



# ARMADALE

CASTLE, GARDENS & MUSEUM OF THE ISLES

THE SPIRITUAL HOME OF CLAN DONALD

## **Clan Donald Lands Trust – Gaelic Performing Arts Competitions**

### **Overview**

The ancient MacDonald Lords of the Isles saw it as their responsibility to support, encourage, and develop the Gaelic culture in all its forms. For more than thirty years, the Clan Donald Lands Trust (CDLT) has been pleased to carry on this important responsibility. In 2017, we supported piping competitions in Scotland, New Zealand, Australia and North America. In North America we introduced a senior clarsach competition and a prize for male Highland Dance to encourage boys to take up, and men to compete in Highland Dance.

The Clan Donald Lands Trust is fully committed to continuing its support of the Gaelic performing arts, and looks forward to additional opportunities to recognise and support Gaelic artists.

The Trust currently (2021) supports 19 prestigious traditional arts competitions worldwide:

### **Scotland**

- Donald MacDonald Cuach for Piobaireachd, Isle of Skye
- Kate MacDonald Memorial Prize for Junior Clàrsach, Isle of Skye
- Princess Margaret of the Isles Prize for Senior Clàrsach, Isle of Skye
- The Macdonald of Sleat Prize for Poetry in the Gaelic Language, Isle of Skye
- The Colonel Jock MacDonald Junior Piping Prize, Isle of Skye
- Sponsorship of The Northern Meeting Gold Clasp for Piobaireachd, Inverness

### **New Zealand**

- Harold McIsaac Memorial Prize for the best Grade 3 Pipe Band in New Zealand
- Sir Thomas Lachlan MacDonald Memorial Prize for Best Male Dancer
- Amie MacRuari Memorial Prize for Best Female Dancer

### **Australia**

- AWR MacDonald Memorial Prize for the best Grade 4 Pipe Band in Australia

- John MacDonald MBE of Inverness Memorial Prize for Piobaireachd (R.U. Brown Gold Clasp Contest)

## Canada

- The Sister Margaret A MacDonell, CND Prize in Gaelic Poetry
- The Sir John A Macdonald Memorial Prize for Piobaireachd

## United States

- Princess Margaret of the Isles Prize for Senior Clàrsach, North America
- The Dan Rory MacDonald Memorial Prize for Best Senior Fiddle
- Ellice and Rosa McDonald Memorial Prize for Pipe Band, North America
- The Colonel John McDonnell of Lochgarry Memorial Prize for Best Male Dancer
- The Flora MacDonald of Kingsburgh Memorial Prize for Best Female National Dancer
- Bishop Faber MacDonald Memorial Prize for best Junior Fiddle

## Background

Each competition has been named after a late Clan Donald person:

**The Donald MacDonald Cuach** has been sponsored by CDLT for over 25 years. Donald MacDonald (1767-1840) is a key figure in the history of piping. He was a Skye man, piper, soldier, bagpipe-maker, music publisher and ‘Pipe Maker to the Highland Society of London’. A part of his unique collection of piobaireachd was first published in about 1820 and then republished in 2006.

**The Kate MacDonald Memorial Prize** is named after Miss Kate MacDonald, a well-known 19th century clarsach player. Kate MacDonald was a member of the St Columbia Choir in Glasgow and won the inaugural prize at the 1892 National Mod for Best Gaelic song with self-accompaniment on the clarsach.

**The Princess Margaret of the Isles Memorial Prize for Senior Clàrsach** is named after Princess Margaret of Scotland, the daughter of King Robert II and the wife of John, Lord of the Isles. Princess Margaret was a great patron of the arts, and the through this prize for senior clarsach playing, CDLT seeks to perpetuate and honour that reputation.

**The Macdonald of Sleat Memorial Prize for Gaelic Poetry** was created by Sir Ian Macdonald of Sleat, the 25<sup>th</sup> Chief of Sleat, to honour his late daughter, Deborah, and is awarded in cooperation with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. Sir Ian has graciously agreed to allow CDLT to partner with him in the support of this annual prize for best Gaelic poem.

