

Genealogy of the Clan

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The genealogy of the clan was one of its most prized possessions. The pedigree defined the relationship of one clan to another as well as defining their entitlements and rights. During the medieval period it was the pedigree that determined the place of the chiefs on the councils and at the feasts of the Isles. The importance of these pedigrees was felt by even the lowliest members of the clans. An individual's entitlement, position and status in the clan was dependent on the antiquity of the pedigree or the relationship to the family of the chief. In a society where oral history and ancestry was of great importance and there were few written records, everyone knew their own genealogies and those of their neighbours. It was even considered undignified by all levels of society to marry into a family which was not versed in their genealogy. Indeed, one of the important cultural differences between the highlands and the lowlands was that the Lowlanders placed relatively little or no importance in their pedigrees. The Highlanders viewed this as a serious character flaw and held them in disdain as a people who did not know their past. The islanders who fought under Donald MacDonald at Harlaw in 1411, were addressed by MacVurich, the hereditary bard of the MacDonalds; before the battle, he reminded them of their noble pedigrees and to keep courage. Three hundred and thirty five years later on Culloden's moor, the islanders again recited their genealogies to bolster their courage as they waited and watched the advance of the English army. The main families of the clan were called after the names of their farms or townships (Lachlan of Corry) while the ordinary folk were called after their pedigrees (Ian ic Angus mac Nail). It was the clan sennachie who traditionally preserved this knowledge for the clan and safeguarded the positions of the constituent families.

Highland genealogies were not static things that remained unchanged through the ages. They were regarded by the clans as important tools which could be used for political or territorial ends. The genealogies we now have were developed over several hundred years. It is thought that there were three major changes to the highland genealogies:

1. That they were altered to reflect the legendary history of Scotland
2. During the 1300's the Irish sennachies gained status in the western highlands and as they had the more ancient records, their influence was easily felt in a society which had few written records and which valued antiquity.
3. After the fall of the Lordship of the Isles in 1493, the Scottish Kings attempted to make their authority felt among the islanders by the imposition of the feudal manner of land holding. Many clans were compelled to defend their lands and status upon grounds which would stand up in a feudal Heralds Court.

The earliest genealogies would have been orally transmitted through families and kindred groups in the ancient traditional manner. The first written genealogy of the Clan MacKinnon is said to have come from the pen of the Irish annalist Tighernac, who died in 1088. This genealogy, which is surely based on the older spoken tradition, traces descent through sixteen generations from Fergus II, one of the kings of Dalriada. There is one other important early genealogy; it is the manuscript of 1467 which is in the National (Advocates) Library of Scotland in Edinburgh. Both these genealogies have a great resemblance to each other and to the early Irish records in the Book of Ballimote of 1383. It would have been these pedigrees which were used by the clan during the Lordship of the Isles, and which insured their places on the councils of the isles.

Tighernac	1467	Ms of 1467 & MacFirbis
Naill mhic (son of)	Nail ic	
Gillabrighe mhic	Colum mc	Nail mac
Eogain mhic	Gillabrighe mc	Gillabrighe mhic
Gillabrighe mhic	Eogan mc	Eogain mhic
Sean Eogain mhic	Gillabrighe mc	Gillabrighe mhic
Finlaeic mhic	Saineagain mc	Sean Eogain mhic
Fingainne o fuiled Clan Fingaine (of whom Clan Fingon)	Finlaeic mc	Finlaeic mhic
Cormac mhic	Finguine ofiled clann F mc	Fingainne o fuiled Clan Fingaine mhic
Airbertaigh mhic	Cormac mc	Cormac mhic
Murchertaig mhic	Airbertaigh mc	Airbertaigh mhic
Fearchar oig mhic	Muircheach mc	Murchertaig mhic
Micbeathaidh mhic	Fearchar oig	Fearchar oig &c mhic
Finlaeic mhic		Fionnguine Ab Hi dearbrathair do
Fearchar fada mhic		
Fearadaig mhic		Naill mhic Gillebrigde
Fergus		

These genealogies are believed to be accurate as far back as Airbertaigh (circa 1150). Beyond that there is need of caution. The names of Fergus (King of Dalriada 503-506), Fearadaig, Fearchar fada (King of Dalriada 681-672) and Fearchar oig (his son or grandson) are historic personages, and all of the ancient house of Lorn. The inclusion of

Micbeathaidh (King of Scots 1040-57) and his father Finlaeic from the pedigree of the Moarmors of Moray could illustrate early political or social aspirations. It should be noted that in counting the generations we see eight generations between Airbertaigh and Nail which is a period of about 240 years. From Airbertaigh back to Fergus there is almost 700 years in which we count nine generations. There are by this reckoning some fifteen names missing from the bottom half of the pedigree.

