



ISTORY of



ULL

& of Scotland <1500

Although the Clan McGilvray is mentioned but rarely in pre-1500 records all the family legends indicate our story begins on or near the Isle of Mull. (162p.197) Thus, one can speculate about their earlier history by reviewing the historical highlights pertaining to this region.

Mull, or Mal-eus, was notable enough to be mentioned by Ptolemy, in 125AD. Because it was situated along the pathways taken by a number of important historical migrations its history has been turbulent as well as long. The Picts, the Celts/Scots, & the Norse/Danes have all inhabited this area at various times. We will never know which, if any, of these peoples were the ancestors of the McGilvrays but we can surmise they all had a major impact & lasting influence on our family. (The primary historical sources for this book have been James Brown & Donald Gregory, numbers 19 & 84 in the Bibliography.)



Bartholomew's; in Road Book of Scotland, by AA. 1953 p.269

The



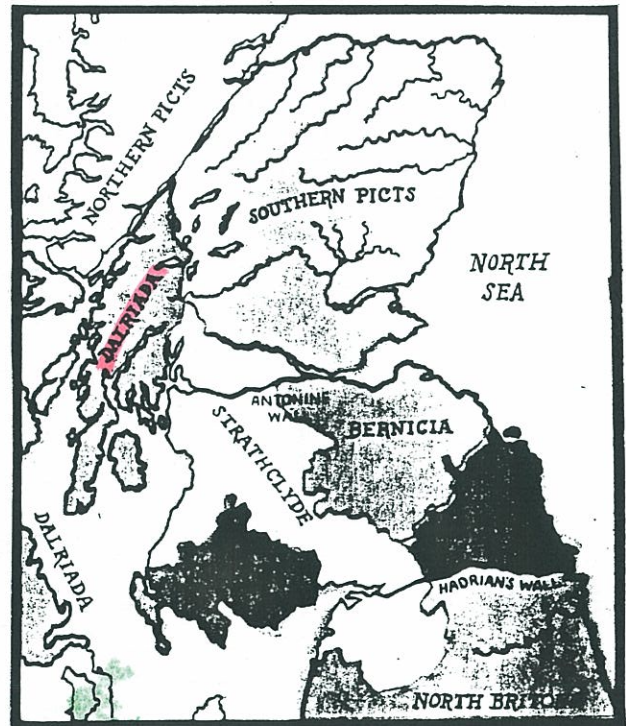
COTS

were a branch of the Celtic race which is believed to have originated in & around the Alps. The Celts arrived in Ireland after having been displaced from their homelands by Germanic & Roman expansion. (190) It was then not uncommon for whole nations to pack up & move to greener pastures. The Scottish branch must have been exceptionally footloose for even the name Scot, in Celtic, means wanderer or rover. (146p.35) These vigorous & powerful fellows seem to have been able to make themselves at home anywhere.

*Green are the hills that are far from us.*

In the third & fourth centuries, the Kingdom of Dalriada (basically Argyllshire) was formed from the colonies of Scots who sailed over from northern Ireland. A major group arrived in 327AD when King Colla da Crioch & 350 clan chiefs were banished from Ireland & settled in the Western Isles. (109p.7) Possibly there was a McGilvray chief among them.

This Scot's incursion into north Britain put them in conflict with the original Picts but sometimes the two races combined to harass the Romans; who first mention the Scots in 360AD. (19v1p.98) At one time, Mull was divided between Picts & Scots. But, any equilibrium that might have existed was irrevocably disrupted in 503AD, when Fergus MacErc (& his two brothers; Angus & Lorne) led a fresh Scottish invasion force from Ireland & established their main stronghold at Dunadd (near Lochgilphead - 30 miles south of Oban).



It is said the colonists sailed from the Antrim ports around Ballycastle Bay & that they formed three distinct but cooperative settlements. Angus secured Isla, Jura & Iona & likely parts of Mull (or else he soon expanded into Mull). Angus would later be shipwrecked & drowned near his northern Ireland castle, Carrig-Fergus (Castle or Rock of Fergus). (94p.3)



## CHRISTIANITY &



## ONA

The next intrusion into this area was that of Christianity. Its first missionary, St. Oran, set up churches in Iona, in Mull & in Tiree. (153pp.15/19) Iona is the small island just off the southwest tip of Mull. It had been a Druid religious centre for centuries prior to this time so it was a natural place to establish the new religion. The ruins of a Druid temple lie three miles northeast of Pennyghael & there is a stone circle at Lochbuie. There still remain many Druid standing stones on Mull (all about 6' high) some of which are near the McGilvray lands; & there is a Dun, or small defensive enclosure, at Pennyghael. (3)



In 563 the great Irish missionary, St Columba, arrived on Iona. Before he died, in 597, he had established a monastery that would become famous throughout Christendom. Columba was a nobleman of the Cenel Conaill (O'Donnells) who, with the O'Neills, were the dominant clan of Donegal. Columba had left Sligo, Ireland (at age 42) after losing what was likely the first copyright action in post-Roman history.

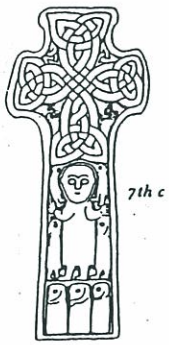
He had borrowed a book of psalms from St. Finian, but before returning it, Columba made a copy. Finian claimed both book & copy & the dispute was submitted to High King Diarmuid who ruled, in a Solomon-like judgement;

*"To every cow its calf, &  
to every book its copy".*



The hard feelings that resulted led to fighting between the two factions &, in the Battle of the Books (561AD), many were killed. In anguish St. Columba sailed away. (109)

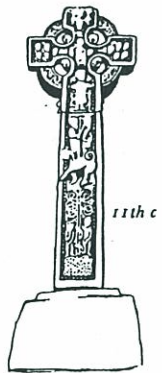
Columba went to Hii (Iona) with 20 bishops, 40 priests, 30 deacons & 50 youths. (224p.491) Other accounts place the number of initial followers at 12. Few details are known of these monks as the little surviving information deals mainly with Columba's



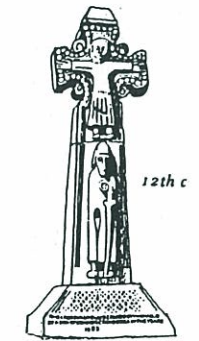
prophecies. (206) Even when specific monks are mentioned, the lack of surnames during that era makes it impossible to determine if any McGilvrays were in this early monastery. However, as there was continued movement of Irish missionaries & disciples over the years, it is possible the McGilvrays came later, if indeed they *were* priests, as will be contended. And, if, as will also be postulated, they were Druids then they would have predated Oran & Columba & have adapted to Christianity. There is also the possibility we were Picts or may even descend partly from the earliest Stone Age or Bronze Age people.



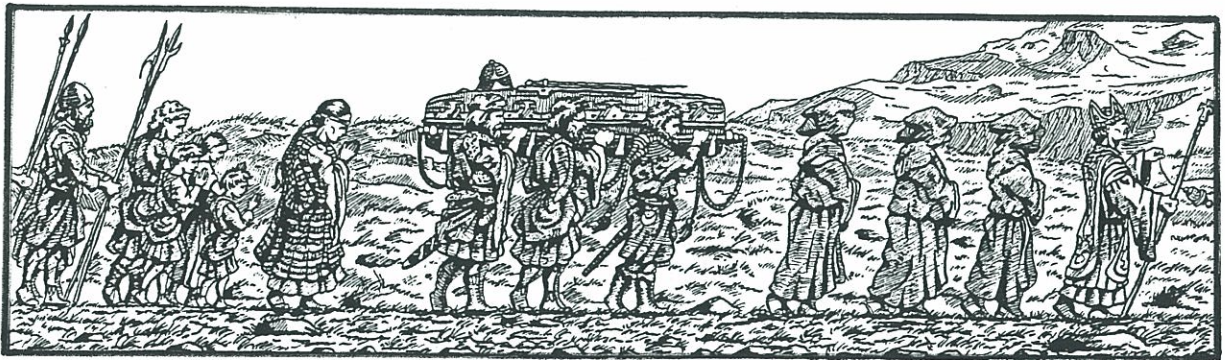
Monastery life was simple & evolved around the dictates of reading, writing & labor. Columba's church especially laid great emphasis upon education which has continued to be important in the Western Isles to this day. However, this predilection, plus Iona's simple teachings of the gospel, were considered 'erroneous' by Rome for they were based on rival, eastern (Ephesus) Christianity interpretations. When these views were forced to yield to the Vatican, at the 664AD Synod of Whitby, the people said; "*the Celtic church gave love; the Roman - law*". Thus, even as Catholic priests, the McGilvrays would have had to have been adaptable to changing times.



Iona attracted many pilgrims. As well, students came from all parts of civilized Europe, & the island retreat became a centre for learning & culture during the Dark Ages. In that age of darkness Ireland was the bearer of many torches, & Iona, her fairest daughter, more than any other, stood for all that was luminous & spiritual, pure & unworldly. (15p.23) It was from this monastery that Christianity was introduced throughout northern Britain.



And, it was to Iona that over 60 Scottish, Irish & Norwegian kings & heroes were brought to be buried, including Duncan & his murderer, Macbeth (immortalized by Shakespeare).



*The Story of Muir & Iona, by Nick Hesketh. 1988 p.22*

The corpses were carried in great funeral pomp, from their ships, up the long stone causeway to the Cathedral. Such rituals would have been all too common due to the almost ceaseless fighting between neighbors, civil conflicts in Dalriada, & wars with the Picts, that occurred between 500 & c850. Internal fights were common because Celtic succession of rulers did not automatically go to the eldest son, & because of the pretensions of the provincial kings.

Over the centuries, Iona declined in importance as power & knowledge shifted to central Scotland. By 1561 it had become an anachronism & the new Protestant Church gave it & its lands to the local chiefs. (221) The once beautiful cathedral fell into ruins. Religious fanaticism & lordly greed proved more destructive than even the Vikings.



