

# GLENGARRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## newsletter

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<b>Date:</b>	Thursday, November 6, 2003
<b>Time:</b>	8:00 p.m.
<b>Place:</b>	Nor'Westers & Loyalist Museum, Williamstown
<b>Speaker:</b>	Dr. Kathleen Toomey
<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Long Sandy and The Great Lady</b>

### Long Sandy and The Great Lady

Dr. Kathleen Toomey will be with us at our next meeting to speak about our favourite BIG BISHOP, aka, "Long Sandy," "Big Sandy," and "Alaistair Mór." Alexander Macdonell earned this nickname as a boy and he did not cheat the future. He matured to about six-foot-four, as broad as he was tall, an anomaly, to say the least, in the nineteenth century. Kathleen's research indicates that, by all accounts, Long Sandy used his corpulence to good effect in confrontations with some of his more obstreperous parishioners. Both real names and nicknames become rather confusing, however, as there was a plethora of Highland clergymen with the name of Alexander Macdonell, or Macdonald, and at the very least, three Big Sandies! It seems that these Highlanders were tall people – the ones from Glengarry and Strathglass at least - while the seafaring Clanranald Macdonalds were considerably shorter. It appears that the mountain people had all the luck with long legs.

Kathleen stumbled upon the appellation, "The Great Lady," while doing research in Edinburgh not only in the Blair Papers, but in the correspondence of "Long Sandy" as well. This mysterious lady turns out to be none other than Mary Macdonell Fraser, grandmother to the explorer, Simon Fraser. What makes Mary so interesting to us here in Glengarry is, not only her connection with "Long Sandy," but a missing manuscript reputed to have been written by her in Scots Gaelic. Enough! We must not spoil the heart-and-soul of Kathleen's presentation.

Kathleen comes to us well qualified. She wrote her MA thesis on "Big Sandy – The Scottish Years" covering the period 1762-1804 and her PhD dissertation on the Catholic clergy who emigrated with their people between 1773 to 1815, which focused on the Maritimes and Eastern Ontario with special paid attention to Glengarry. Kathleen also holds a degree in Library Science and continues to manage McGill University's Special Collections. So, a very warm welcome to Kathleen.

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### Carin' for the Cairn:

The great debate over the Glengarry Cairn last month proved to be quite the evening. Do you suppose that Messrs. Anderson, Gilsdorf, and Lancken are on speaking terms yet? The debate certainly generated a lot of discussion and gave everyone an opportunity to reflect on the issues at stake. As David mentioned at the last meeting, author **Marion Heath** of Kitchener, Ontario has recently published a book, **Stories from Stone: Cairns of Ontario**, wherein she devotes a whole chapter to the Glengarry Cairn. Marian, in conjunction with Borealis Press of Ottawa, will be launching her book here in

SEE OVER ►►►►

Glengarry on **Saturday, November 22, 2003 at 2:00 p.m.** at the **Glengarry Bookstore** in Alexandria.

Marion will make a twenty minute presentation at about 2:15 on her research and findings on cairns in general, and the Glengarry Cairn in particular. Marion's interest in cairns evolved from a life-long interest in stone work and monuments and a strange co-incidence of topology. She has a cottage up on Lake Huron and has made the trip from the cottage into Goderich frequently. Along the Huron-Goderich road are a series of six cairns that totally captured her imagination, quite delighted her, and drove her to the library, the archives, and every other cairn she could find.

Enthralled with her subject, she just *happened* to mention it to her brother, who just *happened* to be married to one of our own MacMillans from Lochiel who just *happened* to tell her about the Glengarry Cairn on Monument Island. Forsaking Kitchener, down she came to our little corner of the world here in Eastern Ontario. The rest of the story is for Marion to tell.

Marion is a retired teacher who holds a BA from McMaster University in Hamilton and a Masters degree in Religious Education from Columbia University in New York. Next to Glengarry, she loves New York best. Marion has also written an article on "Granite Buildings in Galt" for *Antique Show Case* and is, at present, hard at work on another book, a biography this time.

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**Don't Forget!** Just as soon as you have renewed your yearly membership, you will receive the 2003 version of **Glengarry Life**. If you have already done so or are a life-long member, you should already have it.

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#### **TALES OF GLENGARRY**

We are always looking for tales for our Newsletter. Long or Short, if you have a juicy tidbit, by all means, let us know. There is a wealth of history in both our county and our country, not to mention in our own families. Be it art, architecture, archaeology, genealogy, history or literature, we'd love to hear from you. Our Society exists because we all share a love of the past and some of that past may be in your attic, your basement or your head. So call Rosemary O'Flaherty with your anecdotes at 613-525-1011 or e-mail them to [glenbook@glen-net.ca](mailto:glenbook@glen-net.ca)

**Th... Th...That's all, folks !**