

ROSS

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

The clan Anrias or Ross—called in Gaelic clan Roisch na Gille Andras, or the offspring of the follower of St Andrew—by which can be meant only the chiefs or gentry of the clan, are descended from the Earls of Ross, and through them from the ancient Maormors of Ross. According to Mr Smibert, the mass of the clan Ross was swallowed up by and adopted the name of the more powerful Mackenzies. "The generality," he says, "had never at any time borne the name of Ross, the gentry of the sept only were so distinguished. Thus, the common people, who must naturally have intermingled freely with the real Mackenzies, would ere long retain only vague traditions of their own descent; and when the days of regular registration, and also of military enlistment, required and introduced the use of stated names, the great body of the true Ross tribe would, without doubt, be enrolled under the name of Mackenzie, the prevailing one of the district. In all likelihood, therefore, the old Rosses are yet numerous in Ross-shire."

The first known Earl of Ross was Malcolm, who lived in the reign of Malcolm the Maiden (1153–1165).

Ferquhard, the second earl, called Fearchar Mac an t-Sagairt, or son of the priest, at the head of the tribes of Moray, repulsed Donald MacWilliam, the son of Donald Bane, when, soon after the accession of Alexander II. in 1214, that restless chief made an inroad from Ireland into that province.

William, third Earl of Ross, was one of the Scots nobles who entered into an agreement, 8th March 1258, with Lewellyn, Prince of Wales, that the Scots and Welsh should only make peace with England by mutual consent.

William, fourth earl, was one of the witnesses to the treaty of Bruce with Haco, King of Norway, 28th October 1312. With his clan he was at the battle of Bannockburn, and he signed the memorable letter to the Pope in 1320, asserting the independence of Scotland. He had two sons, Hugh, his successor, and John, who with his wife, Margaret, second daughter of Alexander Comyn, fourth Earl of Buchan, got the half of her father's lands in Scotland. He had also a daughter, Isabel, who became the wife of Edward Bruce, Earl of Carrick and King of Ireland, brother of Robert the Bruce, 1st June 1317.

Hugh, the next Earl of Ross, fell, in 1333, at Halidonhill.

Hugh's successor, William, left no male heir. His eldest daughter, Euphemia, married Sir Walter Lesley of Lesley, Aberdeenshire, and had a son, Alexander, Earl of Ross, and a daughter, Margaret. Earl Alexander married a daughter of the Regent Albany, and his only child, Euphemia, Countess of Ross, becoming a nun, she resigned the earldom to her uncle John, Earl of Buchan, Albany's second son. Her aunt Margaret had married Donald, second Lord of the Isles, and that potent chief assumed in her right the title of Earl of Ross, and took possession of the earldom. This led to the battle of Harlaw in 1411.

On the death of the Earl of Buchan and Ross, at the battle of Verneuil in France in 1424, the earldom of Ross reverted to the crown. James I., on his return from his long captivity in England, restored it to the heiress of line, the mother of Alexander, Lord of the Isles, who, in 1420, had succeeded his father, Donald, above mentioned. In 1429 he summoned together his vassals, both of Ross and the Isles, and at the head of 10,000 men wasted the crown lands in the vicinity of Inverness, and burned the town itself to the ground. At the head of some troops, which he had promptly collected, the king hastened, by forced marches, to Lochaber, and surprised the earl. The mere display of the royal banner won over the clan Chattan and the clan Cameron from his support, and he himself, suddenly attacked and hotly pursued, was compelled to sue, but in vain, for peace. Driven to despair, he resolved to cast himself on the royal mercy, and on Easter Sunday, did so in the extraordinary manner narrated at p. 140 of this volume.

Alexander's son, John, the next Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles, having joined the Earl of Douglas in his rebellion

against James II., sent, in 1455, to the western coast of Scotland an expedition of 5000 men, under the command of his near kinsman, Donald Balloch, Lord of Islay. With this force he desolated the whole coast from Innerkip to Bute, the Cumbrays, and the island of Arran; but from the prudent precautions taken by the king to repel the invaders, the loss was not very considerable. The Earl of Ross afterwards made his submission, and was received into the royal favour. On the accession of James III., however, his rebellious disposition again showed itself. Edward IV. of England having entered into a negotiation with him to detach him from his allegiance, on the 19th October 1461, the Earl of Ross, Donald Balloch, and his son, John of Islay, held a council of their vassals and dependants at Astornish, at which it was agreed to send ambassadors to England to treat with Edward, for assistance to effect the entire conquest of Scotland. On the forfeiture of the Lord of the Isles in 1476, the earldom of Ross became vested in the crown.

