

NOTES & QUERIES
of the
Society of West Highland and Island
Historical Research

Number I

30 November 1972

EDITORIAL.

On the 8 July, 1972, a meeting was held at Breacachadh Castle, Isle of Coll, where it was decided to found a society for West Highland Historical Research from amongst a small group of people, who have a considerable knowledge of the history of the West Highlands, and who were prepared to share the benefits of their research with each other.

It was also agreed to bring out a periodical with properly researched articles on West Highland History. Subsequently, it has been suggested that this should be called 'Alba', the historic journal of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland. To date, two articles have been received for such a journal, and it is hoped that the remainder, which were promised, will soon reach Breacachadh.

'Notes & Queries I' is the Society's first effort. It has taken longer to produce than was originally intended and it is hoped that it will be of interest and that the contributions will not be so slanted towards Coll in the future. It will appear again once sufficient answers and questions have been received.

Members of the Society are:-

The Reverend Donald and Mrs Maclean of Dochgarroch.

Miss Campbell of Kilberry.

Dr Grant Simpson, the University of Aberdeen.

R. Balfour, esq., Inverness.

Mr and Mrs R.W. Munro, Edinburgh.

Allan Maclean, esq., yr. of Dochgarroch.

Nicholas Maclean Bristol.

Subscription - 50p per year.

NOTES

ALEXANDER SNODGRASS, MASON AND INDWELLER IN COLL

On 8th February, 1971, J.G. Dunbar, M.A., F.S.A., F.S.A. Scot., and D.J. Turner, BSc., F.S.A. Scot. presented a paper to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland on the excavations and field survey at Breacachadh Castle, Isle of Coll, between 1965 and 1968. Among the many alterations to the Castle between 1430 and 1750, they noticed the building of a substantial dwelling house within the curtain wall, which they ascribed to the latter half of the 17th century. It is now possible to suggest a more precise date to this building and to discover something of the identity of the man most responsible for its construction. In the manuscript history of the Macleans, which deals most fully with Coll, it is stated that one 'Alexander Stewart or Snodgrass came to Coll from Greenock . . . [and] was undertaker for the building and finishing of the house of Breakacha'.¹ At one time I thought that this referred to the new house at Breacachadh, which, as we know from several sources, was completed in about 1750.² That this was not the case is apparent from new evidence which I recently discovered in Register House.

This evidence is to be found in a bond to Donald Maclean of Coll by Andrew Hayes and Robert Jacob, Lieutenant in Colonel fferdmond's Regiment of Foot, and Alexander Balfour, Ensign in the regiment of the late Bartholomew Balfour, dated 10th May, 1690. One of the witnesses was Alexander Snodgrass Mason and Indweller in Coll.³ It would therefore seem probable that the Maclean MS is correct in ascribing the building of the house at Breacachadh to Snodgrass and that it was carried out circa 1690. The MS has

details of Snodgrass' ancestry, which are not without interest. His father, it appears, was one John Snodgrass (alias Stewart), who had 'free houses at Carsdick and a spot of ground which he called Snog grass, [and] ran through his property by keeping to much bank'. Apart from the fact that Carsdick is near to Greenock, I have not been able to discover anything about the location of this property or anything of John Snodgrass' history. There is, however, an interesting clue in the MS, where it says that Alexander's mother was a daughter of Sir Dugald Campbell of Auchnabreck. This could provide the reason why he came to Coll.

In about 1620, John Maclean, younger of Coll, married Florence, daughter of Sir Dugald Campbell. This is confirmed by the 'Genealogie of the Family of Auchnabreck',⁴ which states that she had one full sister, three legitimate half sisters (one was married to the Sheriff of Bute), and a natural sister. There is no mention of a marriage to a John Stewart or Snodgrass. It is improbable that a legitimate daughter has been omitted, but it is not unlikely that another illegitimate daughter existed, and that her son, after his father had lost his property, went to work for his cousin in Coll.

