

Tiree: A History

Part 2 – 600AD-1600

*Bent grass, rushes and wild water-cress
Are in secret hollows where the thrush sings.
Often we found honey in the banks
From the restless, russet-brindled humming bee.*

(John Maclean, the Balemartine Bard)¹



Neil MacKinnon of Tiree c.1568

Billy Clelland 2001, Revised 2009

¹ TB p3

About the author

Billy Clelland was born in South Lanarkshire, Scotland in 1935. His great grandparents were MacKinnons of Balemartine, Tiree. His maternal grandmother, although not born in Tiree, always maintained Highland traditions and a Sunday afternoon during World War 2 often resembled a ceilidh in that she and her six daughters would sit around the old kitchen table singing Gaelic songs in turn solo and together. Everyone had to participate. Thus he was raised with a smattering of 'the Gaelic' and a keen interest in the island of Tiree. His father, a joiner and typical Presbyterian Lowlander, was involved in construction of the airport at The Reef, Tiree, and was a frequent guest of his MacKinnon in-laws. Lacking the tongue he was annoyed that they occasionally lapsed into Gaelic during his visits.

In 1952 the family emigrated to South Australia where Billy and his brother, Tommy, were welcomed into the Port Adelaide Caledonian Society Pipe Band as experienced although young bandmen. Billy graduated as an actuary and followed a career in computer science principally in the mining industry. This career allowed him with his family to travel widely and their journey to Scotland enroute to Africa in 1972 was when he made his first visit to Tiree.

Subsequent visits in 1988, 1990, 1992 and 2000 were frustrated by the lack of readily-available documentary evidence of the history of the island. When he began to compile a family tree in 2001, including of course his Tiree ancestors, he found it necessary to start from scratch by building his own 'history of Tiree' as background to the family story. The work was never intended to be published, being simply notes for his Tiree ancestors' chapters to be drawn from. Nevertheless he is more than happy to allow other interested genealogists and historians free access to his research.

Part 2

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Chapter Four: Creation of the Highlands - Vikings - Inhabitants of Scotland - Destruction of Iona & Tiree - Dark Ages - Somerled & Lords of the Isles - Origins of Tiree Placenames

The Battle of Dunnichen Moss (Nectansmere) fought on Tayside on 20th May 685AD halted Northumbrian-Anglian expansion north of the Firth of Forth. This ensured the division of Scotland's Highlands and Lowlands into ethnic and cultural divisions with its permanent political consequences.³³

There is persuading evidence of peaceful cohabitation between the peoples of northern Scotland (ON *skotland*, land of the Irish) and Norwegian immigrant farmers long before the "outbreak" of the Viking (ON *viking*, men of the fjords) Age. The first settlements in the Scottish islands around 780AD appear to have been peaceful by men who were not after plunder but pastureland where they could live. Nevertheless there were roving bands of pirates in the Isles before the Vikings appeared.³⁴ The deeper causes of the *vestrviking* or 'western piracy' were rooted in human nature: the northern peoples had needs and ambitions, were prepared to make demands, and had the will, strength and technical means to enforce them. They wanted land to farm, wealth to make life splendid, or bearable, and some of them wanted dignity and fame. Trade, colonisation, piracy and war would get them these things, and such could be practised only at the expense of neighbours near and far. A long tradition testifies to recurrent over-population and land shortage in Scandinavia.³⁵ The Shetland (ON *hjalmland*) Islands lie only 180 nautical miles from Norway, two days sailing in spring with the prevailing winds that favour voyages to the west.³⁶

From as early as 789AD, the Norsemen, in their *vestrviking*, had been regularly harrying the coasts of England, Scotland and Ireland. In 793AD Norwegian marauders raided the Holy Island of Lindisfarne and attacked the shores of Ireland; in 798AD they plundered the Hebrides (ON *sudreyjar*), and in 802AD and 806AD ravaged Iona.³⁷ The latter raids led to the dispersion of the Columban community to Kells and Dunkeld.³⁸ By 807AD, the Norsemen had established themselves in the north of Ireland suggesting that they were already settled in the Orkneys (ON *orkneyjar*). The name 'Cape Wrath' is derived from the Norse *hvarf*, meaning 'turning point'.³⁹

By around 850AD there was a medley of realms and races occupying Scotland's mainland and islands: Picts north of Argyll and the Firth; Welsh [Britons] in Strathclyde and Cumberland and, mingled with the Picts in Galloway north of the Solway Firth; Scots in their expanding kingdom of Dalriada and Angles in Bernicia. Olaf the White (*Amlaibh*), son of the king of Norway, took Dublin from the Danes in 853AD where he ruled until 871AD. The Vikings, by conquering much

³³ TI p189

³⁴ HWH p175

³⁵ HV p183

³⁶ VS p12

³⁷ CT p39

³⁸ TI p248

³⁹ HWH p2

of Pictland and cutting off Dalriada from its Irish roots, created the preconditions for the consolidation of the "Kingdom of Scots".⁴⁰

