

CHAPTER 5

THE BATTLE OF FLODDEN FIELD

The tragedy of the Battle of Flodden Field has become known as one of the worst military defeats of Scotland at the hands of the English. This unnecessary battle arising from an unnecessary war came about as a result of King Henry VIII of England making war with France in 1512. King James IV of Scotland was married to Margaret, the sister of Henry VIII, and peace between England and Scotland had brought a period of relative prosperity to Scotland. There can be little doubt that King James was in no mood for war. In 1502 Scotland and England signed a treaty of perpetual peace and King James was also mindful that his wife, Margaret, was heir presumptive to the English throne. However, despite his obvious reluctance for war with England, James was nevertheless obliged to help his old ally, France, once they invoked the “auld alliance”.

King James assembled an enormous army of 35,000 men which included 7,500 Highlanders. The Highland clans had little interest in these distant political and religious conflicts separated as they were by geography and language from their lowland brethren. But James was a popular king in the Highlands. He spoke Gaelic and as far as the Highlanders were concerned he was one of them and if he needed their support he would get it.

The enmity between the Mackenzies and the Macdonalds was at least temporarily forgotten at Flodden. Hector Roy Mackenzie of Gairloch and his old enemy Alexander Macdonald of Lochalsh were allies fighting for their King. John of Killin, the clan chief, commanded the Mackenzies and claimed, for the last time, the ancient right of forming part of the king's bodyguard. From August 22nd, 1513 fierce fighting took place and the Scots had many successes. However, on September 9th the Scots faced the powerful army of English under the command of Lord Thomas Howard. The Scots were ordered to charge the English in a muddy field at Flodden Edge while Howard encircled the Scots from the north. The power of the English broad bladed bills against the long spears of the Scots was overwhelming and in the short period of two hours 10,000 Scots were killed including King James himself, who was so badly mutilated by battleaxes that he was not recognized until the following day. No less than twelve Scottish earls and many lords and bishops lost their lives at Flodden. So disastrous was the battle for the Scots that only four adult men were left alive in the Scottish peerage.

Though bill-men ply the ghastly blow,
Unbroken was the ring;
The stubborn spear-men still made good
Their dark impenetrable wood,
Each stepping where his comrade stood

The instant that he fell. (Scott)

Both Hector Roy and John of Killin survived the slaughter of Flodden. So too did Alexander Macdonald of Lochalsh who was knighted on the field of battle.

The death of King James IV brought, once again, a child onto the Scottish throne. King James V of Scotland was only seventeen months old.

Law and order in the Highlands had become a matter for the clan chiefs to administer ever since the government had moved to Edinburgh. The crown was unable to undertake this role as there was no standing army or police force. It therefore had to rely upon the disciplines of the clan system to punish wrongdoers. Unfortunately the petty and not so petty jealousies and feuds between some of the clans, which were longstanding, frequently led to wars. The history of this period is a long and sorry tale of feuds and battles which the king's government could do little to control.

Shortly after the Battle of Flodden Field a rebellion broke out led by Donald, the son of Alexander Macdonald of Lochalsh. To help deal with this rebellion John of Killin seized the castle of Dingwall and threatened to keep it. Donald was, among other things, the lord of Lochalsh, Lochbroom and Lochcarron. Donald Macdonald's death in 1519 put an end to the rebellion and also the male line of his family. As a result his lands were inherited by his two sisters. The first sister, Margaret, married Alexander Macdonell of Glengarry, and the second sister, Janet, married William Dingwall of Kildun. William was killed in 1527 by one of the sons of John of Killin and over a period of time most of the Dingwall lands were acquired by the Mackenzies. Some of the lands of Lochbroom were acquired in 1543, Lochalsh was obtained via a wadset (i.e. a mortgage) in 1554 and a purchase in 1571. Lochcarron was bought by the Mackenzies in 1579.

Thus the major Mackenzie families extended their power through the ownership of land in Ross and Cromarty. Ownership of land came with the power to grant tacks or leases to tacksmen, usually members of the same clan. The tacksmen in turn granted smaller tenancies to crofters and farmers and their families. Hence all tenants had an obligation to support the laird, who in turn supported his chief in times of war. So with land came an army and the more land which was controlled, the larger the army which could be raised. Such power could be easily augmented by careful marriages of sons and daughters into other land owning families. As a result the chief would seek out suitable marriages for his children where he saw possible future advantages to his clan. Land married land.

This growing importance of the clan was vividly demonstrated in 1544 when the Earl of Huntly, the Lieutenant of the North, commanded John of Killin to raise his clan against Clanranald of Moidart. The Mackenzie chief refused and Huntly's supporters, the clans Grant, Ross and MacIntosh declined to attack the Mackenzies. From that time the Mackenzies were recognised as a separate and superior force in the north-west.

