

MacAulay

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

The last clan claimed by Mr Skene as belonging to the Siol Alpine is the minor one of MacAulay, or clan Aula. Many formerly held that the MacAulays derived their origin from the ancient earls of Lennox, and that their ancestor was Maurice, brother of Earl Maldouin and son of Aulay, whose name appears in the Ragman Roll as having sworn fealty to Edward I. in 1296. According to Skene, these Aulays were of the family of De Fasselan, who afterwards succeeded to the earldom.

The MacAulays consider themselves a sept of the clan Gregor, their chief being designed of Ardincaple from his residence in Dumbartonshire. That property was in their possession in the reign of Edward I. They early settled in the Lennox, and their names often occur in the Lennox chartulary, hence the very natural supposition that they sprung from that distinguished house. In a bond of manrent, or deed of clanship, entered into between MacGregor of Glenstrae and MacAulay of Ardincaple, of date 27th May 1591, the latter acknowledges his being a cadet of the former, and agrees to pay him the "calp," that is, a tribute of cattle given in acknowledgment of superiority. In 1694, in a similar bond given to Sir Duncan Campbell of Auchinbreck, they again declared themselves MacGregors. "Their connection with the MacGregors," says Mr Skene, "led them to take some part in the feuds that unfortunate race were at all times engaged in, but the protection of the Earls of Lennox seems to have relieved the MacAulays from the consequences which fell so heavily on the MacGregors."

Mr Joseph Irving, in his History of Dumbartonshire (p. 418), states that the surname of the family was originally Ardincaple of that ilk, and seems inclined to believe in their descent from the Earl of Lennox. He says, "A Celtic derivation may be claimed for this family, founded on the agreement entered into between the chief of the clan Gregor and Ardincaple in 1591, where they describe themselves as originally descended from the same stock, 'M' Alpains of auld,' but the [265] theory most in harmony with the annals of the house (of Ardincaple of that ilk) fixes their descent from a younger son of the second Alwyn, Earl of Lennox." Alexander de Ardincaple who lived in the reign of James V., son of Aulay de Ardincaple, was the first to assume the name of MacAulay, as stated in the Historical and Critical Remarks on the Ragman Roll, [227] "to humour a patronymical designation, as being more agreeable to the head of a clan than the designation of Ardincaple of that ilk."

When the MacGregors fell under the ban of the law, Sir Aulay MacAulay, the then chief, became conspicuous by the energy with which he turned against them, probably to avert suspicion from himself, as a bond of caution was entered into on his account on Sept. 8, 1610. He died in Dec. 1617, and was succeeded by his cousin-german, Alexander.

Walter MacAulay, the son of Alexander, was twice sheriff of Dumbarton.

With Aulay MacAulay, his son and successor, commenced the decline of the family. He and his successors indulged in a system of extravagant living, which compelled them to dispose, piece by piece, of every acre of their once large possessions. Although attached to Episcopacy, he was by no means a partisan of James VII., for in 1689 he raised a company of fencibles in aid of William and Mary.

Aulay MacAulay, the twelfth and last chief of the MacAulays, having seen the patrimony of his house sold, and his castle roofless, died about 1767. Ardincaple had been purchased by John, fourth Duke of Argyll, and now belongs to the Argyll family.

About the beginning of the 18th century, a number of MacAulays settled in Caithness and Sutherland. Others went into Argyllshire, and some of the MacPheiderans of that county acknowledged their descent from the MacAulays.

A tribe of MacAulays were settled at Uig, Ross-shire, in the south-west of the island of Lewis, and many were the feuds which they had with the Morrisons, or clan Alle Mhuire, the tribe of the servant or disciple of Marg, who were

located at Ness, at the north end of the same island. In the reign of James VI., one of the Lewis MacAulays, Donald Cam, so called from being blind of one eye, renowned for his great strength, distinguished himself on the patriotic side, in the troubles that took place, first with the Fifeshire colonies at Stornoway. Donald Cam Macaulay had a son, Fear Bhreinis, "The Man," or Tacksman "of Brenish," of whose feats of strength many songs and stories are told. His son, Aulay MacAulay, minister of Harris, had six sons and some daughters. Five of his sons were educated for the church, and one named Zachary he bred for the bar.

One of Aulay MacAulay's sons was the Rev. John Macaulay, A.M., was grandfather of the celebrated orator, statesman, and historian, Lord Macaulay. One of his sons entered the East India Company's military service, and attained the rank of general.

Another son, Aulay Macaulay, was known as a miscellaneous writer. In 1796 he was presented to the vicarage of Rothley, by Thomas Babington, Esq., M.P., who had married his sister Jane. He died February 24, 1819.

Zachary, a third son, was for some years a merchant at Sierra Leone. On his return to London, he became a prominent member of the Anti-slavery Society, and obtained a monument in Westminster Abbey. He married Miss Mills, daughter of a Bristol merchant, and had a son, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Lord Macaulay, author of "The History of England," "Lays of Ancient Rome," &c., and M.P. for the city of Edinburgh.

FOOTNOTES:

[216]Highlanders, vol. ii. p. 235.

[217]Highlands and Isles of Scotland, p. 111.

[218]Vol. ii. p. 435.

[219]Introduction to Rob Roy.

[220]A MS., part of it evidently of ancient date, a copy of which was kindly lent to the editor by John Grant of Kilgraston, Esq., boldly sets out by declaring that the great progenitor of the Grants was the Scandinavian god Wodin, who "came out of Asia about the year 600" A.D. While a thread of genealogical truth seems to run through this MS., little reliance can be placed on the accuracy of its statements. It pushes dates, till about the 16th century, back more than 200 years, and contains many stories which are evidently traditionary or wholly fabulous. The latter part of it, however, written about the end of last century, may undoubtedly be relied upon as the work of a contemporary.

[221]Caledonia, vol. i. p. 596.

[222]P. 321.

[223]Highlands and Isles of Scotland, p. 80.

[224]Skene's Highlanders, vol. ii. p. 259.

[225]Register of the Great Seal, lib. vi. No. 17

[226]Register of Great Seal, 31, No. 159.

[227]Nisbet, vol. ii. App.