

# CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY

Secretary to The Clan Society

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## *Dear Clans Folk*

This is my first Newsletter to you ALL and I will start off by apologizing for it haven't taken me so long. I am sure not many of you know that I had a handover of only a few days with the previous Clan Secretary, Fiona. After she moved down south I was left in an office with no idea what was what, and where anything was. I had not realized that I had a steep learning curve ahead of me. My job description stated dealing with Clan Memberships from across the world, answering the telephone, emails, dusting the museum with a yellow cloth and doing a couple of ceilidh dances once a year. Little did I know that I was going to have to learn the steps of a completely new dance, The steps of a Clan Secretary, and yes I have been dancing ever since, more often than not 'The Quickstep'. To date not many 'Waltzes', some Military Two Steps, no Gay Gordons and still looking for a Dashing White Sergeant'.

The talk of dancing brings me to my first Clan Gathering, and what a fantastic week was had by ALL. I was overwhelmed by the passion and dedication of All the Clan Members who travelled to the Gathering. I certainly enjoyed each event and met so many truly remarkable and wonderful Clans Folk who all had their own stories to share and reasons to be there. From the opening night, The Welcome Meeting, the bus trips, AGM, Chief's Dinner and the Clan Church Service. Something for everyone, and everyone participated.

Over my first 4 months we had all the changes and relocation of The Little House Gift Shop and Museum to the premises vacated by Blair Antiques. For 4 months the House of Bruar renovated the empty premises and on July 1<sup>st</sup> opened their Fish, Lobster and Chip bar, also selling their own 9 varieties of ice creams and jars of sweets. During the time of the renovation also, at no cost to The Clan, paved, painted all outer buildings, and attended to the grass area surrounding the Clan Buildings. A huge facelift and a huge thanks to Patrick Birkbeck M.D. his management and staff.

A blow was dealt to us just as the new grass had begun to grow beside us, Cath of The Little House made the decision to retire. She did this not lightheartedly, and also with a degree of regret. The Clan were faced with half an empty building, which still had not been properly decorated inside, nor the Museum set-up. Help was at hand again, Patrick of House of Bruar was not going to let us become stuck and offered to help. This help was the complete decoration of the interior of the vacated premise that had housed Blair Antiques. Along with the decoration we made an agreement for them to occupy part of the building and in return they agreed to heat, staff and maintain these premises. The Clan worked very closely with House of Bruar during the projects and as a result have built strong bridges. The area occupied by House of Bruar has become a high-class bookshop. The staff are not only knowledgeable about the books but have also learned about the history of Clan Donnachaidh and the contents of the Museum.

My first 10 months as Clan Secretary has given me a huge amount of high moments but also some difficult ones. The difficulties being I had no list of what jobs or tasks required doing, and then when I did discover what needed done I had no guidelines. Again, I was dancing, but in 'the dark'! Having said that I have had wonderful support from The Chief, Gillespie, Christy Duncan Lange, Donald Reid, Suzi McNutt and Stephanie Robertson who has been a stalwart for me. The Clan Members and prospective Clan Members and visitors that I have encountered in my 10 months have been warm, welcoming and supportive, as well as forgiving. I am now becoming slightly more experienced as 'Girl Friday', Chief Cook and Bottle washer' and learning more 'steps' to dance to.

The 2018 Clan Gathering programme is completed with just a few details to be confirmed. The Events are planned with venues and costings almost completed. The programme is wide and varied with something to suit All Members and families. The 2018 Clan Gathering is a special gathering for two reasons. We will be celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday of The Chief and also celebrating him being The Chief for 35 years. We have put together a wonderful programme which I hope will truly celebrate these tremendous occasions. (Not giving too much away!)

An enormous time-consuming but hugely welcome challenge for me over the past few months has been pursuing the opportunity to purchase Struan Kirk to preserve it in perpetuity for future generations of The Clan. We have just now finally received the Church of Scotland's formal offer to sell to The Clan Society rather than on the open market, after many weeks of to-and-fro discussions. With some major individual donors having emerged, we are almost in sight of raising the funds needed for purchase, legal and other set-up costs and much needed repairs and maintenance costs, with about another £25,000 targeted in the next few weeks. Please help with the final push! The steps needed to obtain and record formal approval by The Membership to put into effect your Council's unanimous decision that we should proceed with the purchase will be put in place shortly, and we are aiming at finalizing matters by the end of March 2018.

Please keep checking the website for updates, Clan Gathering Booking Forms, news and photos. And please do not hesitate to contact me for information, queries you may have or suggestions.

I wish each and every one of you,

**Nollaig Chridheil agus Bliadhna Mharth Ur**

**(Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year)**

**Peace, Joy Health and Happiness in 2018**

**Catriona**

