Clan Labhran

Clan MacLaren Society of Australia

https://clanmaclarenau.org/

Booklet edit by Bill Law CMSA Sept 2026 ©Clan MacLaren Society of Australia 2026

CLAN MACLAREN

(As told by Donald MacLaren of MacLaren, 25th Chief of Clan Labhran of Balquhidder and Strathearn)

Once upon so long a time ago that no man can now say when that time was, there was a mermaid. She lived in a loch in the very heart of the land called Alba. She saw the sun rise over the peak of Ben Vorlich and she saw it set behind the great hills that lie between Strathearn and Lorn. She fell in love with a mortal man and from their union was born the progenitor of the MacLarens.

Whether or not you believe in mermaids (which naturally I do, being descended from one), the MacLarens are among the oldest recorded of the ancient Gaelic kindreds. The Clan takes its name from the Celtic Abbot, Labhran, who lived in the 1200s; but it existed as a community, with a shared ancestry, for centuries before adopting a shared patronymic. The genealogy of the Chiefs extends back a further seven centuries to King Lorn Mor, of the royal house of Dalriada.

The traditional Clan lands are those of Balquhidder and Strathearn in the central highlands. True to their Celtic origins, the MacLarens resisted the Crown's attempts to impose feudalism and refused to apply for a charter for our lands. From our rallying point in the centre of the glen, Creag an Tuirc (the Boar's Rock), we defended these fiercely. The earliest recorded clan battle took place in the 1400s when we faced a war party of Buchanans

from Leny. None of them returned home. The last confrontation (of several) was with the MacGregors. It was in 1734 when Rob Roy, frustrated in his attempt to seize MacLaren land, issued a challenge. He lost the duel and died some weeks later. Is he buried in Balquhidder? Oral tradition says not. Defeated, disgraced and then given pride of place in a MacLaren kirkyard? That's rather less likely than the Loch Ness monster.

Throughout Scottish history, the MacLarens were prominent in battle in support of the Kings of Scotland and the national cause. In the Wars of Independence, they were with William Wallace at the battle of Stirling Bridge; and under the banner of their kinsman, Malise 7th Earl of Strathearn, with Bruce at Bannockburn. Together with our blood allies, the Stewarts of Appin, we fought consistently for the Royal Stuarts: at Sauchieburn, Flodden and Pinkie; with Montrose in the later Wars of the Covenant; for James VII at Killiecrankie, for his son in 1715 and1719 and for his grandson Charles Edward Stuart in the last Jacobite Rising of 1745-6.

Migration from the glen, which had already started for economic reasons as early as the Middle Ages, accelerated in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, there are strong communities of MacLarens settled throughout the world, each with their own flourishing Clan Societies, not the least of which is the Clan MacLaren Society of Australia. And wherever MacLarens gather, you will hear resounding loudly our ancient war cry: ***CREAG AN TUIRC.***

THE MACLAREN OF MACLAREN

25th Chief of Clan Labhran of Balquhidder and Strathearn (October 2019)

The Clan MacLaren Society of Australia is part of a worldwide network celebrating the history and people associated with the **Clan Labhran** (MacLaren), an ancient Scottish clan that can trace its history back to the 1200s.



Florian Robert MacLaren became the 26th Chief of Clan MacLaren following his father Donald's untimely death in July 2023. Florian's formal investiture took place at The Old Kirk, Balquhidder on the 25th July 2026 attended by representatives of the family and clan society members from Scotland, North America and Australia and Friends of MacLaren, Germany.

The Clan MacLaren Society of Australia is affiliated with the

Clan MacLaren Society based in Scotland
(www.clanmaclarensociety.com)

Clan MacLaren Society of North America
(http://www.clanmaclarenna.org/)

The Friends of Clan MacLaren in Germany
(http://www.clanmaclaren.org/).

Clan History

The Clan MacLaren is one of the most ancient Scottish Clans, with a history dating back a thousand years. Members across the world can trace their origins back to the traditional lands which reach from the Braes of Balquhidder to Loch Earn, in the heart of Scotland.

