



## THE 17TH CHIEF OF GLENGARRY

In 1977 the 7th issue of the Clan Donald Magazine carried a story on the grave, in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery, of Alexander Ranaldson MacDonell, 17th. of Glengarry.

Glengarry died in Dunedin on 2 June 1862 and was interred in the Anglican section of the cemetery on 5 June. The story relates how Glengarry, a young man of 28, had passed away of "rheumatic fever with fever of the brain". Alexander, or to his family "Alastair" was succeeded by his brother Charles as 18th Chief but he in turn died leaving no issue even though he had married. We learned that Charles died and presume that he was also buried, at sea. There had been a brother Aeneas Robert who was older than Charles but he had been drowned in the Medway in 1855 at the age of twenty. He had been a distinguished student, having secured the highest prizes at Chatham. With the death of the 18th Chief came the end of his line and succession passed to Aeneas Ranald, 7th of Scotus, Great grandfather of the present Chief.

In 1862 Dunedin was virtually a "frontier town". Gold had been discovered at Gabriels Gully some 60 miles inland from the

City and there followed a rush of miners of all kinds, seeking their fortunes on the goldfield. Glengarry was not one of these, but was passing through Dunedin on his way north to a property in which he and his brother had an interest, in North Canterbury.

Although Dunedin had been settled in the early 1840's, it was not until 1848 that the first organised settlement took place. This settlement was one of mainly Free Church Scots, with a few others, who had arrived in Otago on 23 March and their influence is strong throughout the Province of Otago to this day. However by 1862 many other people had found their way to Dunedin and the future city was beginning to take shape.

Into this place arrived Glengarry, apparently alone, as his brother Charles, who was travelling with him, had missed their ship in Australia, and here also Alexander was to die.

The burial was advertised in the local papers with a request, common at the time, for "Home Papers" to please copy, but there is no mention in the papers of the standing of the Chief who is described as of "Culladon", Oamaru, Canterbury. This is rather surprising to find in an Otago newspaper even at that time, as Oamaru is in North Otago, not Canterbury, It is a little akin to describing Carlisle as being in Inverness!

We have no reports of the actual funeral, but as Dunedin would then have been in in early winter, it is not hard to imagine the mournful procession making it's way by very muddy streets, to the Southern Cemetery. And there the Chief lay until in 1897 members of Clan Donald in Otago, recognised that he was buried in the Southern Cemetery and after some publicity, arranged to erect a suitable memorial over his grave. There is evidence that a simple marble cross bearing the name "Glengarry" had been placed on the grave by Mr.W.Crawford Brown at the request of Glengarry's sister Ellie, to whom he was related by marriage. Mr. Brown was employed by the National Bank of N.Z. in Auckland and had previously been in Dunedin. Ellie was Helen Rebecca who married Captain John Cunninghame of Balgownie.

At a cost of 120 pounds a sandstone memorial, with the Arms of the Chief and inscriptions in Gaelic and English, was placed on the grave and this memorial stood until the end of 1991.

Over the ensuing years, the Glengarry grave was probably known to various members of our Clan but there is no evidence that, as the original committee who arranged the memorial themselves died off, that anyone took an active interest in maintaining the site. As a consequence the fabric of the stonework gradually deteriorated with the action of Dunedin's climate. The choice of sandstone, although no doubt being an easy material to work, was not wise for our climate.

The writer first became aware of the grave sometime in the 1970's and the possibility of doing something to restore it was discussed but came to nothing at that time. Obviously whatever was done was going to be costly because of the dilapidated condition of the stonework. The Celtic cross bearing the name "Glengarry" had some time in the past, broken through diagonally, the broken half lay on the ground, and the grave itself had subsided, with the result that the stone pillar had a lean to one side of about 15 degrees. There was also a distinct possibility that it would fall down entirely in time unless it was braced or somehow straightened.

Nothing was done however until in 1988, a visiting party of Clan Donald members from the U.S. passed through Dunedin and when talking to the late Colin McDonald, who was to become President of a revived Clan Donald Society, and Rhondda Martin who was to become the Secretary, suggested that restoration of the memorial be considered. Consequently at a meeting to re-form the Clan Society in March 1990, a discussion took place regarding the matter. Because of cost no decision was made to proceed but the subject was not lost sight of. That party of Clan Donald USA members, was led by the late Doug Murdock.

