

Macalisters.

Source: The Scottish Highlands, Highland Clans and Highland Regiments, Volume II (of 2) by Sir John Scott Keltie

A clan at one time of considerable importance, claiming connection with the great clan Donald, is the Macalisters, or MacAlesters, formerly inhabiting the south of Knapdale, and the north of Kintyre in Argyleshire. They are traced to Alistair or Alexander, a son of Angus Mor, of the clan Donald. Exposed to the encroachments of the Campbells, their principal possessions became, ere long, absorbed by different branches of that powerful clan. The[162] chief of this sept of the Macdonalds is Somerville MacAlester of Loup in Kintyre, and Kennox in Ayrshire. In 1805 Charles Somerville MacAlester, Esq. of Loup, assumed the name and arms of Somerville in addition to his own, in right of his wife, Janet Somerville, inheritrix of the entailed estate of Kennox, whom he had married in 1792.

From their descent from Alexander, eldest son of Angus Mor, Lord of the Isles and Kintyre in 1281, the grandson of Somerled, thane of Argyle, the MacAlesters claim to be the representatives, after MacDonell of Glengarry, of the ancient Lords of the Isles, as heirs male of Donald, grandson of Somerled.

After the forfeiture of the Lords of the Isles in 1493, the MacAlesters became so numerous as to form a separate and independent clan. At that period their chief was named John or Ian Dubh, whose residence was at Ard Phadriuc or Ardpatrik in South Knapdale. One of the family, Charles MacAlester, is mentioned as steward of Kintyre in 1481.

Alexander MacAlester was one of those Highland chieftains who were held responsible, by the act "called the Black Band," passed in 1587, for the peaceable behaviour of their clansmen and the "broken men" who lived on their lands. He died when his son, Godfrey or Gorrie MacAlester, was yet under age.

In 1618 the laird of Loup was named one of the twenty barons and gentlemen of the shire of Argyle who were made responsible for the good rule of the earldom during Argyll's absence. He married Margaret, daughter of Colin Campbell of Kilberry, and though, as a vassal of the Marquis of Argyll, he took no part in the wars of the Marquis of Montrose, many of his clan fought on the side of the latter.

The principal cadet of the family of Loup was MacAlester of Tarbert. There is also MacAlister of Glenbarr, county of Argyle.