Clan Chiefs were cadets of the Celtic dynastic house of the Earls of Strathearn. In the early 1200s, Abbot Labhran (Laurence) of Achtow lent the Clan MacLaren its name. The Clan was influential until the

16thC following a campaign of pressure from the Campbells, the Clan MacGregor carried out a raid of eighteen homes which ended in the deaths of Clan families and the Chief.

This left the MacGregors in a position to take possession, and without a Chief or lands, the Clan MacLaren was unable to produce a legal title to their ancestral homelands. The Clan MacLaren was now formally 'chiefless and landless'. From the Battle of Bannockburn onwards, the Clan fought for the Scottish crown and supported the Jacobites until the devastating Battle of Culloden. The Clan's fortunes remained mixed until the 20th when its status was firmly re-established.

In 1957, the Clan's label 'chiefless and landless' was removed when Donald MacLaren of MacLaren and Achleskine successfully matriculated his Arms at the Lyon Court, and purchased land in Balquhidder. Creag an Tuirc or 'The Boar's Rock', the traditional MacLaren rallying point, was part of that land and remains an important landmark today. A few years later, the Society was established to support the Clan's interests and help bring together members from across the world.

Following his death in 1966, Donald MacLaren was succeeded by his son, Donald MacLaren as the 25th Chief of the Clan Labhran. As a member of the Diplomatic Service, Donald served in various important postings and from 2004-2007 was the British Ambassador to the Republic of Georgia. Donald unfortunately died on the 22nd July 2023 after serving as Chief for 57 years. At the time of his death The MacLaren was the Convenor of the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs.

Donald's second son Florian was named as his successor under the ancient principle of Tanism.

Acknowledgement (https://www.clanmaclarensociety.com/history.html)

Compelling Points of the MacLaren Story

MacLaren is an ancient clan, well over 1000 years old.

The MacLaren Clan united both an ancient Pictish line of ancestry (through the mother's line) and an ancient Scottish line of ancestry (through the father's line).

The MacLaren's are a highland clan with an identifiable, beautiful clan homeland that is relatively easy to find and visit.

The MacLaren's are kinsmen of the Earls of Strathearn, who were among the '7 Earls of Scotland', considered to be peers of the King.

Because of this connection with one of the '7 Earls', MacLaren's are entitled to use the royal colours of red and gold in their beautiful tartan, of which there are several great versions to choose from.

The MacLaren's endured hard times, loss of lands, massacres…but kept their identity, and their Chief.

The MacLaren's are the maternal ancestors of the Stewarts of Appin.

The MacLaren's were constant, loyal supporters of the Appin Stewarts, and of the Stewart Kings.

The MacLaren's were staunch Jacobites in all the Risings, and fought with Prince Charlie at Culloden.

The MacLaren's are legendary as fierce warriors.
MacLaren's figure prominently in Scottish literature—including Sir Walter Scott's "Redgauntlet" and Robert Louis Stevenson's "Kidnapped".

Donald MacLaren, grandfather of our current Chief rose up and was officially recognized by the Heraldry Court of the Lord Lyon, King of Arms.

Our Chief's family and clan once again possess the Boar's Rock, the ancient gathering place of the clan. "Creag an Tuirc", the Gaelic name of that ancient gathering place (which sounds mysterious and dramatic), makes the ideal clan rallying cry.

