

MUNRO OF FOULIS

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

The possessions of the clan Munro or Munro, situated on the north side of Cromarty Firth, were generally known in the Highlands by the name of Fèarrann Donull or Donald's country, being so called, it is said, from the progenitor of the clan, Donald the son of O'Ceann, who lived in the time of Macbeth. The Munroes were vassals of the Earls of Ross, and may be regarded as a portion of the native Scottish Gael. According to Sir George Mackenzie, they came originally from the north of Ireland with the Macdonalds, on which great clan "they had constantly a depending." Their name he states to have been derived from "a mount on the river Roe," county Derry. Clan tradition, probably not more to be relied upon than tradition generally, holds that they formed a branch of the natives of Scotland who, about 357, being driven out by the Romans, and forced to take refuge in Ireland, were located for several centuries on the stream of the Roe, and among the adjacent mountains. In the time of Malcolm II., or beginning of the 11th century, the ancestors of the Munroes are said to have come over to Scotland to aid in expelling the Danes, under the above named Donald, son of O'Ceann, who, for his services, received the lands of East Dingwall in Ross-shire. These lands, erected into a barony, were denominated Foulis, from Loch Foyle in Ireland, and the chief of the clan was designated of Foulis, his residence in the parish of Kiltarn, near the mountain called Ben Uaish or Ben Wyvis. So says tradition.

Another conjecture as to the origin of the name of Munro is that, from having acted as bailiffs or stewards to the Lords of the Isles in the earldom of Ross, they were called "Munrosses." Skene, as we have said, ranks the clan as members of a great family called the Siol O'Cain, and makes them out to be a branch of the clan Chattan, by ingeniously converting O'Cain into O'Cathan, and thus forming Chattan. Sir George Mackenzie says the name originally was Bunroe.

Hugh Munro, the first of the family authentically designated of Foulis, died in 1126. He seems to have been the grandson of Donald, the son of O'Ceann above mentioned. Robert, reckoned the second baron of Foulis, was actively engaged in the wars of David I. and Malcolm IV. Donald, heir of Robert, built the old tower of Foulis. His successor, Robert, married a daughter of the Earl of Sutherland. George, fifth baron of Foulis, obtained charters from Alexander II. Soon after the accession of Alexander III., an insurrection broke out against the Earl of Ross, the feudal superior of the Munroes, by the clans Ivor, Talvigh, and Laiwe, and other people of the province. The earl having apprehended their leader, and imprisoned him at Dingwall, the insurgents seized upon his second son at Balnagowan, and detained him as a hostage till their leader should be released. The Munroes and the Dingwalls immediately took up arms, and setting off in pursuit, overtook the insurgents at Bealligh-ne-Broig, between Ferrandonald and Loch Broom, where a sanguinary conflict took place. "The clan Ivor, clan Talvigh, and clan Laiwe," says Sir Robert Gordon, "wer almost uterlie extinguished and slain." The earl's son was rescued, and to requite the service performed he made various grants of land to the Munroes and Dingwalls.

Sir Robert Munro, the sixth of his house, fought in the army of Bruce at the battle of Bannockburn. His only son, George, fell there, leaving an heir, who succeeded his grandfather. This George Munro of Foulis was slain at Halidonhill in 1333. The same year, according to Sir Robert Gordon, although Shaw makes the date 1454, occurred the remarkable event which led to a feud between the Munroes and Mackintoshes, and of which an account is given under the former date in the General History.

Robert, the eighth baron of Foulis, married a niece of Eupheme, daughter of the Earl of Ross, and queen of Robert II. He was killed in an obscure skirmish in 1369, and was succeeded by his son, Hugh, ninth baron of Foulis, who joined Donald, second Lord of the Isles, when he claimed the earldom of Ross in right of his wife. The forfeiture of the earldom of Ross in 1476, made the Munroes and other vassal families independent of any superior but the crown. In the charters which the family of Foulis obtained from the Scottish kings, at various times, they were declared to hold their lands on the singular tenure of furnishing a ball of snow at Midsummer if required, which the hollows in their

mountain property could at all times supply; and it is said that when the Duke of Cumberland proceeded north against the Pretender in 1746, the Munroes actually sent him some snow to cool his wines. In one charter, the addendum was a pair of white gloves or three pennies.

Robert, the 14th baron, fell at the battle of Pinkie in 1547. Robert More Munro, the 15th chief, was a faithful friend of Mary, queen of Scots. Buchanan states, that when that unfortunate princess went to Inverness in 1562, "as soon as they heard of their sovereign's danger, a great number of the most eminent Scots poured in around her, especially the Frasers and Munroes, who were esteemed the most valiant of the clans inhabiting those countries." These two clans took for the Queen Inverness castle, which had refused her admission.

With the Mackenzies the Munroes were often at feud, and Andrew Munro of Milntown defended, for three years, the castle of the canonry of Ross, which he had received from the Regent Moray in 1569, against the clan Kenzie, at the expense of many lives on both sides. It was, however, afterwards delivered up to the Mackenzies under the act of pacification.

The chief, Robert More Munro, became a Protestant at an early period of the Scottish Reformation. He died in 1588. His son,[233] Robert, sixteenth baron of Foulis, died without issue in July 1589, and was succeeded by his brother, Hector Munro, seventeenth baron of Foulis. The latter died 14th November 1603.

