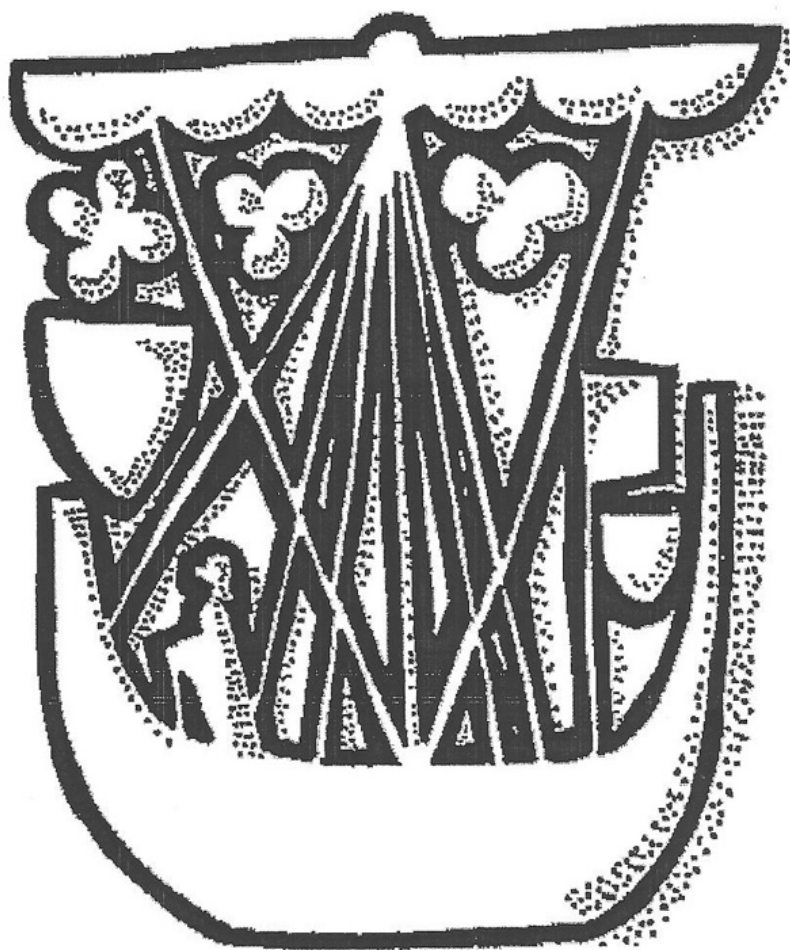


West Highland Notes & Queries



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EDITORIAL

I have to apologise for the lack of West Highland Notes & Queries since January 2005. The enclosed flyer is my excuse. I am afraid it has taken all the time that I can devote to history. I will endeavour to make it up to our subscribers in the future with more frequent issues, if I get enough material!

In 2007 we propose to bring out two glossies. Ronald Black assures me that he will devote 2007 to his long awaited 'Prince Charlie's Poet' the sequel to his *Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair: The Ardnamurchan Years*, which we published in 1986.

I will be completing my history of the church in Coll in the next six months. It has been written to mark the centenary of Coll Parish Church which falls in 2007. It must be out before the end of the year!

* * *

Among other subjects 'From Clan to Regiment' deals with the lives of crofters on the Coll estate. It illustrates their story until they emigrated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It does not have much about their adventures once they arrived in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. That could be the subject of another book.

After 'From Clan to Regiment' went to the publishers I received a letter from Beverley Koschitzke of Warracknabeal in Victoria, Australia. She descends, through her mother from the MacLeans in Fisgary, Coll. This is a family, which I use to illustrate the lives of crofters in Coll who poured into the army during the Napoleonic Wars. I had not previously known that one of them last heard of in Coll in the 1851 Census in Freslan emigrated to Australia in 1852 on the *Flora MacDonald*.

She quotes the shipping list that shows the family consisted of:

Lachlan, agricultural labourer, 48.
Marion, his wife, 40.
Hugh, 22.
Charles, shepherd, 19.
Alexander, shepherd, 17.
John, shepherd, 14.
Lachlan, 11.
Jane, 7.

She goes on to say that:

I only know information on the McLeans since their arrival in Australia....landing at Portland (Victoria). Their first place of residence was at Moyston, near Ararat (Central Victoria) where a lot of Scots settled. One son, John, remained there while others moved on to Warracknabeal as the land opened up about 1880, the district being Bangerang. Just coincidence, that when I married I came to live there, - the next farm to Koschitzke's was the McLeans original block, sold to my husband's family. All that remains of the family is a large 'pepper tree' - seen wherever there has been an early homestead. A lot of the McLeans are buried in the local cemetery....

