



Finte na hÉireann-Clans of Ireland

Bromehill House, Kilrush, Co. Clare, Ireland V15 RT28



Patron: Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland

Accredited as a Civil Society Non-Governmental Organisation by The United Nations.

25 October 2023

A chara,

I would like, initially, to draw your attention to the fact that the Clans of Ireland AGM & Cultural Summit events are planned for 12 and 13 April 2024 in Dublin. The working theme for the Summit is "**The historic building / monuments / sites associated with Ireland's clans**", with a visit to Brú na Bóinne and Newgrange being planned on Friday 12th. Further details and expressions of interest may be had from Ms Kieran O'Dowd (treasurer@clansofireland.ie).

There are many reasons to be associated with an Irish clan and by extension with Clans of Ireland, but only one that is worthy of you and only one that interests me. I am passionate about the sociological and genealogical facet of how we, Irish people, are related through our shared blood and I am personally involved in Clans of Ireland because I enthusiastically believe that such genealogical associations deserve to be recognised and protected just as any physical cultural object of historical importance might be.

There are among the people who are interested in Irish genealogy those who wish to embrace reality and those who wish to create a romantic notion that they are the direct descendants of royalty. There are those who unhelpfully create a genealogical invention. These inventors are generally not unintelligent and must go to considerable lengths to create such an artificial genealogy. This is generally some form of self-aggrandisement and such interests will not be served by membership of Clans of Ireland and the interests of Clans of Ireland is not served by such members.

It was the fundamental recognition by your Board of examples of such invention that led it to clarify specifically what is understood by being an Irish clan or historical family. Clans of Ireland has advanced significantly as a result of this project of clarification, particularly the constitutional ratification of the Threshold Date, the explanation and rationalisation of the Registration Protocols and the emphasis on the clarification that kindred groups are associated with specific territories and are linked, if Gaelic, to tribal origins. This gives Members a far greater level of understanding of the fundamental philosophies of Clans of Ireland.

Registering kindred groups as members, more or less simply because their name is Irish, is simply now not given consideration. To be associated with Clans of Ireland, members of a kindred group need to manifestly inherit and practice a unique culture and way of relating to each other and the Irish environment from where they originate, distinct from the rest of Europe or indeed the rest of the World. The clan or historic family organisation is a forum of personal family native identity.

The philosophy of Clans of Ireland is broadly to commemorate our societal history as Irish people. It is our aim to continue to develop an ever-greater understanding of how our society developed through our early and medieval history, as well as to appreciate our own culture above all others and to be proud of our ancestry, whether high-born or humble. I hope that you agree.

A number of projects that have been in existence over the years have created a meaningful focus for the organisation, including the annual Essay Competition, the Order of Merit, the Historical Plaques, as well as our major new initiative of leading, underwriting and supporting the publication of contemporary transcriptions of medieval genealogical and historical source material and in particular the current project, *Linea Antiqua*.

The editorial work associated with *Linea Antiqua* is progressing under the stewardship of Mr. Luke McInerney, so that publication is anticipated in 2024.

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Directors:

Gearóid Ó Ceallaigh (Cathaoirleach), Luke McInerney, Michael Crowley (France), Robert O'Halloran (England), Eileen Ashe, Laurie J Joyce (Aust), Vincent O'Carroll, Seán McGrath, Kieran O'Dowd (USA).

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On the suggestion of a member, a proposal to award non-Irish citizens a separate form of the Order of Merit has been drafted by the Chancellor of the Order of Merit, Mr Michael Crowley and will be in place for 2024. The details of this will be circulated to each member clan, with invitations to nominate candidates. The nomination format is expected to reflect the current Order of Merit process with submissions due by 28 February and the names of the successful nominees being published on 17 March. The style of the order is yet to be finalised.

A further development is the extension of the Clans of Ireland global academic network, particularly in the United States, where it is being led by Mr Chris Nolan. Interest is being developed by him among the Irish and Celtic studies departments of high profile and Ivy League universities, in Irish medieval genealogical and historical research.

