



# Tha mise Douglas

Clan Douglas Society of Australia

December 2017

Edition 1

Do you have a story to share?

Do you have a family history story you would like to share?

Do you have a special interest story you would like to see published?

We would love to hear from you! So put your writing skills to work and share *your story*.

## In this issue:

Christmas message 1

Upcoming events 1

Photo gallery 2

Feature story: 'The origins of Douglas' 2

What's to come in 2018 5

Douglas ebook sale 5

## Nollaig Chridheil!

Merry Christmas!

And what a year it has been!

Earlier this month we had our first ever gathering at the Burns Club in Canberra where I was very happy to meet fifteen members of our Society!

Thank you very much to everyone who braved the wet weather and travelled to our gathering. We already look forward to meeting you again at our next gathering.



Now that we're entering the festive season we reflect back at the year that was, enjoy special time with our loved

ones and look forward to the year ahead.

Next year we plan on flying the flag again at events around the country and another special gathering just for us.

Watch out for some special projects next year too!

On behalf of the Clan Douglas Society of Australia we wish you a

Nollaig Chridheil (Merry Christmas) and bliadhna Mhath Ùr (Happy New Year).

## Upcoming Events

### Celtic Christmas

4—15 December,  
Wongawallan, QLD

Christmas songs played in a Celtic form at the 'Fox and Hounds'.

### A Joyful Celtic Christmas

15 December at Parramatta

A must-see performance this holiday season at the Riverside Theatres.

### Scottish Hogmanay Ceilidh

31 December at Inglewood, WA

7.30pm at Bob Daniels Community Centre.

## Clan Douglas Society of Australia

Tel: Andrew Douglas  
Mobile: 0458167652  
E-mail: [clandouglasaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:clandouglasaustralia@gmail.com)  
[facebook/clandouglasaustralia](https://facebook.com/clandouglasaustralia)

We're on the web!  
[clandouglasaustralia.wordpress.com/](http://clandouglasaustralia.wordpress.com/)



Remembering a fallen hero. Wing Commandeer John Douglas,



Society members at our first Clan Douglas Australia gathering on 2 December.



Anne Bruest at the Bundanoon Highland Gathering 2017.

## The Origins of Douglas.

The earliest evidence of human habitation in Scotland is believed to be about 14 000 years ago during what is known as the Mesolithic Period. It was a time when what we know today as the British Isles were a part of the European mainland, this made it easier for prehistoric man to roam across lands in search of new hunting grounds.

Over the millennia these roving bands of people established tribal lands, developed cultures and languages. They built structures and learned to farm the land.

Gradually tribal identity grew into what we know today at the Picts, the Scotti, Celts and Gaels. Kingdoms were created along with their feudal system of nobility and class structure. In Scotland the tribe became a clan and the people who lived in clan lands owed fealty to the Clan Chief. The Chief in turn paid fealty to the

Monarch.

Scotland became the scene of many battles, either between clans or invading hordes. Through this came conquest, migration and assimilation. Ancient cultures disappeared, new cultures and languages flourished from the old. But the mainstay language is Gaelic. An ancient language whose origins are reasonably believed in the Highlands and Ireland.

To everyone who is familiar with our clan history, it is impossible to pinpoint exactly when did the family name 'Douglas' originate. Although the 'where' is comfortably beyond dispute, which will be explained later in this article.

It's written in the Douglas Archives; 'The origins of the Douglas family are lost in the mists of time.' That said the only reference material that





# The origins of Douglas

can be comfortably relied upon in accuracy is the book *The History of the House and Race of Douglas and Angus*. Published in 1748, this fourth edition book explains in detail the origins and notable figures, yet again most of the claims stated are questionable in the absence of hard evidence.

According to Douglas Archives, the earliest known recording of the Douglas name was of a mythical battle in 767 where a man known as 'Sholto du glasse', whom was instrumental in the defeat of an enemy to a legendary Scottish King, Solvathius.