Coinneach na Cuirc. (Kenneth of the Whittle) Chief 1561—1568

While his father John of Killin was alive, Kenneth was known as Kenneth Mackenzie of Brahan. He was served as heir to his father from which time he became Kenneth Mackenzie of Kintail. Because of his skill at carving wood with his knife, he has acquired the epithet Kenneth of the Whittle, which helps to distinguish him from other Kenneth Mackenzies of Kintail. By 1564 he had received the appointment of sheriff-depute of Inverness.

He seems to have been quite an active man prior to inheriting his father's estates and responsibilities. The Applecross Manuscript describes some of his pastimes, such as burning and harrying Sleat twice for pleasure! He also seized John Glassich Mackenzie of Gairloch, the son and successor to Hector Roy, and imprisoned him in Eilean Donan castle. The particular quarrel Kenneth had with his close kin is thought to have been due to John Glassich once again taking up the case of his father's claim to the lands of Kintail, based upon the illegitimacy of John of Killin. Kenneth was not the sort of man to put up with this rebellion and whether he acted on his own or was put up to it by his father we can only surmise. In any event John Glassich appears to have died of poisoning in July, 1550 while a prisoner in Eilean Donan.

In 1562, Kenneth at the head of his clan, joined with other chiefs and met with Mary Queen of Scots at Inverness. They successfully gained possession of Inverness castle which had been held by Alexander Gordon, the governor, who was refusing Mary access.

In the same year an Act of Privy Council, dated May 21, ordered Kenneth to deliver to the Queen, Mary MacLeod, the heiress of MacLeod of Harris and Dunvegan, who was in Kenneth's custody. What this lady was doing in Kenneth's care is not known but she was clearly not with him of her own free will. Mary MacLeod was to remain with Queen Mary for several years as a maid of honour.

Kenneth was only chief for seven years because his father lived to a great age. He died at Killin near Garve on 7 July 1568. He was buried at Beaulieu.

Kenneth married Lady Isobel, otherwise Elizabeth Stewart. She was the daughter of John, 2nd Earl of Atholl. This important marriage brought the royal blood of the Plantagenets into the house of Kintail. They had three sons and six daughters:

1. Murdoch Mackenzie. He outlived his father only a short time and was probably dead in 1569.
2. Colin "Cam" Mackenzie of Kintail. Chief of the clan. He was formally served heir to his father 6 May 1570.

3. Rory Mackenzie of Redcastle. Ancestor of the Mackenzies of Redcastle and Kincaig.

1. Mary. Married
1. Angus Macdonell of Glengarry.
2. Alexander Chisholm of Comar.

2. Agnes. Married Lachlan Mackintosh of Mackintosh whom she survived. She seems to have been short of cash since she was “put to the horn” for non payment of her debts by Richard Gordon, burgess of Inverness. She obviously failed to settle these debts since she is on record as one who remained “contumaciously at the horn”.

3. Margaret. Married Walter Innes of Tarbert in Ross, son and heir of John Innes of Inverbreckie. Died January, 1570/1.

4. Janet. Married Alexander Ross of Balnagown.

5. Elizabeth. Married Walter, son of Alexander, son of Thomas Urquhart, Sheriff of Cromarty.

6. Catherine. Married Robert, son and heir of Robert Munro of Foulis.

Colin Cam. (Colin Mackenzie of Kintail) Chief 1570—1594

Colin Mackenzie of Kintail became chief and heir to his father's estate in 1570. His elder brother Murdoch survived his father but only for a short time. It is believed he was dead in 1569. It is not certain how Colin became known as Colin Cam. It is generally believed to mean “one-eyed”, but it can also mean bent or crooked. According to the Earl of Cromartie, Colin became a special favourite at Court and in particular with the young King James VI, who, during Colin's chiefship, was Scotland's king but not yet that of England since Queen Elizabeth was still alive and reigning. The Earl of Cromartie states:

there was none in the North for whom he had a greater esteem than for this Colin. He made him one of his Privy Councillors, and oft times invited him to be nobilitate (ennobled); but Colin always declined it, aiming rather to have his familie remarkable for power, as it were, above their qualitie than for titles that equalled their

power.

The Applecross Manuscript says he was:

a tender, feeble man but wise and judicious and had much trouble in his tyme with the feud of neighbours against whom he had always the lawes of the country and his brother Rorie Moire (Roderick) still acted in the fields and put the law in executione.

If it can really be said that Colin and his brother Roderick acted within the law then it was only just within the law. In modern parlance they “sailed close to the wind”.