The most decisive battle in ancient Scandinavian history took place at Hafursfjord around 885AD when Harald Fairhair's (*Hárfagri*) victory allowed him to consolidate Norway into a single monarchy resulting, among other things, in a sharp increase in Norse emigration, culminating in invasion and occupation of Iceland and the isles of Britain by those chiefs who were discontented with Harald's rule. Considerable numbers of Norwegians fled from the tyranny of King Harald to Shetland, Orkney and the Hebrides and from there practised *vestrviking* in reverse. Instead of spending their winters in Norway and their summers raiding British and Atlantic islands, they now lived out west and did their raiding back along the shores of Norway. But King Harald then sailed to the Atlantic islands and put all his enemies in Shetland, Orkney and the Hebrides to the sword. He bestowed Shetland and Orkney on the family of jarl Rognvald of Moer. His brother Sigurd of Moer was 1st Earl of Orkney, a jarl notorious for his assaults on Scotland.⁴¹ Rognvald's son, Einarr, who reputedly introduced the art of peat burning, was the progenitor of the line of earls who ruled Orkney and Shetland until 1472. The rulers of Orkney were continually feuding with other Norsemen for superiority and no doubt Tiree felt the impact of the warring bands. Anarchy was epidemic. There were many years of warfare - kinsman versus kinsman. Peace only came with the long reign of Thorfinn the Mighty, considered the greatest jarl of Orkney.

By 872AD the Norsemen had burnt down the monasteries on Tiree including that at Sorobaidh and some had settled on the island. The Rev Archibald MacColl in *The Statistical Account 1791-1799* for Tiree and Coll included the following under 'Antiquities'. "British, Danish, and other small silver coins, in small earthen vessels, have often been dug out of mosses [peat] and sandy ground. Two years ago [c1788], was discovered a bent tubular piece of gold about £2 value, the two ends not closely joined, and not unlike a sort of ear-ring. In a stack-yard at Cornaigbeg in Tiry [sic], in digging pits in sandy ground to secure potatoes during winter and spring, there were found at different times human skeletons, and nigh them the skeletons of horses. They seem to have been completely armed, according to the times. Two-handed swords were found diminished with rust; silver work preserved the handles; there were also shields and helmets with a brass spear. Nigh this was discovered another skeleton, holding the skeleton of an infant in its arms. It is proposed to dig more of this ground. Some of these curiosities are in the possession of the Duke of Argyle. Near the centre of Tiry [sic] is a lake with an island in it [Loch an Eilein], whereupon was built a castle; the access by a made road and draw-bridge. Upon the ruins of this, in 1748, was erected a house with a garden for the Duke of Argyle's factor. Built into the south-east wall of 'Island House' is the inscription "AdA 1748" [Archibald, 3rd Duke of Argyll 1748]. The island was some time ago made a peninsula."⁴² Reputedly all the work involved in procurement of the stone and of building the new house was by forced labour. All the crofters from the island were called upon by the factor to carry out the work free of charge.⁴³

⁴⁰ TI p257

⁴¹ HV p86

⁴² SA1791

⁴³ TE p104

The Rev Neil Maclean in *The Statistical Account 1834-1845 for Tiree and Coll* writes "Several old coins, chiefly copper, are reported to have been found from time to time, but little or no authentic information can be given regarding them. A small silver coin was found in a sand bank about fourteen years ago. It was somewhat larger than a sixpenny piece, seemed pretty entire, and was inscribed in Gaelic '*Rìgh Callum Ceanmor*' or King Malcolm Ceanmor [Canmore], who flourished in the 11th century, and was contemporary with William the Conqueror."⁴⁴

Christianity had come to the Orkneys around 995AD as dictated by the warlike Christian King of Norway, Olaf Tryggvissón. His son Thorfinn, the greatest of the Orkney jarls "in might, wisdom, and magnanimity" set out on his pilgrimage to Rome and absolution by Pope Leo IX around 1048. Thorfinn lived in untroubled power and peace until he died in 1065 to the relief of Malcolm Canmore (who married his widow) but Orkney, Shetland, the Isle of Man and islands of Scotland were accustomed to permutations of local power. In the islands of Britain from Man to the Orkneys, the practice of *víking* died hard. At the end of his long reign in Ireland, Olaf Kvaran lost Dublin and died in Iona around 951AD. The battle of Clontarf in 1014 signalled the end of Norse control of Ireland but they remained until the arrival of the Norman-English in the 1160s and 1170s. From England after his defeat at Stamford Bridge in 1066, Olaf Kyrre sailed home to Norway via the Orkney Islands. The power of the Norsemen over the islands and mainland of Britain had begun to retreat.

Magnus Barelegs sailed the old route to war and booty in 1098 and plundered Tiree and the other islands on the west coast of Britain as far south as the Menai Strait in Wales. According to one of his skalds,⁴⁵ Bjorn Cripplehand:

*"The hungry battle-birds were filled
In Skye with blood of foemen killed,
And wolves on Tiree's lonely shore
Dyed red their hairy jaws in gore..."*

Barelegs, who got his by-name from his preference for Celtic costume, lived until 1103 when he fell in battle in Ulster (*G ulaidh*).⁴⁶

Tiree was the refuge in 1138, under the patronage of Bishop William the first bishop appointed to Orkney, of the young Sweyn of Gairsay (*Asleifsson*) during the customary turmoil and conflict for power in Orkney. Sweyn led a fleet of five ships in 1171 to harry the English fleet but was ambushed and killed in Dublin. Control of Tiree passed to the Kingdom of Man and then to the Norse-Celtic leader Somerled, King of the Isles, and his heirs in 1164 when he had broken the power of the Norwegian king in the southern isles.⁴⁷

According to "The Chronicle of Melrose": In 1164, Sumerled [sic], the under-king of Eregeithel [Argyll], who had been in a state of wicked rebellion for twelve years against his natural lord,

⁴⁴ SA1834

⁴⁵ An ancient Scandinavian poet.