(Acknowledgement to LJKascht, CMSNA October, 2015)

Suggested Reading

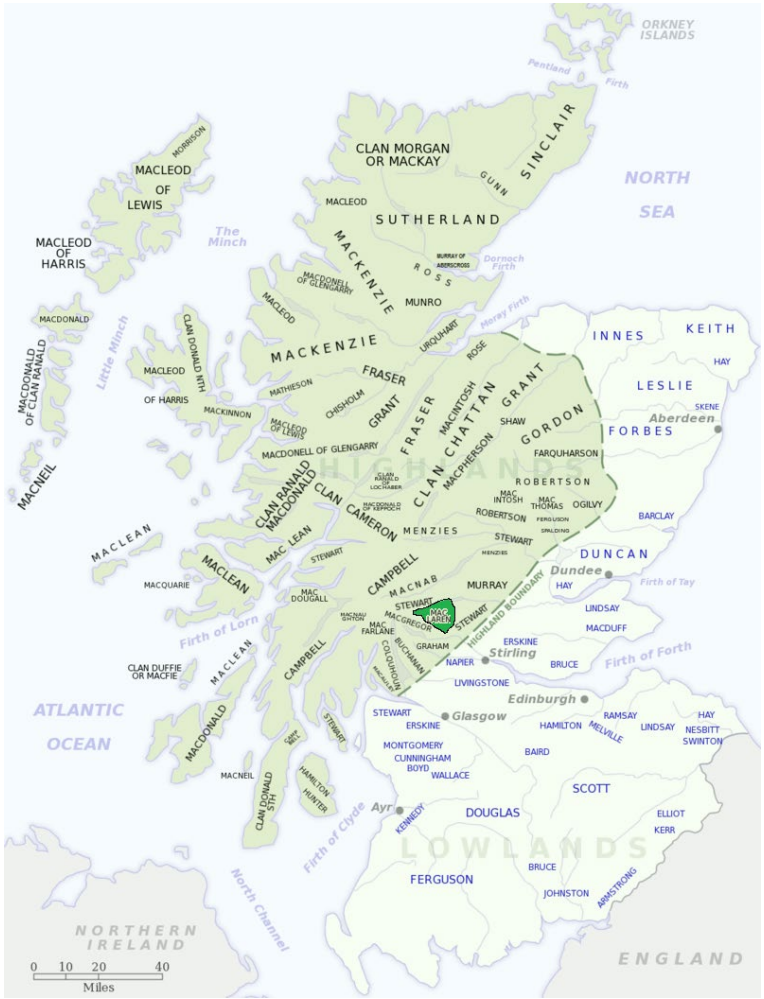
The MacLarens, A History of Clan Labhran. Margaret MacLaren of MacLaren (reprinted 4th ed 2014).

Creag an Tuirc, A social history of the members of the Clan Labhran (MacLarens and MacLaurins. Neil McLaurin. (3rd ed 2014)

The Braes O Balquhidder, An Historical Guide to the District. Elizabeth Beauchamp. (4th Edition 1993)

The Scots in Australia, Malcolm Prentis. (2008)

Location of the traditional Clan Maclaren lands in Stirlingshire, Scotland.



By Gsl - Originally based on the "Clan Map of Scotland" from The Scottish Clans & Their Tartans, W. & A.K. Johnston, 1939. Also used a map from ScottishRadiance., Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=504583 (edited)



https://www.mapsbookstravelguides.com.au/upimages/International_Maps/Collins/scotland_of_old_collins_sample.jpg (edited)

Heraldry of Clan Labhran

The MacLaren's Arms.

Margaret MacLaren of MacLaren, the Chief's mother, wrote a comprehensive explanation of the Heraldry of Clan Labhran (ch. XI) in her book The MacLarens, A History of Clan Labhran. It is worth reading if you are lucky enough to have access to a copy.

Donald MacLaren of MacLaren and Achleskine by authority of the Lord Lyon is entitled to:

Coat of Arms



Standard



Arms



The Arms in rectangular form is also used as a Banner to indicate the Chief's presence at events and gatherings.

These are the sole property of the Chief of the name and are for his use only.

We as Clan members are not entitled to any claim or use of these insignia.

The Chief's Badge

This is often erroneously referred to as the Clan Crest. The crest is the part of the Coat of Arms above the helmet and below the motto "Creag an Tuirc" (The Boar's Rock) which is the clan's war cry.