**The Colonel Jock MacDonald Memorial Prize for Junior Piping** is named after Colonel John Macdonald of Portree, Skye. He was a Scottish rugby cap and served in the army in both World Wars. In WWII he served in the Burma campaign with the Indian Army, commanding a construction unit on the Burma Road, and was in Rangoon for the Japanese surrender. After the war, he stayed in India as a tea planter in Assam until 1948 when he returned to Skye. He became a well-known figure for his involvement with and promotion of piping, shinty, Highland games, and the Gaelic language. CDLT and the Colonel Jock MacDonald Memorial Trust are at present looking for ways to cooperate in the organising and financing of an annual junior piping competition for young people of either sex under the age of eighteen years who are resident in the District of Skye and Lochalsh.

**The Northern Meeting Gold Clasp for Piobaireachd, Inverness, Scotland.** The Clan Donald Lands Trust has become the main sponsor of the prestigious Clasp trophy at the Northern Meeting Piping Competition. The competition began in Inverness in 1841. The Clan Donald Lands Trust is a fitting sponsor as it has clearly demonstrated for decades its support for the full range of the Gaelic Performing Arts, and in particular piobaireachd, and CDLT's sponsorship of the world's premier solo piping competition is certainly in line with that tradition. The Clasp is the most important of the competitions held at the Northern Meeting. It is only open to previous winners of the Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting or the Argyllshire Gathering. The Clan Donald Lands Trust has agreed to sponsor it to the sum of £5,000 annually and with a further £500 added to the first prize which now totals £1000.

**The Harold McIsaac Memorial Prize for best Grade 3 pipe band in New Zealand.** Harold was a CDLT Trustee who contributed both time and money to the furtherance of the Trust's goals.

**Sir Thomas Lachlan MacDonald Memorial Prize for Best Male Dancer.** Thomas Lachlan MacDonald was born in Invercargill, Southland, New Zealand on 14 December 1898. In 1918, he volunteered for military service and went to the Middle East with the final draft of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. At the general election in 1938 he stood for Parliament as the New Zealand National Party candidate in the Maitua electorate, winning comfortably against a long-serving MP. Enlisting again as a private in 1940, Sir Thomas would have the rare distinction among MPs of serving in the Middle East in both the First and Second NZEF. During his second stint of active service, he rose to the rank of Captain before being invalided home in 1943 because of persistent illness. In 1961, he was appointed High Commissioner to London and served until 1968. Sir Thomas died on 11 April 1980 at age 81.

**Amie MacRuari Memorial Prize for Best Female Dancer.** Amie MacRuari was the heiress to the powerful Gaelic-Norse MacRuari clan. She brought her lands of Garmoran and the Uists to the Lordship of the Isles through her marriage to John of Islay. Undaunted by her divorce from

John of Islay, Amie went on to build two fine castles: Castle Tioram in Moidart and Borve Castle on Benbecula. Their son Ranald became the founder of Clan Ranald.

**The AWR MacDonald Memorial Prize for the Best Grade 4 Pipe Band in Australia** is named after AWR MacDonald, who left the Trust a significant bequest. We know very little about him other than he was an Australian artist who had once visited Armadale. We have erected a plaque for him in the Old Laundry, and we hope the naming of the Prize after him will show appropriate respect and thanks.

**John MacDonald MBE of Inverness Memorial Prize for Piobaireachd.** John MacDonald was born on 26 July 1865 at Glentruim, near Kingussie in Scotland. After leaving school he was employed as a gamekeeper. In 1899, he joined the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the Cameron Highlanders as a Pipe Major in a part-time role, and moved to Inverness. He gave lessons around Scotland arranged by the Piobaireachd Society, and in from 1910 became involved in formal Army teaching with the Army School of Bagpipe Music and Highland Drumming. For much of his life, he worked as a travelling whisky salesman, a job he held at various intervals until 1947. Macdonald received an MBE in the 1932 New Year Honours. He died on 6 June 1953 in Inverness.

**The Sister Margaret A MacDonell, CND Prize in Gaelic Poetry.** Sister MacDonell is a Gaelic speaker originally from Judique, Cape Breton with a PhD in Celtic Languages and Literatures from Harvard University. She is professor emerita, and formerly head, of Celtic Studies at St Francis Xavier University.

