

A History of the Clan Chattan Macintyres in Badenoch

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The Clan Chattan Macintyres in Badenoch, an offshoot of the main body of the clan in Glenoe ⁽¹⁾, occupied the lands of Upper Strathspey, in the Central Highlands, from the late 15th century, settling mainly in the parishes of Kingussie and Laggan, but also further down the River Spey in the vicinity of Alvie. Collectively dominating the Highlands between the Grampians and the Moray Firth, Clan Chattan itself was a confederation of allied clans, forming a major power block within the region. The heartland of the Badenoch Macintyres lay in the neighbouring glens of the Truim, between Newtonmore and Drumochter, and the Tromie, which joins the Spey at Kingussie, and there is some evidence to suggest that Glen Tromie was the clan's original foothold in Badenoch ⁽²⁾. The Macintyres lived among their Clan Chattan brethren, the Macphersons, a well-integrated community that survived until the mid 19th century, though it was the Laird of Mackintosh - whose seat at Dunachton lay close to the mouth of the Tromie - who first introduced the name to the district.



View of Glen Tromie from Croidh-la, looking north towards Kingussie and Upper Strathspey. To the left are the wooded footslopes of Creag Mhic an t-Saoir, or Macintyrés Rock

1496 is the date given by the Kinrara MS for the arrival of the first Macintyre in Badenoch, a bard from the old clan heartland who joined William Mackintosh, Captain of Clan Chattan, during a retaliatory campaign against the future chief's enemies in the west. During the expedition, or soon after, he became William's personal bard, and by extension bard to Clan Chattan - a role, according to Charles Fraser-Mackintosh in his Clan Chattan chronicle, his descendents are said to have filled over several generations. The former document was written around 1680 by clan historian Lachlan Mackintosh of Kinrara:

"It was this William in an expedition to Rannoch and Appin, took the bard Macintyre, (of whom the Macintyres of Badenoch are descended), under his protection." (3)

The Appin reference is pivotal, given its close proximity to Glenoe and the Macintyre homeland of Lorn.

Kinrara also informs us that:

"This Macintyre was a notable rhymmer. It was he that composed the excellent Gaelic epitaph in joint commemoration of Farquar Vic-Conchie and William Vic-Lachlan-Badenoch, Lairds of Mackintosh."

Connections have been made between this epitaph, composed on the death of the above William, the 13th chief, and the famous "Mackintosh's Lament", though Fraser-Mackintosh, in "Dunachton Past and Present", expresses his belief that the lament was written over three decades later, on the death of William's nephew and namesake, the 15th chief of the clan:

"The deep feeling of the aged rhymmer Macintyre, who had seen, within the space of forty years, four Captains of Clan Chattan meet with violent deaths, found vent in that fine composition, so well known and admired, 'The Mackintoshes' Lament'".

The Highland folklorist, Alexander Carmichael, has described it as "one of the most beautiful things in the Gaelic language". Unfortunately, although the refrain is thought to be as Macintyre conceived it, parts of the rest appear to have been tinkered with to varying degrees over the course of the centuries.

However, two complete works by the bard exist in Scotland's first anthology of Gaelic verse, "The Book of the Dean of Lismore", assembled between 1512 and 1526, and a key landmark in Scottish literature. These are the enigmatic "ship poems", which are discussed in "Bard Macintyre, The First Voice of the Clan", (Electric Scotland). The extent of the unbroken line of hereditary Macintyre bards is unknown, though if Fraser-Mackintosh was right the bard himself, the wellspring of the line, looks, during his long lifetime, to have inherited no fewer than four Lairds of Mackintosh as his patrons.



View west from Croidh-la, down onto the crest of Creag Mhic an t-Saoir, very probably named after the bard himself. The shallow dish of Coire Phiobaire, immediately behind it, or the Pipers' Corrie, suggests that this was a centre of cultural production, where the interdependent disciplines of bardic poetry and music were pursued.