⁴⁶ OS p48

⁴⁷ HSP p30

Malcolm, King of Scotland, landed at Renfriú [Renfrew], with a large army which he had collected together in Ireland and various other places; but at length God's vengeance overtook him, and he and his son [Gillecolan], and a countless number of his followers, were there slain by a few of the people of that district."⁴⁸ This contemporary account does not sit comfortably with the account given in the previous paragraph.

The "Battle of the Sheaves" reputedly took place at Cornaigmore (NL9747) in 1190 when the desperate islanders of Tiree, armed only with tightly-bound corn sheaves, defeated marauding Vikings. The islanders were busy harvesting corn when the raiders struck. With nothing to defend themselves but sheaves, the men of Tiree engaged the Norsemen in battle. Blinded with the grain from the sheaves, the enemy fled, but it was only after heavy losses that they managed to gain the safety of their galley. The bravery of the Tiree men on that day is still heard in the Gaelic adage that may be translated as: "A corn sheaf [thrust] to its band in the side of a Norseman."⁴⁹ [*G Sguab choirce gu críos ann an slios Lochlannaich.*]

In August 1263 King Hakon of Norway launched an expedition, which recruited nearly half its strength in Orkney, to the Hebrides and to the Isle of Man. Summoned from Norway to help his people on Skye because of alleged ill-treatment by the Scottish nobles,⁵⁰ he sailed south to the Firth of Clyde, and after furious fighting stormed Rothesay Castle. After their return to Orkney, his son John, Earl of Orkney, was murdered after a drunken brawl in Thurso and the line of Norse jarls came miserably to an end. The Earldom of Orkney passed to Magnus, a son of an Earl of Angus. King Hakon made his second expedition to the Hebrides but failed to achieve his purpose of re-mustering the western isles among his subject people. Driven north after the Battle of Largs, his campaign in ruins, he returned to die in Kirkwall.⁵¹

The writer of "The Chronicle of Melrose" gives the following account of the Battle of Largs: "Haco, king of Norway, supported by a large number of ships, came by the western sea to attack the king of Scotland; but of a truth, as the same Haco admitted, it was not man's power which drove him away, but the power of God which crushed his ships, and sent a pestilence amongst his troops. Some of them as mustered to engage on the third day after the feast of Michaelmas [2nd October], God defeated and slew by means of the foot-men of the country. Thus they were compelled to carry off their wounded and slain to their ships and to return home in more disgraceful plight than they left it."⁵²

The MacDougalls held Lorn and Benderloch, Mull, Lismore, Coll, Tiree, the Treshnish and the Garvellachs islands from the King of Norway until they were ceded to Scotland in 1266. The Chronicle of Melrose describes the matter as being conducted by Reginald of Roxburgh, a monk of Melrose, who travelled to Norway in 1265 to negotiate an agreement and returned in 1266 with the treaty for signature accompanied by the Chancellor of the 'lord king of Norway'.⁵³ After King Hakon recognised defeat at the Battle of Largs in 1263, Alexander III, King of

⁴⁸ CM p13

⁴⁹ TE p38

⁵⁰ The Earl of Ross laid waste to Skye in 1262.

⁵¹ OS p72

⁵² CM p30

⁵³ CM p103

Scotland, had granted ownership to the MacDougalls but they were indecisive owners and there were continual disputes.

The frequency of place-names on Tiree with Norse origins testifies to their long habitation as settlers.⁵⁴ The arrival of the 'land-takers' (ON *landnamsmenn*), initially in the northern islands then progressively further south provides examples on Coll and Tiree of suffixes such as *-bol* or *-poll* (farmstead or divided farm) but as one moves further south among the Scottish isles the ratio of Norse to Gaelic placenames alters in favour of Gaelic, e.g. Arran 1:8.⁵⁵ But what heritage did the Norsemen leave in the southern isles of Scotland other than giving names to geographical features? There does not appear to be, despite about four hundred years of occupation, a significant indication of their settlement or Norse culture. As with the Romans in southern Scotland and England who settled there for about the same lengthy period of time, after their departure, the Celtic peoples returned to their old ways, their own Celtic language and customs. Of Norse culture, only the rectangular ground plan of its dwellings remained as a visible sign of its contribution to the culture of the region.⁵⁶ In the Hebrides, where Gaelic eventually predominated, Norse patronymics were translated into Gaelic, e.g. Ivarsson became Maciver. Names of Norse origin include Macleod and Maclachlan.⁵⁷ It would appear that the Norse overlords did not attempt to assimilate their Celtic vassals. There were, however, people still speaking Norse in the Orkney and Shetland islands in the 18th century. An interesting analogy might well be the history of Normandy where the invading Norsemen adopted the language and customs of the French. Similarly in the 20th and 21st centuries, as the African colonies of Britain and France collapse back into tribalism and barbarity the sole legacy of colonial rule is the convenience of an official language. These circumstances should not come as a surprise given that the colonial period was of only one quarter the length of the Roman and Norse occupations.