The Boar's Rock is a geographical feature marked by a stone cairn on the hill behind the village of Balquhidder on the banks of Loch Voil in Stirlingshire, Scotland. Creag an Tuirc overlooks the Chief's home, Kirkton Farm and is the traditional rallying point for Clan Labhran.

We, as members of Clan Labhran are entitled to wear/use this badge as a sign of acknowledgement and allegiance to The MacLaren as Chief of the name.

Plant Badge LAUREL NOBILIS or Bay Tree



The Laurel is the MacLaren plant badge as depicted on the Chief's badge surrounding the lion's head.

The White Cockade and the Laurel!



Scottish White Rose

The white cockade is the symbol of the Jacobites, i.e. the supporters of the Stewart Kings of Scotland and followers of Bonnie Prince Charlie. The MacLaren's were a strong Jacobite Clan and were out in support of the Stewarts in all of the rebellions. The white cockade is worn with pride by descendants of these brave rebels who paid a terrible price for their loyalty to the Stewarts, "their own true kings."

Hanoverian loyalists wore the black cockade and if you buy a Scottish hat, Balmoral or Glengarry, it will come with a black cockade already on it. If you wear a white cockade on your hat, (or bonnet as it is rightly called in Scotland), it indicates you are from a Jacobite Clan, the MacLarens.

Make a cockade from 2 pieces of white ribbon folded and pinned together to form a St Andrew's cross.

Pin your clan badge over it, in the centre.

If you are lucky enough to come upon a sprig of Laurel put that in the cockade as well since the Laurel is the plant badge of the MacLarens.

Traditionally Scottish Clansmen warriors were not in uniform and they were identified by the plant worn in their bonnets. Wear both laurel and white cockade with pride MacLarens!

"I don't find any disposition in my neighbours…to give up their arms….The people of Balquihidder not only keep their arms but wear their white cockades". Campbell of Glenorchy, May, 1746

Acknowledgement to CMSNA

Clan Tartans

MacLaren and MacLaurin Tartans

Ancient and Modern tartans are the most popular, and as a result are the tartans most often seen at Clan events.



MacLaren Ancient



MacLaren Modern

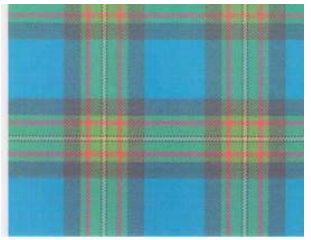


MacLaren Weathered

Weathered and MacLaurin of Broich tartans have a smaller following, while the Dress tartan is favoured for formal ladies wear.



MacLaren Dress



MacLaurin of Broich



Oldest known MacLaren Tartan C1770

Clan Maclaren Names and Septs

The MacLaren, Chief of Clan MacLaren

The current Chief of Clan MacLaren is Florian MacLaren of MacLaren. The Chief's family are based at Kirkton Farm in Balquhidder. The farm property includes Creag an Tuirc, the hill overlooking the village. This was the ancient rallying point of the Clan.

MacLaren and MacLaurin

The various spellings of the name MacLaren derive their patronymic from Abbot Labhran, which was Anglicized, to Lawrence or Laurence. The name Lawrence was first recorded in Roman history, and was spread throughout the Roman Empire, eventually arriving in the British Isles. In approximately 500 AD Loarn or Laurin, a son of Erc, is reported to have acquired the lands of his father in what is currently known as Argyll. This is the first recorded instance of a name in this region of Scotland connected with the name Lawrence.
The use of Mac or Mc at the beginning of a name is used in Gaelic to denote "son of" or simply "of". Less common forms are M', V', Na' and B'. These prefixes were often or used infrequently or completely dropped by Scots. And it is only in relatively recent times that the widespread use of written records has caused an emphasis on standardized name spellings.