# The



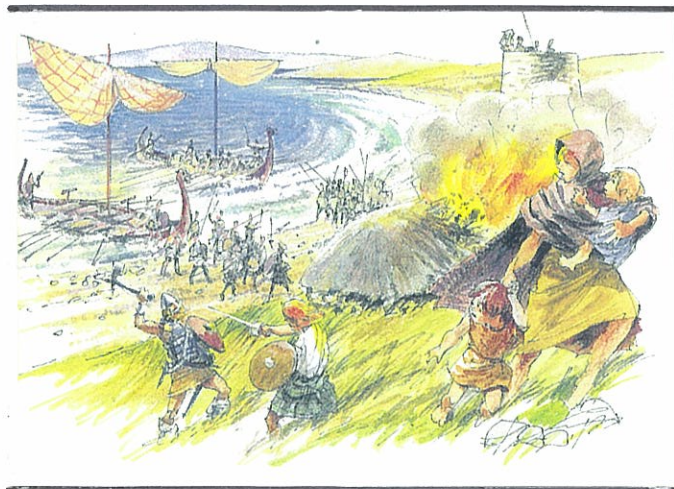
# VIKINGS

The petty feuds of the Scottish warlords faded into insignificance with the onslaught of the marauding Vikings who came seeking the treasure that Iona's fame had attracted. Originally these vicious pirates had stayed mainly within the Baltic. Although the island of Eigg & a few other places in the Hebrides were raided in 617 (92p.12) it is possible this was done by local pirates rather than by Vikings trying out this new area. In any event, their first serious western raid was in 787 when they struck eastern England.

There they found the monasteries to be rich & easy targets. In those days the churches were, like our banks, repositories of wealth & this was their undoing. If they had been less concerned with gold and silver, it is doubtful the Vikings would have been so attracted to them.

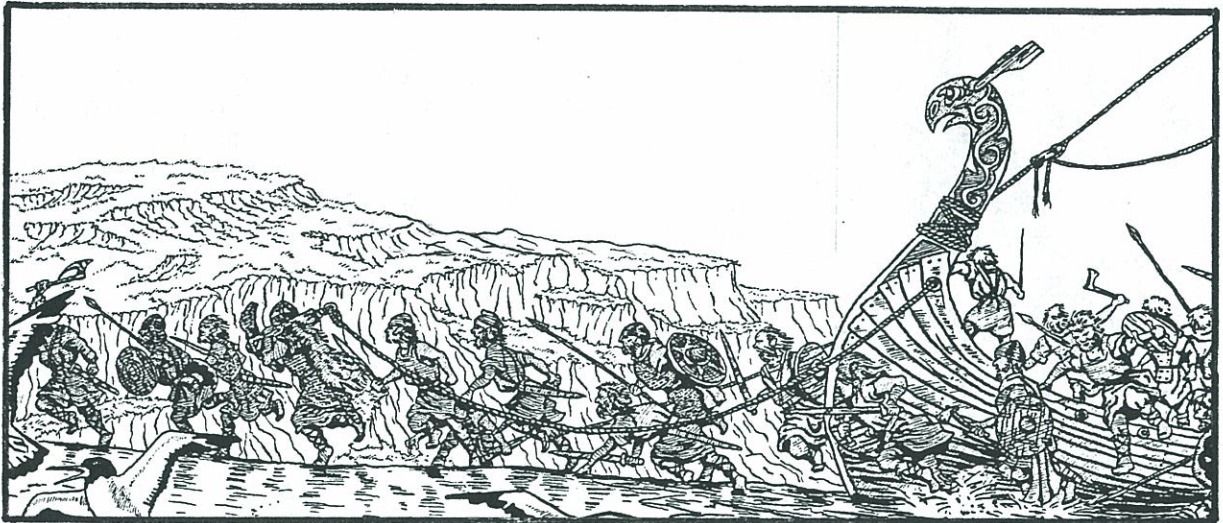


Eight years later the Vikings attacked Iona. The Cathedral was sacked in 802 & raided again in 805/6 (when 68 monks were killed at Martyr's Bay), & again in 925, 985/6, & 1069. The Vikings became very familiar with Mull (as they called it) for this area lay on their path to their new bases in Ireland. The serious damage wrought on the abbey during these five raids was each time laboriously repaired until, in 1093/7, the Norwegian Magnus Barelegs (or Barefeet) specifically safeguarded the Iona Church (140v15p.4) [note: various sources often give different dates or variant names] Magnus was given this nickname after he adopted the Highland gentry's short tunics. (223p.147)



The recorded raids on Iona do not mention, but certainly indicate, that the local inhabitants suffered incessant depredations during the 400 years following 850 when the Western Isles, & much of Argyll, fell completely under Norse sway. Although King Magnus may have spared Iona's Cathedral, the people were not so fortunate. Even in the early 1100's it is recorded that "the people of Mull ran for fear".

During his great invasion in 1095 Magnus burned & slaughtered his way through the Isles. After this, the Scottish King Malcolm accepted the obvious & granted the region to him. But, in 1098 the Islesmen (who by this period must have included many of Norse blood) rebelled, & when Magnus returned, the slaughter was so great that the survivors fled to the mainland. (14p.355) That could be the time when the McGilvrays wisely moved to Morvern for it is then & there that they are first mentioned.



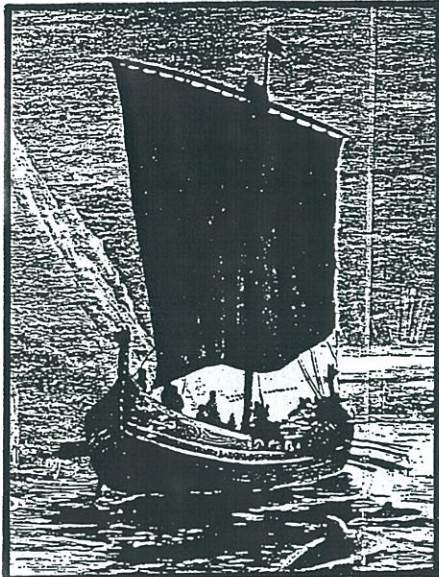
*The Story of Mu11 & Iona, by Nick Hesketh. 1988 p.23*

These pirates often seized a local coastal village, with its food stores & women, & used it as a base from which to raid other areas. They showed few mercies & many villages had rows of heads stuck on poles to remind the area Scots who was boss. Even if the Vikings didn't kill you they usually carried you off to the slave market. When that area was depopulated & barren, (they often set forest fires to eliminate shelter for their enemies) & all peaceful shipping had been driven from the seas, they moved to another village. No place was safe.

And, no one was safe, for these people were just as vicious when they were feuding among themselves. Even a Swedish king, Olaf 'Tree-hewer', was sacrificed to Woden by his own subjects during a famine in 710. These men loved their rough life style & if they cared little for their own lives, one can imagine how insignificant they considered those of weak foes. Our word 'berserk' is derived from the way they fought. The next time you are chopping wood, imagine the damage that a razor sharp axe could do to a body when wielded by a very strong, proficient & angry brute.

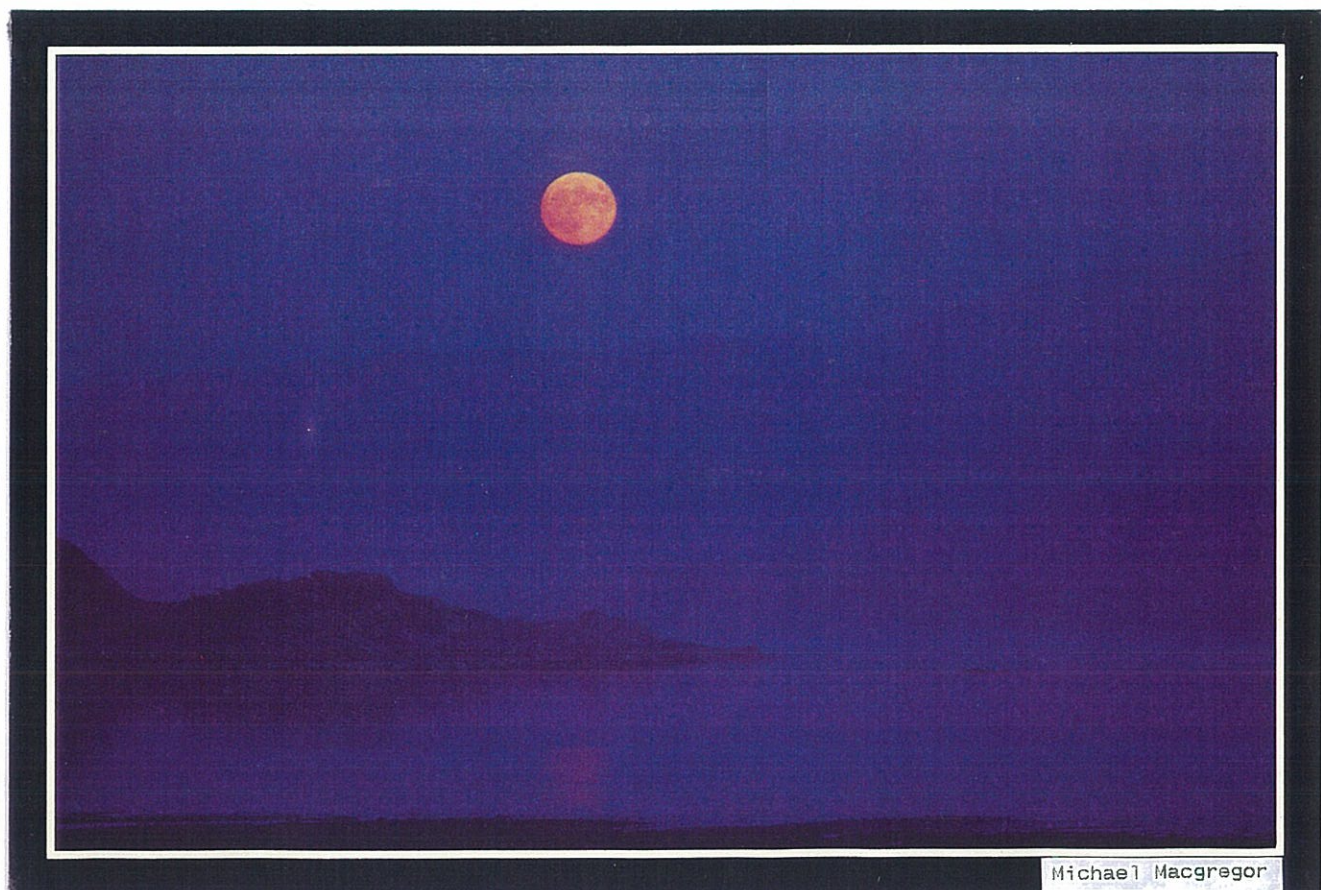


Such nicknames, as Olaf's, were used to distinguish themselves. There was Haldon 'the Stingy' whose descendants ruled the Western Isles; Harold 'Blue-tooth'; Eystein 'Bad-fart'; & of course there were the inevitable sexual connotations. They also gave names to their weapons such as an axe being called 'leg-biter'.