Mrs Koschitzke's case is similar to that of many other emigrants. They know what happened to their family once they emigrated but little or nothing about their life in the 'old country'. 'From Clan to Regiment' redresses this lack of information. Although it is not a genealogical treatise and deals with the general rather than the particular the footnotes provide a mass of information about individual families. It is not limited to Macleans but to Macdonalds, Mackinnons, MacFadyens, Rankins and Mathesons &c who made up the community of Coll. I hope that subscribers will find it of interest.

Nicholas Maclean-Bristol

NOTES

The Resignation of the Lordship of the Isles.

A document cited by Riddell in his Stewartiana (1843) appears to have escaped the notice of the Munros¹ - not surprisingly perhaps, given the obscurity of the source. In a section entitled 'Original and last authentic notices of him' - John, Lord of the Isles - Riddell quotes a

Notorial Instrument, dated January 2nd, 1492 [1492/3], setting forth that then 'Johannes olim Dominus de Ilis, non vi, &c accessit ad presentiam supremi domini nostri Regis Jacobi quarti, - Reverentia qua decuit flexis genibus', (and) 'resignavit & totum Dominium de Ilis, cum tenentibus et tenandriis, &c pro se et hereibus suis &c in favoem dicti domini Regis, &c. - Testibus Episcopo Orcadiense Comite de Ergill, &c.

The citation is 'Acta Dominorum Consilii of that date, in Her Majesty's General Register House, Edinburgh.'² Riddell then commented, in his inimitable style:

The above new authorities may also be material in proving how completely

John of the Isles, - the ci-devant Earl of Ross, &c - but now only plain John, without any surname or property, - had denuded himself and his heirs of his patrimony, and how fully all that was once Insularily in him, had come, - as must now legally be presumed, to vest in Government by his own special act, independently of forfeiture, - a point I know that has been questioned.³

Gregory quoted the same document, though he unaccountably dated it a year later, in 1493/4:

At present, we have only to record the fact, that, in the Parliament, which sat in the month of May 1493, John fourth and last Lord of the Isles, was forfeited and deprived of his title and estates. In the month of January following [1493/4] he appeared in presence of the King and went through the form of making a voluntary surrender of his Lordship; after making which he appears to have remained for some time in the King's household, in the receipt of a pension.

Gregory gives the source as 'Acts of Lords of Council'.⁴ And in his Preface, dated at Edinburgh in April 1836, he observed:

The use I have made of the public records will readily be perceived; and, in this departure, my researches have been facilitated by the kindness of the learned Deputy Clerk Register, Mr Thomas Thomson, and of Mr Alexander Macdonald, who have pointed out to me many curious original documents.⁵

Hugh MacDonald gives a detailed account of this resignation:

So, leaving Isla with only six men, he went to the mainland and to Inverary, and having waited without till one of the Argyle gentlemen came forth in the morning, who, observing Macdonald, went in immediately, and told Argyle of the matter, who could scarcely believe him, saying, if he was there, he would certainly send some person to inform him before hand. With that he started up, and going out, finds Macdonald, and having saluted him, and brought him in, he said, I do not wonder at your coming here; but I am surprised you did not warn me before your arrival, and that your retinue is so small.

That is little, said Macdonald, to the revolutions of the times, and thou shall be the better of my coming; and so, after dinner, he bestowed on him the lands of Knapdale Rilisletter, from the river Add to the Fox-burn in Kintyre, 400 merks lands, and desired Argyle to convey him to Stirling, where the king was at that time,⁶ and for his son's disobedience, he would resign all his estates to the king.

So they went to Stirling, and from thence to Air, in company with the king, when John resigned all into his hands, excepting the barony of Kinloss in Murray, of Kinnaird in Buchan, and of Cairndonald in the west, which he retained to support his own grandeur during his lifetime.⁷

One wonders what has become of this crucial document, certainly known to Gregory and Riddell and probably known to Thomas Thomson and Alexander Macdonald. Perhaps a complete copy survives among Gregory's or Riddell's manuscripts.⁸ Can any reader comment?

Andrew BW MacEwen

NOTES

¹ Jean Munro, Ph.D & RW Munro (eds) *Acts of the Lords of the Isles 1336-1493* (1986), 311; cf Introduction, lxxii.

² John Riddell, *Stewartiana*,...With Incidental Reply to Cosmo Innes, Esq. Edinburgh, TG Stevenson, (1843), 81 7 n.

³ Ibid. Is Donald Gregory meant? The emphasis is Riddell's.

⁴ Donald Gregory *The History of the Western Highlands and Isles of Scotland from AD 1493 to AD 1625* (Edinburgh, 1836), 2nd edition, London & Glasgow, 1881), 58.