Law, Lawson, and Lawrence

From the discussion above, it can be seen how the surnames Law, Lawson, and particularly Lawrence are connected to the surname MacLaren. Law is a simple patronymic of Lawrence or Laurin. The name Lawson is a more complex patronymic, and it carries the same relationship to the surname MacLaren to depict "son of". The suffix "son" may be derived from Scandinavian, Pict, or Viking origin. The term "son" is used throughout Scotland, and is sometimes referred to as a means for Anglicizing a Scottish name. Anglicized clan names were frequently used as Highland Scots migrated from their traditional clan lands. Early Perthshire records show that Law, Lawson and Lawrence were in common use in the region. In the period 1500-1700 the names were found as far north as Inverness, and in the counties of Banff, Aberdeen, Kincardine, Angus, Fife, Sterling, and Kinross. In addition, the names were found in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and as far south as Ayr, Dumfries, and Berwick.

Lowry, Laurie, and Lowe

The prime origins of the names Lowry, Laurie, Lawry, or any of the other spellings appears to stem from the basic trend that most of the Indo-European languages share: ellipsis and foreshortening. Lowry is simply a truncation of the name (Mac)Laren by dropping the final "n". This tendency toward ellipsis, or the dropping of the final sound of a word, is constant in the evolution of any language. The Lowry's are heavily identified with the Scotch-Irish in North America, and there is ample ground for speculation that several political factors at work in the 1600's hastened the foreshortening

of the name from MacLaren. By then, the fortunes of Clan MacLaren had been in decline for many years in the Balquhidder homeland. When Ulster was opened to Scottish and English Protestants for plantationing in 1609, settlers were not permitted from Scotland's Western regions or Isles. A desire to obscure real or imagined ties with ineligible applicants may well have led to the intentional dropping of the "Mac" prefix and the shortening of the name.
In any event, by 1685 the Lowry's were present in what is now Northern Ireland in large numbers.

SEPTS of Clan MacLaren

A sept is a branch or division. In Scotland the term was originally used to identify a group affiliated with a particular clan and acknowledging the authority of the chief. The major septs of Clan MacLaren are Patterson, McRory, and Wright.

Patterson

The largest sept of Clan MacLaren is Patterson, which includes McFater, McFeat, and McPatrick. The earliest reference to a Patterson is to Duncan Patterson, who was implicated with other MacLarens in the murder of the Vicar of Balquhidder in 1532. This individual may be Duncan, son of Patrick M'Ewyn V'Laurane who was mentioned in the Bond of manrent in 1559, but both Duncan and Patrick were favourite MacLaren names, so it is not possible to make a positive identification.
Patterson's are also identified to a lesser degree with other clans, primarily Lamont, Campbell, and McAulay, but the Pattersons from Balquhidder and Strathearn belong to the MacLarens. Because the Pattersons arose all over Scotland, it is practically impossible to trace the origins of each individual. Owing to this, the Clan MacLaren welcomes all Pattersons.

MacRory

The second largest sept of Clan MacLaren is MacRory. Roderick, or Ruari, was an unusual name among the MacLarens, and was perhaps derived from a marriage with the famous Clan Ruari, the descendants of Ruari, second son of Sommerled, the 12th Century progenitor of Clan Donald.
The MacRuari emblem was the "Black Galley of the Isles" which was added by the MacLaren chiefs to the chevrons of Strathearn on their own shield. MacRory was obviously an important name in Clan MacLaren, and it seems likely that when Clan Ruari disintegrated as a result of devastating clan wars, at least some of the survivors transferred their allegiance to the Clan MacLaren. Several MacRorys are listed in the Bond of 1573. The 1747 the Balquhidder Baptism Registry lists the baptism of the child of a "MacLaren, alias MacRorie"- a perfect example of a double surname.

Wright and McIntyre

The Rental for Crown Lands for 1509 lists several McIntyres who were tenants at the western end of the Glen at Balquhidder. McIntyre is a trade name derived from the Gaelic Mac an t Soir, or carpenter. Wright is the Anglicized version of the name. There is of course a Clan McIntyre, and it is possible that several members of

this clan settled at Balquhidder, but it is more likely that these McIntyres were MacLarens distinguished by their profession or trade. McIntyres or Wrights whose ancestry is traced to Balquhidder are regarded as MacLarens.

