

MACKENZIE

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

The clan Kenneth or Mackenzie has long cherished a traditionary belief in its descent from the Norman family of Fitzgerald settled in Ireland. Its pretensions to such an origin are founded upon a fragment of the records of Icolmkill, and a charter of the lands of Kintail in Wester Ross, said to have been granted by Alexander III. to Colin Fitzgerald, their supposed progenitor. According to the Icolmkill fragment, a personage described as "*Peregrinus et Hibernus nobilis ex familia Geraldinorum*," that is, "a noble stranger and Hibernian, of the family of the Geraldines," being driven from Ireland, with a considerable number of followers, about 1261, was received graciously by the king, and remained thenceforward at the court. Having given powerful aid to the Scots at the battle of Largs two years afterwards, he was rewarded by a grant of Kintail, erected into a free barony by charter dated 9th January, 1266. No such document, however, as this pretended fragment of Icolmkill is known to be in existence, at least, as Mr Skene says, nobody has ever seen it, and as for King Alexander's charter, he declares[216] that "it bears the most palpable marks of having been a forgery of later date, and one by no means happy in the execution." Besides, the words "*Colino Hiberno*," contained in it, do not prove the said Colin to have been an Irishman, as Hiberni was at that period a common appellation of the Gael of Scotland.

The ancestor of the clan Kenzie was Gilleon-og, or Colin the younger, a son of Gilleon na hair'de, that is, Colin of the Aird, progenitor of the Earls of Ross, and from the MS. of 1450 their Gaelic descent may be considered established. Colin of Kintail is said to have married a daughter of Walter, lord high steward of Scotland. He died in 1278, and his son, Kenneth, being, in 1304, succeeded by his son, also called Kenneth, with the addition of Mackenneth, the latter, softened into Mackenny or Mackenzie, became the name of the whole clan. Murdoch, or Murcha, the son of Kenneth, received from David II. a charter of the lands of Kintail as early as 1362. At the beginning of the 15th century, the clan Kenzie appears to have been both numerous and powerful, for its chief, Kenneth More, when arrested, in 1427, with his son-in-law, Angus of Moray, and Macmathan, by James I. in his parliament at Inverness, was said to be able to muster 2,000 men.

In 1463, Alexander Mackenzie of Kintail received Strathgarve and many other lands from John, Earl of Ross, the same who was forfeited in 1476. The Mackenzie chiefs were originally vassals of the Earls of Ross, but after their forfeiture, they became independent of any superior but the crown. They strenuously opposed the Macdonalds in every attempt which they made to regain possession of the earldom. Alexander was succeeded by his son, Kenneth, who had taken for his first wife Lady Margaret Macdonald, daughter of the forfeited earl, John, Lord of the Isles, and having, about 1480, divorced his wife, he brought upon himself the resentment of her family.

Kenneth Oig, his son by the divorced wife, was chief in 1493. Two years afterwards, he and Farquhar Mackintosh were imprisoned by James V. in the castle of Edinburgh. In 1497, Ross and Mackintosh made their escape, but on their way to the Highlands they were treacherously seized at the Torwood, by the laird of Buchanan. Kenneth Oig resisted and was slain, and his head presented to the king by Buchanan.

Kenneth Oig having no issue, was succeeded by his brother, John, whose mother, Agnes Fraser, was a daughter of Lord Lovat. She had other sons, from whom sprung numerous[239] branches of this wide-spread family. As he was very young, his kinsman, Hector Roy Mackenzie, progenitor of the house of Gairloch, assumed the command of the clan, as guardian of the young chief. "Under his rule," says Mr Gregory,[217] "the clan Kenzie became involved in feuds with the Munroes and other clans; and Hector Roy himself became obnoxious to government, as a disturber of the public peace. His intentions towards the young Lord of Kintail were considered very dubious; and the apprehensions of the latter and his friends having been roused, Hector was compelled by law to yield up the estate and the command of the tribe to the proper heir." John, at the call of James IV., marched with his clan to the fatal field of Flodden, where he was taken prisoner by the English.