Alexander Snodgrass is said to have married Julian, daughter of James (oig) son of Duncan.¹ I have been unable to identify who they were. He had issue Alexander, Hector, Mary and Catherine. Mary married Archibald Maclean of the Lochbuy family, and Catherine married Allan Maclean of Crossapol, merchant in Coll (of the family of Coll), whose son Neil, Tacksman of Crossapol, in Coll, married his cousin Julian, the daughter of Mary Snodgrass and Archibald Maclean.

There is a tradition, which keeps cropping up in 19th century correspondence, of the numerous descendants of this marriage,⁵ that Julian, the wife of Neil of Crossapol, was a Stewart of the family of Bute, as well as being a near relative of Maclean of Coll, and that when her parents died, leaving her an orphan, she was brought up by the Laird of Coll. When she came of marriageable age, the Laird sent for Crossapol and said that he should marry her or be turned out of his farm. It would seem that generations have been telescoped, as both the Maclean MS and the Catechists' Roll of 1776 confirm that Neil of Crossapol's wife was surnamed Maclean. It is therefore uncertain if it was Neil's wife or his mother, both descendants of Alexander Snodgrass (alias Stewart) who was brought up by Coll.

The Catechists' Roll of 1776 lists only one Snodgrass in Coll, Hector, who is shown as being a servant in Sorisdale.⁶ The name does not recur in any Coll record that I have examined. However, in a lecture to the Society of Genealogists Eric Cregeen maintained that the name occurred in Tiree in the 18th century.

It is curious that when, in 1818, Alexander Maclean of Coll needed to borrow £2,000 to assist him to purchase the estate of Aros in Mull, he should have gone to Neil Snodgrass of Cunninghamhead for the money⁷ and it would be interesting to discover if anything else is known about Alexander and his family.

NICHOLAS MACLEAN BRISTOL.

References.

1. Breacachadh Castle Papers, 'A Genealogical Account of the Macleans' by an unknown author. It was probably written in Coll about 1835/36 and is based on earlier MSS and has similar wording to similar accounts in the MacFarlane Collection.
2. For example, see Boswell's Journal of a Tour of the Hebrides

with Samuel Johnson LL.D., ed. by Frederick A. Pottle and Charles H. Bennett, 1936, p. 265.

3. SRO/RD/MacK/63
4. SHS/3rd series/Vol. XXII/p. 66.
5. Breacachadh Castle Papers: Correspondence of H.A.C. Maclean, 1896-1918.
6. SRO/CH2/70/1.
7. SRO/Sasines Argyll 1781-1830/2955.

A DYNASTY OF STONEMASONS.