David MacRitchie (1851 – 1925), a Scottish folklorist and antiquarian published a series of theories in his 1884 book titled *Ancient And Modern Britons*. In it he claims many Briton families could trace their ancestry to early Moors (North African in origin) who roved and eventually settled in the British Isles.

Of these Moors he alleged is Sholto Douglas. He writes:

The king being anxious to see the man who had done him such signal service, he was pointed out to him by his colour, or complexion in Gaelic language -sholto-du-glash-" behold the black or swarthy coloured man" from which he obtained the name Sholto the Douglas.

Sadly though, this tale is a product of myth and legend. No evidence supports this story and as such, the legend of the progenitor of the Douglas family name can only be referred to as 'pseudo-history'. Indeed much of what has been claimed by MacRitchie can be discredited.

I draw the conclusion that it is likely that this 'Sholto Douglas', if he existed, was not a Moor but rather the description provided by David MacRitchie was a product of mistranslated text and verbal accounts handed down over the centuries. I demonstrate this mistranslated account from two separate sources, here with David MacRitchie's version and through Douglas Archives where the description reads "Sholto du glash" – behold that swarthy man." The latter appears to be the most commonly used quote through a number of sources thereafter.

I'm basing my conclusion on two reasons; firstly the actual meaning of the word 'Douglas' and

secondly how the use of surnames actually came to be.

Firstly, let's examine the word 'Douglas'.

Douglas in modern translation is actually two ancient words that have merged together to create a name. 'Douglas' originates in Scottish Gaelic; 'dubh' means 'Black' or 'Dark' and 'ghlas' meaning 'stream' or 'river'.

There is only one body of water or a river or stream in Scotland that bares the old name 'dubh ghlas' and that is 'Douglas Water' – Scottish Gaelic today names it 'Dùghlas'.

Dùghlas (Douglas Water) is a river, a tributary of the River Clyde, that flows entirely through South Lanarkshire.

Located on the banks of Dùghlas are the ancient villages of 'Douglas' and nearby 'Douglas Water'; both of these villages and their associated river within a valley known as 'Douglasdale', is widely accepted from every source on this subject, that the area around Douglas Water is the area that the family name and Clan Douglas was born.

Secondly, to take an educated guess at the origins of our name one has to examine the early history of Scottish names. A practice not too dissimilar to elsewhere, however complex nonetheless.

The use of 'fixed' or 'surnames' is relatively new in human history. Surnames only started to appear in Scottish history from the 10th century and still wasn't used with any consistency until the 16th century.

Prior to this and in some cases right up until the early 19th century in some parts of Scotland people were simply given a single name (or a given name). The use of a 'byname' a 'fixed' name added to a 'given' name at birth was dependent on territory or location, occupation or relational (including the fathers name to ones own given name – ie: Caitlin of Douglas).

Originally fixed names were used along with the words like 'of the' or simply 'of'. So a person could identify themselves as, in my instance, 'Andrew of Douglas'; or more traditionally 'Anndra de Dùghlas'. ('de' in Scottish Gaelic means 'of' in English – a word within a name used again in Douglas history repeatedly).

Given the meaning of the name 'dubh ghlas' is derived from a physical location it is reasonable to assume that at some point between the 7th and 11th centuries when fixed names started to be used, a family took the name of the river that flowed through their land.

So if Sholto Douglas did indeed exist in the 7th century then it's fair to assume that the Douglas family origins can be traced back to this location some 1300 years ago. In any event it is impossible to conclude that this man was either a Moor or indeed a candidate for the title of progenitor to the Douglas family name. Nowhere in any of the translations of this myth is the word 'Dubh' used for a start and the only word that has a resemblance of consistency is 'glasse' or 'glash' which could be loosely translated as 'river'. But all that said in no description provided from the sources here resemble the Scottish Gaelic word 'Douglas'.

The myth goes on to explain that as a reward for Sholto's service to the King he was rewarded lands around present-day Dùghlas. We can also reasonably know that the family that did take on the Douglas name could only do so if they were upper-levels of society (meaning, noblemen and titled families). This is because these were the people who owned the land, or territory, and were often known or recognised accordingly.