On King James the Fifth's expedition to the Isles in 1540, he was joined at Kintail by John, chief of the Mackenzies, who accompanied him throughout his voyage. He fought at the battle of Pinkie at the head of his clan in 1547. On his death in 1556, he was succeeded by his son, Kenneth, who, by a daughter of the Earl of Athole, had Colin and Roderick, the latter ancestor of the Mackenzies of Redcastle, Kincaig, Rosend, and other branches.

Colin, eleventh chief, son of Kenneth, fought on the side of Queen Mary at the battle of Langside. He was twice married. By his first wife, Barbara, a daughter of Grant of Grant, he had, with three daughters, four sons, namely, Kenneth, his successor; Sir Roderick Mackenzie of Tarbat, ancestor of the Earls of Cromarty; Colin, ancestor of the Mackenzies of Kennock and Pitlundie; and Alexander,

of the Mackenzies of Kilcoy, and other families of the name. By a second wife, Mary, eldest daughter of Roderick Mackenzie of Davoch-maluak, he had a son, Alexander, from whom the Mackenzies of Applecross, Coul, Delvin, Assint, and other families are sprung.

Kenneth, the eldest son, twelfth chief of the Mackenzies, soon after succeeding his father, was engaged in supporting the claims of Torquill Macleod, surnamed Connanach, the disinherited son of Macleod of Lewis, whose mother was the sister of John Mackenzie of Kintail, and whose daughter had married Roderick Mackenzie, Kenneth's brother. The barony of Lewis he conveyed by writings to the Mackenzie chief, who caused the usurper thereof and some of his followers to be beheaded in July 1597. In the following year he joined Macleod of Harris and Macdonald of Sleat in opposing the project of James VI. for the colonization of the Lewis, by some Lowland gentlemen, chiefly belonging to Fife.

In 1601, Neill Macleod deserted the cause of the colonists, and Mackenzie, who had detained in captivity for several years Tormod, the only surviving legitimate son of Ruari Macleod of the Lewis, set him at liberty, and sent him into that island to assist Neill in opposing the settlers. In 1602, the feud between the Mackenzies and the Glengarry Macdonalds, regarding their lands in Wester Ross, was renewed with great violence. Ultimately, after much bloodshed on both sides, an agreement was entered into, by which Glengarry renounced in favour of Mackenzie the castle of Strone, with the lands of Lochalsh, Lochcarron, and others, so long the subject of dispute between them. A crown charter of these lands was granted to Kenneth Mackenzie in 1607. The territories of the clan Kenzie at this time were very extensive. "All the Highlands and Isles, from Ardnamurchan to Strathnaver, were either the Mackenzies' property, or under their vassalage, some few excepted," and all about them were bound to them "by very strict bonds of friendship." The same year, Kenneth Mackenzie obtained, through the influence of the lord-chancellor, a gift, under the great seal, of the Lewis to himself, in virtue of the resignation formerly made in his favour by Torquill Macleod; but on the complaint to the king of those of the colonists who survived, he was forced to resign it. He was created a peer, by the title of Lord Mackenzie of Kintail, by patent, dated 19th November 1609. On the abandonment of the scheme for colonising the Lewis, the remaining adventurers, Sir George Hay and Sir James Spens, were easily prevailed upon to sell their title to Lord Kintail, who likewise succeeded in obtaining from the king a grant of the share in the island forfeited by Lord Balmerino, another of the grantees. Having thus [240] at length acquired a legal right to the Lewis, he procured from the government a commission of fire and sword against the Islanders, and landing there with a large force, he speedily reduced them to obedience, with the exception of Neil Macleod and a few others, his kinsmen and followers. The struggle for the Lewis between the Mackenzies and the Macleods continued some time longer; an account of it has been already given. The Mackenzies ultimately succeeded in obtaining possession of the island.