The clans of MacKinnon, MacQuarrie, MacMillan and MacLennan share a significant element in these early genealogies. They are all directly descended from Cormac, the son of Airbertaigh. The authenticity of these four lines may be inferred from their support for one another. When the generations are counted back from the period of a known individual, all four place Airbertaigh and his son Cormac in the same time period. In the Tighernac genealogy we know that Naill mhic Gillabrighe was a historical chief of the clan Mackinnon, who was alive in 1385. This would place Airbertaigh circa 1150. The MacLennan genealogy supports Airbertaigh's existence historically as it includes a short account of his land holdings among the Norse. Other important considerations are that both the MacKinnons and MacQuarries historically have held land in Mull and on Ulva. The MacMillans had land in Knapdale and later moved to the shores of Loch Archaig only thirty miles up Loch Linne, while the MacLennans sprang from Kintyre and only later did some settle in Kintail. The earliest records suggest that all four clans originated in the same geographic area: the northern part of ancient Dalriada. This area called Lorn after the Cenel Loairn who were the first Gaels to settle there, comprised the peninsula of Ardnamurchan and Morvern and may have included Mull, Iona, Coll, Tiree and Colonsay

An early historical genealogy of the Clan Finguine & its related clans

		Fearchair oig		
		<i>about 350 years</i>		
		Murchertaig		
(circa 1150)		Airbertaigh (of Lorn)		
		Cormac		
Finguine (<i>MacKinnon</i>)	Guarie (<i>MacQuarrie</i>)	Gillecríst	Ferquhar	Anrais
Finlaeic	Caelbeg	Malcolm	<i>MacPhee</i> <i>MacNab</i>	<i>MacGregor</i>
Sean Eogain	Torquil	<i>MacPherson</i> <i>Macintosh</i>		
Gillabrighe	Cellach	<i>MacMillan</i> <i>MacDougal</i>		
Eogain	etc.	<i>MacLennans</i>		
Gillabrighe	until			
(1385) Naill	(circa 1463) Ian			

The most important element in support of this genealogy is the MacKinnon tombstone on Iona. The stone is inscribed in Latin:
“HIC IACET BRICIUS MACFINGONE CUM FILIIS SUIS EUGENIUS ET CORNEBELLUS:
HIC IACET FINGONE MAC CARMAIC ET FINLAID MAC FINGONE ET EOGAN”
(Here lies Gillabrighe Mackinnon with his sons Eogan and Toirdelbach;
Here lies Finguine son of Cormac and Finlaeic son of Finguine and Eogain)

This early MacKinnon genealogy served our ancestors well for several hundreds of years. Remarkably, it can be taken as an accurate historical pedigree of the clan. It clearly shows that we are a very old tribe who sprang from the Cenél Loairn of ancient Dalriada.

After the fall of the Lordship of the Isles in 1493, the political situation of the western highlands was radically changed. The ancient methods of succession and land holding were under assault by a victorious feudal monarchy. For the majority of the Gaelic islanders this was only the beginning of a dark period of struggle for the preservation of home and culture. There were three defining acts passed by the Scots parliament which listed the clans at this time:

- 1, 1587 “for the quieting and keeping in obedience of the disorderly subjects” This act contained a “Roll of Landlords and Baillies” and “of the Clans that have Captains, Chiefs, and Chieftains”
- 2, 1594 “for punishing theft, reif, oppression and sorcery, which contained a list of the clans and of “broken men”

3, 1597 "That the inhabitants of the Iis and Hielandis shaw their holdings". This act stated that any one holding land in the highlands was to proceed to the Exchequer to show all of the titles and justify the claims to their lands. Failure to do so would result in the lands reverting to the crown.

The Highlanders found a very simple yet ingenious solution to this dilemma. With a few simple strokes of the pen they reinvented their collective pasts, and by the mid 1600's the Great Clan Alpin was an accepted entity in the highlands. The Clan Alpin is recorded as being descended from Alpinus I the 68th fabulous and the 28th authentic King of Scotland. He was slain in Galloway or as some say near Dundee in either 834 or 837 by Brudus, a King of the Picts. The legend states that Brudus cut off Alpin's head, thus the "couped head" as an ancient crest and the motto "Cuimnich bas Alpan" or "Remember the Death of Alpine". Where the idea of this genealogy originated is unknown. The earliest record we have is the discovery in 1512 by the Dean of Lismore of the "Books of the Genealogies of the Kings" in which the MacGregors are named as Alpinian stock. On 27th of May 1591 the MacAulays of Ardincaple had signed a bond of manrent with MacGregor acknowledging his superiority in the Alpinian descent. The MacKinnons signed bonds of friendship with the MacNabs on 12th of July 1606 and the Grants on June 6th 1671. In each of these bonds the two parties acknowledged a mutual decent from King Alpine. Of the two other members of the Clan Alpine, MacFie and MacQuarrie, there is on record only that Alan, an early chief of MacQuarrie, authenticated their descent with the lost "History of the Alpinian Family". The MacKinnons were thought to descent from Prince Gregor, Alpin's third son. This has been accepted as the traditional genealogy of the MacKinnons for the last 400 years. Being descended from King Alpine, the father of Kenneth I King of Scots, at once put some distance to the Celtic background of the chiefs and embrace a mythical part of the conquerors own past. In those days this would have helped a great deal to legitimise the claims of the clans to the lands on which they lived. The success of this strategy is seen from the fact that this pedigree is the one of record. It is used by the Lord Lyon and by such works as Burkes Peerage and Gentry.