However, events began to accelerate with the impetus of interest from the U.S. and in June of 1991, the magnificent donation of NZ\$8000 from the Clan Donald Foundation. With this money available, together with some additional finance from Clan Donald Societies in Southland and Canterbury, work was put in hand.

On advice from Monumental Mason Mr. Ian Bingham, any thought of attempting renovation of the sandstone memorial was abandoned. The whole fabric was weathered to such an extent that this was impossible and it was decided that a completely new stone of brown Balmoral granite, on a resurfaced grave, was the preferred option, and this was put in hand.

With the new stone, the opportunity was taken to check and where possible, correct the wording on the original as it was suspected that there were inaccuracies. The name on the stone was "ALASTAIR RANALDSON MACDONNELL", but correspondence with the late 22<sup>nd</sup>. Chief confirmed that this should have correctly been "Alexander Ranaldson MacDonell". Further problems were also found with the Gaelic inscription but it was decided to repeat exactly what had been put there in 1897. The same difficulty was encountered with the spelling of the Glengarry motto and this was resolved by correspondence with the present Chief and the assistance of Mr. Jim McCready of Dunedin, who is an expert in heraldry.

Delays with other work in hand meant that Ian Bingham and his workers finally had something of a last minute rush to have the old stone removed, the grave re-surfaced and the new stone engraved and placed ready for the dedication in the early evening of St. Andrew's Day 1991. The removal of the old stone proved the accuracy of the decision, as it disintegrated in the process. We were able to salvage the shattered pieces of the Coat of Arms which we would like to have eventually sent to Skye for placing in the museum at Armadale Castle, and the portion

containing the Gaelic inscription may go into the Otago Settler's Museum in Dunedin.

At 6.30 on the 30th November 1991, members of Clan Donald Societies from Otago, Southland and Canterbury, together with friends from other local Clan Societies, the Gaelic Society, the Mayor of Dunedin Mr. Richard Walls, and interested members of the public, were led to the graveside by Clan Donald Otago's piper Dr. Warwick Johnson. The grave was guarded by two Ratings and an Officer from the R.N.Z. Naval Reserve, marking the fact that the 17th Chief had, at one time, served in the Royal Navy, and the stone was covered with a McDonald tartan plaid and sprigs of heather.

After some introductory remarks from the President of Clan Donald Society (Otago) and the Mayor, a simple but very moving dedication service was conducted by the Very Reverend Robert Mills, Dean of Dunedin's Anglican Cathedral. During the service "Glengarry's Lament", written for Alexander's grandfather the famous 15th Chief, was played by Warwick Johnson. Mr. John Macpherson of the Gaelic Society, read and translated the Gaelic inscription.

One of the great joys of the work leading up to the placing of the new stone, was the discovery, in Otago University's Hocken Library, of material dating from the turn of the century. This dealt with newspaper correspondence and a small booklet published by Dr. Gordon Macdonald who was Chairman of the Committee which raised the original stone. Most valuable were copies of letters to Dr. Macdonald from Glengarry's aunt Miss Louise C.R. Macdonell, which shed considerable light on the young Alexander. Clan Donald is indebted to Mr. Gregor Macaulay of the University staff for drawing their attention to this material, copies of which have now been forwarded to the present Chief and to Skye for inclusion in Clan archives. The existence of any such material was quite unknown to any of us and perhaps we may at some time, have this reprinted.

Additionally two descendants of members of Dr. Macdonald's original committee also appeared and one of these has recently joined the Clan Donald Society, Otago. We also believe that there is no Highland Chief buried anywhere in the world, further from his native land than the 17th Glengarry.

One or two other facets have also come to light. Annette McDonald, the wife of South Island Clan Commissioner Bill McDonald descends on her mother's side from one Anne MacPhail, who was born at Kyles Knoydart about seven miles from Inverie the birthplace of Alexander Ranaldson MacDonell, and we believe that Anne's parents may possibly have been some of Glengarry's people who he was attempting to re-settle in N.Z. but this still has to be ascertained.

The Clan Donald Society in the south of New Zealand is proud of the fact that, on behalf of clansfolk everywhere, they were privileged to replace such a historic gravestone and as a result of the close contacts made with the late Air Commodore Donald MacDonell of Glengarry, CB DFC RAF (Rtd) the 22nd Chief, he consented to become Patron of Clan Donald Otago. Following the death in June 1999 of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Chief, Lois MacDonell of Glengarry, Lady Glengarry, has now become Patron of Clan Donald Society in Otago, thus preserving a link greatly valued by the members of the Society.