⁵ Gregory, op cit, Preface, v-vi.

⁶ There was a sederunt of the Lords of Council at Stirling on 28 Dec. 1492. [Thomas Thomson (ed) *ThActs of the Lords of Council in Civil Causes AD M.CCCC. LXXVIII-M.CCCC.XCV* (1839), 256].

⁷ JRN Macphail, KC (ed) 'History of the Macdonalds' *Highland Papers* (1914), Vol. 1, 48.

⁸ Gregory's 'MS Collections were acquired by the Society of Antiquaries' [Macphail, op cit, Preface,v], while Riddell's are 'understood to have been purchased by the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, who afterwards presented them to the Library of the Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh'. [TG Stevenson *The Bibliography of James Maidment, Esq, Advocate* (Edinburgh, 1883), 16, Note.

Editor's Note: The National Library of Scotland shows two sets of manuscripts for Donald Gregory, namely MSS 2129-2139 and Acc.11652 and also two sets for John Riddell, namely Ch.A.245-Ch.A.251 and Adv.MSS.25.8.1-26.7.37

Lady Grange

I am researching the 'Strange Tale of Lady Grange' for a chapter in my next book on the West Highlands - however, the way it is going it may well be a book in itself! You may recall Lady Grange was kidnapped by her husband in 1732 for threatening to denounce his Jacobite sympathies; she was immured for thirteen years on Heisker, St Kilda and Skye before her death in 1745.

Lady Grange correctly was Mrs Erskine of Grange, but as Dr Alexander Carlyle explained, 'by the custom of Scotland, [they] give 'Lord' to a judge and used to give 'Lady' to the wife of a landed proprietor'. She was the wife of Lord Grange, a law lord, and at one time Lord Justice Clerk. He was rumoured to be a Jacobite sympathiser, and his termagent of a wife threatened to denounce him and others, among them Lord Lovat. With the connivance of Lovat, Sir Alexander Macdonald of Sleat, Macleod of Dunvegan and others, Lord Grange abducted the lady in 1732, confining her first near Stirling for six months, then taking her by force, and mostly at night, through the Highlands to the shores of Loch Houran.

From here she was carried by small sloop to Heisker [Monarch Islands] for two years, then St Kilda for seven more years. Even when news of her imprisonment finally reached Edinburgh in December 1740, Grange and Lovat were able to remove the unfortunate woman from St Kilda to Assynt, Harris and Skye, and keep her remaining a captive until her death in poverty and madness in 1745.

None of her family or friends raised objections, preferring to believe her ensconced in some comfortable lodging for her own protection from madness. In reality she was immured without any physical or mental comforts, and, to a woman of her class, in utter destitution and isolation.

Georgina and I saw the ruins of her house on St Kilda, although it was little more than a two-room hut. I started researching the true story when we went in October 2004 to explore Trumpan church, where the ill-fated woman was buried. The ruins stand on a hill looking west across the Minch, and the silence was absolute - no sounds of man, nor burns, sea, wind, sheep or birds. It should have been a simple piece of research, checking the facts and re-writing; however, the search has been going on for a year, as the more I dug the more inconsistencies I found. The basis of her story is the two letters she managed to smuggle out of St Kilda, but there are cross-references in several other books. The last accurate published

account was in 1931, so I eventually decided to do a fully researched account - I've got 50 pages and we are still on St Kilda! My trouble is I see a reference I wish to check for, say, Lord President Forbes of Culloden; that means good old Oban Library find me a volume on his 'Life & Letters' [last borrowed 1963!]. In it I find much fascinating stuff which side-tracks me - like his wine bill for one month in 1730 was £24. 2s. 3d. Now, what is that in comparison for the times? So I check, and I find the Minister of St Kilda's salary was £25 a year, but that book has a reference to Harris, so the side-tracks lead into huge roads to explore - but fun, and I am learning lots!

I also came across a reference to John Macleod of Muiravonside. Lady Grange spent the first night of her abduction at his house. Muiravonside was Dunvegan's 'doer'. He was also Maclean of Coll's lawyer and had a pension of £40 as his lawyer. Do his papers still exist?

ADF Dalton

QUERIES

Mac Gille Chainnich

I am researching the early history of my clan, Mac Gille Chainnich, and now turn to you for possible assistance regarding the details and possible ancestry of the last chief of the clan who was slaughtered by the Campbells of Craignish with a further fifteen of his clan on Scarba. He is recorded as being the proprietor of Moalbuy (which may be a corruption of the name) on Scarba. This happened early in the seventeenth century. Thereafter, I can find no record of a chief of the clan nor any reference to a collective existence of the clan. I suspect I am faced with the beginnings of a broken clan.

Can any reader help me?

Duncan Shaw

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