The Viking's main weapon was their long-ship from which they never strayed far. This mobile raiding machine, with its high dragon head & colorful square sail, could travel anywhere there was water. They often set out on their raids in great fleets with thousands of men. Even the walls of Paris & London proved insufficient & they conquered & colonized whole areas of England, Ireland & Normandy, as well as much of the Hebrides.

The raider's long-ships would appear suddenly around a headland or out of the mist & they would swoop down on any likely habitation.



Michael Macgregor



After pillaging & burning the homes & churches they would sweep the countryside bare of arms & provisions & then return to their ships before a force could be collected against them. During the day the McGilvrays likely kept scanning the horizon & at night prayed to Balor, the Celtic God of Darkness, that they might live to see the morning light.

Four centuries of absolute Viking control is a very long time. It is, therefore, to be expected that the Western Isles became merely an extension of Norway & that Viking barbarism became the standard for this area. The result must have been that the McGilvrays, in order to survive, became as adept at deception & killing as these invaders. Some sources believe that many of the 'Vikings' in the Isles were, in reality, Scottish pirates. Of course, the McGilvrays may, in fact, be Norse or, like most other Highlanders, have a strong Viking strain in their blood.

The Norse settlers who followed the Viking raiders would have appreciated the resemblance of the McGilvray lands to their homeland fiords. They would also have desired the relatively good farm land found at both Pennyghael & Carsaig. Carsaig Bay would have been an excellent Viking summer base. Its gentle beach was ideal for hauling their ships ashore; the bay was sheltered from most weather; the nearby cliffs offered excellent look-out points to see both enemies & prey (many such posts have been identified on the south coast of the Ross); it would have been difficult to attack by land; the wide sea entrance meant it would be hard to box them in; &, land targets & sea routes were within easy reach.

The attractiveness of such sites would have meant that if McGilvrays were there during this period they would have been driven out. The other McGilvray homeland on Mull, Glencannel, was also on a inlet although now it is landlocked. (see map p.22)

The bloody deeds of those ultra violent times have resulted in numerous apparitions being seen today. One evening, in 1944, a local resident was walking near the northern shore of Iona when he noticed that all the familiar landmarks were missing & that no houses stood in their usual places. Nearing the Whitesands he saw a fleet of long-ships approaching rowed by armed, gesticulating warriors. He turned to find a group of monks standing nearby.



*Norse Galley.*

After slaughtering the unarmed holy men, the intruders disappeared over the dunes in the direction of the Abbey. Presently the sky was filled with smoke & the warriors reappeared driving cattle before them. Once the beasts were safely aboard the galleys, sails were hoisted & the ships disappeared below the horizon. The man's description of the Viking's painted sails was verified & until that time he had not known that the Abbot & 15 monks had been massacred at that point on Christmas Eve in 986; giving the spot its name, 'the White Strand of the Monks' (at Martyr's Bay).

Other persons have seen & heard spectres & non-existent bells, & there is the case of an Anglican clergyman who walked in a trance, on the site of the long vanished causeway, leading from the sea to the Abbey, quite oblivious of the fact that he was up to his middle in water. (95p.100)

The Viking depredations had repercussions on mainland Scotland as well as on the Western Isles. The Dalriada Scots' encroachments into the Highlands of the Picts were intensified by the Viking push. The Picts seem to have been evenly matched with the Scots & were holding their own until they suffered a serious defeat against the Vikings in 838. (193b.p.178) The Scots, under their King, Kenneth McAlpine, took advantage of this opportunity & wrested the whole of the mainland Highlands from the Picts in 843. Following this, the Picts simply fade away historically & were likely completely absorbed by, & mixed with, the Scots just as the Vikings would intermix with the Scots of the Western Isles. It must be remembered that our concept of national boundaries & even permanence of home would have been unknown to these tribal peoples.

In spite of these great tribal migrations, & their periods of conflict, there continued to be much peaceful intermovement between Ireland & Dalriada & even with the Picts prior to their demise. (78p.35) It would be similar to any frontier society where small groups of adventurous people, especially the younger generation, would be searching continually for new farming & trading opportunities. All such interplay makes it impossible to be certain of where the McGilvrays originated or what their blood lines were.

The expansion of the Scots into northern Britain (called Scotia after 1020) led to the further isolation of the Western Isles as the Scottish Kings became concerned increasingly with mainland events. King Kenneth moved his capital from Dunstaffnage (on the west coast just 5 miles north of Oban) to Scone (Perth) which was more central to his enlarged kingdom. (19v1p.57) It was also safer from the Vikings. Malcolm II came to the throne in 1003 & for 30 years kept the Vikings at bay. In 1039 Macbeth killed the new King Duncan at Bothgowanan (near Elgin) but was himself killed by MacDuff in 1057. The 'Coronation Stone' or 'Stone of Fate', connected with Scone, is said to have come from Spain with the Celts & to have been carried to Dunstaffnage by Fergus McDonald.

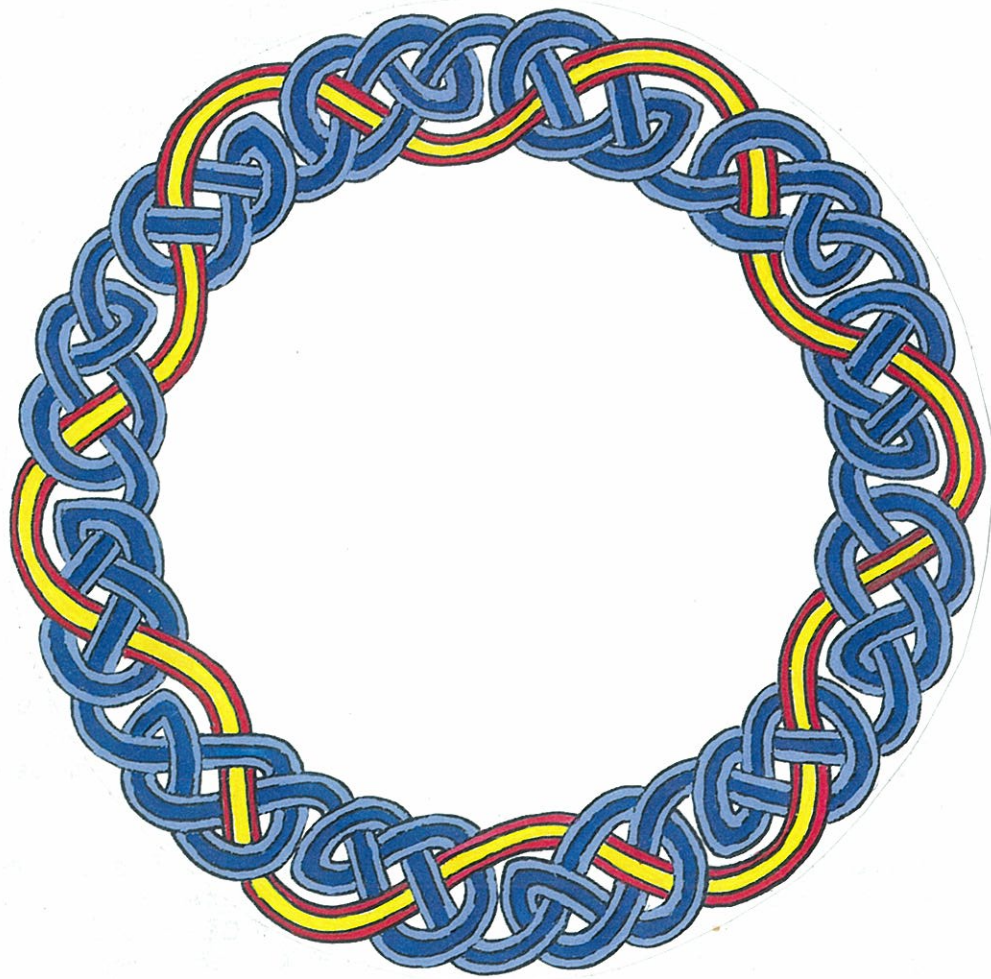
The next great threat to the Scots was from another bunch of Norsemen - the Normans under William & William Rufus, who had just conquered England in 1066. Malcolm III moved his court still further south to Dunfermline &, as his attention shifted to the Borders, he left the Highlanders to fend for themselves.



WILLIAM I (1027-1087)  
(William The Conqueror)  
Penny - Silver Coin



For their part, the Highlanders scarcely acknowledged a distant government which could neither enforce obedience nor afford protection. As well, the geographical division of their highland country into so many valleys & islands gave rise to many distinct groups who looked to their own leaders for rules. Each district became a petty, independent state. This dream of separation from the Scottish Crown would set the pattern of violence for the next 700 years. The people, now beyond the reach of the king's laws, stayed fierce & turbulent, revenging their wrongs in person & knowing that (under Celtic law) any crime could be commuted by payment. Such thinking created chiefs in place of judges. (19v1pp.119&p.155) It would have been tough times for a clan which specialized in the law, the church & administration.





## SOMERLED (c1100-1164)

In 1156 the islands south of Ardnamurchan (including Mull) were ceded to Somerled, a Norse Celt. His mother was a daughter of an Irish chief & a relative of the Norwegian king; while his father, Gillebride (or Gillebrede or Gillibrehde or Gilbert) (son of Gilledomnan), was the exiled Thane (Lord) of Argyll, including Lorne (that part of Argyll that surrounds Oban) & Morvern. (242p.12) Somerled married Ragnhildis, the daughter of Olaf Godredson (or Olay or Olave) the Red, King of Man, Islay, Mull & the Southern Isles. Somerled was said to have been of average height & shapely build; a well-tempered man with a fair, piercing eye & quick discernment. (84p.16)

This connection between Argyll & the Isle of Man at this period opens another historical possibility for the McGilvrays. Lagmann, the father of Olaf the Red, went on the first Crusade, where he died in 1096. It is known that he & his men crossed to Normandy & joined with Duke Robert. But why they didn't go all the way by galley? We can only guess whether any McGilvrays accompanied them. A contemporary described the groups of Scots as "*ferocious among themselves but unwarlike elsewhere, coming forth from their marshy lands with bare legs, shaggy cloaks, & purse hanging from their shoulders; their abundant arms seemed ridiculous to us*". (172pp.130/3)

Regardless of which great king ruled the area, the local overlords were constantly vying for power. Somerled was ambitious & was determined to regain the lands once governed by his father. With the aid of his relative's vassals, & of Irish free-booters, he slowly drove the other Norse overlords out of the area & regained his inheritance. By 1158 he controlled all of the Western Isles.