Hugh Ross of Rarichies, brother of the last Earl of Ross, obtained a charter of the lands of Balnagowan in 1374, and on him by clan law the chiefship devolved. In the beginning of the 18th century, Donald Ross of Balnagowan, the last of his race, sold that estate to the Hon. General Ross, the brother of the twelfth Lord Ross of Hawkhead, who, although bearing the same surname, was not in any way related to him.

In February 1778, Munro Ross of Pitcalnie presented a petition to the king, claiming the earldom of Ross, as male descendant of the above-named Hugh Ross of Rarichies. This petition was sent to the House of Lords, but no decision appears to have followed upon it.

According to Mr Skene, Ross of Pitcalnie is the representative of the ancient earls; but as this claim has been disputed, and as other authorities think the Balnagowan family has a stronger claim to the chiefship, we shall take the liberty of quoting what Mr Smibert says on behalf of the latter:—"Mr Skene labours, with a pertinacity to us almost incomprehensible, to destroy the pretensions of the house, to represent the old Earls of Ross. He attempts to make out, firstly, that Paul Mactyre (or Mactire), who headed for a time the clan Ross, was the true heir-male of the fifth Earl of Ross, the last of the first house; and that the Balnagowan family, therefore, had no claims at that early time. He quotes 'an ancient historian of Highland families' to prove the great power and possessions of Paul Mactyre, the passage, as cited, running thus:—"Paul Mactyre was a valiant man, and caused Caithness to pay him black-mail. It is reported that he got nyn score of cowes yearly out of Caithness for black-mail so long as he was able to travel."

"Now, there are a few words omitted in this citation. The original document, now before us, begins thus: 'Paull M'Tyre, aforesaid, grandchild to Leandris;' that is, grandchild to Gilleanrias, the founder of the clan, and its name-giver. If he was the grandson of the founder of the sept, Paul Mactyre could certainly never have been the heir of the fifth Earl of Ross, unless he had lived to a most unconscionable age. It would seem as if Mr Skene here erred from the old cause—that is, from his not unnatural anxiety to enhance the value and authenticity of the MS. of 1450, which was his own discovery, and certainly was a document of great interest. That MS. speaks of Paul Mactyre as heading the clan at a comparatively late period. We greatly prefer the view of the case already given by us, which is, that Paul Mactyre was either kinsman or quasi tutor to one of the first Ross earls, or successfully usurped their place for a time.

"Besides, the ancient document quoted by Mr Skene to show the greatness of Paul Mactyre, mentions also the marriage of 'his daughter and heire' to Walter, laird of Balnagowne. If the document be good for one thing, it must be held good also for others. Such a marriage seems quite natural, supposing Mactyre to have been a near kinsman of the Rosses.

"Perhaps too much has been already said on this subject to please general readers; but one of our main objects is to give to clansmen all the rational information procurable on their several family histories."

"Among another class of Rosses or Roses," says the same authority, "noticed by Nisbet as bearing distinct arms, the principal family appears to be that of Rose of Kilravock," to which a number of landed houses trace their origin. According to a tradition at one period prevalent among the clan Donald, the first of the Kilravock family came from Ireland, with one of the Macdonalds, Lords of the Isles. There does not seem, however, to be any foundation for this, except, perhaps, that as vassals of the Earls of Ross, the clan Rose were connected for about half a century with the

lordship of the Isles. Mr Hugh Rose, the genealogist of the Kilravock family, is of opinion that they were originally from England, and from their having three water bougets in their coat armour, like the English family of Roos, it has been conjectured that they were of the same stock. But these figures were carried by other families than those of the name of Rose or Roos. Four water bougets with a cross in the middle were the arms of the Counts D'Eu in Normandy, and of the ancient Earls of Essex in England of the surname of Bourchier. They were indicative of an ancestor of the respective families who bore them having been engaged in the crusades, and forced, in the deserts of Palestine, to fight for and carry water in the leathern vessels called bougets, budgets, or buckets, which were usually slung across the horse or camel's back. The badge of the Roses is Wild Rosemary.

The family of Rose of Kilravock appear to have been settled in the county of Nairn since the reign of David I.