

MACDOUGALL.

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

The Macdougalls—Bruce's adventures with the Macdougalls of Lorn—The Brooch of Lorn—The Stewarts acquire Lorn—Macdougalls of Raray, Gallanach, and Scraba—Macalisters—Sìol Gillevray—Macneills—Partly of Norse descent—Two branches of Barra and Gigha—Sea exploits of the former—Ruari the Turbulent's two families—Gigha Macneills—Macneills of Gullochallie, Carskeay, and Tirfergus—The chiefship—Macneills of Colonsay—MacIauchlans—Kindred to the Lamonds and MacEwens of Otter—Present representative—Castle Lachlan—Force of the clan—Cadets—MacEwens—Macdougall Campbells of Craignish—Policy of Argyll Campbells—Lamonds—Massacred by the Campbells—The laird of Lamond and MacGregor of Glenstrae.

The next clan that demands our notice is that of the Macdougalls, Macdugalls, Macdovals, Macdowalls, for in all these ways is the name spelled. The clan derives its descent from Dugall, who was the eldest son of Somerled, the common ancestor of the clan Donald; and it has hitherto been supposed, that Alexander de Ergadia, the undoubted ancestor of the clan Dugall, who first appears in the year 1284, was the son of Ewen de Ergadia, who figured so prominently at the period of the cession of the Isles. This opinion, however, Mr Skene conceives to be erroneous; first, because Ewen would seem to have died without leaving male issue; and, secondly, because it is contradicted by the manuscript of 1450, which states that the clan Dugall, as well as the clan Rory and the clan Donald, sprung not from Ewen, but from Ranald, the son of Somerled, through his son Dugall, from whom indeed they derived their name. Mr Smibert's remarks, however, on this point are deserving of attention. "It seems very evident," he says, "that they formed one of the primitive branches of the roving or stranger tribes of visitants to Scotland of the Irish, or at least Celtic race. Their mere name puts the fact almost beyond doubt. It also distinguishes them clearly from the Norsemen of the Western Isles, who were always styled Fion-galls, that is, Fair Strangers (Rovers, or Pirates). The common account of the origin of the Macdougalls is, that they sprung from a son or grandson of Somerled, of the name of Dougal. But though a single chieftain of that appellation may have flourished in the primitive periods of Gaelic story, it appears most probable, from many circumstances, that the clan derived their name from their descent and character generally. They were Dhu-Galls, 'black strangers.' The son or grandson of Somerled, who is said to have specially founded the Macdougall clan, lived in the 12th century. In the 13th, however, they were numerous and strong enough to oppose Bruce, and it is therefore out of the question to suppose that the descendant of Somerled could do more than consolidate or collect an already existing tribe, even if it is to be admitted as taking from him its name." [162]

The first appearance which this family makes in history is at the convention which was held in the year 1284. In the list of those who [160] attended on that occasion, we find the name of Alexander de Ergadia, whose presence was probably the consequence of his holding his lands by a crown charter; but from this period we lose sight of him entirely, until the reign of Robert Bruce, when the strenuous opposition offered by the Lord of Lorn and by his son John to the succession of that king, restored his name to history, in connection with that of Bruce. Alister having married the third daughter of the Red Comyn, whom Bruce slew in the Dominican church at Dumfries, became the mortal enemy of the king; and, upon more than one occasion, during the early part of his reign, succeeded in reducing him to the greatest straits.

Bruce, after his defeat at Methven, on the 19th of June 1306, withdrew to the mountainous parts of Breadalbane, and approached the borders of Argyleshire. His followers did not exceed three hundred men, who, disheartened by defeat, and exhausted by privation, were not in a condition to encounter a superior force. In this situation, however, he was attacked by Macdougall of Lorn, at the head of a thousand men, part of whom were Macnabs, who had joined the party of John Baliol; and, after a severe conflict, he was compelled to abandon the field. In the retreat from Dalree, where the battle had been fought, the king was hotly pursued, and especially by three of the clansmen of Lorn, probably personal attendants or henchmen of the Macdougalls, who appear to have resolved to slay the Bruce or die. These followed the retreating party, and when King Robert entered a narrow pass, threw themselves suddenly