An old shenachie (Hugh McDonald of Skye, writing c1630) told how Somerled got his start. He said the Norse had compelled the inhabitants of some of their Northern Isles to attack Morvern. The local clans were going into battle to defend themselves but could not determine who should lead them. At length they agreed to make the first person who should appear their general. Somerled came along with his bow, quiver & sword & they appointed him. (Luckily it wasn't a decrepit old shepherd.) They won & ultimately Mull & Morvern were freed. [See map inside back cover.]

The shenachie went on to say that "*the principal surnames in the country were McInneses & McGilvrays, who are the same as the McInneses*". It would thus appear that the McGilvrays were already a principal clan in the Morvern, Ardgour & Lochaber areas of old Dalriada prior to 1100. (223 & 181p.158 & 83v1pp.1/6) Basically, this is the mainland area situated northeast of Mull. Unfortunately, the shenachie didn't say how these two clans were related. It is

interesting, however, that even today there are McInnes families in the Outer Hebrides who are referred to locally in Gaelic as McGillebhreithich (which would be McGilvray in English). They had migrated there from southern Morvern. (When?)

Our McInnes relatives were Constables of the Castle of Kinlochaline but are believed to have suffered greatly during the wars with Scotland's King Alex II. Their last chief is said to have been murdered at Ardtornish in 1390 after which the McInnes descendants aligned themselves with other clans. Other sources say we were also intimately associated with the MacMasters & with the MacEacherns.



Kinlochaline.



Although there has been some criticism of the shenachie's details (152v9/3rdp.70) he is generally recognized as an authority. In any event, this is one of the first identifications of any Highland clan name & indicates that even if we were not responsible for Somerled's beginnings at least we were an important part of his early forces & would certainly have been rewarded as such. And, although the story says we were then a principal clan on the mainland, this does not preclude the possibility of an earlier displacement from Mull by the Vikings.

The Morvern homeland of our clan is substantiated by legends of the MacGillivrays of Dunmaglass (Inverness) which state they are an offshoot of an ancient Celtic clan who originated there. These MacGillivrays were the first & oldest of the 'attached' clans to the Mackintosh Clan Chattan Confederation, (169) & their chiefs held the castle of Dunmaglass, with lands in Lochaber & Morvern. (118) Dun-ma-glass means the fort of the grey man's son. (175p.737)

Legend also says the Mull lands of Pennyghael (& likely Carsaig & Glencannel), which would ultimately become more important to the McGilvrays than any in Morvern, were given to the clan by Somerled in recognition of their support. As he was born around 1100 it means the McGilvrays were in the general area well before that time. From a historical perspective it is likely they were merely getting these Mull lands restored to them by Somerled after having been earlier driven out by the Vikings (possibly by King Magnus c1100). Clans often took sides in a war hoping to regain previously lost lands. And, obviously, no other clan had a better (enforceable) claim to these regained Mull lands at the time. If this concept is correct then the McGilvrays must have been



This same McDonald shenachie noted that the McGilvrays continued to wield influence, from their Mull homeland, long after Somerled. He defined the mode of government under the Lordship of the Isles in the 1300's when Macdonald had his 16 member council at Island Finlaggan in Islay. (south of Mull) There were four great lords (MacLean of Duart, MacLaine of Lochbuie, MacLeod of Harris & MacLeod of Lewis). Next were four Thanes (McKinnon, who had land in Mull in 1354; McQuarrie of Ulva & the adjacent area in Mull; MacNeill of Gigha; & MacNeill of Barra). They were followed by freeholders who held their "lands in factory": Macgee (Islay), MacNicol (Skye); & MacEachern, Mackay & McGilvray in Mull, MacMillan, etc. (185p.120 & 171v1p.24 & 140v12p.45) This was the council through which the Inner & Outer Hebrides were governed from the 1300's until the early 1600's. Another early document (108) says "McIlvora or McGilvra, of Pennygail in Mull, was the name of an ancient family, of small property, who (later) followed the MacLeans".

More detail is available regarding these freehold families; (111½p.53)

- Macgee (Mackay), maor (factor) of North Kintyre & the Rhinns.
- MacNicol (Nicolson), officer of Trotternish under the MacLeods of Skye. (116½)
- MacEachern, maor of South Knapdale.
- MacMillan, maor of Knapdale around Castle Sween.
- McGilvray, administrative officers in Mull. (If only some details had been provided for our elucidation.) This role would require some form of education and, of course, does not preclude the known job specialities of lawyer & priest which were common for family members >1500.

Other families held office by virtue of their duties; (111½p.54)

- MacBrehons (MacBryons), lawyers & virtual chancellors.
- MacBeths (Beaton), physicians
- MacEacherns, masters of horse
- MacMairich (McVurich), bards
- MacLaverty, speechmakers

The shenachie says this council sat around a stone table at the Round Island near Finlaggan. Here was the "Justice seat where 14 of the most worthy of the country did minister justice onto all the rest". Their equity & discretion kept peace at home & abroad. With this peace came the companion of peace; abundance of all things. (94p.17) This table, along with the bells of Iona, were later plundered by Argyll. He also explains that "there was a judge in every Isle for the discussion of all controversies, who had lands from McDonald for their trouble, & likewise the 11th part of every action decided". Was this a McGilvray occupation?

But, the established procedures of the Lord of the Isles did not occur without many generations of turmoil & evolution. Everyone is affected by change &, just as today, the bitterness can be softened by astute leadership which has been guided by wise counsellors & administrators. Was this a McGilvray role?

Somerled had to fight many battles to seize control of the Isles. As sea power would have been a prerequisite, the Sound of Mull must have been witness to many great fleets of long-ships. It is probable that one or more would have been McGilvray galleys.

Even after the Viking overlords were driven out, the area was rarely peaceful. Few successful kings have ever been content to rest on their laurels & fighting had become a way of life. The McGilvrays could have been part of Somerled's forces in 1138 when he helped the Scottish King David at the Battle of the Standard, at Northallerton in Yorkshire, where they were defeated by the English longbow.

Somerled became so powerful as to threaten the new Scottish King Malcolm IV (1141-1165) & when forced to maintain his independence, the Lord of the Isles gathered a fleet of 160 galleys & sailed up the Clyde. On the eve of the battle (in 1164, near Renfrew) it is commonly believed he was assassinated in his tent by a trusted friend. It is said that a son was also assassinated & that the two men were buried at Saddell Abbey in Kintyre. However, the evidence indicates he & a son, along with many followers, were killed in a badly fought battle, & interned at Iona. (161; Nov 1991 p.6) History is silent, as it so often is regarding women, about the fate of his wife, Ragnhilde.

After Somerled's death the Western Isles drifted back into their independent ways as his three sons divided the kingdom:

- \* Dugald received Lorne, Mull, Jura, Tiree & Coll; & his descendants, the Macdougalls, founded the House of Argyll & Lorne.
- \* Reginald received Kintyre & Islay & his son Donald founded the clan Macdonald who became the Lords of the Isles. Reginald rebuilt the main buildings of the Iona abbey & founded a nunnery there. This must have been a major change for it is said Columba had decreed there could be no cows or women on Iona: "*where there is a cow, there will be a woman; & where there is a woman, there will be mischief*".

Although the McDonalds are known to be descended from Somerled there is a legend of their Scottish migration which involves two brothers setting sail from Ireland. They spied the island of Islay & when both resolved to possess it, they agreed to race for it with their ships. Almost at the shore, the brother in the second ship (only a bit behind) placed his left hand on the gunwale & with his own sword cut it off & threw it ashore, crying "*my flesh & blood are on shore ahead of you*". (140v12p.131)

- \* Angus received Bute, Arran & the Northern Isles. (242)





OST



IKING

The divided kingdom of Somerled led inevitably to conflict as his sons each vied for control. The resulting overall decline of Norse/Celtic power in the Isles concurred with the increasing strength of the Scottish kings. The unruliness of the Islanders would give these kings the excuse they needed for intervention into an area they never felt they had really lost. This overall scenario would be repeated often over the next 600 years.

In 1211 a large number of freebooters from the West & from Ireland plundered Ross-shire & in 1222 there was a major insurrection in Argyll. Alex II of Scotland (1198-1249) decided the time was right to invade the disputed region. When several of the local chiefs fled, Alex gave their lands to his loyal Argyll followers. (19v1p.224) As Reginald's forces were his strongest local ally it is likely they received most of such lands. (51v90p.199)

Some scholars believe our family was affected by these upheavals, which they claim resulted in many clans being scattered far & wide. Other historians discredit any such dispersal & believe the family just spread naturally throughout the region. It is possible that the McGilvray Clan may have been already split by this time but some of them were definitely uprooted from Lochaber & Morvern during this period. (135p.36/7) This may have been the reason for the Inverness Sept of McGillivrays looking for a new allegiance & home at this time - if they had supported the losing side.

The changes in tribal control of the region did not occur overnight or peacefully. Alex had to return in 1249 to reclaim the unruly Western Isles from the Norse who still considered this region to be their territory. But Alex died on 8 July, at Gylen Castle, Kerrara, just 15 miles east of Carsaig. Following his death the enterprise was abandoned & his troops dispersed, leaving the turbulent area's control unsettled. Angus Mor of Islay saw this as an opportunity to ravage Loch Lomond by copying an old Viking trick & dragging his galleys overland from Loch Long. (187p.58) However, the next year the mainland Scots retaliated & ravaged the Isles, killing many Norse supporters.

The Islanders were quite capable of preserving the independence of their disputed region by playing one king off against another. They now appealed to Norway for assistance. King Hakon (or Haco or Haakon) had noticed the increasing intervention by Scottish kings into 'his' island affairs & in 1263 he sailed here with the largest fleet ever to leave his country. Again, at Gylen Castle in Little Horseshoe Bay, Kerrara, (243p.259) he met the Highland chieftains who were his vassals (including the McGilvrays &/or the McGillivrays?). In this, the last of their invasions, the Norsemen tried to conquer Ayrshire, but a storm, Hakon's old age, & the new king of Scotland defeated them at Largs.

