

Clan Societies

Members may be aware that, within the last few years, two new clan societies, the Clan Duncan Society and the Clan Donachie Society have been formed. It is hoped that both these Societies will join with our Society, the Clan Donnachaidh Society and, with this in mind, John A. Duncan of Sketraw, FSA Scot, the chairman of the Clan Duncan Society, here outlines the aims of the respective societies.

The clan system, as we currently understand it, was an invention of the Victorians. With the rise of interest in the Highlands and Highlanders during the 19th century people wished to wear tartan and to be associated with clans. This gave rise to the 'septs' associated with individual clans, often based on little more than a single family of the 'sept' name having once lived within the territory of a clan. This could be taken to extreme lengths as, for example, with the Clan Chattan federation which claims over a thousand septs. But there is no reason why this Victorian creation should be set in stone.

With the rise of interest in family history and the facilities and information now available for research, the historical fallacy of many individuals bearing these names being associated with particular clans is becoming increasingly apparent. The Clan Donnachaidh is no exception to this. It is certainly true that the names Reid, Duncan, Donachie etc. have been associated with the Clan and played a part in its history but it is not true to claim that all those who bear these names today have done so. This certainly does not preclude those bearing such names to claim membership of the Clan Donnachaidh or of the Clan Donnachaidh Society and the latter, in its constitution, states that *'membership of the Society shall be open to any person interested in its (the Society's) Objects.'*

The intention of both the Clan Duncan Society and the Clan Donachie Society is to have their own 'Chief of the Name' (Duncan/Donachie). Appropriate provisions are laid down by the Court of the Lord Lyon for the creations of new clans and chiefs (see: www.clan-duncan.co.uk/clan-recognition-derbhfine.html) Paper copies of the said Lyon rulings can be obtained from Lyon Court. There are also two types of Chiefs: Clan Chiefs and Chiefs. The latter, to quote the Lyon Court Website, are *'heads of large branches of a Clan, who have been Officially Recognised as Chiefs by the Lord Lyon King of Arms'*.

Heraldry in Scotland plays a huge roll in the formation of Clans and name recognition of families. Arms being based historically on the 'stem Arms' of a family (when available) in order that they can be instantly recognisable as being associated with that particular name. As far as Duncan is concerned, arms found so far date back to Duncan, 1592 in the Hague Roll, and William Duncan, 1594. There is also mention in some texts that William's father, Finlay Duncan, also bore the same arms in 1545. This has yet to be cross-referenced.

So what does this mean? It means that historically previous Lyons regarded Duncan as an individual family with no attachment to Robertson or the historical Clan Donnachaidh. If there had been an attachment to it, Duncan Arms would reflect those of the Robertson Chiefly line as the 'stem', namely three Wolves' heads coupéd; there is absolutely no evidence that this is, or ever has been, the case. You will note that the grant of



arms to Donachie of Brockloch (the first armiger of his name) are not based on the Robertson Chiefly Line; the wolf's head was only added as a charge to the arms of Donachie of Brockloch at David's request and was not insisted upon, by Lyon, as any indication of affiliation to any other name.

As far as our own Grants of Arms are concerned the territorial designations 'of Sketraw' and 'of Brockloch' are both officially recognised by Lyon making Duncan of Sketraw and Donachie of Brockloch, both Scottish Landowners (Lairds), Armigerous Territorial Houses (non baronial). Please see www.clan-duncan.co.uk/territorial-designations.

html for an expanded explanation taken from *Clans, Septs and Regiments* by Lord Lyon Sir Thomas Innes of Learney and extrapolated for the web by Stuart Morris of Balgonie and Eddergoll, yr.

Reference to the first link on derbhfine will show that a meeting could be held for both the Clan Duncan and Clan Donachie Societies at which it would be possible to nominate the elected candidate for consideration by the Lord Lyon as a suitable head of each respective family. The concept of Duncan and Donachie having their own identities as a Clan is rapidly growing as demonstrated by the increasing membership of each respective Society and support for their Clan Rolls.

At the moment the Clan Duncan Society and the Clan Donachie Society exist as individual societies. Each intends to elect a chief of the name for recognition by Lord Lyon. Should these new individual Chiefs be recognised, both Societies would obviously continue to exist as separate entities.

Regardless of the eventual outcome it is our preferred option that we join Clan Donnachaidh Society and acknowledge Struan as our paramount chief. This would require acknowledgement by the Clan Donnachaidh Society and by Struan of the chiefs of the name of Duncan and Donachie, which may well require a re-structuring of the Clan Donnachaidh Society. This would create a dynamic, forward thinking Clan Confederation. It would also mean that the Duncan Society and the Donachie Society would be actively promoting membership not only of their own Societies but also of Clan Donnachaidh.

Depicted above: the arms of John A. Duncan of Sketraw