Lord Kintail died in March 1611. He had married, first, Anne, daughter of George Ross of Balnagowan, and had, with two daughters, two sons, Colin, second Lord Kintail, and first Earl of Seaforth, and the Hon. John Mackenzie of Lochslin. His second wife was Isabel, daughter of Sir Alexander Ogilvie of Powrie, by whom, with a daughter, Sybilla, Mrs Macleod of Macleod, he had four sons, viz., Alexander; George, second Earl of Seaforth; Thomas of Pluscardine; and Simon of Lochslin, whose eldest son was the celebrated Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh, lord advocate in the reigns of Charles II. and James VII.

Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh.

From a painting by

Sir Godfrey Kneller.

Colin, second Lord Kintail, was created Earl of Seaforth, by patent dated at Theobald's, 3d December 1623, to him and his heirs male.

The great-grandson of the third Earl of Seaforth, and male heir of the family, was Colonel Thomas Frederick Humberston Mackenzie, who fell at Gheriah in India in 1783. His brother, Francis Humberston Mackenzie, obtained the Seaforth estates, and was created Baron Seaforth in the peerage of the United Kingdom in 1796. Dying without surviving male issue, his title became extinct, and his eldest daughter, the Hon. Mary Frederica Elizabeth, having taken for her second husband J. A. Stewart of Glaserton, a cadet of the house of Galloway, that gentleman assumed the name of Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth.

The clan Kenzie from small beginnings had increased in territory and influence till they became, next to the Campbells, the greatest clan in the West Highlands. They remained loyal to the Stuarts, but the forfeiture of the Earl of Seaforth in 1715, and of the Earl of Cromarty in 1745, weakened their power greatly. They are still, however, one of the most numerous tribes in the Highlands. In 1745 their effective strength was calculated at 2500. No fewer than seven families of the name possess baronetcies.

The armorial bearings of the Mackenzies are a stag's head and horns. It is said that they were assumed in consequence of Kenneth,

the ancestor of the family, having rescued the king of Scotland from an infuriated stag, which he had wounded. "In gratitude for his assistance," says Stewart of Garth, "the king gave him a grant of the castle and lands of Castle Donnan, and thus laid the foundation of the family and clan Mackenneth or Mackenzie." From the stag's head in their arms the term "Caberfae" was applied to the chiefs.

The progenitor of the Gerloch or Gairloch branch of the Mackenzies was, as above shown, Hector, the elder of the two sons of Alexander, seventh chief, by his second wife, Margaret Macdowall, daughter of John, Lord of Lorn. He lived in the reigns of Kings James III. and IV., and was by the Highlanders called "Eachin Roy," or Red Hector, from the colour of his hair. To the assistance of the former of these monarchs, when the confederated[241] nobles collected in arms against him, he raised a considerable body of the clan Kenzie, and fought at their head at the battle of Sauchieburn. After the defeat of his party, he retreated to the north, and, taking possession of Redcastle, put a garrison in it. Thereafter he joined the Earl of Huntly, and from James IV. he obtained in 1494 a grant of the lands and barony of Gerloch, or Gairloch, in Ross-shire. These lands originally belonged to the Siol-Vic-Gilliechallum, or Macleods of Rasay, a branch of the family of Lewis; but Hector, by means of a mortgage or wadset, had acquired a small portion of them, and in 1508 he got Brachan, the lands of Moy, the royal forest of Glassiter, and other lands, united to them. In process of time, his successors came to possess the whole district, but not till after a long and bloody feud with the Siol-Vic-Gilliechallum, which lasted till 1611, when it was brought to a sudden close by a skirmish, in which Gilliechallum Oig, laird of Rasay, and Murdoch Mackenzie, a younger son of the laird of Gairloch, were slain. From that time the Mackenzies possessed Gairloch without interruption from the Macleods.