(Acknowledgement CMSNA)

Maclaren Immigration History to Australia

In the extensive emigration from the old world in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the majority of emigrants chose North America in preference to Australia and New Zealand. The westward voyage under sail across the Atlantic could take one month, but at least three times longer if travelling to Australia or New Zealand.

McLarens were well represented in the early arrivals of free settlers with their families in all Australian states. In 1834, John Barclay McLaren arrived in Tasmania; in 1837, Daniel McLaren arrived in Sydney and the following year James McLaurin arrived in Sydney and then settled in the Riverina. In Victoria, one of the first was John McLaren who arrived at Portland in 1854 and settled in the Western district, and in the same year Peter McLaren arrived in Melbourne and initially settled there.

In South Australia, the name McLaren stands out in early history. Unlike other states, South Australia was not established as a government penal colony, but by private enterprise in the form of The South Australian Company. In 1837, one year after settlement started, David McLaren took over the position of manager and started to build it into a successful company. As the company prospered, so did the young colony. McLaren Vale, well known for its quality wines, was named after John McLaren from the South Australian Survey Office, who surveyed the area.

(Bruce D McLaren CMSA)

Acknowledgement of Country.
McLaren Vale lies in the Taringga area of the Kaurna people, the traditional owners and custodians of the Adelaide region.
The Clan MacLaren Society of Australia acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to the people, their cultures and Elders past and present.

MACLAREN REGISTER

Ian F McLaren's "MacLaren Register", is a card index of more than 3,000 cards, covering genealogical and biographical details of Australian MacLarens. It was compiled by Ian over 35 years and is held in the Baillie Library at the University of Melbourne. (It forms part of the McLaren Collection, in the Special Collections Section on the third floor.) Ian's main sources of information were the births, marriage and deaths in newspapers.

CLAN MARKERS IN AUSTRALIA

MacLaurin Hall, University of Sydney, Camperdown NSW

https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=4726044
Named for Sir Norman MacLaurin who served as Chancellor from 1896 - 1914.

Australian Scottish Cairn, Rawson Park, Mosman, Sydney.

http://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/landscape/settlement/display/22323-scotland-australian-cairn

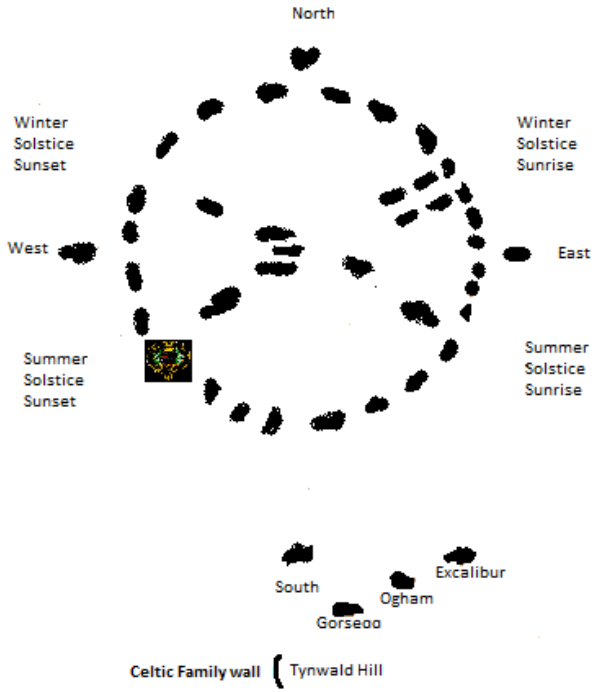
Members of the Clan MacLaren Society's in both Scotland and Australia were involved in the establishment of this monument to Scottish settlers.

Australian Standing Stones, Glen Innes NSW

https://www.gleninnestourism.com/australian-standing-stones/

Clan MacLaren stone is number 26 situated to the left of the axis at the southern end of the circle.

