

RECORDS OF ARGYLL PART IV

CONCLUSION

By Ken McNaughton

The historic origins of the Macnachtan Clan lie in Perthshire but between the 13th and 18th centuries the leadership resided in Argyll. The reasons for this discrepancy are not known. It could be that when he gave them the castle at Fraoch Eilean in 1267 [1] King Alexander III needed defensive allies in Argyll and wanted to reward the Macnachtans. Duncan McNaughton [2] suggests the leadership may have been transferred to Argyll to weaken the Clan, since there they may have been under closer royal supervision or dominated by more powerful, loyal clans. The last Macnachtan Chief left the family stronghold at Dunderave between 1710 and 1713 [3] and the Campbells consolidated their hold on Argyll.

Because of their wealth and power the Campbells had time to collect stories about their clan and those of their neighbors. Perhaps the best known (and oft quoted) such book is *Records of Argyll* [4] which was published in 1885. One would hope that this would include some valuable information about our Clan. But keep in mind that the author is a Campbell whose *modus operandi* was to collect stories and that in 1881 there were twice as many people with the name MacNaughton in Perthshire as there were in Argyll [5].

The first story about the MacNaughtons in the book [6] is called “The MacNaughtons of Dunderave” [7]. While it includes some interesting stories it is not a reliable historical document. The other main entry about the MacNaughtons is contained in an Appendix [8]. This contains interesting stories of dubious accuracy, plus a beautiful poem. The purpose of this fourth and final essay about *Records of Argyll* is to survey all other references to the MacNaughtons throughout the 514 pages, to make sure we have not overlooked any clues to the lives of our ancestors.

RECORDS AND TRADITIONS OF INVERARY

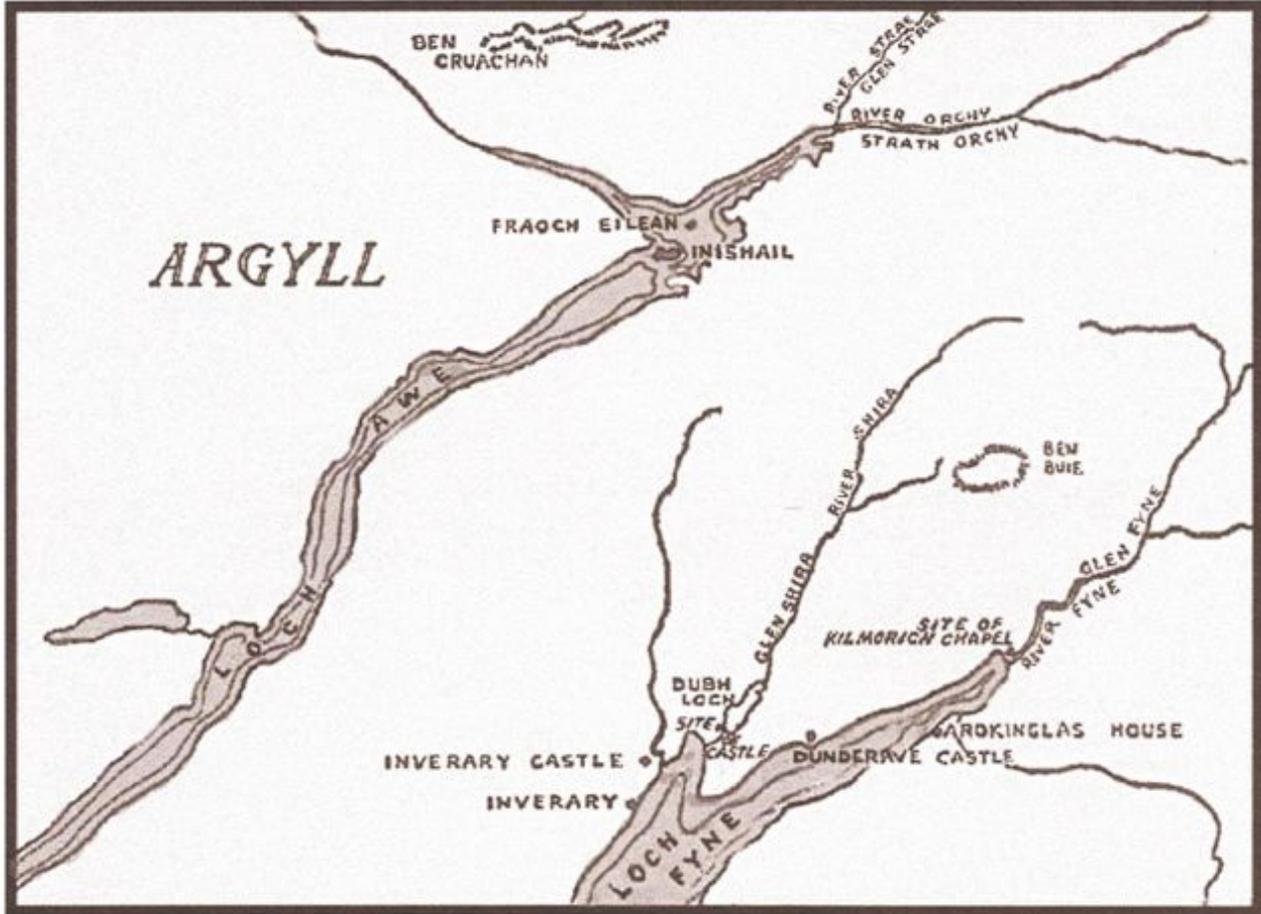
When researching the Macnachtan castle on Dubh Loch I started with a dedicated chapter in Matthew Cock’s 1998 book [9]. Cock referred frequently to Archibald Campbell, which is why I obtained a copy of *Records of Argyll* and embarked on this four-part analysis. Having now read it cover to cover I can review my earlier analyses to see if anything has changed, but little has. Most of the references to the MacNaughtons occur in the first eighty pages “Records and Traditions of Inverary” and in the curious Appendix “MacNaughtan of the Dun.” Here are the references to the MacNaughtons I have not already discussed.