Historic Genealogy		Traditional Genealogy
	c. 836	Alpinus
Murchertaig		Doungallus
Airberthaigh	c.1150	Findanus
Cormac		MacFindanus
Finguine		Donald MacFingon
Finlaeic		Cormac MacFingon
Sean Eogain	240 years	Lauchlan
Gillabrighe		Lauchlan
Eoghain		Kenneth
Gillabrighe		Donald
Naill	c.1390	Fingal
		Lauchlan
		Eowin
		Alpin
		Lauchlan
		Donald Gillebride
		Eowen
		Naill

It can be seen that the traditional genealogy contains the names of Cormac his son Finguine, Eoghain, Gillabrighe and Naill, all of which are found in the historic lists. The order of the succession has changed, from the historic to the traditional pedigrees. Cormac is made the great grandson of Finguine, but the Naill is last in both lists. The historic element had not been totally forgotten and replaced by the purely traditional. There is however no mention of Murchertaig, Airberthaigh, or Finlaeic. It may be significant that there are a number of Donalds, Lauchlans, a Kenneth and an extra Alpin, all of whom there is no historical record. Between Kenneth and Alpinus there is a period of three hundred years in which only nine generations are shown. A simple calculation using thirty years for a generation shows that there may be twenty one generations missing.

The most controversial of the modern genealogical trees was compiled by the Rev. Donald MacKinnon (1735-1831) of Kilbride. After meeting in 1810 with William Alexander MacKinnon of Antigua who was visiting Skye with his friend Sir

Walter Scott, the Rev Donald began to work on a “new” family tree. The new tree was to be made up from the compilation of two older trees, one then in the possession of the Rev. Donald himself and one which belonged to Mr John MacKinnon of Kyle. To this was added the new information supplied by William Alexander. Once the information was compiled, the Rev. Alex MacGregor of Kilmuir who worked under the direction of the Rev. Donald, wrote in a fine copperplate script and drew up the chart. Unfortunately, it seems as though one of the original charts was mutilated, the part opposite the name of Sir Lauchlan (1587-1634) traditionally the 26th chief, had been torn off. As a result of this mutilation, the family of John of Elgol, the nephew of Chief Ian Dubh (1682-1756), and famous for his part in the rebellion of 1745, is not given at all nor were large parts of the family of Kyle. This composite chart showed the Alpinian descent.

The names of many of the chiefs recorded on this chart before Lauchlan Dubh (1557) would seem wild and outlandish to us today. Many of the names were given the ending Bui (yellow) which would indicate they had fair hair. There were also many errors in the descent of some of the cadet branches and the names of the chief's spouses. This work was continued by the Rev. Donald's son John, also a minister of Strath (1825-1855) and by his son the Rev. Dr. Donald Mackinnon who in his turn succeeded to the ministry of Strath (1856-1888). There would have been a great deal of clan history, lore and genealogy lost if these three generations of Mackinnons had not been inclined to collect and record what they did.

The Rev. Donald MacKinnon, M.A. in his 1882 edition of the Memoirs of the Clan Fingon presents what has been accepted as the classic MacKinnon genealogy. It is an edited version of the Alpinian descent as outlined in the chart drawn up in 1810 by the Rev. D MacKinnon and the Rev. Alex MacGregor and shows the descent of the main family groups as perceived at that time. There is general agreement on the accuracy of the historic line of chiefs from about 1385 to the present as there are existing records in which the names of the chiefs appear which verify their places and positions on the charts. We know for example that Naill mhic Gillebride (circa 1385), was executed by Donald of Harlaw, Lord of the Isles sometime between 1387 and 1390. Naill's successor, Lachlan MacFingon *vir nobilis*, witnessed a charter granted to MacLean of Duart by Donald of Harlaw on November 1st 1409. In this manner, the lineage after 1390 is substantiated. Some MacKinnon historians however, have had considerable difficulties with the lack of historical support for the many chiefs who were listed before Naill mhic Gillebride; even so they did not abandon the Alpinian descent. These historians have dealt with this matter in a number of ways; by omitting the chiefs that are not found in records or the old manuscript histories, by renumbering the names of chiefs or both. The Rev. D. MacKinnon (Memoirs of Clan Fingon:1882) simply numbered all of the names, which is the system adopted by John MacKinnon (MacKinnons of Kyle:1981), while Lauchlan MacKinnon (Genealogical Account of the Family of MacKinnon:1882) and the other Rev. D. MacKinnon(1890-1966) (MacLeods: a genealogy of a clan, vol 1:1969) give differing numbers for the chiefs. Many of the apparent mistakes in the earlier charts were carried over to the later ones. There were also the inevitable misprints and omissions, all of which have provided much material for debate among MacKinnon genealogists. From the 1840's until the late 1920's, there was a very lively debate carried on by many clansmen regarding the various rights to the chiefship of the families of Corry and that of Antigua.