When the Hebrides were finally ceded back to Scotland in 1266, by Hakon's son, the agreement stated that the local Vikings who had supported Hakon were not to be punished or to be disturbed in their possessions. (94p.12) They were given the option of staying or of departing with all their goods. It is said the Isles were thinly populated after this expulsion for most of the original peoples had long since been killed or driven out. But, there were still many Norse who elected to stay, particularly those in the islands who, during their long occupation, had intermarried & become absorbed into the remaining local population. There has always been a natural tendency for invaders to secure their new possessions through marriage into the families of pragmatic local chiefs.

The McGilvrays must not have had strong Norse ties, nor must they have made mortal enemies during the 'revolution', for they obviously chose to stay. Overlords placed more value on obedience than on blood lines. And, even at that time, our clansmen were likely minor chieftains who had merely to shift alliances & then, over the years, gain close ties with their new, more powerful neighbors (as they would do again with the MacLeans). These inter-clan arrangements were necessary in a land where tempers were short & memories long. To survive, one needed watchful eyes & powerful friends. The result was that small clans, like the McGilvrays, aligned themselves with larger clans. Powerful confederations of such mergers controlled large areas &, as explained, in the early 1300's the two strongest in this area were the heirs of Somerled; the Macdougall (& later Stewart) Lords of Lorne & the Macdonald Lords of the Isles. These lords, in turn, would have had to shift their allegiance from the Norse King of Man & the Isles, to the Scottish King in Edinburgh.

When such allegiances were being sworn it was important that the ceremony fit the occasion & that the symbols of sovereignty be engraved firmly onto the visual memory of the illiterate participants. One such ritual occurred when a new Lord of the Isles was to be proclaimed. This ancient ceremony took place on the inauguration rock which stood near Dunadd, their old fortress, five miles north of Lochgilphead at Kilmichael. All the heads of the tribes, who were his vassals, assembled around this 7' square stone in which there were two deep impressions. The new king stood in these depressions & swore to walk in the ways of his fathers, to support his subjects & to exact justice. Then his father's sword was given to him & seven priests anointed him king. (19v1p.260 & 83v1p.24)

Also near this place was a small artificial mound called Dun Donald. This elevated point was where the Lord of the Isles gave judgement for all to see. (78p.37) His decisions would have been guided by his 'Doomsters' (judges). As will be shown, it is very likely that the McGilvrays were these judges & priests & thus directly involved in these ceremonies.

Following the reconquest of the Hebrides & the final settlement of the Norse threat by Alex III, in 1266, the Lowlanders were free to concentrate on feuding amongst themselves. In 1286 Alex fell (or was pushed) to his death while riding along the north shore cliffs of the Firth of Forth one dark, stormy night. Alex's death may not have been 'natural'.

Just before this time Alex's queen had died childless & he was seeking a new wife to give him heirs. One day, while residing in the royal castle at Jedburgh (on the Borders southeast of Edinburgh), he met the beautiful woman he was determined to make his queen. Her name was Yolande de Dreux, Dutchess of Brittany.

Unfortunately, for Alex, Yolande was already engaged to a French knight, named Eronton de Blois, who had made a name for himself fighting in the Crusades. But, Alex, being a true king, did not let this stand in his way & he pursued the young beauty with all his heart. On her part, Yolande preferred the idea of becoming Queen of Scotland & she promptly fell out of love with her fiance. Getting rid of him, however, was not quite that easy. Her father, who had arranged the match, would not compromise his honour by breaking the engagement.

Yet Yolande had a mind of her own. She forced a bitter quarrel with Eronton & succeeded in driving him away. This might have ended the affair had it not been for the intervention of a third party, the Count of Montbar, an unscrupulous, scheming & ambitious man who wished to advance his own fortunes by consolidating the match. To ensure success he proposed to kill Eronton if, in return, Yolande would give him an influential position at the Scottish court after she became queen. She agreed & a few days later Eronton was found with a dirk protruding from his back. An immediate inquiry was launched but the murderer was never caught & no one suspected either Montbar or Yolande. Now, the new engagement was honorable & it was soon announced.

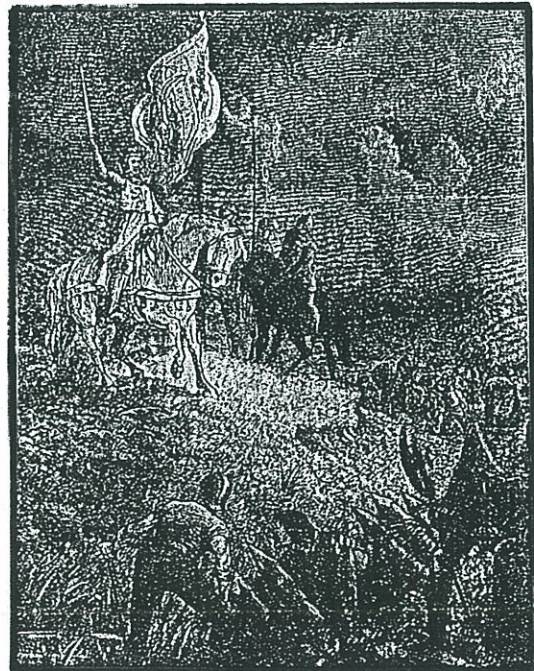
The wedding ball was a gala affair attended by the most noble & influential people of Scotland & France. But, the festivities were suddenly halted by the appearance of an uninvited guest. Wearing a full suit of armour & a floor-length cloak, he strode into the great hall & went directly to the bridal party. Men gasped & women fainted at the horror he inspired. His visor was down & his cloak was torn, muddy & bloodstained. But most terrifying of all was the blood that oozed from the joints of his armor & dripped to the floor leaving a trail of red. Stopping before the horrified Count de Montbar he raised his visor & uttered a withering curse. "*Who are you?*" demanded the king. "*Ask your wife & the treacherous Montbar!*" replied the stranger in a sepulchral voice. "*The curse of the murder victim is upon all of you...my curse! You, Alexander, will have masses sung for your soul ere three months pass, & she will live to suffer & pay for her crimes with her misery...*" Then, pausing & fixing his terrifying gaze on the trembling Montbar, he added, "*But she will pay alone, & be hated by all men.*"

At that, Montbar fell to floor & began foaming at the mouth as the terrible figure closed his visor & walked noiselessly from the hall. The castle was searched afterwards from top to bottom, but no trace of the stranger was found. The Count of Montbar was paralysed by his stroke & died in misery a few days later. Exactly three months later the king fell to his death. Yolande lived to old age in poverty & obscurity after being deposed & driven away. (101p.112)

The death of Alex resulted in two formidable claimants vying for the Scottish throne: Robert de Brus & John de Balliol; both Anglo-Norman nobles. Balliol would lose, but his supporter, John of the Isles, remained too powerful to be removed by the new king & they ultimately came to terms. (78p.173) But, as was to become all too common, the strife & division of the Scottish leaders invited English intervention. The divisive Scots were easily & utterly defeated by Edward I in 1296. As a result, 2000 Scottish nobles & landowners signed homage to him in the 'Ragman's Roll'. It is claimed a McGilvray (Gille-Mhoire macGhilleathain) was a signatory (156) but I can't find him on the list.

Brus's son, Robert Bruce, rebelled, after his home was violated, & gradually he wore down the English. In 1309 he came into the West &, with the help of the Macdonalds & the Macleans, seized the Macdougall stronghold of Dunstaffnage. It was at this time that the Aros region of Mull was lost by Lame John MacDougall who had taken the English side. Bruce granted it to Angus Og of the Isles, his long time supporter. (243p.252)

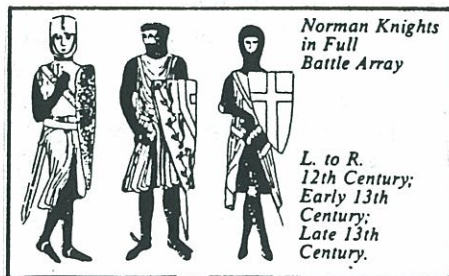
In June 1314, 18 Highland chiefs, accompanied by their vassals (including the Macleans, who were in the fourth line of battle) fought under Angus Og (Junior) Macdonald at the famous Battle of Bannockburn in which Robert the Bruce regained Scottish independence from Edward II. In this battle it is said the Scots fought "not for glory, nor riches, nor honor but only for that liberty which no true man relinquishes but with his life". (153) When the English fled they left so much treasure upon the field that the Scots said they became rich as well as free.



King Robert Bruce addressing his troops before the great Battle of Bannockburn.

The Book of Knowledge Encyclopedia.

1947 v15p.5649



Norman Knights in Full Battle Array

L. to R.  
12th Century;  
Early 13th  
Century;  
Late 13th  
Century.

Most certainly the McGilvrays were at this battle, but it is less clear on which side we fought. Although we were said to be members of McDonald's council & were likely with them & the Macleans & thus with Bruce; another source claims parts of Mull & some other islands were still held by the Macdougalls of Lorne & they supported the English. These two clans had long disputed the ownership of Mull, Jura, Coll & Tiree. Following this victory Bruce subdued these hold-outs & these forfeited islands were given to the Macdonalds of Isla (either in 1314 or 1354). (69p.283) This forfeiture seems to tie in more with the movement of the MacGillivrays to Inverness-shire & maybe even to Skye.

It is not always possible to determine the exact sequence of events, or even the veracity of some of the events themselves, due to the conflicting source material which was rarely written by contemporaries. For example, even the McLean histories do not place their clan on Mull until 50 years after the above battles. Yet, their involvement with Bruce places them in the area at this earlier time.

In 1346 the King of the Northern Isles was killed & John of Isla inherited them - thus becoming the first true Lord of the Isles since Somerled. John died in 1380, at his royal castle of Ardtornish (near Lochaline in Morvern; just northwest across the Sound of Mull from Duart). He was buried at Iona & his liberal grants to the church gained him their title of 'the good John of Isla'. He was likely as rough as any of his contemporaries but as monks were the only reporters of the day, their accounts were often very biased especially against their enemies. Ecclesiastical hatred is particularly bitter. (14pp.338-370 & 13p.345)



Mull; across the Firth of Lorne from Oban

# The cLEANS

This great clan is believed to have arrived in Mull in 1366 (132) although their connection with the McDonalds at Bannockburn (1314) would indicate an earlier entry into this region. Regardless of the exact date, the legends of this large clan soon dominate the area's history, including that of the McGilvrays. No other clan was more warlike & they held in contempt the idea of a peaceful death-bed. (29p.89)

One version of their beginning says that three brothers left Ireland after their uncle stole their inheritance. They landed in Ayrshire where one settled while the other two moved on to the MacDougall castle of Dunollie at Oban. Here they claimed that Highland hospitality which was never refused to strangers & which, if required, was given for a year & a day. After staying their full time it was suggested they try the entertainment of the MacDonalds on Mull. MacDougall's aged steward accompanied them. He had long been suspicious of, & uncivil to, them & the first thing the brothers did upon landing was to construct a gallows with their oars & hang the old gentleman.