The last-known of the clan poets from Badenoch, Malcolm Macintyre, (1755-1830), is best remembered for his elegy to Captain John Dubh Macpherson of Balachroan, "The Black Officer", killed in the Gaick avalanche tragedy of 1800. The Gaelic scholar Rev. Alexander Cameron had this to say of him during the latter part of the century: "The theme of the Loss of Gaick was sung by Duncan Gow, and in still more beautiful poetry by Malcolm Macintyre, better known all over the Highlands as *Calum Dubh nam Protaigean*, (or "Dark Malcolm of the Tricks", owing to his skills as a puppeteer, juggler and general showman). "Calum composed several poems, and he takes a good position among the minor bards of the Gael." Historian Alexander Macpherson, writing a decade later, in *Glimpses of Church and Social Life in the Highlands*, believed that his talent far outweighed his reputation, remarking that: "He is less known in Gaelic poetry (today) than many who had not a tithe of his genius". Malcolm was a proud descendent of the 15th century poet, suggesting an extensive oral history long since lost. The poet's home clachan of Dallanach lay at the head of Glen Truim. His putative grandfather, Malcolm Macintyre, appears on the 1746 surrender lists for Macpherson of Cluny's Regiment, along with Donald Macintyre, (like the elder Malcolm also from Dallannach), probably the poet's father. Malcolm is an interesting character, as he embodies, even during the twilight years of the clans, the essence of the old clan bard, who, as much as chronicler and wordsmith, was also master of ceremonies, news-bringer, and all round entertainer, whose visiting presence among the townships was always sure to draw the crowds. Malcolm, separated from his hereditary bardic forebears by several generations, never held the role on a formal basis, as by then the close link between bard and chief had

become all but severed, though his work, in the spirit of the genre, continued to immortalise the great and the good among the Clan Chattan confederation.

Sir Aeneas Mackintosh, clan chief and author, writing some time before 1820, lists the “Clan Inteir” as the sixteenth and final admission into the Clan Chattan of a constituent clan or sept. It’s important to clarify this record as it has led to misunderstandings about the nature of the clan’s arrival in Badenoch. The listing was a classification used by the Mackintosh historian three hundred years after the event, and had no root in any 15th century Clan Chattan constitution - which would suggest the arrival of the Macintyres in force in the wake of the Appin expedition. Instead, the bard - perhaps with an immediate family entourage – appears in the record specifically as the sole progenitor of the Clan Chattan Macintyres, who with time proliferated to form a significant group within the confederation.

It’s not until four or so generations later that the bard’s descendents show up in the archive. The Genealogies of the Macphersons, recorded in the Book of Invereshie, lists a Donald McEntire as living at Etterish, Glen Truim, during the late C16th, a son-in-law to James Macpherson of Biallid. Whatever Donald’s role within the community, he was evidently of sufficient standing to marry into Macpherson clan gentry, suggesting that as a great great grandson of the bard, (or thereabouts), the old man’s memory - and his contribution to the literature of the Clan Chattan alliance - continued to be held in high esteem. As previously indicated, for reasons that are not yet clear it was among the Macphersons, not the Mackintoshes, that the bard’s descendents chiefly settled, though this may have something to do with shifting boundaries within the Clan Chattan lands during the 16th or 17th centuries. Alan G. Macpherson’s demographic studies of Upper Strathspey suggest that there would have been a significant population of Macintyres in Badenoch by the end of the C17th. Some would certainly have been out with Montrose’s Royalists during the Civil War, as one of his captains was Donald Macpherson, eldest son of Malcolm of Phoness, a branch of the clan with which the Macintyres were closely associated. The Phoness lands, stretching from Dallanach in Upper Glen Truim to the Knappach of Ruthven, by Kingussie, are, (Strathmashie and Glen Tromie apart), an encapsulation of the lands finally settled by the Macintyres in the Strathspey district. Donald’s troops fought under Graham of Montrose at the Battle of Auldearn, and the Siege of Aberdeen, and served with the Earl of Huntly at Lethen.

The Badenoch Macintyres took part in the Rising of 1715, enlisting with the Clan Chattan Regiment led by Lachlan, Laird of Mackintosh. They were with the regiment during its audacious march into England, as part of the small Highland army under Mackintosh of Borlum. After crushing the Cumberland Militia on Penrith Fell, the Jacobite force finally came to grief at the Battle of Preston, once the English Jacobites - who then, as in 1745, were keener to toast the “King over the Water” than bear arms for him - failed to provide support. A number of Macintyres, the majority of them from the parish of Laggan, appear on the subsequent transportation lists. During the ‘Forty-Five, the Clan Chattan Macintyres served with their traditional comrades-in-arms the Macphersons, forming a significant contingent of Cluny’s Regiment, generally

acknowledged to have been among the finest troops in the Prince's army. (See *The Macintyres and the Forty-Five*, Electric Scotland).