That portion of the lands formerly belonging to Sir Donald Macdonald of Lochalsh and inherited by Macdonell of Glengarry became the cause of a long and bitter feud between the Mackenzies and the Macdonells of Glengarry. Colin Cam married Barbara Grant in 1570 and took as part of her dowry the half share of her lands in Lochbroom. These lands had come into the Grant family as compensation awarded to them as a result of a raid by Macdonell of Glengarry on Grant lands in 1544. In 1571 Donald MacAngus of Glengarry recovered his half of the lands of Lochalsh and Lochcarron by marrying Helen Grant, Barbara Grant's sister. The Mackenzies were not satisfied with this state of affairs and, needless to say, neither were the Macdonells of Glengarry. The feud between the two clans became intense and bitter and, as will be seen later, did not end until early into the 17th century.

Around the year 1569, another feud arose between the clan Mackenzie and clan Munro, who by this time were among the most powerful clans in Ross-shire. The trouble arose when John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, made over to his cousin Leslie, the Laird of Balquhair, the right and title to the castle at Chanonry together with the castle lands. Bishop Leslie had been secretary to the deposed Mary Queen of Scots and there was strong feeling against episcopacy in Scotland. He therefore felt it best to get the church property under his bishopric passed into his family's hands to preserve some of the important privileges that came with being a bishop. Notwithstanding this grant the Regent Moray, acting in the name of the infant King James VI of Scotland gave the custody of the castle to Andrew Munro of Milntown, who was a devout presbyterian. James Stewart, Earl of Moray, who was the illegitimate son of James V and the most powerful man in Scotland, promised Bishop Leslie that in return for ceding the castle and lands he would give him some of the lands of the barony of Fintry in Buchan. This scheme, however, became somewhat interrupted when, in January 1570, the Regent Moray was shot dead! So the unfortunate Andrew Munro did not obtain title to the castle and lands of Chanonry, but that did not deter him from occupying them as though he did. The Mackenzies were not particularly pleased to see their powerful neighbours, the Munros, in possession of this castle and recognizing the inherent weakness in

Munro's title, or lack of it, they purchased from Leslie the legal title and rights and proceeded to demand possession of their rightful property from Munro. Munro must clearly have been gnashing his teeth to see how he had been outflanked and outsmarted. This was an example of how Colin and his brother “put the law in executione”! However, Munro decided to stay put and made a new approach to the new regent, the Earl of Lennox who seeing the justice of the situation supported Munro. The situation became even more complex when the unfortunate Earl of Lennox was in turn shot and killed in September 1571. The next regent, the Earl of Mar, subsequently gave his approval to Andrew Munro to retain possession of the castle.

The Mackenzies regarded the Munros as wrongful possessors of their property which they had legally purchased from Leslie and they had no intention of quietly handing it over to Munro. They therefore laid seige to the castle, which the Munros defended for three years with the loss of many lives on both sides. The Mackenzies eventually successfully seized the steeple of the cathedral church and Munro was finally forced to give up the castle to the Mackenzies under an Act of Pacification, in the terms of which Munro was awarded compensation for his expenses in occupying the castle. And so, by smart use of the laws of the land, the power of the Mackenzies expanded both in the east and west of Ross. Given the general lawlessness in the Highlands, opportunities often arose for the more powerful clans to expand and extend their power. The lawless state in the Highlands was confirmed by the Earl of Sutherland in 1573 when he petitioned to be served heir to his estates at Aberdeen. The reason he was unable to get a jury to sit at Inverness, the Highland capital, was “in consequence of the barons, such as Colin Mackenzie of Kintail, Hugh Lord Lovat, Lachlan Makintosh of Dunachton and Robert Munro of Fowlis, being at deadly feud among themselves”.

Occasionally the King was forced to intervene and some of the offenders were required to answer charges brought against them. Since some of the killings that took place were often in retaliation for killings against others it was frequently difficult for the King to know who was the worst offender. As a result a chief might get off with a rap over the knuckles and told not to do it again. Such a remission was granted in 1586 by King James VI to :

Colin M'Kainzie of Kintail, and Rodoric M'Kainzie of Auchterfailie (viz Redcastle), his brother, for being art and part in the cruel murder of Rodoric M'Allester in Stroll; Gorie M'Allester, his brother in Stromcraig; Ronnald M'Gorie, the son of the latter; John Roy M'Allane v' Allester, in Pitnean; John Dow M'Allane v' Allester, in Kirktown of Lochcarroun; Alexander M'Allanroy, servitor of the deceased Rodoric; Sir John Monro in Lochbrume; John Monro, his son; John Monro Hucheoun, and the rest of their accomplices, under silence of night, upon the lands of Ardmanichtyke, Dalmartene,

Kirkcubbin of Lochcarroun, Blahat, and other parts within the baronies of Lochcarroun, Lochbrume, Ros, and Kessane, in the Sheriffdom of Inverness (Inverness).