*'Douglas Water' today.*

# *The origins of Douglas*

Given the information shared here about the meaning and origin of Scottish names one can assume that if the story is true then Sholto adopted 'Dùghlas' to his name – because he owned the location. The name is territorial in origin.

As the clan system evolved from the tribal, many people who lived within the clan lands who were not related to the chief took the chief's surname as their own to either show solidarity, loyalty or to obtain basic protection or for much needed sustenance.

Most of the followers of the clan were tenants, who supplied labour to the clan leaders. Contrary to popular belief, the ordinary clansmen rarely had any blood tie of kinship with the clan chiefs, but they took the chief's surname as their own when they didn't possess one of their own and as surnames came into common use in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries so too did the need for shared identity and descent.

By the eighteenth century the myth had arisen that the whole clan was descended from one ancestor, with the Gaelic word "clann" meaning "children" or "offspring".

## **The Flemish connection**

It's probable, indeed proven, that the Douglas has connections with Flemish settlers. It's written in the Douglas Archives; 'Perhaps, at the time when surnames were first used, a family took the name of the river that flows through what became known as Douglasdale, possibly descendants of Flemish settlers'.

The St Andrews Institute of Scottish Historical Research explains in detail about the history of Flemish migration to Scotland which provides an enlightening insight into post Roman-era migration.

Between the 11th to 17th centuries Scotland a large number of people migrated to Scotland from Flanders (located in present-day northern France and Belgium). The reason for this migration was mainly two-fold; which were the need for merchants and skilled tradesmen in Scotland.

The much revered St Margaret of Scotland (1045 – 1093) was the first recorded Monarch to

actively encourage foreign migration to Scotland so as to boost the economy and stimulate trade (granted, I used artistic license to translate this passage into modern terms).

However the influence of Flemish migrants didn't just settle with trade and goods. After the Norman conquest of 1066 many Flemish aristocrats were invited to settle in their host lands and were rewarded for military service through grants of lands and titles. The Flemings who settled in Scotland, in areas such as Moray and Lanarkshire, were without ties to the local populations and were intended to bring those areas further under the control of the kings of Scots.

The creators of scotweb assert the following: "Two of the greatest of the Flemish families to immigrate to Scotland were Murray and Douglas. The founder of Murray was a Fleming named Freskin, who was granted land in West Lothian and Moray by David I of Scotland. Although they were first recorded in the 1170s, the Douglas family names consisted of Arkenbald and Freskin, and were undoubtedly related to the Murrays, and to be of Flemish origin. Though the Flemish origin of the Douglasses is not undisputed, it is often claimed that he was descended from a Flemish knight who was granted lands on the Douglas Water by the Abbot of Kelso, who held the barony and lordship of Holydean. However this is disputed, it has been claimed that the lands which were granted to this knight were not the lands which the Douglas family came from.

I have a lot of difficulty in accepting that the origins of the Douglas family name began from a Flemish Knight. Although it is feasible that a Flemish aristocrat was rewarded the lands about Douglasdale for his service to King David I, it is highly unlikely that this Knight took his name to his newly gifted lands. But rather, adopted the name to his own.

I state a number of reasons for this conclusion; namely:

- We've established beyond reasonable doubt of the indigenous origins of the name 'Douglas';
- It is possible that the progenitor to the family name 'Douglas' could be a chap by the name of 'Sholto'; and lastly
- I believe that the mysterious Knight who was granted the lands about Douglasdale may have adopted or changed his name to 'Douglas' in order to appease the locals and escape the persecution that was experienced in England.

The persecution I'm referring to occurred when the Flemish were expelled from England in 1154 by Henry II. A Knight of Flemish origin known as 'William de Douglas' was recorded as owning the castle and lands of Douglas Water in 1161. He possibly may have come into possession some years prior to this record. Aristocratic Flemings were granted lands and titles, most notably in Upper Clydesdale and Moray, in order to maintain the power of the Scottish king in those areas.

