

CLANRONALD

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

The Clanranald Macdonalds of Garmoran are descended from Ranald, younger son of John, first Lord of the Isles, by his first wife, Amy, heiress of the MacRorys or Macruaries of Garmoran. In 1373 he received a grant of the North Isles, Garmoran, and other lands, to be held of John, Lord of the Isles, and his heirs. His descendants comprehended the families of Moydart, Morar, Knoydart, and Glengarry, and came in time to form the most numerous tribe of the Clandonald. Alexander Macruari of Moydart, chief of the Clanranald, was one of the principal chiefs seized by James I. at Inverness in 1427, and soon after beheaded. The great-grandson of Ranald, named Allan Macruari, who became chief of the Clanranald in 1481, was one of the principal supporters of Angus, the young Lord of the Isles, at the battle of Bloody Bay, and he likewise followed Alexander of Lochalsh, nephew of the Lord of the Isles, in his invasion of Ross and Cromarty in 1491, when he received a large portion of the booty taken on the occasion.[157] In 1495, on the second expedition of James IV. to the Isles, Allan Macruari was one of the chiefs who made their submission.

During the whole of the 15th century the Clanranald had been engaged in feuds regarding the lands of Garmoran and Uist; first, with the Siol Gorrie, or race of Godfrey, eldest brother of Ranald, the founder of the tribe, and afterwards with the Macdonalds or Clanhuistein of Sleat, and it was not till 1506, that they succeeded in acquiring a legal title to the disputed lands. John, eldest son of Hugh of Sleat, having no issue, made over all his estates to the Clanranald, including the lands occupied by them. Archibald, or Gillespock, Dubh, natural brother of John, having slain Donald Gallach and another of John's brothers, endeavoured to seize the lands of Sleat, but was expelled from the North Isles by Ranald Bane Allanson of Moydart, eldest son of the chief of Clanranald. The latter married Florence, daughter of Maclan of Ardnamurchan, and had four sons—1. Ranald Bane; 2. Alexander, who had three sons, John, Farquhar, and Angus, and a daughter; 3. Ranald Oig; and 4. Angus Reochson. Angus Reoch, the youngest son, had a son named Dowle or Coull, who had a son named Allan, whose son, Alexander, was the ancestor of the Macdonells of Morar.

In 1509 Allan Macruari was tried, convicted, and executed, in presence of the king at Blair-Athol, but for what crime is not known. His eldest son, Ranald Bane, obtained a charter of the lands of Moydart and Arisaig, Dec. 14, 1540, and died in 1541. He married a daughter of Lord Lovat, and had one son, Ranald Galda, or the stranger, from his being fostered by his mother's relations, the Frasers.

On the death of Ranald Bane, the fifth chief, the clan, who had resolved to defeat his son's right to succeed, in consequence of his relations, the Frasers, having joined the Earl of Huntly, lieutenant of the north, against the Macdonalds, chose the next heir to the estate as their chief.

This was the young Ranald's cousin-german, John Moydartach, or John of Moydart, eldest son of Alexander Allanson, second son of Allan Macruari, and John was, accordingly, acknowledged by the clan captain of Clanranald. Lovat, apprised of the intentions of the clan against his grandchild, before their scheme was ripe for execution, marched to Castletirrim, and, by the assistance of the Frasers, placed Ranald Galda in possession of the lands. The Clanranald, assisted by the Macdonalds of Keppoch and the Clan Cameron, having laid waste and plundered the districts of Abertarf and Stratherrick, belonging to Lovat, and the lands of Urquhart and Glenmoriston, the property of the Grants, the Earl of Huntly, the king's lieutenant in the north, to drive them back and put an end to their ravages, was obliged to raise a numerous force. He penetrated as far as Inverlochy in Lochaber, and then returned to his own territories. The battle of Kinloch-lochy, called Blar-nan-leine, "the field of shirts," followed, as related in the account of the clan Fraser. The Macdonalds being the victors, the result was that John Moydartach was maintained in possession of the chiefship and estates, and transmitted the same to his descendants. On the return of Huntly with an army, into Lochaber, John Moydartach fled to the Isles, where he remained for some time.