Hector's eldest son, Robert Munro, eighteenth chief of Foulis, styled "the Black Baron," was the first of his house who engaged in the religious wars of Gustavus Adolphus, in the 17th century. In 1626 he went over with the Scottish corps of Sir Donald Mackay, first Lord Reay, accompanied by six other officers of his name and near kindred. Doddridge says of him, that "the worthy Scottish gentleman was so struck with a regard to the common cause, in which he himself had no concern but what piety and virtue gave him, that he joined Gustavus with a great number of his friends who bore his own name. Many of them gained great reputation in this war, and that of Robert, their leader, was so eminent that he was made colonel of two regiments at the same time, the one of horse, the other of foot in that service." In 1629 the laird of Foulis raised a reinforcement of 700 men on his own lands, and at a later period joined Gustavus with them. The officers of Mackay's and Munro's Highland regiments who served under Gustavus Adolphus, in addition to rich buttons, wore a gold chain round their necks, to secure the owner, in case of being wounded or taken prisoner, good treatment, or payment for future ransom. In the service of Gustavus, there were at one time not less than "three generals, eight colonels, five lieutenant-colonels, eleven majors, and above thirty captains, all of the name of Munro, besides a great number of subalterns."

The "Black Baron" died at Ulm, from a wound in his foot, in the year 1633, and leaving no male issue, he was succeeded by his brother, Hector Munro, nineteenth baron of Foulis, who had also distinguished himself in the German wars, and who, on his return to Britain, was created by Charles I. a baronet of Nova Scotia, 7th June 1634. He married Mary, daughter of Hugh Mackay of Farr, and dying in 1635, in Germany, was succeeded by his only son, Sir Hector, second baronet, who died, unmarried, in 1651, at the age of 17. The title and property devolved on his cousin, Robert Munro of Opisdale, grandson of George, third son of the fifteenth baron of Foulis.

During the civil wars at home, when Charles I. called to his aid some of the veteran officers who had served in Germany, this Colonel Robert Munro was one of them. He was employed chiefly in Ireland from 1641 to 1645, when he was surprised and taken prisoner personally by General Monk. He was subsequently lieutenant-general of the royalist troops in Scotland, when he fought a duel with the Earl of Glencairn. Afterwards he joined Charles II. in Holland. After the Revolution he was appointed commander-in-chief of the forces in Scotland.

Sir Robert Munro, third baronet of Foulis, died in 1688, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Sir John, fourth baronet, who, in the Scottish convention of estates, proved himself to be a firm supporter of the Revolution. He was such a strenuous advocate of Presbyterianism, that, being a man of large frame, he was usually called "the Presbyterian mortar-piece." In the Stuart persecutions, previous to his succession to the title, he had, for his adherence to the covenant, been both fined and imprisoned by the tyrannical government that then ruled in Scotland. He died in 1696.

His son, Sir Robert, fifth baronet, though blind, was appointed by George I. high sheriff of Ross, by commission, under the great seal, dated 9th June 1725. He married Jean, daughter of John Forbes of Culloden, and died in 1729.

His eldest son, Sir Robert, twenty-seventh baron and sixth baronet of Foulis, a gallant military officer, was the companion in arms of Colonel Gardiner, and fell at the battle of Falkirk, 17th January 1746.

In May 1740, when the Independent companies were formed into the 43d Highland regiment (now the 42d Royal Highlanders), Sir Robert Munro was appointed lieutenant-colonel, John Earl of Crawford and Lindsay being its colonel. Among the captains were his next brother, George Munro of Culcairn, and John Munro, promoted to be lieutenant-colonel in 1745. The surgeon of the regiment was his youngest brother, Dr James Munro.[215]

The fate of Sir Robert's other brother, Captain George Munro of Culcairn, was peculiar. He was shot on the shores of Loch Arkaig among the wild rocks of Lochaber, on Sunday, 31st August 1746, by one of the rebels named Dugald Roy Cameron, or, as he is styled in tradition, Du Rhu. After the Rebellion, an order was issued to the Highlanders to deliver up their arms. Dugald, accordingly, sent his son to Fort-William with his arms to be delivered up. When proceeding down Loch Arkaig, the young man was met by an officer of the name of Grant, who was conducting a party of soldiers into Knoydart, and being immediately seized, was shot on the spot. His father swore to be revenged, and learning that the officer rode a white horse, he watched behind a rock for his return, on a height above Loch Arkaig. Captain Munro had unfortunately borrowed the white horse on which Grant rode, and he met the fate intended for Grant. Dugald Roy escaped, and afterwards became a soldier in the British service.

Sir Robert left a son, Sir Harry Munro, seventh baronet and twenty-fifth baron of Foulis, an eminent scholar and a M.P.

His son, Sir Hugh, eighth baronet, had an only daughter, Mary Seymour Munro, who died January 12, 1849. On his decease. May 2, 1848, his kinsman, Sir Charles, became ninth baronet and twenty-seventh baron of Foulis. He was eldest son of George Munro, Esq. of Culrain, Ross-shire (who died in 1845), and lineal male descendant of Lieut.-General Sir George Munro, next brother to the third baronet of this family. He married—1st, in 1817, Amelia, daughter of Frederick Browne, Esq., 14th dragoons; issue, five sons and two daughters; 2d, in 1853, Harriette, daughter of Robert Midgely, Esq. of Essington, Yorkshire. Charles, the eldest son, was born in 1824, married in 1847, with issue.

The military strength of the Munroes in 1715 was 400, and in 1745, 500 men. The clan slogan or battle cry was "Caisteal Foulis na theine"—Castle Foulis in flames.