Perhaps the most significant feature of Celtic culture that was retained in the Highlands or reintroduced by the people now free of their Norse overlords was the *clann* social structure which was to prove their greatest asset in the dangerous Middle Ages but became a tragic illusion in the 18th and 19th centuries.

⁵⁴ Appendix A

⁵⁵ LS p52

⁵⁶ LS p171

⁵⁷ SS pxxxviii

Chapter Five: Feudalism - A'Ghalltachd - Clan Structure - Surnames - Campbells & Macleans - Age of Forays - James VI - Anglicisation of the Chiefs - Kirkapol Chapels - Isleburgh Castle

The collapse of Norse power in the north and north-west of Scotland, which was followed soon afterwards by warring in the Lowlands for Scottish independence from England's aggressive feudal rulers, led to a renaissance of Gaelic power and confidence. The descendants of Somerled exercised so much control over other clan chiefs in the western Highlands that, at the height of their power, they approached the style and status of a second royal house in Scotland.

By the middle of the 12th century it is certain that with the exception of Galloway, the inhabitants of the counties of Scotland below the Highland line were practically English in speech, whatever may have been their proportion of Celtic blood. The placenames of Gaelic origin in the Lowlands (*G A'Ghalltachd*, home of the strangers) attest to a people speaking a Celtic language formerly possessing the territory but that is not evidence of the prolongation of a Gaelic people there. Feudalism, with the Anglo-Norman families who brought it, helped more than anything to obliterate the old distinctions in the Lowlands between Angle, Briton, Scotti and Pict and because geography impeded its penetration into the north-western third of Scotland, it also helped create a distinction between Lowlander and Highlander that had hardly existed before. This distinction became more obvious when other factors came into play.⁵⁸

The employment of surnames in the Lowlands came into general use during the reign of David I (1124-1153).⁵⁹ The focus of the Highlands and Islands 'clan' tribal system was on ties of blood linking members in an indissoluble relationship that, in contrast to the feudal system, had nothing to do with land ownership. [Elsewhere in this work, the word 'feudal' is incorrectly used on occasion by the contemporary commentators to mean 'traditional' or 'outdated' methodology and belief.] The Gaelic term *clann* meant nothing more than children, family or kin: However to talk of a 'clan system' in the Middle Ages is perhaps to give too formal an impression of Highland society, but ultimately it did evolve some kind of recognisable shape. A chief, or supreme head, was linked by close consanguinity to the chieftains of the septs (*G sliochdan*), or main branches of the clan: the dependants of the chieftains, down to the humblest herdsman, sometimes were or sometimes only imagined themselves to be blood-relations of each other and of the chief. The chief parcelled out land by way of leases or tacks to gentlemen of the septs, who became known as 'tacksmen'. A tack was a heritable tenure of fixed duration usually a multiple of 19 years. It was the customary belief that once a family had occupied land for three generations [three times nineteen = fifty-seven years] then the fourth and subsequent generations acquired a secure right to occupancy. *Dutchas*, vaguely defined as three tacks of nineteen years is the equivalent of 'hereditary occupation'.⁶⁰ These tacksmen, as the 'gentlemen' of the clan chief, were his officers and the men who surrounded these officers were the foot soldiers of the clans. This tribal basis of land management conferred a commune-like association among the

⁵⁸ HSP p24

⁵⁹ SS pxv

⁶⁰ LS p112

peasants at the foot of the hierarchy. They, below the tacksmen, worked the land held by the tacksmen from the chief on a shared responsibility: they conferred by custom or agreement on the methods and timing of tillage and harvest, they helped each other in building their dwellings. In this 'commune' or extended-family environment, tradition ruled and shared agricultural practices where the seeming common good prevailed such as 'runrig', flourished to the detriment of the long-term wellbeing of the individual peasant. In this detail lies the crux of the problem with land rental and ownership that became the centre of dispute during the Crofters' Land Wars of the late 19th century. Any disputes among peasants on the tacksman's lease were settled by the tacksman who received part of their produce in return for his protection and leadership. Ultimately, usually without the permission or knowledge of the chief, the tacksmen sublet land to the clansmen. Occasionally also, parcels of land were gifted in perpetuity, say, to the clan bard or a favourite piper. On the Scottish mainland, as distinct from Tiree, the ground supported little husbandry and the clansmen were largely herdsmen and drovers where a chief would count his wealth in the small black cattle grazing in his straths and the number of broadswords that made up his clan regiment, of which he and his tacksmen were respectively colonel and officers. The clan supported its leaders with military service and food and accepted their judgment and protection in a similar way to the Lowlanders when they obeyed their feudal superiors. Traditionally, a clan's fighting men were composed of young men from the senior families of its cadet branches but by the 17th century included a number of 'broken men' and this troupe grew to become an unwelcome burden on the chief's finances.