The Clan Wall on Tynwald Hill contains a stone from the dry stone wall near the Kirkton Burn at Creag an Tuirc, Balquhidder.



Genealogy and family histories

Those interested in tracing their family histories may be interested in the following resources:

Scotland - for further information please visit the Scottish Clan website

http://www.clanmaclarensociety.com/history.html

https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/

Worldwide

Please visit the North American website http://www.clanmaclarenna.org/ for further information and information regarding their DNA project.

Australia

https://www.naa.gov.au/

MacLaren History on the web

http://www.clanmaclarensociety.com/

http://www.clanmaclarenna.org/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clan_MacLaren

Membership of the Clan MacLaren Society of Australia

We welcome new members, particularly those with a connection to the name.

All enquiries should be directed to the Chairperson Linda McLaren, Ph. 02 9544 5653 or via the contact page on the website.

Application forms can be accessed at the back of this booklet, at the Clan Display or via the website (https://clanmaclarenau.org/)

Membership eligibility guidelines:

A) Persons bearing or connected with the name **MacLaren** or **MacLaurin** in any of its spellings by birth, marriage or descent
B) Persons bearing or connected with the name of any **sept** of the Clan in any of its spellings by birth, marriage or descent
C) Others who may be admitted at the discretion of the Society

Variations and Septs of Clan MacLaren / MacLaurin include:

FAED	LAIR	LARNACH	LAURENCE
LAURENSEN	LAURIE	LAW	LAWRENCE
LAWSON	LOW	LOWRIE	LOWSON
MACFADE	MACCLARENCE		MACCRORIE
MACFAIT	MACFATER	MACFEAD	MACFEAT
MACGRORY	MACLERAN	MACPATRICK	MACPETRIE
MACPHAIT	MACRORIE	MACPHATER	PAT(T)ERSON
PATRICK	PETERKIN	PETERS	RORISON
RORIE			

Benefits of Membership

Members page on the website.

Newsletter – *CLAN LABHRAN*

Members receive a newsletter with information on Clan activities and interesting articles on Clan and Scottish history.

Clan Activities

Members of the Clan MacLaren Society of Australia meet at the Annual General Meeting held in June of each year at various locations.

Members represent the Clan at various Scottish events across the country. There are a number of Highland Gatherings across the country and some members are active at these events.

Contacts

Clan MacLaren Society of Australia

Information & general enquiries
Mobile: 0422 223 161 or email clanmaclarenau@gmail.com

The Chairperson, CMSA,
email: linda_mclaren_@hotmail.com
Phone: (02) 9544 5653 (message only)

Clan MacLaren Society of Australia

Application for membership

I/We wish to apply for Annual/Life membership of the Clan MacLaren Society of Australia.

Please note this does not confer membership of the Clan MacLaren Society (Scotland) or the Clan MacLaren Society (North America). Please refer to their respective websites for their membership applications.

Please use block letters

Name/s……

Address……

Phone……

Email……

Signature/s……

Date……

Subscription Rates The annual membership year commences on 1st January.
Regardless of the type of membership taken out there is a (once only) joining fee of $10.00.
Annual Membership: $20.00
Concession: $15.00 (Concession rates apply to persons over the age of 60 and students.)
Life Membership. Single: $200.00
Details of Remittance Payment must be in Australian Dollars.

Joining Fee	$10.00
Annual or Life Membership	$ ……
Total Enclosed	$ ……

Direct Deposit (preferred) can be made to
St George Bank BSB: 112 879 Account Number: 040395684,
Account Name: Clan MacLaren Society of Australia
Ref: (your surname) fees
Please make cheques or money orders payable to The Clan MacLaren Society of Australia and forward with the completed form to the following address.
The Secretary, CMSA, 68 Hume Road Cronulla. NSW 2230
Email: linda_mclaren_@hotmail.com Phone: (02) 9544 5653