

Bundanoon 2026

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Despite the latish date of 18 April, we were fortunate to enjoy very fine autumnal weather for the 45th Bundanoon Highland Gathering. As we know, the notion that while we can only access that mythical Scottish Village, Brigadoon, once every 100 years, we are spoiled by the fact that we are fortunate that Bundanoon happens once a year. As usual, the gathering lived up to all expectations, with the challenge being how to fit in as many of the incredibly diverse mix of activities as possible - where to start!

Somehow, even though I've attended most of the Bundanoon gatherings since my first in 1995 with daughter Morna, I had never stopped to ask myself until now, where and what is Bundanoon – where does the name come from? Given the close association and likeness to Brigadoon, I somehow assumed that with the similarity in names, Bundanoon would have its roots in Scotland – a small village in the hills or islands perhaps? Lo and behold, a quick check on Wikipedia and all is revealed: formerly known as Jordan's Crossing, Bundanoon is an Aboriginal name meaning 'place of deep gullies'. So, there it is, it's only taken me over 30 years to check, but important to now know the origins of Bundanoon.

The Street Parade of the 29 pipe bands and Clan representatives that extends about a kilometre along Erith Street and runs parallel to the nearby railway line before turning into the Oval for the formal start of the Gathering, is an integral part of the day's activities. Besides, providing a great display for the crowds aligning the street, once the pipe bands and Clans have reassembled at the Oval, they provide a perfect setting as a prelude to the Opening Ceremony. This year was a first for the Bundanoon Gathering with the clan representatives forming parallel lines on the oval on either side of the procession of pipe bands – a sort of guard of honour – as the pipe bands proudly regaled the Chieftain with a selection of ever-popular Scottish tunes, as a prelude to the official opening.

This year, Frank McGregor, High Commissioner and Chiefs Lieutenant for Clan Gregor Australia accompanied by his wife Fiona, was honoured to have been appointed Chieftain of the Gathering and to carry out the official duties of the day. In the event, while 9 of us were originally set to take part in the Street Parade, late changes and family illness meant that 5 of the original 9 were unable to attend; nonetheless the 4 remaining Clan members - Simon Abney-Hastings, patron of the Clan Campbell in Australia and himself a former Chieftain at Bundanoon among his many accolades, Malcolm Rothe, Secretary of the Clan Campbell Society along with Morna Bassi and Stewart Campbell – were proud representatives of the Clan during the parade.

With 20 Clans represented at this year's Gathering, as always, it was terrific for the Clan Campbell Stall to be represented throughout the day by President Barbara Gurney and Secretary Malcolm Rothe. All I can say is that their engagement and commitment is so impressive and so very much appreciated by all Clan members.

Where to start, what to do, and where to go is always a problem at Bundanoon. In addition to the comprehensive programme that Bundanoon prepares every year, this challenge is captured by the helpful map that the Organising Committee produce each year with a clever overview of the events and their time as located on and around the Oval. Nonetheless, my recurring problem about Bundanoon – albeit a good one I must admit - is that I never seem to have the chance to view all the events that grab my attention with everything from: the individual band performances, Highland and Scottish Country dancing, dog obedience demonstration, kilted dash, Bonnie Bairns, swordplay, and so it goes on, and that's before you connect with the Fiddlers Tent, the Scottish Dog Breeds or visit friends in the 20 Clan stalls, or explore the 78 stalls that lure your attention with a myriad of Scottish merchandise and goodies, or wrestle with the crowds at the 12 stalls in the food court area - who can resist Scottish tablet or Macaroon bars? One thing I wasn't going to miss, and which did not disappoint was the Wee Heavies and their mastery of tossing their cabers. Their elders could certainly learn a thing or two from the infectious enthusiasm of these 'wee yins'.

Despite the reality that the procession of the Pipe Bands in the late afternoon and their marvellous playing of a mix of Scottish melodies indicates that, yes, Bundanoon is Brigadoon is really coming to a close for another year, the quality of their performance always offers an element of compensation. This is emphasised by the haunting rendition of the lone piper which causes reflection and appreciation of all that has gone before. But then, just as Brigadoon fades into the night, the sounds of pipes, fiddle-playing and the swirl of dancing drifts across the Oval from the nearby Soldiers Memorial Hall, and yes, of course, the Ceilidh awaits!

Just as we would expect, the Ceilidh - chock-a-block with people of all ages and life experiences - provided a very fine mix of enjoyable activities. Everyone seemed more than ready to take part in pretty much the full range of instructions that the band gave about what participants should do, when and where. No prizes were awarded but there was a lot of good old fun to be had as the night progressed. Of course, there was an element of proper procedure with the traditional piping to welcome the arrival of the Chieftain, but otherwise it was game on, just get out there and enjoy it! Of course, none would forget the amazing 'Address to the Haggis' presented by the inimitable Barry McLeod, when he took the stage, you even begin to feel a bit sorry for the Haggis as it awaits its fate: what on earth do I mean - find out by attending the Ceilidh next year The evening slowly comes to a close, and before we know it, we have to face the cold dark night air that

awaits us. Tired as we are there's little doubt that it was all very much worth it, we'll just have to build up our strength again for next year.

As always, it is appropriate to acknowledge the efforts of the organising Committee in pulling all aspects of the 2026 Bundanoon Highland Gathering together. The slightly more orderly nature of pathways, access points and so on were another indication of the continuing efforts of the committee and its host of volunteers, to ensure that attendees have the most straightforward access to the Gathering and all its happenings. The date for next year is already well established – Saturday 3 April offers two big advantages, we still have daylight saving and with it ending early on Sunday 4 April, that means an extra hour's sleep after the busyness of Bundanoon – who can resist attending next year in 2027!

Stewart Campbell,
Canberra ACT
26 May 2026

POSSIBLE IMAGES AND CAPTIONS FOR THE BUNDANOON ARTICLE (26 May2026)



Our greeting to Bundanoon 2026



Simon, Malcolm and Morna await the street parade



And we're off!



The opening procession is underway at the Oval



The pipe bands and representatives of Clans, present themselves to Chieftain of the day Frank McGregor, High Commissioner and Chiefs Lieutenant for Clan Gregor Australia



President Barbara Gurney greets Clan representatives in the Street Parade as they wend their way to the Oval



Barbara welcomes Clan members, Morna's husband Justin, and Morna, to the Clan stall



Malcolm, with lunch for Barbara and himself, joins two visiting Clan members along with Morna, Stewart and Barbara at the Clan stall



Athol Opas from Canberra enjoying his first visit to Bundanoon with Patron of the Clan Campbell
Simon Abney-Hastings, Secretary Malcolm Rothee and President Barbara Gurney



(L) The children have got this tossing the caber business off pat
(R) The friendly police keeping a watchful eye on things



(L) The closing ceremony;

(R) Lone piper Andrew ‘China’ Iverson, Pipe Major Penrith RSL Pipes and Drums at the Closing Ceremony with his whisky reward delivered by Ceilidh organiser Helene Jessop



Bundanoon is Brigadoon fades into the night, but wait, the sound of fiddles, pipes and dancing can be heard at the nearby Soldiers Memorial Hall - the Ceilidh awaits!



(L) The ceremonial arrival of Chieftain Frank McGregor and wife Fiona at the Ceilidh.

(R) So that's how you do it



The haggis is addressed in no uncertain manner by Barry McLeod supported by Ian Young, Head of the Clan Young in Australia and Chieftain at Bundanoon 2024, and Peter Rocca, President of the Bundanoon Organising Committee.