Theoretically, feudalism is the antithesis of tribalism, since it based itself upon territorial units that had nothing to do with kinship or other personal relationships. In the Highlands it was not actually necessary for the chief to have any land in order to gain his dependents' allegiance. However by the late Middle Ages, all Highland chiefs held land by feudal charters accepted from the Crown or from each other which gave them virtually absolute control over their tenants and their territories. In particular it is necessary to stress that there was no known concept of clan lands to which peasants had immemorial prescriptive rights of ownership, though such rights were very widely believed in by 19th century crofters, who held them to be of great antiquity and the existence of such a belief can be traced even in the 18th century.⁶¹ Certain of the clans, most notably the Campbells and the MacKenzies, practised 'aggressive feudalism', seeking charters that extended their own lands, often at the expense of their less-enlightened neighbours such as the Macleans. In Scotland an individual could hold land by feudal tenure, tack (lease), feu (heritable) or wadset (redeemable mortgage) but for most peasants, access to land was only by leasehold and the customary short leases weakened incentives for improvement.⁶²

A contemporary view explained the broad-spectrum circumstances as follows: "*The gentlemen farmers [tacksmen] are for the most part the descendants of the different branches of the families of the chieftains, on whose estate they live. The chieftain prided himself on the number of his gentlemen so much that he looked upon himself as their common father. In their distress he relieved their wants; and when one of them died, he became the guardian of his children, and the executor of his will; which trust was in general executed with fidelity. On the*

⁶¹ HSP p41

⁶² SC p11

*other hand, when the chieftain was threatened with danger from invasion or encroachment of his neighbours, his gentlemen flocked to his castle to assist in his deliberations, and to offer their services. If war was determined upon, they, with their adherents, followed him into the field to support his pretensions, and share his fate. By this means the strongest attachment was established between them, partly on the ties of consanguinity, and partly on mutual services. This attachment continued unimpaired, till the rebellion in the year 1745, which, though attended with the happy consequence of civilizing the Highlanders, and making them good and loyal subjects, yet was attended with this disadvantage, that it weakened the attachment between the chieftains and their people; for since that period, the chieftains, from different motives, have withdrawn themselves from their estates, have become unacquainted with their people, who they visit but seldom, are not so attentive to the ties of consanguinity, and are become less scrupulous in removing the tacksmen from their farms, if a higher offer is made than the possessors can afford to pay."*⁶³

Despite the martial heritage of the clan system, only a relatively small percentage of those who lived on islands such as Tiree, where cultivation of the land was the rule as opposed to herding cattle on the hills, were natural warriors. In fact many inhabitants of the remote islands and in the barren wastes of the north-west were too scattered and too poor. It would be wrong to picture every Highlander as a 'Rob Roy' figure charging through the heather brandishing his broadsword. Most were poor herdsmen or farmers who would have had little time or energy for forays into the Lowlands or neighbouring clan territories. Such adventures were better suited to the sons of chiefs and tacksmen, who were less ground down by daily necessities and better able to afford expensive arms.⁶⁴ Crimes in the Highlands were rare. They fought fiercely with men of another sept on occasion; they 'lifted' cattle from a hostile clan but the instances of theft from a dwelling house seldom occurred. Highway robbery was unknown.⁶⁵

The use of surnames among the Gaelic-speaking Scots appears to commence in the 14th century when it became the practice for sons to take their surnames from the Christian names (given-names) of their fathers. Patronymics were not permanent; they changed with each succeeding generation and it was well into the 18th century before this cumbersome system was given up in the Highlands. As an example: Magnus Johnson was the son of John Magnus and John Magnusson was the grandson and so alternately for many descents. The limited number of Gaelic surnames is due to the custom of many families and small tribes adopting the surname of the large and powerful clan that they wished to support as their lairds or chieftains.⁶⁶ The 8th Duke of Argyll refers to this habit of Highlanders dropping one name and assuming another. He said, "*During the Military Age, they did so perpetually when they enlisted under some new chief, and joined some other Clan.*" Thus Highland surnames prior to the 18th century and sometimes even later, were in a fluid and ever-changing state. Suppression of the clans after the '45 and directives to officially register with the authorities led to the indiscriminate adoption of clan names as