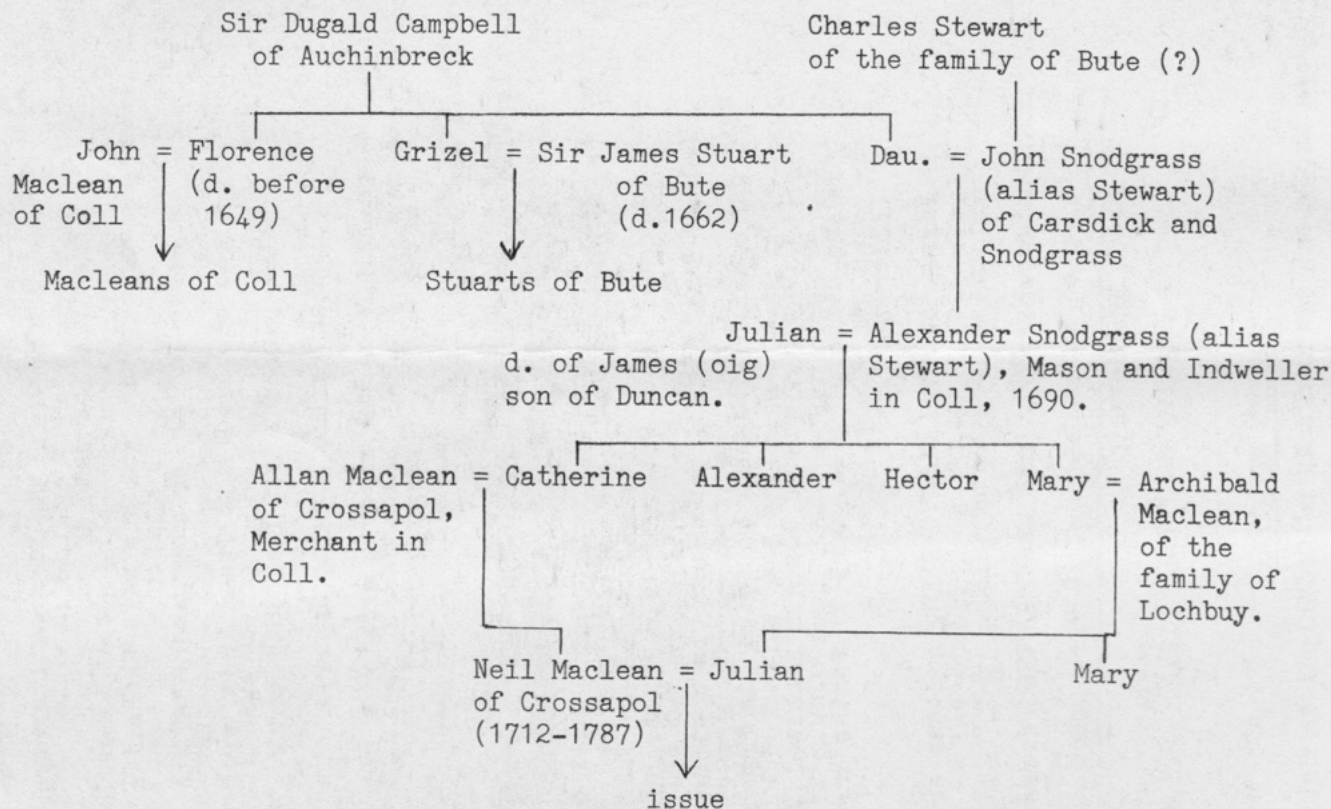
The Mid Argyll Natural History and Antiquarian Society and the Kintyre Archaeological Society are jointly recording pre-1855 gravestones in their respective areas. An unexpected bonus has been the discovery of a group of stonemasons, active in South Knapdale and North Kintyre in the early 19th century. Their surname was GLEN, and their work is of high quality.

Most of the South Knapdale stones may well have been quarried at Kilberry, where an exposure of chlorite schist was worked to obtain many of the mediaeval stones preserved there; but any idea that the Glens could be descended from the local mediaeval carvers is defeated by the total absence of their name from the 18th century Kilberry Rent Rolls (1735-1779), which the Mid Argyll Society hopes to publish shortly. Where, then, do the Glens originate, and what brought them to this area? Any information about them, or about signed work by them to be found elsewhere, will be most welcome.

The names so far found are listed below.

Alexander Glen, Mason at Kilberry, erects a stone to the memory of his daughter Elizabeth, died 8th July, 1810, aged 3 years. (Lernahension Parish Graveyard, South Knapdale; range of fine scripts; masonic emblems).

Alexander Glen, tenant in North Colpein, erects a stone in memory



of his daughter Ann, died 30 Oct. 1843, aged 9 years and 3 months. (Kilbrannan Churchyard, Skipness).

(Possibly the same man?)

Dougald Glen, Mason, Clachan, and his wife Catherine Paterson, erect a stone in 1849 to the memory of his father Peter Glen, who died 14th June, 1837, aged 83, and mother, Helen Darroch, who died 30th March, 1838, aged 65. (Clachan Parish Burying Ground).

John Glen, Mason, signs on the reverse side of a stone erected after 1823. (Lergnahension).

Peter Glen, see Dougald, above.

Thomas Glen, (a) signs, as THO^S GLEN STONE CUTT^R, reverse of a stone erected after October 1817 (Lergnahension).

(b) signs, as THOS GLEN CARVER, the top edge of a stone erected after October, 1823 (Kilbrannan).

(c) as Thomas Glen, Mason, erects a stone in memory of his daughter Janet, who died 7th March, 1820, aged (4?) months, and of his son Archibald, who died 25th January, 1828, aged 11 months and 25 days. (Kilbrannon).

(d) signs, as THOS GLEN CARVER, a stone erected in 1825 (Kilnaish, South Knapdale).

(e) signs, as THO. GLEN CARVER, the reverse of a stone erected after January, 1829 (Lothead, Achahoish, South Knapdale).