Members who are engaged with Clans of Ireland Facebook page and YouTube channel will undoubtedly be familiar with the recent post and lecture, entitled *'The Irish Tradition: a deep dive into Gaelic literary culture, with writer and translator, John Minahane'*, but for the social media neophytes among us, who have not watched it, I recommend this scholarly discussion. It delves into the cultural and literary achievements of Irish writing in the vernacular since the 6th century and the assimilation of Latin learning from within the Christian church between the native poets and clerical scholars. You will not be disappointed.

You will also be familiar with the on-going Clans of Ireland Historic Site Plaques Project, particularly since the high-profile erection at Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin in May of this year. You are invited to submit your interest in marking a location or structure that is historically significant or associated with your clan and historical family. Clans of Ireland wishes to cohesively advertise the association that Irish kindred groups and or their wider tribal groups have with their geographical origins. Proposed Historical Site Plaque locations may have been used for residential, ritual, political, governmental, religious, defensive, martial or any other purposes that were of significance to an immediate kindred group or the wider tribal group associated with a registered Clans of Ireland Irish clan or historical family. Further details and expressions of interest may be addressed to Ms Eileen Ashe (post@clansofireland.ie).

We, the representatives of historical Irish kindred groups, which are the member organisations of Clans of Ireland, are involved because it is the recognised collective body of Irish historical kindred and family organisations. Clearly, each of us has, for our own personal reasons, a deep interest in understanding this historical aspect of our culture.

Obviously, we are passionate about this sociological and genealogical facet of how Irish people are related through our shared and shed blood. In the globalised contemporary world in which we live the tribal and kindred associations of the past are being dissipated by multi-culturalism and multi-cultural families. Yet, migration, difficult as it may be for those involved when it is occurring, can be beneficial in the long run.

Migration has been a constant throughout history to greater or lesser extents. In Ireland it has been to a lesser extent, particularly along the western coastal counties. Migration within Ireland during the six or seven hundred years leading to the 19th Century was comparatively minimal, other than that which was forced upon us by the largely unsuccessful attempts of foreign invasionary armies. This has resulted in identifiable genetic isolation, which clearly could have negative genetic connotations, but has also, more influentially, formed the recognisable racial identity of which we, who are associated with Irish clans, are so proud.

I am well aware of several Irish people, of middle age, who are the first of their children's direct ancestors to have married someone from outside their native county since at least the tenth century and some who are the first to have married someone from outside of Ireland since the Bronze Age. This exemplifies the personal history of so many within Irish kindred groups and this is why I say that association by a kindred group to one distinct area is worthy of recognition and appreciation. The surname is just the tip of our genealogical iceberg and it is my hope that each person of Irish descent, who is interested in their genealogy, can come to explore their own genealogy with ever increasing revelation and amazement.

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Finally, as we approach the ancient Festival of *Samhain*, when the last of the crops have been brought in, we should be aware that anything that remains in the fields is no longer edible as the "*puka*" has affected it. We were always told, as children, that we could not eat overripe blackberries because they were the "*puka's*" berries. However, on November (Irish: "*Samhain*") 1st the "*puka*" is expected to act politely... Originally, in Christianity, November 1 was referred to as the feast of All Martyrs, then All Hallows and more recently as All Saints Day. On November 2 the Feast of All Souls is commemorated when the dead were said to return to their homes because the veil between the physical and spiritual worlds was thought to be at its most slim. It is symbolically associated with the burial of the dead and is a time when we are reminded of our own mortality. In Celtic tradition, the eve of *Samhain* involved the lighting of bonfires to keep the "*puka*" or any evil spirits at bay and a communal meal that included honey and flour, was prepared for the living and dead of the family. Therefore, my personal wish is that you enjoy your pancakes on Halloween and remember not to eat blackberries until the autumn of next year.

Is mise le meas,

*Gearóid Ó Ceallaigh
Cathaoirleach*

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