On page 35 there is a section supplied by George Clark, keeper at Rosneath, called “Inverary Topography—Glenshera.”

The accounts of Glenshera in the early days of the Reformation do not by any means portray a peaceful state of society as existing in that glen. We hear that Protestants and Roman Catholics on the way to their respective places of worship could not refrain from launching darts and firing their arrows at each other ... We know, however, that up to a comparatively recent time the clergy themselves were wont to go armed to church; so, after all, perhaps it is not astounding to find that

their flock were careful to keep in training for spear-throwing and shooting arrows even on the way to church. The Roman Catholic portion of the inhabitants of this glen were followers of MacNaughton, the Protestants followers of Argyll; hence the perpetual and smouldering fires of mutual animosity which every now and then burst into flame—the river alone, which flowed between the two factions, preventing hand-to-hand fighting.

Figure 1. Map of the Macnachtan lands in Argyll (T. R. Holme).



The River Shira flows south through Dubh Loch and the Short (Garron) River into Loch Fyne (Fig. 1). Glen Shira was a MacNaughton stronghold before the Dubh Loch castle was abandoned. After that it is possible the MacNaughtons were stronger on the east bank and the Campbells on the west, since the Campbell castle is on the western side of the river. Although this passage is not dated, it does emphasize that our clan was Roman Catholic, but of course sympathies fluctuated with political fortunes through the centuries and our clan was devastated in 1645 when the Chief aligned himself with the Protestant Campbell against the Catholic Royalists. I have no reason to doubt the animosity between the two religions, given Scotland's bloody history. When I went to Carey Baptist Grammar School in Australia in the 1950s and walked past a Catholic Orphanage, the boys behind the fence sometimes jeered "Proddy dogs, sit on logs, eating frogs." *Plus ça change ...*

At the neck of the Dùloch, as it is called, about 150 yards from the Avenue Bridge, are the relics of the MacNaughtain Castle, built on a triangular peninsula; at least, when the loch is at all high, it becomes one, and even in dry weather the old fosse remains to this hour swampy. The MacNaughtons did not agree well with the other clans about Lochow ... so they left that country-side, and built for themselves a castle on this promontory.