MARION CAMPBELL, F.S.A., F.S.A.Scot.

SWEEN MCSWEEN.¹

'Sween MacSween' was Tacksman of Grishipol in Coll when Boswell

and Johnson visited the island in 1773. Boswell states² 'His predecessors had been in Skye from a very remote period, upon the estate belonging to MacLeod; but probably before the MacLeods had it, as the name is certainly Norwegian, from Sueno, King of Norway. This Mr McSweyn left Skye upon MacLeod's raising his rents. He then got his farm [Grishipol] from Coll, whom he had fostered. . . The present Lady Coll, sister to Talisker, was also fostered by Mr McSweyn'.

It would seem probable that McSweyn was a member of the McSweins of Roag, Bernisdale and Vattin in Skye mentioned in 'The MacLeods'.³ Grishipol was in the hands of Captain Lachlan Maclean, younger of Muck, in 1787,⁴ and was probably given up by McSweyn about this time. The name does not recur in Coll and it is probable that they left the island.

It would be interesting to know,

1. Who these McSweyns were, and when they left Skye for Coll.
2. What happened to them after they left the island.
3. Why they were chosen to foster Coll.

NICHOLAS MACLEAN BRISTOL.

References.

1. This is the spelling in the list of the inhabitants of the Island of Coll Dec. 2nd, 1776 - SRO/CH2/70/1.
2. Boswell's journal of a Tour of the Hebrides. Pottle & Bennet edition, 1936.
3. The Macleods: The History of a Clan, 1200-1956, by I.F. Grant, 1959.
4. SRO/CH2/70/1.

DONALD MACLEAN - MURDERED AT 'INISHON IN IRELAND'.

The Maclean MS, referred to already, states that the fourth son of Allan Maclean, Merchant in Coll, was 'murdered at Inishon in Ireland'. This is an intriguing enough statement to excite my curiosity.

Two of his elder brothers died in 1780 (John) and 1787 (Neil). No date is given for the death of Allan, the third son, while the fifth son died 'young in the year 1757'. From the evidence of his tombstone in Coll, it would appear that the elder brother Neil was born in 1712. If the fifth son were born three years later, the earliest date he could have been conceived, he would have been 42 at the time of his death. This would hardly be considered as 'dying young'. It would therefore seem that there was a considerable gap between the dates of birth of the elder and younger males of the family.

The first question to be asked is, Where is Inishon? I have no gazetteer of Ireland at Breacachadh, but it does occur to me that it could be Innishowan, where the 79th Foot had their first engagement and casualties in circa 1794. It is just conceivable that Donald Maclean could have been 'murdered' there. It would be interesting to know the names of the casualties suffered by the 79th in that engagement.

NICHOLAS MACLEAN BRISTOL.

LIST OF THE INHABITANTS IN THE ISLAND OF COLL, DECEMBER 2nd, 1776.

This list, SRO/CH2/70/1, is the first 'Census' of the inhabitants of Coll that I have been able to discover. It is an invaluable starting-off point for any social history of the island.

It lists the inhabitants by farms, starting at Kelis (Caolis) in the west and ending at Soudasdale (Sorisdale) in the east. The different households are separated by a broken line, and children under age for catechiseable purposes, i.e., under seven years old, by a separate column.

The list answers a numbers of queries. It shows who was married, the names of their children, who employed servants, and who it was not necessary to catechise - almost invariably the same people. It does, however, raise a number of questions that are unanswered. After each examinable person is an abbreviated comment, which I have understood to mean the number of questions answered, e.g.,

Feall

(Niel Campbell - 30 Qs.

(Christian McKinnon - 42Qs.

Archibald - 30 Qs.

Malcom - 42 Qs.

Angus - 30 Qs.

The last examinable child 'Effie' has 'PCC' instead of a number. This occurs in several cases and I have been unable to discover what it means. Other comments include '1st Pn' = First Portion?; 'all' = every question correct?; '42 Qs & Up^{ds}'; 'superan^d' = superannuated? It would be extremely interesting to know hat any reader thought these comments mean.

NICHOLAS MACLEAN BRISTOL.