

From Clan MacLeod Society South Australia Newsletter March 2001.

THE ASSOCIATED CLAN MACLEOD SOCIETIES SEARCH FOR PROJECTS, IDEAS AND REALITIES.

The Fortieth anniversary of ACMS has just been celebrated in Scotland, and it is valuable to consider what the ACMS President Alexander MacLeod iterated last year.

"Clan MacLeod has many positive aspects in its favour. We have two Chiefs, one (Chief John MacLeod of MacLeod) who has managed to put Dunvegan on a much improved fiscal basis to preserve it for the future, the other (Chief Torquil Roderick MacLeod of the Lewes) who represents the reconsolidation of the Lewis Branch after so many centuries. We have a vibrant Management Council of persons dedicated to Clan MacLeod. We have eight National Society Presidents who are working diligently to lead their memberships and, at the same time ensure that their memberships are an integral part of our whole. We have some viable and exciting new projects in our pipeline. ... But we must ask ourselves some hard questions. Where are we going ? What are we doing for the real future, not just at the end of our corporate nose ? What do we truly want to be ? "

There are two landmarks he identifies as we look ahead.

1. Communication:- Internationally, nationally and between ourselves. This will be a major conduit for 'Clanship'.
2. Endowment:- make the Clan MacLeod Heritage Trust a living and growing entity, a vessel that holds potential for the future.

WE SHALL HOLD A LIGHT (the motto of our Associated Clan MacLeod Societies, which combines the three traditions of Harris/Dunvegan, Lewis/Raasay and Isle of Man) It is those words we must fulfil through communication and endowment, for present and future generations."

Clan Societies have created local initiatives such as; -

1. USA Society has the Dunvegan Foundation, a fund supporting projects in that country, eg. College Scholarships, Memorial Lectures. It has over half of the Clan membership worldwide.
2. New Zealand has Dame Flora Memorial Fund (Previous Chief of MacLeod) providing wine tables to Dunvegan village hall, and Dame Flora Scholarship Fund to assist clan members to visit Scotland, with a study element. (eg piping studies).
3. The Canadian Foundation has just been initiated.

The matter of endowment will be reported on again as this has significant regional implications for fundraising, and project funding. It works as an investment trust from which the income will provide funds to various purposes. Until now all projects have relied on direct appeal without assurance of adequate funds, or sometimes good opportunities are missed altogether because cash was not readily accessible.

CLAN PROJECTS

The proposals recently considered were for a Clan Centre, a Virtual Centre (see following article) and a Public Art Project. These have highlighted difficulties in ACMS Management structures, USA Society relationships, and Dunvegan Community relationships. The Public Art project seems attractive but is potentially contentious and will not likely be pursued. The Clan Centre is a divisive issue and it is recommended that it be left alone for now. It is in effect superseded by the Virtual Centre.

Other items under way or in proposal are:-

1. The Inchnadamph Project to conserve the ruins of Ardvreck Castle, Calda House, Inchnadamph Churchyard, and Assynt Parish Church (see Mag. Issue 86, 1998)
2. Young MacLeod activities videos.
3. Dunvegan Community, and Clan Woodland, a joint venture opportunity to create an amenity, owned and managed by local groups.

I have an enthusiasm for this last one. I think that an international planting of exotic tree species, as representing the global migration of Scots (MacLeods), and symbols of retaining their roots in the Western Isles, has merit. I also believe there is potential for woodlotting for a diverse woodcraft industry in the community, as well as aesthetic benefits. – *Alex Ed*

CLAN CENTRE

The Consultant's response was "to realise that a Virtual Centre was far more practical and achievable than a Centre building. We felt we had been asked the wrong question; to come up with ideas, and costs for a building. However, in ACMS we found an organisation divided about a Centre building in Skye, and was not geared up to raise funds or manage a project such as this to completion. ...For a generation ACMS had worked toward that objective but despite efforts, it had failed to materialise. We should have been asked to review that capability, and whether the objective should remain and develop alternative ideas. I suspect a report as such would have reached the same conclusions, but in a way that would have tended to unify and encourage rather than disappoint and divide." Robert Clark, Lanarkshire.

The full report (120+ pages) is available for interested readers from Alex McLeod Sec. SA.

VIRTUAL CLAN CENTRE REPORT

"The ACMS is attracted by the concept of a Virtual Clan Centre and will pursue the feasibility of developing a Virtual Clan Centre subject to further investigation"

The Virtual Clan Centre is one which, if it proceeds, will exist on the internet. Through technological means the Clan's history, culture, and treasures and visions could be represented in a much more affordable, interesting and accessible way for all MacLeods. Folk will only need to get helpful assistance to a computer instead of having to make a world traversing journey to a fixed building, which in itself will be considerably more expensive to set up and operate.

Ian MacLeod of WA responded to the report with some qualification that " We can have all we like in a virtual reality, but there is nothing like bricks and mortar to facilitate a sense of identity and homecoming. People still prefer the direct comfort of human contact and connection made across a room."

That may be so, but as an example, a possible sale of title to the Black Cuillin Hills of Skye, which most of the Clan have never seen, has caused considerable consternation. Just knowing that there are real heritage foundations for us is significant. Experiencing it in person will be beyond most, so I say "help the knowledge", and open as many doors to it as possible. The real thing after all is on the shores of Loch Dunvegan.