This passage suggests the MacNaughtons left Loch Awe because of feuding. It does not tell us if the Dubh Loch castle was on the east or west side of the loch [10]. Generations of map-makers have copied the notion that it was on the south-western shore. However, the only archeological report we have [11] says it was “east of the river’s exit.” Matthew Cock, writing as recently as 1998 reviewed ten sources and dedicated Chapter 7 to “The Dubh Loch Castle,” but he does not show a photograph or plan of the castle and does not specify if it was on the east or west side. The only map he shows is Pont’s (1583-96), which is ambiguous on this point.

Some merchants hawking linen are said to have brought a plague into the glen; several persons died of the same, and in the death-roll were some of the occupants of the castle. In a panic, the survivors left, having buried those who died near the castle. The place is still known by the name of Bruach-nan-uaighean (Bank of graves). The castle was then shut up, and never again inhabited. It was eventually pulled down, and Dunderave (Dùn-da-ràmh) built. Two flagstones used to mark the graves. These were there not many years ago, and probably are still there.

This frequently quoted passage has been discussed elsewhere [12].

This castle is said to have been pulled down before the Campbells had an acre of Glenshera. In fact the Campbells had not an acre of land north of Kilmalua, or the “Burying-place,” until the Marquess of Argyll’s time.

There has been a lot of debate about when the Dubh Loch castle was pulled down, with various dates suggested in the 15th and 16th centuries [9]. I suggested that the date of abandonment was 1661 [12] and this section does not discount this possibility. The first Marquess of Argyll (also called Archibald Campbell) was de facto head of government in Scotland, fighting for the Presbyterian religion during the English Civil War of the 1640s and 1650s in opposition to James Graham, 1st Marquess of Montrose, a Scottish nobleman who supported King Charles I of England. Argyll was executed for treason on 27 May 1661, so his “time” was between 1640 and 1660. Kilmalua is a burying ground on the shore of Loch Fyne near the current Campbell castle. The above passage shows that the Campbells had practically no land in Glen Shira before 1640, so the rest, including the castle, could have belonged to the MacNaughtons.

In the wars of Montrose’s time Argyll and the MacNaughtons were on the same side, and tradition says that they raised a large number of men in Glenshera that fought at Inverlochry under the Marquess of Argyll. Here MacNaughton lost several near relatives. But, with the exception of Boshang, from the upper end of the Dùloch, south side, to Kilmalua, or “Burying-place,” which one Sinclair had feued from MacNaughton, and of which he gave the deeds (or his rights) to the Marchioness of Argyll—with this exception, Argyll had not an acre of Glenshera until MacNaughton left.

Argyll came under siege in 1644, retired to Inveraray Castle and was forced to flee southeast to Rosneath, across the Firth of Clyde from Glasgow. On 2 February 1645, Argyll was surprised by Montrose at Inverlochy, a Royalist castle near Fort William. Argyll witnessed a fearful slaughter of his troops, including 1,500 of the Campbells. Luck was not with the MacNaughtons, predominantly Catholic, who had supported their Presbyterian Campbell neighbors. On subsequent pages of this section (38, 39, 41 and 44) we read of parcels of land lost by the MacNaughtons. The only good news comes on page 43:

Down to the time when MacNaughton left, no sheep could be kept at large on the moors, on account of the country being overrun with wild animals; so that MacNaughton kept Ben Buie (Beinn-bhuidhe) [3,113 ft; 949 m] and Ben-an-tean (Beinn-an-t-sithein) [1,877 ft/572 m] as a deer-forest and had one Turner as a forester.”

NOTE ON THE MACVICAR LANDS

These notes come from *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, 1855, vol. ii, part i, pp. 85-90. The northern portion of the MacVicar lands is traversed by the valleys of Glenshira and Glenarary (Fig. 1). Its highest mountain is Benbuy, 2,800 feet above the sea (853 m). All of this area is understood to have once belonged to the MacNaughtons, who accept the MacVicars as a sept (the MacVicars could be descended from a MacNaughton who was a vicar). This section, on page 61, goes on:

In the year 1403, Margaret, the daughter of Gyllecrist, called Macgillegeachin, with the consent of her son and heir, Fynlay Macawaran, resigned to Colin Cambell Lord of Lochaw, her overlord, the sixth part of the lands of Glenserw (Gleann-sìora) and of other lands which heritably belonged to her, and which had formerly belonged to Alexander McNeachden, lord of the same lands.