**The Sir John A Macdonald Memorial Prize for Piobaireachd.** Sir John A. Macdonald was born in Scotland, then emigrated to Canada as a young boy. After practising law in Kingston, Ontario, Sir John went into politics and during the 1860s championed the Confederation of the Canadian Provinces. He was instrumental in securing passage of the British North America Act, and is considered the primary organizer of the Dominion of Canada, serving as its first Prime Minister. As Prime Minister, he oversaw the expansion of the Dominion from sea to sea. His Government dominated politics for a half century and set policy goals for future generations of political leaders. An 1860 speech summed up his lifelong political creed and political goals: 'One people, great in territory, great in resources, great in enterprise, great in credit, great in capital.' Sir John was a son of Clan Donald and a member of the Clanranald Branch of the Clan.

**The Dan R MacDonald Memorial Prize for Best Senior Fiddle (North America)** is named after Dan Rory MacDonald of Inverness County on Cape Breton Island. He became one of Cape Breton's most prolific composers of fiddle tunes. Usually known as 'Dan R.', MacDonald took an early interest in music, encouraged by his fiddle-playing father. He made his first radio appearance in 1935, and the next year he composed his first tune - a reel called The Red Shoes. Although Dan R. had a reputation as an outstanding fiddler, people remember him best for his composing. He estimated in the early 1970s that he had written over two thousand tunes. Many of his compositions have become part of the 'standard' Cape Breton repertoire. Two

published volumes of Dan R.'s compositions exist: The Heather Hill Collection and The Trip to Windsor Collection.

**The Ellice and Rosa McDonald Memorial Prize for Pipe Band** is a North American prize, first presented annually since 2016. Ellice and Rosa McDonald were major benefactors of Clan Donald Lands Trust. Ellice and his wife Rosa established the Glencoe Foundation as a private charitable foundation oriented toward Scotland, making contributions toward Scottish organisations such as the National Trust for Scotland, the Royal Caledonian Schools in Bushey, and, more particularly, the Clan Donald Lands Trust on Skye. To date, the Glencoe Foundation, funded almost entirely with donations from Ellice and Rosa McDonald, has made over \$20 million in grants to the Clan Donald Lands Trust. It is clear that without the force of personality and the financial support of Ellice and Rosa McDonald, the Clan Donald Lands Trust would not be what it is today.

**The Colonel John MacDonell of Lochgarry Prize for Best Male Highland Dancer (North America)** is named after a famous Clan Donald warrior who commanded the 76th Regiment of Foot (MacDonald's Highlanders) of the British army. It was a Scottish Light Infantry regiment raised in 1777 by Clan Donald from clansmen in the west of Scotland and western isles of Scotland. Modern Highland Dancing has its roots in the ritualistic and combative dances of regiments like the 76th that imitated the epic deeds and martial skills of Highland warriors. The Sword Dance, the Dirk Dance and the Highland Fling were at one time only danced by men. However, since the late 19th century, the number of females participating in the sport has increased until today in excess of 95% of all dancers are female. The purpose of the MacDonell of Lochgarry Prize is to encourage more boys to take up Highland dancing and more men to participate in Highland Dance competitions.

**The Flora MacDonald of Kingsburgh Memorial Prize for Best Female National Dancer.** Flora MacDonald of Kingsburgh lived from 1722 to 5 March 1790. She is chiefly remembered as a heroine of the Jacobite cause for her part in helping Charles Edward Stuart - Bonnie Prince Charlie - escape 'over the sea to Skye' from Benbecula in the Western Isles during the Prince's flight in the aftermath of the Battle of Culloden. In 1750, Flora married Allen MacDonald of Kingsburgh. In 1773, like many other Scots, they emigrated, moving to the North Carolina Colony. During the American War of Independence, Allen served with the British forces (in common with many other expatriate Scots). He was captured by revolutionaries at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge on 27 February 1776. Flora was exiled from the United States to Nova Scotia. In 1779, Flora returned to Scotland and settled in South Uist among her Clan. She was joined by Allan after his release in 1783.

**The Bishop Faber MacDonald Memorial Prize for Best Junior Fiddle (North America)** is named after the late Bishop MacDonald who was ordained a priest in 1963 and served several Catholic parishes around Prince Edward Island, Canada. An accomplished fiddle player, he worried about

the death of traditional music and worked hard to revive it, helping found the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival, an important competition in Maritime Canada.

Updated: May 2021