upon him. The king turning hastily round, cleft the skull of one with his battle-axe. "The second had grasped the stirrup, and Robert fixed and held him there by pressing down his foot, so that the captive was dragged along the ground as if chained to the horse. In the meantime, the third assailant had sprung from the hillside to the back of the horse, and sat behind the king. The latter turned half round and forced the Highlander forward to the front of the saddle, where 'he clave the head to the harns.' The second assailant was still hanging by the stirrup, and Robert now struck at him vigorously, and slew him at the first blow." Whether the story is true or not, and it is by no means improbable, it shows the reputation for gigantic strength which the doughty Bruce had in his day. It is said to have been in this contest that the king lost the magnificent brooch, since famous as the "brooch of Lorn." This highly-prized trophy was long preserved as a remarkable relic in the family of Macdougall of Dunolly, and after having been carried off during the siege of Dunolly Castle, the family residence, it was, about forty years ago, again restored to the family.[163] In his day of adversity the Macdougalls were the most persevering and dangerous of all King Robert's enemies.

But the time for retribution at length arrived. When Robert Bruce had firmly established himself on the throne of Scotland, one of the first objects to which he directed his attention, was to crush his old enemies the Macdougalls,[164] and to revenge the many injuries he had suffered at their hands. With this view, he marched into Argyleshire, determined to lay waste the country, and take possession of Lorn. On advancing, he found John of Lorn and his followers posted in a formidable defile between Ben Cruachan and Loch Awe, which it seemed impossible to force, and almost hopeless to turn. But having sent a party to ascend the mountain, gain the heights, and threaten the[161] enemy's rear, Bruce immediately attacked them in front, with the utmost fury. For a time the Macdougalls sustained the onset bravely; but at length, perceiving themselves in danger of being assailed in the rear, as well as the front, and thus completely isolated in the defile, they betook themselves to flight. Unable to escape from the mountain gorge, they were slaughtered without mercy, and by this reverse, their power was completely broken. Bruce then laid waste Argyleshire, besieged and took the castle of Dunstaffnage, and received the submission of Alistair of Lorn, the father of John, who now fled to England. Alistair was allowed to retain the district of Lorn: but the rest of his possessions were forfeited and given to Angus of Isla, who had all along remained faithful to the king's interests.

When John of Lorn arrived as a fugitive in England, King Edward was making preparations for that expedition, which terminated in the ever-memorable battle of Bannockburn. John was received with open arms, appointed to the command of the English fleet, and ordered to sail for Scotland, in order to co-operate with the land forces. But the total defeat and dispersion of the latter soon afterwards confirmed Bruce in possession of the throne; and being relieved from the apprehension of any further aggression on the part of the English kings he resolved to lose no time in driving the Lord of Lorn from the Isles, where he had made his appearance with the fleet under his command. Accordingly, on his return from Ireland, whither he had accompanied his brother Edward, he directed his course towards the Isles, and having arrived at Tarbet, is said to have caused his galleys to be dragged over the isthmus which connects Kintyre and Knapdale. This bold proceeding was crowned with success. The English fleet was surprised and dispersed; and its commander having been made prisoner, was sent to Dumbarton, and afterwards to Lochleven, where he was detained in confinement during the remainder of King Robert's reign.

In the early part of the reign of David II., John's son, John or Ewen, married a grand-daughter of Robert Bruce, and through her not only recovered the ancient possessions of his family, but even obtained a grant of the property of Glenlyon. These extensive territories, however, were not destined to remain long in the family. Ewen died without male issue; and his two daughters having married, the one John Stewart of Innermeath, and the other his brother Robert Stewart, an arrangement was entered into between these parties, in virtue of which the descendants of John Stewart acquired the whole of the Lorn possessions, with the exception of the castle of Dunolly and its dependencies, which remained to the other branch of the family; and thus terminated the power of this branch of the descendants of Somerled. The chieftainship of the clan now descended to the family of Dunolly, which continued to enjoy the small portion which remained to them of their ancient possessions until the year 1715, when the representative of the family incurred the penalty of forfeiture for his accession to the insurrection of that period; thus, by a singular

contrast of circumstances, "losing the remains of his inheritance to replace upon the throne the descendants of those princes, whose accession his ancestors had opposed at the expense of their feudal grandeur." The estate, however, was restored to the family in 1745, as a reward for their not having taken any part in the more formidable rebellion of that year. In President Forbes's Report on the strength of the clans, the force of the Macdougalls is estimated at 200 men.

The Macdougalls of Raray, represented by Macdougall of Ardencaple, were a branch of the house of Lorn. The principal cadets of the family of Donolly were those of Gallanach and Soraba. The Macdougalls still hold possessions in Galloway, where, however, they usually style themselves Macdowall.