Angus Macnaghten [13] on page 19 tentatively identifies this Alexander as a Chief of our Clan. This seems to refer to Glen Shira.



In 1596, Archibald, Earl of Argyle, appointed Alexander M'Naughtan, the son and heir of John Macnaughtan of Dundaraw, keeper of the forest of Benbuy for 19 years, for the yearly payment of £80 and on condition that he not keep "oversoumes" in that forest. [p. 64]. There still exist the remains ... of the castle of the Macnaughtens on the Dùloch ... A standing stone on the castle lawn is said to mark the old march between the McIvers and M'Vicars. [p. 65].

A march can mean a boundary; there are no decipherable marks on the stone [Fig. 2] nor any indication when it formed such a boundary. The McIvers are not listed as a sept of the Macnaghtan Clan in *The Red Banner*.

Figure 2. The author stands by the MacVicar stone on the grounds of Argyll Castle in 2007.

GLEN ARA (*Gleann-aora*)

(Traditions supplied by Miss Isabel Smith).

The River Aray enters Loch Fyne close to the Campbell castle; it is the unmarked river to the left of the River Shira in Fig. 1.

The rival chiefs of the MacVicars, Munroes, and MacArthurs had constant disputes about their lands. The MacNaughtons were gradually beaten back, until somewhere in the fifteenth century their representative was a girl of eighteen years of age, with no nearer relation than a second cousin to support either her or her claims. She lived in the MacNaughtain Castle, on the promontory on the Dùloch, Glenshera, at the spot where at low tide the River Garron begins its short course to the sea.

While this lady lay dying of the plague, a proclamation was made by the King concerning the chieftainship, or the seigniority of lands in Scotland. Argyll set out on horseback for Holyrood, “never drawing bridle till he got to the Palace,” to put in his claim for the suzerainty of Glenshera and Loch Fyne. These are amongst the first charter-lands in Argyleshire; and when a child, I used to hear them spoken of by many of the servants (who used to hold a conclave in the nursery) with contempt as “parchment lands,” to which the Argylls had no right.

Stronmagachain, on which the first Argyll residence was built, was only held in fee from the MacNaughtons—that is, the lower part—the rest was the property of the MacVicars and Munroes. After the death of the heiress, and when Argyll had been for some time in safe possession of the houses and various lordships, one of the Munroes murdered a MacVicar. Both families came to Argyll—one to claim redress, the other protection. Both were given to understand that if they gave up their lands they would get what they wanted.

The children on both sides of the glen used to meet in play. One day a quarrel ensued, in which one of the M’Eachs (Children of the Mist) was severely beaten. His mother took up her son’s quarrel, and arrangements for a fight were made between these factions—both parties endeavouring to obtain the assistance of their powerful neighbours Lochow and MacNaughton, who, however, stood neutral (at the same time privately fomenting the quarrel). It was submitted to the arbitration of Lochow and MacNaughton, who agreed together that, as Tullich, Camus, &c., were so far removed from Glen-shera and Loch Fyne, Lochow should take the upper part of Glenaray for his share, surrendering in return some lands in the parish of Kilmorich (Cille-mhoire), to which he, Lochow, had some claim, to MacNaughton.

Argyll had then established a residence on Stronmagachain, the site of which was at the Rock in lower Druim-na-Tarslaich. In that field we have come upon curious flat stones not far from the site of the old house. We often projected trenching the ground all over to find out more about them, but it was never done.

Much of this material (pp. 69-71) is familiar from frequent quotes in later books. Other portions deserve comment. I don’t know who Isabel Smith was or how accurate are her recollections. She places the death of the MacNaughton heiress in the 15th century, which is disputed elsewhere.

There is sad news for the MacNaughtons. But the good news has been largely overlooked. The MacNaughtons are rarely if ever described in the literature as feuding—here it is the MacVicars, Munroes and MacArthurs. The Campbells built their first residence on land that partly belonged to the MacNaughtons. Isabel Smith refers to curious flat stones nearby. If we ever find an archeologist who is interested in this area it would be good to try to find out if these stones are related to the MacNaughtons or perhaps to previous Pictish inhabitants. Of the five families mentioned in this section, Isabel Smith only refers to the Campbells (Argyll, Lochow) and the MacNaughtons (twice) as being on the same power level. Kilmorich Chapel was situated at the head of Loch Fyne (Fig. 1).