Moving on, they requested hospitality at the house of one McGilvray, a retainer of MacDonald's. This McGilvray had a sense of humor (not always an asset in those stern times) & at dinner gave them bowls but no spoons. When the brothers asked for these he brightly told them to "*put on hen's beaks*". It was his last jest for, ere he could laugh, the MacLean daggers were in him. The adventurers learned that MacDonald was on an excursion with his galleys but was expected home shortly. They became uneasy & knew any hospitality now would likely be in the dungeon of Duart. Yet they were not beaten. They stole a boat & went to meet the Lord of the Isles. Running their craft alongside his galley they leapt on board &, before the chief could defend himself, their daggers were at his breast & throat. The great man was forced to swear to forgive & forget the murder of his retainer &, having given his word, he also could not refuse the customary hospitality. And, before the year was up the elder MacLean was married to his daughter. (124p.25)

This rough & ready tale is probably based on some facts because a McLean became Chamberlain to, & married the daughter of, the Lord of the Isles in 1363. (185p.116) He founded the family of Duart & his brother began the Lochbuie branch after they had received considerable property in Mull from McDonald. We do not know who McDonald displaced when he transferred ownership of these Mull lands, but we can guess. One thing these legends do confirm is that the McGilvrays were in Mull well before the McLeans.

One would think that such aggression would have led to feuding rather than to subservience. But, the McLeans were likely a much

larger clan even then & the realistic McGilvrays probably chose to make the best of a bad situation by aligning themselves with the new power. One would also think McDonald could have found a way to avenge the wrong done to one of his faithful servants if he had so desired. But, he probably felt the McLeans would contribute more to his power than the McGilvrays, & politics then was likely little different from politics now.

The MacLeans must have been a considerable clan because by 1390 they controlled much of Mull, Morvern & Duart Castle. (106p.45) In 1390 at Ardtornish, Don of Islay, Lord of Isles, granted to Lachlan McLean (Duart) many lands including the pennyland of Burg & the 6½ pennylands of Ardmeaganach (the peninsula west of Kilfinichen).

Because the McGilvrays have been so long associated with this clan & because their lands are adjoining, it is possible they originated in the same area of Northern Ireland or were related. One source erroneously claims the originator of the Clan McGilvray was a grandson of a McLean (Gillean of the Battleaxe). (156) In any event, the fact that the McGilvrays remained separate land owners in this sea of McLeans indicates the wisdom & bravery of our forbears.

The dominance of the McLeans persists even in the usually well-researched writings of today. The authors, Nigel Tranter in *Argyll & Bute*; I.F. Grant in *Lordship of the Isles*; & Thomas Hannan in *The Beautiful Isle of Mull*; erroneously state that Pennyghael was the hereditary home of the McLeans (or even of the Beatons). History sadly neglects our family. As well, the current local owners refuse permission to erect a small plaque to our Clan.



Glen Liddle; looking N to Pennyghael & Loch Scridain

The four main branches of the McLean Clan were Dowart, Lochbuie, Coll and Ardgour.

Dowart (Duart)

was considered to be the first of these equal branches of McLeans. Its story began in 1366 when Lauchlan Lubanach ('the crafty') MacLean obtained a Papal dispensation (13 May 1367) to marry Margt, the daughter of John, the first McDonald Lord of the Isles. (84p.69 from 234p.447) Lauchlan, & his son Hector, received extensive lands in the islands & mainland from John & from his successor, Donald. Their Mull lands, in 1390, included Pennyghael, Pennycross, Killunaig, Beech, Glen Leide, Carsaig, Finacheg & Glen Cannel. (158p.20) This is not inconsistent with my contention that most if not all of these lands were occupied by, & 'in factory' to, the McGilvrays. This was the same protocol under which our family had held these lands for two centuries under their McDonald overlords; possibly for centuries under Norse kings &, before them, under a church overlord. The Lord of the Isles may have transferred his overall rights to the McGilvray lands to the McLeans but the defacto ownership remained with our family. The McGilvrays probably had no legal title but that of immemorial possession which they maintained by their wits.

In 1493, Hector McLean was leader of his tribe at which time they owned much of Mull & Tiree, & land in Isla, Jura, Scarba, etc & in Morvern, Lochaber & Knapdale. Hector was heritable keeper of the castles of Dowart, Carneburg (Cairn na Burgh, on Treshinish Island, just west of Mull; used as a fortress until c1680), Dunconnell (in Scarba), Dunkerd (on Garveloch Island, near Scarba), & Isleborg?

Because their holdings were connected by water the Duarts became a great sea-faring clan. In many ways they were like latter-day Vikings for in 1400 they led a great fleet to Ireland where they defeated some English & made Dublin pay tribute, (155) although others dispute this story. (158) What can't be disputed, however, is that Duart's supporters would also have been great seamen & that McGilvray, being an important ally, must certainly have had his own galley(s).



Colin Baxter



This sea-faring tradition, of the McGilvrays, must go back a considerable time for even the long landlocked McGillivrays of Dunmaglass have a crescent shaped galley on their emblem. The wide, gentle beach of Carsaig Bay was ideally suited to these mariners & was, no doubt, witness to many a rousing gathering of armed & boisterous crews; strong men living vigorous lives.

Duart was the family which the McGilvrays followed for over 200 years. How important a role we played in both war & peace will never be known unless the lost Duart papers are located. *Even if the McGilvrays of Pennyghael are now extinct, those who claim descent from Lachlan Lubannach of Duart should not forget that this clan fought & bled alongside their forefathers at Harlow, Flodden, Gruinart, Kilsyth, Inverkeithing, Sheriffmuir & Killiecrankie. It is to be hoped the day will never come when the MacLeans shall have no interest in the history & welfare of the McGilvrays.* (162)

#### Lochbuie

was begun by Hector Reganach ('the astute') MacLaine, the (supposedly elder) brother to Lauchlan Labanach. Hector's son was Murchard, whose great-grandson John was head of this Sept in 1493. They then had lands in Mull, Tiree, Jura, Scarba & Morvern as well as an uncertain hold over Lochiel in Lochaber & Duror & Glencoe in Lorne. Their c1500 feud with the Camerons over these disputed lands involved all the people of Mull. Their Mull lands in 1390 included Rossal & Glenbyre to the east of Pennyghael, & Gruline & other places around Glen Cannel. That these lands may have been taken from the McGilvrays may account for the lack of close friendship between these neighbors.

#### Coll

was given to one of Lauchlan Lubanach's grand-sons. In 1493 he held this & Quinish in Mull (5 miles west of Tobermory).

#### Ardgour

was given to a son of Lauchlan whose son, in turn, had been Seneschal (steward) to John of the Isles in 1463. Ardgour is located southwest of Fort William.

All these families solidified their positions through marriage alliances with all the principal island families, including the McGilvrays. However, it is interesting that no such marriage between Duart & a McGilvray has been found. Possibly the McGilvrays were astute enough to keep themselves & their lands at arm's length from their overlords.



ORE



IGHTING

In 1355, Scotland was once again divided into warring alliances. *"In those days there was no law in Scotland; & the great man oppressed the poor man"* & the whole country was infested with bandits. (153) During this period the Lord of the Isles, with the help of a great number of Highland chiefs, revolted again & only submitted, in Nov 1369, at Inverness. (19v1p.229) This coincides with the McLean land grants which were likely their reward for service.

It was during this period that the Black Death began in England & spread into Lowland Scotland. It reputedly reached Argyll <1366. (158p.19) This terrible pestilence recurred, in repeated waves, from 1350-1450. (227p.151) The mainland must have been left almost empty for the total English population in 1377 was estimated at only 2.3 million. The government was too weak to completely subdue its Highland troublemakers & thus began its policy of sowing the seeds of disunity by paying some (shortsighted) chiefs to fight others.

There were other ways to quieten the Highlands. *"In order to establish peace rather than the war that had previously existed"* a marriage was arranged in 1393 between Laughlan, son of Hector of Duart; & Mor, daughter of Colen Campbell. (27)

A more decisive way to settle another burst of inter-clan warfare was used by King Robert III. He ordered 30 McPhersons & 30 Davidsons to undergo a test of strength. On the day of the big battle (13 Oct, 1396), in front of the huge crowds that had assembled in Perth, one McPherson lost his nerve & fled. In order to make things even, a local blacksmith (who claimed to have McPherson blood) offered to take his place. This man (using a battle-axe) proved the hero of the day & the McPhersons wiped out the Davidsons. (19v1p.235) This terrible slaughter subdued the Highlands for a while as no other clan was anxious to face a similar contest.

The weakness of the Scottish Kings allowed the Lord of the Isles to remain autonomous enough to be able to sign treaties with the King of England as late as the 1390's. There must also have been personal ties between the two monarchs because in 1399, Richard II of England sought refuge at Finlaggan when he was forced to abdicate. (140v6p.17)

The islanders, however, were not content with autonomy & decided to try for control over all northern Scotland. On 24 July, 1411, Donald Macdonald, with 10,000 men & aided by an English fleet, fought a savage battle, the Red Harlow, at Harlow (15 miles north of Aberdeen). In this fighting Donald was joined by 'Red Hector of the Battles' MacLean & most definitely by the McGilvrays. The Lowlanders were heavily outnumbered but their mounted knights wrought great havoc. The typical arms used by the McGilvrays &

other Islesmen, at this period, were long-handled battle-axes, bow & arrows, knives, swords & shields. Although both sides fought bravely the king had more resources & could more easily repair his losses. Red Hector was killed & the indecisive battle was really a loss for the Islesmen as Donald relinquished his title to Ross-shire (although he seems to claim it 50 years later). Donald, incidentally, had been an undergrad at Oxford. (68p.68)

There was much more to these battles than just one day of fighting. The armies of both sides would have marched through the countryside for many days or weeks prior to reaching the battleground. During this time they would have thought nothing of pillaging the farms & towns along their route even if it was 'friendly' territory. On their way to help the Scots king, in 1547, 4,000 Islesmen landed near Glasgow & it was said "*great is the moan poor men make for this Irismen; they waist & destroyis all menis gudes*". (158p.124) And, they could be extremely brutal not only to a conquered town but also as undisciplined rabble returning home after a defeat. The local inhabitants lost, no matter who won.

