of the Clan. The Gaelic for Duncan is Donachaidh, in the genitive case Donnachaidh, so the name of the clan literally translates to 'Children of Duncan'.

During the Wars of Independence, King Robert Bruce was defeated at the Battle of Methven outside Perth in 1306 and fled into Atholl where he was given protection by Duncan. They fought together at the battle of Dalry where the king lost his brooch to the Macdougalls of Lorne and Duncan and his clan were beside their monarch at Bannockburn. Duncan named his eldest son and heir Robert after his king.

The fourth chief, Robert Riabhach - grizzled - tracked down and captured Walter of Atholl and Sir Robert Graham who assassinated James I in Perth. For this the new king offered him an earldom. Instead he preferred a legal charter to his lands which then stretched from the gates of Perth to the beautiful landscape round Lochs Tummel, Rannoch and Tay. His successor who spawned most of the chieftains of the clan used the name Robert-son in honour of his father and this became the preferred surname of his clansfolk, although others chose Duncan or, after a red-headed son of the first chief, Reid.

Menzieses were granted land and moved into Atholl. The earldom fell to Stewarts who ruled from Blair Castle and whole tribes of them - bastards and cousins of the king - followed. The daughter of the last Stewart earl married a Murray and this family are still the Dukes of Atholl.

William the 6th chief lost his head and half his lands to the earl but those living on them remained Robertsons and they often ignored commands from Blair Castle and followed their chief. The heart of the Clan lies at Struan a few miles west of Blair Atholl. The chief is known as Robertson of Struan, or Struan Robertson or simply Struan. This was a turbulent country rife with cattle thieves from the wastes of Rannoch Moor and Macgregor refugees from the persecutions of the Campbells of Glenorchy with their seat on the edge of Atholl at Taymouth.

More than any others the Clan Donnachaidh suffered from their support for the Stuart kings. The earls and dukes of Atholl, though not all their family, supported the government. But under Robertson command, the Athollmen banded together to fight for Montrose. In his glittering campaign of 1644 he won every battle in which they took part. In the words of the historian Robert Scott Fittis, 'The Robertsons of Athole were long esteemed the best swordsmen in Scotland, and their prowess, under the royal banner, mainly contributed to the brilliant triumphs of Montrose.'

In 1688, the Stuarts finally lost the throne of Great Britain. The young clan Chief Alexander was at St Andrews University.

He cut short his studies and raised the clan to fight for the deposed king. This Alexander was one of the most remarkable men of his time. As well as a fighter and devoted supporter of King James, he was a bon viveur and highly rated poet, writing in English, French, Gaelic, Latin, Italian and Greek. During one of his periods of exile in France, Louis XIV, the Sun King, described him as 'The First Gentleman of my Court.'

Struan was unique in Scotland for participating in all three of the great Risings - 1688, 1715, and 1745. In the last, he was an old man but joined Bonnie Prince Charlie at Perth and watched his clan join in the route of the Redcoats at Prestonpans outside Edinburgh. After that he was escorted home in the captured carriage of General Cope with a barrel of the general's brandy beside him for refreshment. When they reached the roadless wilds of the clan's heartland, his escort removed the coach wheels and carried it on their shoulders to the old man's home in the shadow of Schiehallion. When he died in 1749, 2,000 men marched 15 miles behind his coffin to the burial ground at Struan Kirk.

His lands were forfeited after the Rising. When his successors regained them in 1782, they were saddled with their old predecessor's debts and, piecemeal, the estates were sold off. But the chief never lost the respect of his people perhaps because no clansman in Atholl was forcibly evicted from their farms during the clearances. The population drained away but these movements were voluntary taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the proximity of clan country to the Lowlands. From there many emigrated to the New World.

The Clan Society began in 1823. In 1969 it built the first purpose-built Clan Centre and Museum in Scotland at Bruar near Pitlochry. Today, Clan Donnachaidh's DNA surname project with the FamilyTreeDNA testing laboratory of Houston, Texas is showing kinship links between members still living in Scotland, and Robertsons, Duncans, Reids and other clan names now scattered across the world. With 17 overseas branches, clan spirit still flourishes.

