

Iain MacMillan MacAulay made history in August of 2002 when he was elected the first chief of the clan for over 250 years. The democratic process by which he was elected is now seen as a blueprint for other disbanded clans.

Iain was born and reared in Dunoon and educated at Dunoon Grammar School. He grew up fearing for what European fascism might do, and in 1938 joined medical branch of the RAF, patriotically wearing the kilt when signing on. During the Battle of Britain he was based at Middle Wallop in Hampshire, before being sent in 1941 to the Far East, to arrive in Singapore just as the city fell. While the rest of the squadron was taken prisoner by the Japanese, he and what he termed "a few stragglers" stole a lifeboat from a ship, and slipped away, determined to row and sail to Australia. Ashore in Java for water and supplies, they were betrayed by a Dutch planter and imprisoned for three years first in Java and then in Sumatra.

Iain was tortured, and several times subjected to fake executions. On one occasion he was sentenced to stand all day in the sun, finally fainting after several hours. His captors rifle-butted his knees, an injury that caused him difficulty descending stairs in later life. On release in 1945, he weighed just 57lbs, and was so ill with amoebic infection that the medical officer examining him said that he would lose his sight, would be unlikely to reach age 50, and would be unable to father children. As it turned out, none of the forecasts came true, but his illness proved what he called "a life-changing experience". On returning home he received £300 back pay for the time he had spent as a prisoner of war. He gave half to one of his brothers and used the other half to buy a MacAulay kilt and to marry Nina in 1946. The couple who were married for **57 years**, had two sons, Alasdair and Diarmid (the current elected chief) four grand-children and a great grand-son.

With RAF support, Iain studied physiotherapy, determined to give back care of the standard he himself had enjoyed. He went on to complete a physiotherapy teaching degree at King's College London, and later founded the School of Physiotherapy at RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire, eventually becoming principal.

The former squadron leader also led expeditions into the Scottish mountains to teach young service men survival skills, for which he was made an MBE. He retired from the RAF in 1966 with the rank of squadron leader, having been made MBE (Military) three years previously for his pioneering work in physiotherapy.

He returned to Scotland, farming 4000 hill acres in Assynt in Sutherland, becoming a local councillor and chairman of the local branch of the Royal British Legion. Renowned for his humour and serenity, he suffered the effects of his war-time captivity to the end of days, yet never evincing bitterness towards his captors. Iain's constant dream was of re-establishing the Clan MacAulay. He advertised publicly for MacAulays to come together and 50 turned up. That was, in effect, the rebirth of the clan. The Clan MacAulay now has a couple of hundred members in the UK and hundreds more in Canada, the US and Australia.

Our current clan chief Hector MacAulay said this about Iain: "He was a wonderful man, with great leadership quality. It was his strength of character and his leadership that managed to re-establish the clan. It was not just a question of him wanting to be chief, before that he had built up an organisation, which will continue. This is his legacy to us."