Kenneth Mackenzie, eighth Baron of Gairloch, was created a baronet of Nova Scotia in 1700. He married Margaret, daughter of Sir Roderick Mackenzie of Findon, and was succeeded, in 1704, by his son, Sir Alexander, second baronet. His eldest son, Sir Alexander, third baronet, married—first, Margaret, eldest daughter of Roderick Mackenzie of Redcastle, issue one son, Hector; second, Jean, only daughter of John Gorrie, Esq., commissary of Ross, issue two sons, John, a general officer, and Kenneth, an officer in India, and three daughters. He died 13th April 1770.

Sir Hector Mackenzie, his eldest son, fourth baronet of the Gairloch branch, died in April 1826. His son, Sir Francis Alexander, fifth baronet, born in 1798, died June 2, 1843. The eldest son of Sir Francis, Sir Kenneth Smith Mackenzie, sixth baronet, born 1832, married in 1860 the second daughter of Walter Frederick Campbell of Islay.

The first of the Mackenzies of Tarbet and Royston, in the county of Cromarty, was Sir Roderick Mackenzie, second son of Colin Mackenzie of Kintail, brother of the first Lord Mackenzie of Kintail. Having married Margaret, daughter and heiress of Torquil Macleod of the Lewes, he added the armorial bearings of the Macleods to his own. His son, John Mackenzie of Tarbet, was created a baronet of Nova Scotia, 21st May 1628. He had four sons.

The eldest son, Sir George Mackenzie, second baronet, was the first Earl of Cromarty. His eldest son becoming a bankrupt, his estate of Cromarty was sold in 1741 to William Urquhart of Meldrum. He was succeeded by his brother, Sir Kenneth, fourth baronet, at whose death, without issue, in 1763, the baronetcy lay dormant until revived in favour of Sir Alexander Mackenzie of Tarbet, elder son of Robert Mackenzie, lieutenant-colonel in the East India Company's service, great-great-grandson of the first baronet. Colonel Mackenzie's father was Alexander Mackenzie of Ardlock, and his mother the daughter of Robert Sutherland, Esq. of Langwell, Caithness, twelfth in descent from William de Sutherland, fifth Earl of Sutherland, and the Princess Margaret Bruce, sister and heiress of David II. Sir Alexander, fifth baronet, was in the military service of the East India Company. On his death, April 28, 1843, his brother, Sir James Wemyss Mackenzie, became sixth baronet of Tarbet and Royston. He died November 24, 1858, and was succeeded by his son, Sir James John Randall Mackenzie.

The first of the family of Coul, Ross-shire, was Alexander Mackenzie, brother of Kenneth, first Lord Mackenzie of Kintail, who, before his death, made him a present of his own sword, as a testimony of his particular esteem and affection. His son, Kenneth Mackenzie of Coul, was created a baronet of Nova Scotia, October 16, 1673. His eldest son, Sir Alexander, second baronet, died in 1702. His son, Sir John Mackenzie, third baronet, for being concerned in the rebellion of 1715, was forfeited. He died without male issue, and the attainder not extending to collateral branches of the family, the title and estates devolved upon his brother, Sir Colin, fourth baronet, clerk to the pipe in the exchequer. He died in 1740.

The Mackenzies of Scatwell, Ross-shire, who also possess a baronetcy, are descended[242] from Sir Roderick Mackenzie, knight, of Tarbet and Cogeach, second son of Colin, eleventh feudal baron of Kintail, father of Sir John Mackenzie, ancestor of the Earls of Cromarty, and Kenneth Mackenzie of Scatwell, whose son, Kenneth, was created a baronet of Nova Scotia, February 22, 1703. By his marriage with Lilia, daughter and heiress of Sir Roderick Mackenzie of Findon, that branch of the Mackenzie family merged in that of Scatwell.

Other principal families of the name are Mackenzie of Allangrange, heir male of the Earls of Seaforth; of Applecross, also a branch of the house of Seaforth; of Ord, of Gruinard, and of Hilton, all in Ross-shire.