Considering the word 'de' is affixed to William's surname suggests (as previously explained) that William 'of' Douglas adopted the Douglas name when the lands and titles were gifted to him. This name adoption may be as a result of appeasement to the local inhabitants who may have held resentment that a foreigner is at the head of the House of Douglas; a name that has at least been in existence hundreds of years before William de Douglas set foot on Scottish soil.

We can conclude beyond any reasonable doubt that the origins of the Douglas name comes from a small valley in present-day South Lanarkshire. This is our ancestral homeland, a place that all of us who are associated with the Douglas name has a connection to.

This is a place that at some stage in our family history, our ancestors lived, worked, played, fought and loved. A place we should all consider to be a pilgrimage at some time in our lives to visit the villages and fields of Dùghlas.

## What's to come in 2018

Today I write these lines we are marking our first anniversary as a Society. This is quite an accomplishment as we look back over the year.

We have welcomed many new members to our society, made connections interstate and internationally and we have been represented at many gatherings around the country.

We've been welcomed into the fold by the Scottish Australian Heritage Council and Anne Bruest has been proudly waving our banner far and wide.

Our first gathering this month drew an impressive response of 15 people!

Now that 2018 is just around the corner, the time is right to build on our society.

Some of you may already be aware by now that I have created a 'Go Fund Me' page. I've explained everything about it on our facebook page and website. But for those who cannot access these sites here is a rundown:

*Our society was formed in December 2016 aimed at preserving, promoting and celebrating our shared heritage. From the beginning we prided ourselves in being a society that is free to join to any eligible person.*

*We want to participate at Clan gatherings, festivals and events to promote our society and honour our aims. We want to produce merchandise and carry on the tradition of a bursary fund to award to a trade student. This award program was in place by the now closed Clan Douglas Association of Australia. This is one tradition we want to preserve for future generations.*

*But all these ambitions come at a cost. Insurance and site fees at festivals and gatherings; membership to authorities, registration fees, tents and paraphernalia for events. The cost of producing merchandise. The cost of raising funds for our bursary award.*

*From humble beginnings we are startled to learn of the cost to have a society like ours and to achieve our aims.*

*This is why we have created this go fund me page. To appeal to you for help.*

*Please help us keep our society free for all to join. Help us achieve our aims and help us to represent our clan in our great land down under.*

It's only early days yet but the response has

been outstanding with \$125 raised within the first few days! Thank you so much!

Our website has an overhaul with a crisp new appearance and a new feature article will be released early in the new year.

Sometime in the first quarter of 2018 we hope to host another gathering, perhaps this time at a different location.

Your newsletters will increase throughout the year, but that also depends on you. We need stories! So put your writing skills to the test and submit a story to publish. You may even be a business owner, we're open to free advertising on our newsletter and website. This special offer is only available to society members.

Welcome to our Society to everyone who has joined us this year and thank you all for your wonderful support!

All the best for 2018.

A Douglas!



### **Douglas Ebook Sale!**

The much awaited update to the family history publications, A Douglas! A Douglas! and Never Behind by Mary Smith and Janet Shaw.

Exclusively written for descendants of Robert Douglas of Kangaroo Point and the Glenbervie/Cruixton line for the first time this history of the

bookshelf.

The book is digitally recorded in PDF format and is offered on a beautifully engraved USB stick with the war cry A Douglas! A Douglas! engraved. The stick is presented in a wooden presentation box engraved with the original 'Clan Douglas Association of Australia'.



This is a must-have for any collector, historian or interested person. For privacy reasons the book will not be distributed via the internet and is a condition of purchase that no content of the book is to be shared in any manner that would violate the privacy of individuals listed in the book.

Total cost is \$40 (\$30 + \$10 P&H). To obtain an order form please email [kate\\_godfrey@hotmail.com](mailto:kate_godfrey@hotmail.com)