The main families of MacKinnon are those of Kilmorie, Mishnish , Corry, Kyle, Ceann Uachdrach and that of Antigua. All but the Kilmorie family are considered cadet families because they are descended from the younger sons of the chiefs. The Kilmorie line takes name from the house of that name in Strathaird on the west coast of Skye. This was the main or ancient line of MacKinnon chiefs through the ages. All of the existing cadet branches and indeed all MacKinnon families may have branched from this line at some time during the last one thousand years. John MacKinnon of MacKinnon, the last chief of the Kilmorie line died in London in 1808 ending the direct male succession.

The Kilmorie family survives through the female line in Scotland and Uruguay. John MacKinnon younger (d 1737) would have been heir to chief Ian Dubh if he had not predeceased his father, leaving four daughters, three of whom survived to marry highlanders. Florence married Ranald MacDonald the Chief of Clan Ranald, Helen married Peter Stuart of Campbelltown while Penelope married first John MacDonald of Sana then Alexander MacLeod. John's half-brother Charles MacKinnon the 30th chief had two children; John, the last chief who died unmarried at thirty five years of age in 1801 and Mary Emelia. Mary Emelia married Alexander MacKinnon of Naples and Montevideo with whom she had two children; a son named Charles and another whose name and gender I don't know. The marriage failed however when Mary Emelia scandalized Edinburgh by leaving Alexander and her son to live with a British naval officer. Alexander took Charles with him home to Montevideo where the family prospered. Nothing more is known of Mary Emelia's fate.

It was, however, the family of Mishnish into whose care the estates were placed during the Jacobite troubles. Mishnish was a name taken from the northernmost district on Mull, which was a MacKinnon possession for the better part of eight hundred years. Ian na Mishnish a younger son of the chief Lauchlan Mhor and uncle of Ian Dubh the Jacobite chief was appointed “heir of provision” when it was thought that the direct Kilmorie line would fail. The descendants of the Mishnish

family are thriving in eastern Canada where they settled after the estates were returned to Charles, the 30th chief of the Kilmore line.

The families of Corry, Ghamble and the Ceann Uachdrach are descended through Tearlach og to John Og, son of Lauchlan Fynnoun, the 22nd chief. The family of Corry takes its name from the now ruined farm of Corriechatchan which is located just west of Broadford on Skye. This notable family has played many important parts in the history of the clan. Lachlan of Corry (d.1783) was an officer in the MacKinnon Regiment during the rebellion of 1745. Lauchlan's son another Lachlan (1772-1828) of Corry was widely respected as the sheriff of Skye and held the chiefship of the clan in trust after the death of chief John MacKinnon in 1801. After the fall of the Jacobite cause in 1745, this family produced many officers of rank in both military and in the East India Company service.

The Ceann Uachdrach (ceann=[head, chief] uachdrach=[upper, higher]) family divided in the early 1800s, with half of the family settling in North America where they supplied a provincial secretary to Cape Breton, and others who were not backward in the work of nation building. On Skye it was from the Ceann Uachdrach that the famous family of Strath ministers and genealogists had descended. The Kyle family is descended from Lauchlan og 25th chief through his son John og. This was an adventurous group which spread over the southern hemisphere. Many of this family were officers in the East India Company.

The Antigua branch take their name from the island of Antigua in the West Indies where their ancestors settled. They claim descent from Lauchlan Mhore, chief of the clan between 1640-1711. The claim of this branch to the chiefship was acknowledged by the Lord Lyon in 1811 and they have supplied the clan chiefs since then. This family has also provided exemplary service to the empire. They have produced one member of the legislative assembly of Antigua, two members of the British parliament, two Major Generals, two Colonels of the Coldstream Guards, and other distinguished military and naval officers. The daughters of this family have married dukes, admirals and diplomats.