*A great war leaves a country with 3 armies;  
an army of cripples,  
an army of mourners,  
an army of thieves. (German proverb)*

History concentrates on, & glorifies, the 'great' deeds of these battles & rarely comments on their ravages & futility unless such outrages were done by the other side. Even the terms used to describe these tribes suggest a darker side. The MacDonalds & their neighbors & kinsmen, the MacLeans (& their neighbors, the McGilvrays) have been termed 'the Spartans of the North'. The MacLeans were also known as 'the children of the mist'. Another, earlier group of people, in the Ross of Mull, were known as 'the race of the iron sword'. (185p.120)

If there wasn't a local war many Highland men went looking for one. Just as they had joined in Somerled's battles, the Islanders now became involved in the terrific wars of Scottish independence. And, when even that area was peaceful there was always Ireland or the Continent. The cause mattered less than the danger & the plunder. John of the Isles was with the French, at Poitiers in 1356, when they were defeated by the English. He was captured & many of his men were killed. (78p.176) And, in the 1420's, 12,000 Scottish troops helped Joan of Arc. It was said of the Scots; "*they spend all their time in wars & when there is no war they fight one another*". "*The people are extremely prolific & therefore so numerous that there is no business in that country ... for half of them. Every place is full of idle people, accustomed to arms & lazy in everything but rapine & depredation*". (73p.1vi). The men of the Isles were constantly training for war; practice, practice, practice. (164) Even the Scottish Privy Council in 1599 considered sending 100 Highlanders to 'daunt' the West March (the worst of the unruly Border areas). (62p.176) However, they decided against

using these notoriously intractable Highlanders whose only notion of law enforcement was three feet of steel independently wielded.

These early accounts of this region & of our ancestors become a monotonous chronicle of brutality, lawlessness & treachery. It seems they delighted in killing & destroying everything - no wonder they were always poor. Or, so they seem to us with our 20th century values. But, the stories are often tempered by fierce loyalty & fanatical bravery. It must be remembered that revenge was then considered a duty, rather than a crime, while the destruction of a feuding neighbor was a meritorious exploit, & rapine was an honorable employment. (187p.169) They were not lawless; their law was the will of their chief.

*An' sair-pyned widows moned forlorn  
For mony a wearie daye  
An' maidens, ance o'blithsome mood  
Tined heart & dwyned away.* (an 'Old Ballad')

In 1424 the new Scottish King, James I, sought to regain true control over all areas of Scotland. After first subduing the Lowland Norman nobles, often with ruthless tactics, he turned to the Highlands. In 1427 he held a parliament at Inverness & summoned the great chiefs to appear. Their perpetual inter-clan warfare made it impossible for them to offer a united resistance & so, out of a mixture of hope & fear, about 40 came & were immediately arrested. The record lists only a few including Alex McDonald who had succeeded his father, Don, as Lord of the Isles. One chief, James Campbell, was hanged, while Alex, who was considered the principal disturber of the peace, was pardoned. (84p.35)

Alex showed his gratitude the next year when, with 10,000 men, he marched on Inverness; devastated the crown lands & razed this royal burgh. The King marched north immediately & at Lochaber routed Alex. Hunted like a dog, Alex secretly came to Edinburgh where, on Easter Sunday in the Church of Holyrood, he humbled himself before the King. Alex was committed to Tantallon Castle but was released after a year. During this year the Islanders were again incited to revolt, by Alex's kinsman, Danal Ballock MacDonald. With great slaughter they defeated a royal army in 1431 at Inverlochy (near Fort William). But, Donald fled to Ireland when the King approached Dunstaffnage with more men. When a number of the insurgents, including some of the most noted robbers of the Isles, submitted, James hanged them. (84p.38) (The pawns became the scapegoats.)

Just before the Lochaber battle (c1429) the Clan Chattan & the Camerons **deserted** the Lord of the Isles & went over to the King's side. (145p.77) This is about the period when the McGillivrays moved east to join with this clan &, if they were part of this switching sides, it would have been a good reason for their departure from the West.

About 1431 some McLeans invaded Colonsay (a small island just south of Mull). This time they met their match, for, in a pass near their landing spot at Balnahard Bay, they were all killed except for their chief. (Battle of Baile Mhaide) (48p.128) It is interesting how many times the chief survives.

In 1437 James I was murdered. He was either very naive or very foolhardy for he paid no heed to many warnings or to even direct threats. He twice refused to talk to an old woman with second sight. He also (accurately) dreamt he had to defend himself in his bedroom with fire-tongs yet he never kept a sword there or placed guards outside the door. And, he knew his enemy yet never took the offensive.

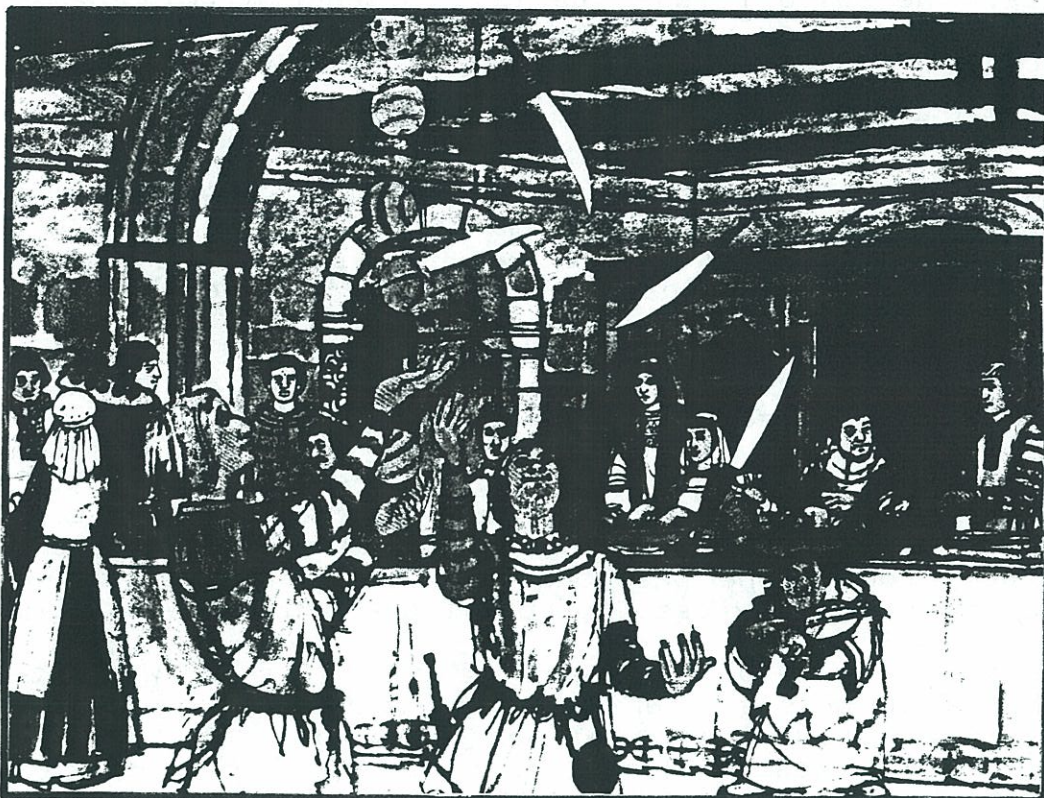
Once again the inevitable anarchy, of a leaderless land, saw bands of fierce robbers come from the Western Isles to harry the people throughout the whole country. (146p.218) In 1445 the Lord of the Isles assembled 500 galleys & with 5000 men desolated the West coast. (19v2p.11)

The new King was also murdered & again the Highlands went lawless. Two brothers, who were chiefs in Lorne, quarrelled over land & one imprisoned the other in a dungeon on Kerrara with the intention of starving him to death (so it couldn't be said he had actually killed him). But the brother escaped &, with the help of the Earl of Argyle, a sea battle was fought in this area. Any such dispute inevitably roused the passions of other island chiefs who were always looking for excuses to commit dreadful excesses. (19v2p.14)

A parliament was held at Edinburgh, in 1461, which was attended by all the Island chiefs. (Unfortunately, no records remain.) Their treachery was shown later that year when, on 19 Oct at Ardtornish, the Northern & Western Lords held a council of their vassals & dependants, & decided to send ambassadors to meet with Edward IV of England. These secret negotiations (18 Feb 1462) ended with the lords agreeing to be Edward's vassals in return for gold & for his help in subjugating all of Scotland. (19v2p.14) However, John of Isla (Earl of Ross & Lord of the Isles) jumped the gun before England was ready, & his rebellion resulted in yet another invasion from the west, "*characterized by all the circumstances of barbarous cruelty which distinguished the inroads of the princes of the Isles*". (19v2p.15) Once again Inverness was seized & Blair castle stormed.

This action, & the discovery of the English conspiracy, called for retaliation & the next king assembled a fleet on the west coast in May, 1476. The Lord of the Isles surrendered & resigned the Earldom of Ross. This time the forfeiture seems to have been certain for hereafter the Islanders considered Ross-shire a separate country "*fit for their predatory exploits*" & it was molested continually. (19v2p.16) Such raids were not without risk, however, for the Mackenzies twice defeated a large body of Islanders as they were wasting Northern Ross.

One of the castles of the Lord of the Isles was Aros in Mull. It is recorded that he gave a great feast there in the 1400's. The MacLeans & most certainly the McGilvrays attended. (106p.103) Here would have taken place the other activities (after fighting & hunting) which the men enjoyed: entertainment by jesters, pipers, harpers, & bards, & games of skill & strength. The ladies who attended were likely similar to those described by a visitor to the Scottish court as "*comely & pleasing yet not overly chaste*". (214)



John MacDonald had lost much favor with his (old) chiefs when he granted additional lands to the (new) MacLeans, MacLeods, MacNeills & others (possibly as his ancestor had by ceding McGilvray lands to the MacLeans). Many chiefs preferred his bastard son, Angus, who was married to a daughter of Argyle. The division between father & son led to open feuding which culminated in a great sea battle, in 1480 at Bloody Bay, just north of Tobermory. John's fleet was commanded by Duart. They lost heavily & most of their men, including Duart, were taken prisoner. During the battle 50 Macleans were driven ashore & found refuge in a cave. Their fate is obvious for the place is known as the 'cave of the heads'. (170p.23)

The McGilvrays might have had a tough time deciding on whose side to fight. It was not uncommon for the main branches of a clan to fight on opposite sides thus ensuring the survival of the family no matter who won. Possibly, the McGilvrays of Glencannel supported Angus against the McLeans which would account for the troubles this branch would suffer in the 1500's.