LOCHOWSIDE CLANS

On page 75 there are some comments from a Donald Clarke about the Isle of Innishail in Loch Awe (Fig 3). He says there used to be a monastery on the island where pilgrims came to do penance. At the time of the Reformation the monastery became a Protestant church, which up till 1736 was the parish church for both sides of the loch. The chiefs of the MacArthurs, the MacNaughtains, and the Campbells are buried here among many more. Clarke recites a tradition that the MacArthurs, MacNaughtons and Campbells are descended from three brothers, but there is a Note at the end (p. 77) from Mr. W. F. Skene who says: “There is no doubt whatever that the Campbells and MacArthurs are the same race but it is a mistake to connect the MacNaughtons with them. They certainly belong to a different stock.” Campbell Chiefs are still being buried on Innishail. It would be nice to know if there are any memorials to Macnachtan Chiefs.



Figure 3. The sacred Isle of Innishail in Loch Awe where some of the Macnachtan Chiefs are buried.

EARLY NOTICES OF TARTAN

An anonymous contributor styled “D” penned the following on page 425:

The beautiful song called Luinneag Mhic Neachduinn (MacNaughton’s Ditty) is to be found in Turner’s ‘Collection of Gaelic Poetry.’ No information is there given us as to its authorship. An approximation to the date of its composition may be inferred from the following internal marks. At the time when the song was composed, Alexander was the name of the MacNaughton: he was master of the little Letter, and of the precious Dun or castle, and the darling of the women of the Sìoradh cIachan. Among those who would come to his aid in straits, the song speaks of Alasdair dubh (black) of Glengarry, of the grandson of Black Duncan of Bealach (Taymouth), and of MacFarlane of Arrochar. Judging from these particulars, it is pretty evident that the song was composed while the MacNaughtons still held their possessions at the head of Loch Fyne, and very probable that it was composed not later than the end of the reign of Charles II.

There are many references to Colonel Alexander McNachtane, Chief of the Clan between 1660 and 1684, coinciding with the reign of Charles II over England, Scotland and Ireland. He died in London and was buried by command of the king in the Chapel Royal. I do not have a copy of this poem but would like to see one. The Sioradh clachan may mean the clan of Glen Shira. I believe "Letter" refers to the sloping land at loch's edge.

APPENDIX

On page 510 some extracts from "Thanes of Cawdore" by Cosmo Innes show personal and traveling expenses of Alexander Campbell, Thane of Cawdor, traveling though Argyll in 1591. Some expenses refer to Dunderave, which must have been an important stopping place for a gentleman traveling in the days of James I. The monetary system is hard to understand and to relate to modern expenses, so I have just quoted the items without the actual currency.

21st day of September being Tysday

Item giffin to the ferrioris for taking yow to Doundaraw fra Innerreray

22nd day of September being Wednesday in Doundaraw

Item giffin to the portar ther

Item giffin to the woman that maid your bedis ther

Item to the cuik ther

Item to the boyis that ferreit owir out of Doundaraw

Item giffin to the boy that ye send out of Doundaraw to Lochgyllisheid

to provyd ane boat for yow

Item to ane boy of your awin ye send bak to Doundaraw for the venesone, to be his expenssis to Striveling

Cawdor is 10 miles (16 km) east of Inverness. The castle dates back to 1454 and still serves as a home, to the stepmother of Colin Campbell, 7th Earl Cawdor and 25th Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth in Shakespeare's tragedy was made Thane of Cawdor but the story is highly fictionalized and the castle itself was built many years after the events of the play.

CONCLUSIONS

Records of Argyll is an important source of information about the Macnachtans in Argyll before 1885. It consists of stories collected by Archibald Campbell from various authors. It is not a rigorous work and therefore it is difficult to separate fact and fiction. But it does paint an impression of our Clan in those times and without it we would have a lot less. In these four essays I have tried to analyze all references to the Macnachtans except one or two that are blatantly inaccurate. We are indeed fortunate that there have been some fine scholars who have worked hard to establish facts, in particular Angus I. Macnaghten and Duncan McNaughton. It would be nice if there were more scholars and archeologists to help us uncover the next layer of history about this, one of the oldest of the Highland Clans.

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