These, together with other past crimes, comprise quite a catalogue of activity which, admittedly, was not inconsistent with the nature of the times in which they lived.

If Colin made a few enemies in his struggles for power, he also made some good friends. The Earl of Huntly, for example, obtained a commission of fire and sword against Mackintosh of Mackintosh. Mackintosh was forced to flee for safety to the isle of Moy. Huntly determined to hunt him down with vengeance and set out to besiege the island. Colin's sister was the wife of Mackintosh and having heard of Huntly's intentions he sent his relative, John Mackenzie of Kinnock to Huntly requesting he treat his sister as a gentlewoman and that Colin would regard this as a great act of personal courtesy. The testy tempered Huntly was not about to do any favours and told Kinnock that when he found the lady she would be "the worst used lady in the North; that she was an ill-instrument against his cause, and therefore he would cut her tail above her houghs."

In reply to this nasty sounding threat, Kinnock told Huntly that if this were so, then Colin would be there to take care of her himself. Huntly replied that he did not value Colin being there more than the lady herself and that he could tell Colin as much. Huntly's officers were more than a little disturbed by this uncivil reply and the results that might ensue.

Colin took the reply in the spirit in which it was given and instructed his brother, Roderick of Redcastle to intercept Huntly. Roderick immediately raised four hundred followers and appeared over the brow of a hill in front of Huntly, who was leading his men from Inverness to Moy. Huntly being told that these were Mackenzies wondered how they had been raised so quickly. He was told by one of his officers that "their leader is so active and fortunate that his men will flock to him from all parts on a moment's notice when he has any ado. And before you gain Mackintosh or his lady you will lose more than he his worth, since now, as it seems, her friends take part in the quarrel". Huntly quietly considered the matter and decided Mackintosh was best left alone.

Duncan Warrand in his book, *Some Mackenzie Pedigrees*, says that Colin's doings, "as mentioned in the Scots Peerage, are certainly open to criticism". This "tender, feeble man" was certainly not short of the craft necessary to stay ahead of his competitors. Before he died on 19 June 1594 at Redcastle, at his brother Roderick's house, he had also become sheriff of Inverness and a member of the Privy Council. He died having "lived beloved by Princes and people". He is said to have been buried at Beaulieu.

Colin Cam married first, Barbara, daughter of John Grant of Freuchie, (now known as Grant of Grant). Barbara's mother was Lady Marjory Stewart, who in turn

was the daughter of the 3rd Earl of Atholl. They had six sons and five daughters:

1. Kenneth Mackenzie of Kintail. Chief of the clan. Created 1st Lord of Kintail.

2. Sir Roderick Mackenzie of Castle Leod, Coigach and Tarbat. Became the tutor of Kintail on the death of his elder brother. Ancestor of the Earls of Cromartie and the present chief of the clan. Known as "Rory Mor".

3. John Mackenzie. Probably died without children.

4. Colin Mackenzie of Killin, afterwards of Kinnoch. Ancestor of the Mackenzies of Pitlundie.

5. Alexander Mackenzie of Kilcoy, Inverallochy, Findon, Kernsary, Muirton and Cleanwaters.

6. Murdoch Mackenzie of Kensary. He was also at one time of Melbost and of Inverewe. He married Katherine, daughter of Alexander Mackenzie of Fairburn. They had one son and two daughters:

1. John Mackenzie. Killed at the Battle of Auldearn, 1646.

2. Marjory Mackenzie. Wife of Alexander Mackenzie of Cliff, (in the parish of Kiltearn).

3. Barbara Mackenzie. Wife of Thomas Graham of Drynie.

1. Margaret. Married Simon, 6th Lord Fraser of Lovat.

2. Janet. Said to have married Lachlan Maclean of Duart.

3. Mary. Married Sir Donald Macdonald of Sleat.

4. Agnes.

5. Katherine.

According to the Earl of Cromartie, Mary, the daughter of Roderick Mackenzie of Davochmaluach, had an illegitimate son by Colin "Cam". This son, Alexander Mackenzie of Assynt, was the ancestor of the Mackenzies of Applecross, Coul, Delvine, Auldeny, Torridon, Lentrán and Kinnahaird. In the Applecross Manuscript this Alexander is called Alexander of Coul, and no mention is made of him being the ancestor of the Mackenzies of Applecross. However, William Fraser, in his "The Earls of Cromartie", shows Colin Cam having married Mary some time after the death of his first wife.