Also in 1480, this Angus defeated the MacKenzies, albeit with heavy losses to his Island vassals. However, the king soon forced him to withdraw from this mainland expansion. Fortunately these people enjoyed fighting & had no fear of dying because they rarely gained anything substantial by it. They really were just latter-day Vikings. No wonder the McGilvrays remained a small clan.

The divisions among the Islanders & their frequent excursions, presented opportunities for outsiders to raid them &, in one such raid, the Earl of Athole carried off Angus's son. Angus immediately sent around the fiery cross to summon his men & ravaged Athole, captured the Earl & gained much plunder. A storm sank many of his war galleys on the return to Islay &, fearing this was retribution for his desecration of churches, he returned some of the loot. The repentance did him little good for, about 1487 in Inverness Castle, he was assassinated by his Irish harper who bore him a grudge.

The weakness of the Scottish kings had encouraged this incessant Highland warfare. Because they couldn't subdue them they often paid one chief to 'control' another rebelling clan. (19v2p.19) This divide & conquer policy was fine as long as the clans merely killed each other but quite another matter if they burned a royal castle, as the aged John of the Isles (the one defeated at Bloody Bay) did once again at Inverness. He also had the impertinence to conspire yet again with the English.

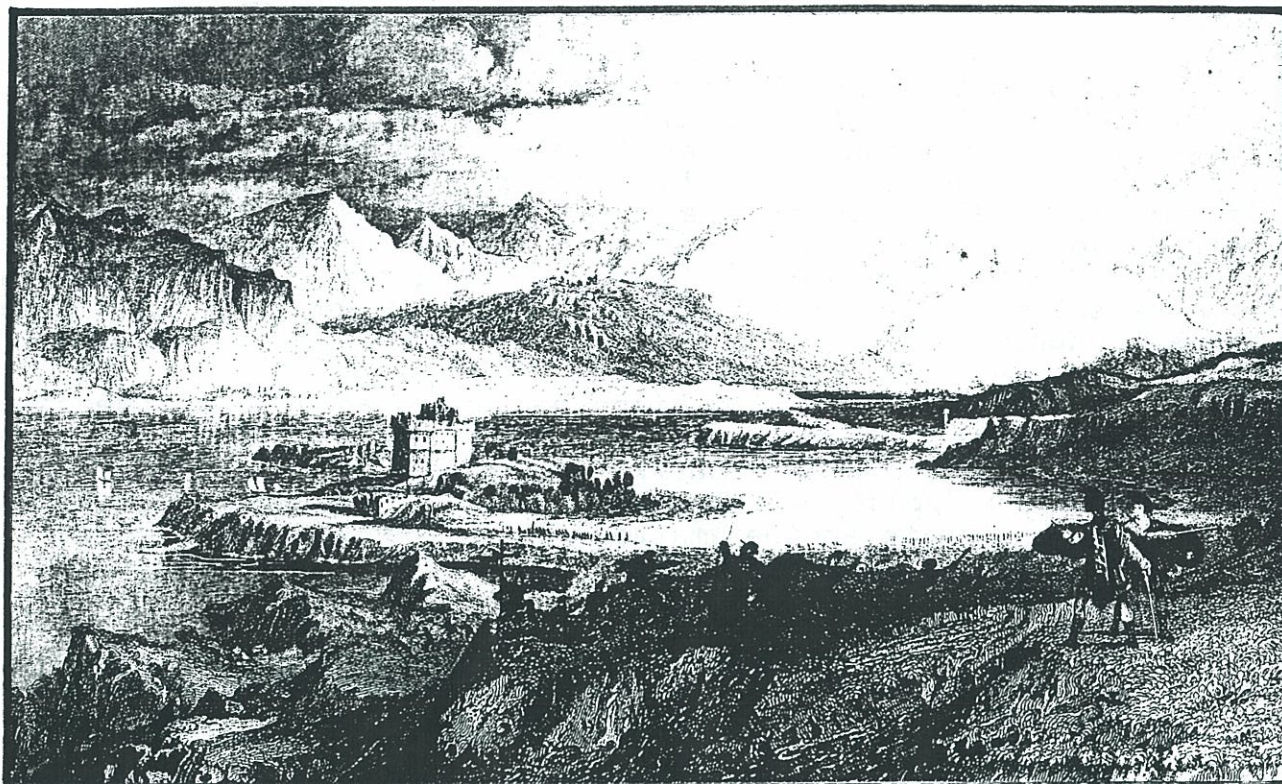
It was the Islander's fatal policy of taking part with England, instead of Scotland, in the quarrels of these kingdoms, which caused Scottish statesmen to feel their danger from England via this island association. Thus, it became the Lowlander's great policy to watch every occasion to weaken & to finally destroy the power of the Islanders. (94p.19)

By this time James IV was king & he was not weak. He decided to regain complete control of the Hebrides by breaking up this confederacy of independent & unruly Islanders. He annexed the Lordship of the Isles to himself, in May 1493 (one year after Columbus). Brolass & the Ross of Mull are shown as places (named in Acts) which had been granted by Don of Isles prior to 1420 but which became crown lands under forfeiture of the Lord of Isles. (96p.177&185) John, the 4th & last Lord of the Isles, died in 1498.

James took a very active interest in the Islands &, with his court, went to Dunstaffnage (18 Aug 1493) to receive the submissions of the Lord's vassals, one of whom was John of Lochbuie. James revisited the islands on three separate occasions in 1494 in shows of force intended to overawe the holdouts. He also visited the area in disguise. (146p.237) On 18 May (& 25 Oct) 1495 most of the remaining chiefs, including Hector of Duart & likely the McGilvrays, submitted to him at Mingarry Castle in Ardnamurchan.

Following their transfer of allegiance to the Crown the McLeans received a royal charter confirming their earlier land grants.

But, internal conflicts led to a division of the clan into independent branches with Lochbuie & Coll refusing to serve Duart. (106p.122 & 84p.111 & 185p.117) It is likely at this time that the McGilvrays became dependent solely on Duart, rather than ultimately on their old protector, the former Lord of the Isles.



Dunstaffnage Castle. T Allem; E Benjamin

The central government continued its attempts to bring the Highlands under control & in 1496 an act of the Lords of Council made the chief of every clan answerable for the due execution of civil actions, summonses & other writs against any of his tribe. This was necessary because it was still impossible for any sheriff to enter this region without a large military force. The Council specifically designated Hector of Duart, MacIain, & other area chiefs, to keep the peace. The king, in an attempt to encourage civilized behaviour, ruled that all barons & freeholders must send their sons to school at age nine, but, it is doubtful if this ruling was enforceable in the Western Isles.

Just to prove who was boss (& to confirm that he couldn't be trusted) the king, in 1499, revoked many of the charters he had granted and the person who gained most by this was Argyle. This chief made it a practice to always be present at court while the Islanders were far away. The abolition of the Lordship of the Isles created a power vacuum & the Campbells stepped in to fill it.



The Campbell Lords were trusted servants of the Crown & were so rewarded. (85p.41) But such favouritism, to this notoriously land hungry chief, made impossible any lasting peace. The Islanders saw war as their only salvation & began plotting a new confederacy under Donald Dubh, their hereditary MacDonald Lord, who had just escaped from prison (assisted, it is said, by Argyll).

Why the McLeans never learned to play the court games along with the Campbells is unknown. Probably their island fastness made them feel secure & separate, & their natural tendency to action, rather than talk, would make them contemptuous of such 'politics'. As well, the proven treachery of kings would make them wary of even well-meant advances by the Crown. Thus, when the king offered Duart overtures & bribes to remain loyal, he was refused.

*Put not your trust in princes.* (1992; 146.2)

Duart did, however, remain loyal to the Isles & was foremost in joining forces with Donald when open rebellion broke out in the West in 1503. England & Ireland were approached for help &, at Christmas, Badenoch was invaded & plundered. The government declared Duart a traitor with his lands forfeit. John of Lochbuie & others (but no mention of McGilvrays) were summoned to answer for their actions.

In April 1504, one of the king's armies laid siege to, & took, Carneburg. This strong fort, on the small, isolated rock near the west coast of Mull, would be recaptured by Duart in 1513. In 1505 the king & his navy were again busy in the area. The exposed site of Carsaig Bay & the homes of the McGilvrays would have been tempting targets for such an overwhelming force. Even Duart soon surrendered & was followed by Lochbuie & others. Despite the royal victory the clans of the Isles & adjacent coasts continued to occupy, many of them perhaps illegally, their ancient possessions.

When the very effective rule of James IV ended at the great English victory of Flodden, in 1513, it was followed by three long minorities (underage kings) with their feuding regents. Again the Highlands reverted to their old lawless state when even pirates are mentioned as operating in the Southern Isles. "*Woe to the land when a child is king*". (Old Poem) Once again the weak central government feared rebellion & raids from the Highlands &, in order to sow dissention, it disputed some charters & even gave the same charter to different clans. As expected, the resulting inter-clan warfare kept the Highlanders busy fighting each other at home.

Although the events outlined in this region's history are of great importance to our clan it is necessary to keep things in perspective. This tiny area was merely a pawn in the much larger, & almost constant, turmoil which existed between England, France & Scotland & which increasingly occupied the attention of the Scottish kings. The smallness & remoteness of these islands had

allowed them to remain an independent kingdom under the Lords of the Isles who, with their lesser chieftains, were allowed to pay as little regard to their new Scottish, as they had to their old Norwegian, overlords.

The Lords of the Isles & their vassals were merely trying to maintain the individuality & independence of the Gaelic race. They believed they were as justified in fighting Scotland as the Scots felt in fighting England for their independence. However, because the Islanders & the Scots were as hopelessly dominated, both economically & numerically, by their foes they each were doomed to fail so long as they persisted in aggravating the status quo & in fighting amongst themselves.



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