## **The Clach na Bratach. The Stone of the Standard**

This globe of rock crystal was discovered adhering to the base of the flag pole of the clan standard c1330 during a campaign by Duncan, the first chief, against the Macdougalls of Lorne. Thenceforth it was carried in a little cage at the top of the pole when the clan went into battle. The Clach is the most famous and has the oldest history of any such charms. Its prime function was for healing. Any water in which the stone was dipped had curative properties for both man and beast. It could also predict the future and went cloudy at the approaching death of a chief. The consternation of the Poet Chief can be imagined when he consulted the Stone on the eve of the Rising of 1715 and saw a great crack running through its heart. Certainly if Struan had not joined the rebellion his own fortunes and that of his successors would have been very different.



Article by James Irvine Robertson for Scotland Magazine, Issue 17, November 2004.

## SLATE FOR 2011 OFFICERS

President	Douglas Newton
Vice-President	Robert Torrey
	Richard Duncanson
Secretary	Susan Newton
Treasurer	Mary Ann Dobbins

## STATE REPRESENTATIVES (For re-election)

Maine	Richard Duncanson
Rhode Island	Open
Connecticut	Scott Duncan
Vermont	Robert Torrey



## HMS Duncan launched on the Clyde

On October 11, 2010, over 14,000 people came out in force to watch the final 7,500 ton Type 45 Anti-Air Warfare Destroyer, HMS Duncan slide down the slipway into the Clyde. This may be the last ever 'dynamic launch' on the Clyde. Future vessels are more likely to be built in dry docks which will be filled with water on launch days, rather than the traditional launch method, which dates back more than 200 years.

Named after Admiral Lord Viscount Adam Duncan who defeated the Dutch fleet in the Battle of Camperdown on October 11 1797, HMS Duncan was launched exactly 213 years after the historic battle.

School children, former shipyard workers and their families and former veterans were among the crowd who turned up to see what may be the last ever dynamic ship launch on the river Clyde, marking a pivotal moment in British shipbuilding heritage. They were entertained with a series of drills and displays, including performances from the Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland.

## Scots, Picts & Irishmen

Legends have always said the Gaelic folks of Scotland mostly descended from Irish settlers. Now it has been confirmed by DNA studies. About A.D. 500, Kelts known as Gaels came across the sea from Ireland and conquered Pictish lands in what is now Scotland. The research was done by Dr. Jim Wilson, a specialist in population genetics. Nevertheless, a number of clans proudly claim their ancestors were Picts

## Scottish Country Dancing



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Visit [rscdsboston.org](http://rscdsboston.org) for details on classes, available in NH, MA, ME, NY and VT

## People News

**April Reid** has been deployed to the Kingdom of Bahrain on active duty with the US Coast Guard until early 2012. Please keep her in your thoughts and prayers for a safe tour of duty.

**Philip Marsh** wrote that his home was destroyed by fire on December 8, 2010 in Zephyrhills, Florida. We are very sorry to hear that and wish you well.

We have just been notified of a dangerous category 5 cyclone about to hit Queensland section of Australia where there is a Clan Donnachaidh Branch. They have asked for our prayers for the safety of these people

## Vanished Instrument Lives Again

In the Middle Ages a popular musical instrument was called the lituus - but it fell into disuse and since none has come down to us, no one remembered exactly what it looked or sounded like. But aided by special computer software, the University of Edinburgh and collaborators were able to recreate the lost instrument. Now, for the first time in centuries, listeners were able to again hear Bach's motet O JESU CHRIST as it was meant to be heard (it was written for the lituus.) Endowed with a piercing trumpet-like sound, the lituus is eight and a half feet long, with a wooden body and a mouthpiece made of cowhorn, and a flaring bell at its end.



*From The Barnes Review Nov/Dec issue*



Clan Donnachaidh  
Northeast Branch

*Northeast Donnachaidh Doings*  
Joan Young, Editor

83 Oak Avenue  
Belmont, MA 02478

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**  
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## 2011 schedule of events

### SAVE THE DATE!

Spring Dinner Party and Annual Meeting will be  
on April 2, 2011 at the Wachusett Village Inn,  
Westminster, MA.

Visit our Branch Website:  
[www.stoutduncan.org](http://www.stoutduncan.org)

Official Clan Website:  
[www.donnachaidh.com](http://www.donnachaidh.com)



### Notice from the Editor

If anyone would prefer to receive the  
newsletter by E-mail please let me know  
at [jsyoung@mac.com](mailto:jsyoung@mac.com)