The Clanranald distinguished themselves^[155] under the Marquis of Montrose in the civil wars of the 17th century. At the battle of Killiecrankie, their chief, then only fourteen years of age, fought under Dundee, with 500 of his men. They were also at Sheriffmuir. In the rebellion of 1745, the Clanranald took an active part. Macdonald of Boisdale, the brother of the chief, then from age and infirmities unfit to be of any service, had an interview with Prince Charles, on his arrival off the island of Eriska, and positively refused to aid his enterprise. On the following day, however, young Clanranald, accompanied by his kinsmen, Alexander Macdonald of Glenaladale and Aeneas Macdonald of Dalily, the author of a Journal and Memoirs of the Expedition, went on board the prince's vessel, and readily offered him his services. He afterwards joined him with 200 of his clan, and was with him throughout the rebellion.

At the battles of Preston and Falkirk, the Macdonalds were on the right, which they claimed as their due, but at Culloden the three Macdonald regiments of Clanranald, Keppoch, and Glengarry, formed the left. It was probably their feeling of dissatisfaction at being placed on the left of the line that caused the Macdonald regiments, on observing that the right and centre had given way, to turn their backs and fly from the fatal field without striking a blow.

At Glenboisdale, whither Charles retreated, after the defeat at Culloden, he was joined by young Clanranald, and several other adherents, who endeavoured to persuade him from embarking for the Isles, but in vain. In the act of indemnity passed in June 1747, young Clanranald was one of those who were specially excepted from pardon.

The ancestor of the Macdonalds of Benbecula was Ranald, brother of Donald Macallan, who was captain of the Clanranald in the latter part of the reign of James VI. The Macdonalds of Boisdale are cadets of Benbecula, and those of Staffa of Boisdale. On the failure of Donald's

descendants, the family of Benbecula succeeded to the barony of Castletirrim, and the captainship of the Clanranald, represented by Reginald George Macdonald of Clanranald.

From John, another brother of Donald Macallan, came the family of Kinlochmoidart, which terminated in an heiress. This lady married Colonel Robertson, who, in her right, assumed the name of Macdonald.

From John Oig, uncle of Donald Macallan, descended the Macdonalds of Glenaladale. "The head of this family," says Mr Gregory, "John Macdonald of Glenaladale, being obliged to quit Scotland about 1772, in consequence of family misfortunes, sold his Scottish estates to his cousin (also a Macdonald), and emigrating to Prince Edward's Island, with about 200 followers, purchased a tract of 40,000 acres there, while the 200 Highlanders have increased to 3000."

One of the attendants of Prince Charles, who, after Culloden, embarked with him for France, was Neil MacEachan Macdonald, a gentleman sprung from the branch of the Clanranald in Uist. He served in France as a lieutenant in the Scottish regiment of Ogilvie, and was father of Stephen James Joseph Macdonald, marshal of France, and Duke of Tarentum, born Nov. 17, 1765; died Sept. 24, 1840.

The Macdonalds of Glencoe are descended from John Og, surnamed Fraoch, natural son of Angus Og of Isla, and brother of John, first Lord of the Isles. He settled in Glencoe, which is a wild and gloomy vale in the district of Lorn, Argyleshire, as a vassal under his brother, and some of his descendants still possess lands there. This branch of the Macdonalds was known as the clan Ian Abrach, it is supposed from one of the family being fostered in Lochaber. After the Revolution, Maclan or Alexander Macdonald of Glencoe, was one of the chiefs who supported the cause of King James, having joined Dundee in Lochaber at the head of his clan, and a mournful interest attaches to the history of this tribe from the dreadful massacre, by which it was attempted to exterminate it in February 1692. The story has often been told, but as full details have been given in the former part of this work, it is unnecessary to repeat them here.

The Macdonalds of Glencoe joined Prince Charles on the breaking out of the rebellion in 1745, and General Stewart, in his Sketches of the Highlanders, relates that when the [156] insurgent army lay at Kirkliston, near the seat of the Earl of Stair, grandson of Secretary Dalrymple, the prince, anxious to save his lordship's house and property, and to remove from his followers all excitement and revenge, proposed that the Glencoe-men should be marched to a distance, lest the remembrance of the share which his grandfather had in the order for the massacre of the clan should rouse them to retaliate on his descendant. Indignant at being supposed capable of wreaking their vengeance on an innocent man, they declared their resolution of returning home, and it was not without much explanation and great persuasion that they were prevented from marching away the following morning.