

Do the Irish have Clans?
By Ken Hannon Larson
Executive Secretary
Ó hAnnáin Sept Association

Do the Irish have clans? Answer: Yes, they do but they are somewhat different from Scottish clans.

In ancient Ireland clans ruled a kingdom. Septs (or Families) also existed which was a term sometimes used instead of the term clan - but always meant to show homage to the larger clan. As an example let us look at the larger Clan of the Dal gCais (Dalcassians) in the ancient Kingdom of Thomond, that included modern day Cos Clare, Limerick and portions of Tipperary.

The ruling clan was the O'Briens who had under them the McNamaras as their marshals and castle builders, along with some 120 Septs or Families. When Brian Boru led the fight against the invading Danish Vikings in 1014 AD, he had beside him the Dalcassians who were known as his personal army - descendents all of Cormac Cas - the king of Munster Province in 250 AD.

When the clan structure and Brehon Law was broken up in the 1600s by foreign forces, clans and septs began to fall apart. Names remained though the spelling in many cases became anglicized. Soon why two people carried the same surname, was lost to all. The history and linkage of clans and septs became lost in time. It was not till the 20th century that an effort was made to find our lost heritage.

In 1989, the Irish government instigated the formation of the Clans Of Ireland, Ltd. (<http://www.theclansofireland.ie/>). Its original purpose was to work in conjunction with the Chief Herald's office. Later it began to concentrate on helping "clans" reform with the purpose of finding their lost history, have clans assist members with genealogy, and in some cases help guide the newly reformed clans in DNA testing of their male members that carry the clan surname. Today, over 200 clans have reformed with many more yet to do so.

This past year, the known Chiefs of Name who sit on the Standing Council of Irish Chiefs (SCIC) held a meeting to discuss common items of interest. One of those items was to decide whether or not the Chiefs should endorse solid color kilts (as opposed to plaid tartan kilts). Since in days of old the Irish wore solid color kilts which differentiated them from Scottish kilts - the Chiefs wondered if the SCIC should endorse the solid color kilt for historical reasons. Since many of the Chiefs actually have their own plaid tartans in use, the discussion on endorsement was not easily acquired. In the end, however, the SCIC did endorse the use of solid color kilts for the Irish. Four colors: saffron, green, royal blue and maroon were mentioned. The Chiefs endorsement of course is merely a guide since it lacks any force of law, but it can help a kilt wearer decide on whether they want a solid or plaid tartan kilt.

With the reformation of clans and endorsement of solid color kilts - slowly our heritage is returning to us.

Details again for the connected are at:

<http://clanhannon.com/hannon.html>

On this website may be found a full list of the Septs of the clan and related information.

To return use BACK button on Browser.