⁶³ PL18 p182

⁶⁴ SB p168

⁶⁵ SL18 p501

⁶⁶ SS pxxiv

surnames. The outcome was a profusion of families all using a limited number of names.⁶⁷ Tacksmen, however, were generally identified by their clan name, a usage which serves to highlight their political role within a clan administration. Since they deal only with tacksmen, 16th century crown rentals give the impression that clan names were widely used in earlier rentals: this appears to hold true in areas like Ardnamurchan, where individuals like Donald McAlister McKane held a group of townships, as well as on Tiree, where a more complicated political structure seems to prevail, with quite a number of townships seemingly held by more than one tacksman.⁶⁸ James Boswell in his 'Journal' of 1773 made the following notes on surnames and forms of address: "*That my readers may have my narrative in the style of the country through which I am travelling, it is proper to inform them, that the chief of a clan is denominated by his surname alone, as M'Leod, M'Kinnon, M'Intosh. To prefix Mr to it would be a degradation from the M'Leod, &c. My old friend, the Laird of M'Farlane, the great antiquary, took it highly amiss, when General Wade called him Mr M'Farlane. Dr Johnson said, he could not bring himself to use this mode of address; it seemed to him to be too familiar, as it is the way in which, in all other places, intimates or inferiors are addressed. When the chiefs have titles, they are denominated by them, as Sir James Grant, Sir Allan M'Lean. The other Highland gentlemen, of landed property, are denominated by their estates, as Rasay, Boisdale; and the wives of all of them have the title of ladies. The tacksmen, or principal tenants, are named by their farms, as Kingsburgh, Corriehatachin; and their wives are called the mistress of Kingsburgh, the mistress of Corriehatachin. Having given this explanation, I am at liberty to use that mode of speech which generally prevails in the Highlands and the Hebrides.*"⁶⁹ The difficulty of tracing genealogy by the use of names appearing in legal documents, particularly rentals, is compounded by the need to establish a descent chain that spread across five or six generations (the Highland *clann*) whereas only one or two were used to identify people in their day-to-day affairs. In the relatively small communities in the islands, knowing an individual person's identity and lineage was seldom a current issue and the difficulties we experience today are outside of the requirements of the system that had evolved.

The clan of the Campbells attained prominence under Robert the Bruce and by the mid-15th century were the wealthiest barons of Scotland, successfully functioning within both the national and clan frameworks. The Macleans also supported Robert the Bruce and the decline of the MacDougalls and MacKinnons, who were dispossessed of many of their Mull lands under the Lord of the Isles, led to the rise of both Macleans and Campbells. The Lord of the Isles' eventual destruction and forfeiture by James IV in 1493 officially abolished their control over the western mainland and islands. After the breakup, the principal powers in the west became the MacDonalds of Islay, the Macleans (their several branches collectively held most of Mull, Tiree and Coll and lands in Morvern, Lochaber, Islay, Jura and Knapdale) and the Campbells who were now masters of much of mainland Argyll. But whereas the MacDonalds and the Macleans did not transcend the old system of loyalties based upon kinship, the Campbells evolved a more positive response to the crown's increasing concern with Highland affairs volunteering themselves as intermediaries between the state and their more 'backward looking' fellow

⁶⁷ TI p780

⁶⁸ SC p178

⁶⁹ JTH pp223-224

Highlanders. During the 16th century the Earls of Argyll were commissioned by the crown to suppress insurrection among their neighbours on many occasions.

The Maclean of Duart (*G Dubh Ard*) clan had risen to prominence in the 14th century in the Hebrides as stewards to the MacDonald lords of the isles, who rewarded them with lands in Mull, Morvern, Tiree, Coll, Islay, Jura and Lochaber. The clan name *Mac'lean* means Son of Gillean and is derived from the 13th century warrior 'Gillean of the Battle Axe' who was reputedly descended from the kings of Dalriada. In 1266 Tiree became part of the Lordship of the Isles and the MacDonalds ruled there until 1517. Barrapol [NL4295] got its Gaelic name, *Goirtean Dòmhnail*, (Donald's Little Farm) as it was the site of the farm occupied by the MacDonald chamberlain during the superiority of the Lord of the Isles over Tiree. In 1367 Lachlan Lubenach Maclean of Duart married Mary MacDonald, daughter of John of the Isles, and claimed Tiree as dowry. In 1390 Lachlan Maclean was Bailie of Tiree and Coll which led to his descendants claiming ownership. In 1411 in the battle known as "Red Harlaw", the Macleans of the Isles fought beneath the banner of Donald MacDonald with detachments from Clan Chattan and Cameron of Lochaber against the Earl of Mar and Lowland forces including the Murrays, Straitons, Leslies, Stirlings and Lovells. The honours went to the Earl of Mar but at a heavy cost as many of his supporters fell on the field. Donald MacDonald survived but the chief of the Macleans died on the field of battle. Donald MacDonald's son Alexander was among the Highland chiefs invited by James I in 1428 to meet at Inverness where he attempted to impose his authority on the Highland clans. Finally, the forfeiture of the lordship of his son John MacDonald in 1493 meant that the Macleans then held their lands directly from the Scottish crown. Tiree thus fell into the possession of Lachlan Catanach Maclean of Duart (c1465-1523). He resisted the attempt by James IV to bring the isles under royal control, in revolt by 1503 and, on 18th March 1504, forfeited for treason. Maclean's castle was captured and handed to the 1st Earl of Argyll. By June 1504 Maclean submitted, reconciled to the king and after 1515 became an erstwhile follower of the Earl of Argyll. The wife of the 2nd Earl of Argyll was a daughter of the chief of the Macleans. In 1527 Tiree was laid waste by the Campbells. In 1562 it was once again burned and plundered, this time by MacDonald of Islay and his kinsman Donald Gorm of Sleat. Hector Mor Maclean of Duart (c1527-1570) supported the Earls of Argyll and reinforced links with Argyll in 1557 but in the 1580s, Argyll sided with the MacDonalds against the Macleans. Macleans, enjoying the hospitality of the MacDonalds of Islay in 1586, were treacherously attacked by their hosts. This period was correctly dubbed the 'age of forays'.

In 1594, the Earl of Argyll, this time supported by the Macleans, marched for James VI against the Catholic magnates of the north, the earls of Huntly, Errol and Angus, but despite his numerical superiority, was defeated at Glenlivet. Sir Lachlan Maclean of Duart unsuccessfully laid siege to the MacDonalds at Mingary Castle, Ardnamurchan with one hundred Spanish soldiers who had been lent to him from one of the ships of the Armada, which had taken shelter in Tobermory harbour in 1588.⁷⁰ This assault failed when neighbouring clans massed at the castle and drove the invaders back. The Spanish soldiers never went aboard the ship again. Still at anchor, and with the Maclean hostages held aboard, she was blown apart and sunk by a

⁷⁰ HWH p244

mysterious explosion. Numerous solutions from folklore have failed to solve the mystery. Clansmen from the western isles went to Ireland in 1594 to join the fight against the English invasion. Sir Lachlan was killed in Islay in 1598, by a hunchback whom he had once scorned, to thwart his interference in Ulster politics during the reign of Elizabeth I of England.⁷¹ Until the 17th century, close links had long survived between the north of Ireland and the Highlands. However, following the 'plantation of Ulster' and the Irish Rebellion of 1641, Protestant Lowlanders dominated the north of Ireland. Henceforth Lowland Scotland acquired a novel assertiveness in its relations with Ulster over the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders. Once James VI discovered Sir Lachlan's dealings with Queen Elizabeth I, this led to the sequestration of Duart to the King's Commissioners in 1604.

Around 1549 Donald Munro, an archdeacon of the reformed Church, conducted a tour of the western (occidental) islands off the coast of Scotland and south to the Isle of Man making a tally of the isles and of their harbours, agriculture, and development at that time. His description of Tiree is as follows: "*Narrest this [Bac Mòr or Dutchman's Cap] toward the west be sax mile of the sea lvis Thiridh [Tiree] ane mane laich fertile fruitfull cuntrie, aucht mile land from the north-eist to the south-west; three mile braid from the north-west to the south-eist. All inhabite and manurit with twa parochie kirkis in it, ane fresh water loch, with ane auld castell. Na cuntrie may be mair fertile of corn, and very gude for wild fowls and for fische, with ane gude heavin for heiland galayis.*"⁷²

The programme of James VI for the northern part of his kingdom, inflamed by racial and religious prejudice as well as by a wish for order, was outlined in his *Basilikon Doron*:⁷³ "*As for the Hie-lands, I shortly comprehend them al into two sorts of people: the one, that dwelleth in our maine land, that are barbarous for the most parte yet mixed with some shewe of civiltie: the other that dwelleth in the Iles and are alluterlie barbares ... reforme and civilize the best inclined among them, rooting out or transporting the barbarous and stubborne sort and planting civiltie in their rooms.*"⁷⁴ The king made it plain that respect for the law was expected in the Highlands as well as in the rest of Scotland. In 1597 all Highland landowners were ordered to produce their titles to land, to find sureties for their good behaviour and any who failed were declared forfeit. In 1608 the government tricked a troublesome clique of West Highland chiefs aboard a ship and who were then forced to subscribe to the Statutes of Icolmkill [also known as the Statutes of Iona, 1609] before their release. This agreement forced the chiefs to agree to undertake a number of fundamental behavioural changes: to obey the law, to live in peace with one another, to plant churches on their lands, to reduce feudal burdens on their tenants and to send their children to be educated in the Lowlands. None of the chiefs carried out these undertakings to the letter once they had got home again but they certainly treated the central government with more respect afterwards.⁷⁵ The constraints placed on clan behaviour by the Statutes of Iona were one cause of the decline of the clan system before it was defeated militarily in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. By curbing the various forms of chiefly consumption,

⁷¹ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

⁷² OI p318

⁷³ HSP p104

⁷⁴ BD p71

⁷⁵ HSP p104

the Statutes forced chiefs to reconsider the food rents which they extracted from the peasant economy. The dilemma now facing them was simple. If they were no longer able to 'fight with food', to expend it within the framework of the estate on status-building activities, then how was its latent value to be realised? In the circumstances, their logical response was to market food, converting food rents into cash.

A more materialistic set of values spread quickly throughout the Highlands and Islands. Some Highland chiefs responded to the changing models of landlord behaviour being transmitted from the Lowlands via the ordinary social and economic interactions that were now being forged between the two regions. Crucial to this mixture of old and new ideology was the growing involvement of Highland chiefs in a cash economy. Adding to this consumption of cash were the developing tastes of the chiefs. To finance their participation in Lowland culture, Highland landowners had to espouse alien commercial values which broke the traditional bonds of clan society. Lengthy visits to Edinburgh or to England not only generated requests for large and regular remittances from their estates but also cultivated their taste for more comfortable mansions and finer furnishings. Paradoxically, nothing signals the growing involvement of Highland chiefs in cash-based transactions more clearly than their growing indebtedness, as needs outstripped supply. A common palliative to the problem, one which raised short-term capital at the expense of long-term income, involved the wadsetting⁷⁶ of land, whereby a tenant lent money to his landlord who then treated the interest owed as rent.

For their tenants, such a change did not alter the nature of the clan system as they perceived it, with '*a pretense of blude*' still being viewed as a means of gaining access to land, at a time when rapidly-increasing [population] numbers were creating a degree of land scarcity. In a subsistence-based society, as many parts of the western Highlands remained until the middle decades of the 19th century, land was clearly of critical importance to survival. It was the source of food, fuel, shelter, drink and status. Little wonder that both crofters and cottars clung to it with such singular tenacity.⁷⁷ The point is that by the early 18th century, the attitude of landowners may have diverged significantly from those still held by the ordinary peasants. The extent of this divergence is possibly captured for us in the differences highlighted by Cregeen's study of the Argyll estate over the early 18th century, with tacksmen and the communities that had developed around them being seen as having different expectations to those of the Duke and his advisors, with the former not the latter appearing to embody the traditional values of the clan system as an institution concerned as much with the cultivation of men as of land.⁷⁸

An anonymous account, written about the year 1595, describes Tiree as follows: "*Tierhie is ane Ile of aucht mile in of lenth, and in sum pairtis but thrie braid, and at the braidest is six mile braid. But it is commodious and fertile of corns and store of gudes. It is 140 merk land, and will raise to the weiris [wars] 300 men. It pertenis to great McClane of Doward [Maclean of Duart], gevin to him be McConneill [MacDonald]. It was callit in all tymes McConnells girnell [granary]:*

⁷⁶ A wadsetter was a creditor of a landowner.

⁷⁷ SC p165

⁷⁸ SC p195

for it is all teillit land, and na girs but ley land, quhilk is maist nurischand girs of any other, quhairthrow the ky [cattle] of this Ile abundis sa of milk that thai are milkit four times in the day. The yeirlie dewtie thair of is sa great of victual, buttir, cheis, mairtis, wedderis, and other customes, that it is uncertain to the inhabitants thair of quhat thai should pay, but obeyis and payis quhatevir is cravet be their maister for their hail duties, only to tak sa mony firlofts as nicht stand side be side round about the hail Ile full of victual, half meill, half beir, and it wes refuseit.⁷⁹

At Kirkapol, opposite the middle of Gott Bay, there are three separate medieval ecclesiastical sites close together. The first is a very old chapel built upon a rock and unenclosed. No name is given by tradition to this chapel but from other evidence it was dedicated to St Columba. The second is another medieval church situated within its own graveyard. This building stands a little to the south of the first. It is relatively more modern, not later than 13th century, and its graveyard is known as '*claoth beg*', simply meaning 'the little burying ground'. It contains some eight sculptured slabs of the West Highland type. The third, and nearest the shoreline, is a burial ground without any remains of a chapel or other building. This is known as '*claoth odhrain*' or '*claoth mor*'. The stones within this burial ground date mainly from the 18th century.⁸⁰

Before the end of the 17th century, the Campbells, with the tacit approval of the monarchy, were pursuing territorial ambitions and the MacDonalds of Islay and their Maclean neighbours were the obvious targets. This was far from bringing peace to the Highlands but simply proved that the chiefs who were to prosper in the contemporary political atmosphere were those who were prepared to back their king. The Campbell assault on the Macleans was hinged on the growing financial problems of their chiefs. Between 1642 and the 1680s Campbells used debts to lay claim to Maclean lands and rentals. In 1681 Archibald Campbell, the 9th Earl of Argyll, acquired the coveted Duart lands.

In 'The Statistical Account 1834-1845 for Tiree and Coll, Parish of Tiree, Presbytery of Mull, Synod of Argyle', Rev Neil Maclean writes: "There was a fortress (of more modern date than the duns) situated in a lake near the centre of the island, probably the occasional residence of the proprietor or chief, from the ruins of which the chamberlain's house was built; and the communication which formerly existed by means of a draw-bridge, has, since then, been supplied by a mound or causeway built across. From this circumstance, it still retains the name of the 'Island House'. There are also several remains of chapels or religious houses to be seen; but a description of these having been made in the previous [Old] Statistical Account, it may suffice here to merely mention them. The truth is that, since that date, many of these monuments of antiquity have disappeared, and are disappearing from year to year. In some instances, they have probably been overwhelmed with sand; in some, the stones have been appropriated to other purposes, as the building of dikes, houses, Etc."⁸¹ In the middle of the 17th century, Maclean of Duart had his winter residence on the island. On Tiree he was usually accompanied by a large retinue of kinsmen, falconers and servants, and his castle on Loch an Eilein (NL9843), the site

⁷⁹ HWH p248

⁸⁰ CT p153

⁸¹ SA1834

of 'Island House', must have known lavish entertainment, with songs and harp music from skilled bards and musicians. Oral culture in the Highlands was rich and densely textured. Featuring ballads and tales about heroes, lords, wars and love, it resembled Ireland more than England or the Lowlands.⁸² Most of the chief Highland families had their hereditary piper. As the renowned Macrimmon was piper to the MacLeod so was Rankin to Maclean of Coll. There was a college of piping on Mull superintended by Rankin until around 1747. It was said that the island castle was "wont to quarter all the gentlemen that waited on Maclean all winter not under a 100". Sometimes known as Isleburgh castle, it was once considered an important Hebridean stronghold and was mentioned in a David II charter of 1343.

⁸² SC p33

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