View south-west from Strath an Eilich, above Cluny Castle, one time seat of the Macpherson chiefs. Ewan Macpherson of the Forty-Five, head of the clan and colonel-in-chief of the regiment bearing his name, spent nine years in hiding in the surrounding hills, before escaping to France. At the famous "Cluny's Cage" hide-out, on nearby Ben Alder, he entertained his fellow fugitive, Prince Charles Edward Stuart, during his legendary flight across the Highlands in the wake of Culloden

At the murkier end of things, during the 17th century, several of the Clan Chattan Macintyres went raiding with Patrick Roy Macgregor. It's not clear who was dispossessed in their regular reshuffles of limited local resources, but among the raiders were three unscrupulous Johns: John Macintyre in Invereshie; John Roy Macintyre in Auchnakint; and John Macintyre, known as "the Ratton", from Glenlivet (4). Among the roll-call of Macgregor's band, which was apparently notorious in its day, the name of Macintyre is among the most conspicuous. They were evidently a rough lot. All were chastised for "not appearing to underly the law" – though these were indeed lawless times.

One of the clan in Badenoch whose martial skills were more respectably employed was James, the standard bearer to Col. John Roy Stewart's Regiment during the 'Forty-Five. As we have seen, most of his kinsmen from the Strathspey district marched with Macpherson of Cluny's, though James, from Beglan, near Rothiemurchus, was one of a number of Speyside men to follow John Roy to Edinburgh, where the main body of the regiment was raised. James marched to Derby with the Prince, and carried the regimental colours, the Green Banner of Kincardine, (Kincardine, Speyside), on the front line at Culloden. He survived the battle and its aftermath, spiriting the flag safely from the field. Ever after, for the duration of his life, he would mark the anniversary of the Raising of the Royal Standard at Glenfinnan - the 19th of August – by climbing Cairngorm and waving the banner aloft in memory of the cause and of lost comrades. On the death of James Macintyre, (*Seumas na Braiteach*, or James of the Flag), the Green Banner - among the few Jacobite colours not to have been burnt at the Mercat Cross by the Edinburgh hangman - was passed on to the Duke of Gordon.



View north across Rothiemurchus Forest, one of the last remaining enclaves of the great Caledonian Forest that once covered most of the Highlands. Many of the ancient pine trees around Loch an Eilean, (centre), were growing at the time of Flodden. *Seumas na Braiteach* was among the relatively few Macintyres who settled down river from the main body of the clan in Kingussie and Laggan

Lt. General John Macintyre, of the East India Company, mentioned by Fraser-Mackintosh in his Clan Chattan history, was born at Gordonhall, near Ruthven, in 1750 (5), the son of Dr Donald Macintyre, surgeon to Cluny's Regiment during the 'Forty-Five. But despite John's Badenoch birth, he belonged to the old cadet of Letterbaine whose lands bordered onto Glenoe, back in the clan homeland of Argyll. These were the descendents of *Iain Buidhe Mac an t-Saoir*, or 'John Boy' Macintyre, (John of the Yellow Hair), who had fought with the Campbells at Tyndrum circa 1440, killing Glenorchy's foster brother, an event that had long term ramifications for the clan. Dr Donald had been a member of one of the early Independent Highland Companies, stationed at Ruthven. His first wife was Ann Macintyre, a local girl and descendent of the bard, and upon marrying her he settled in the district. His second wife, Isobel Macpherson, John's mother, was a sister to the controversial poet James Macpherson of 'Ossian' fame, and a cousin to Chief Ewan Macpherson of Cluny. Unbeknown to Fraser-Mackintosh, his "Prima Donna of the North", Margaret Macintyre - at the time of his writing in 1898, a soprano of world renown, and a regular performer at Covent Garden - was among John's descendents.

Another of the clan who came into Badenoch from outside was Rev. Duncan MacIntyre of Camusnaherie, who was minister at Laggan between 1809 and 1816. Some of his

children were born in the parish, though he eventually returned to his native Kilmallie. His son, another of Fraser-Mackintosh's luminaries of the clan, was the Rev. John Macintyre of Kilmonivaig, a respected Gaelic scholar and poet, and grandson of the chief, James Macintyre of Glenoe, via James's youngest daughter Jean. The lawyer, E.J. Macintyre QC, who served as a Member of Parliament during the later 19th century, appears to have had long-standing roots in Badenoch. His grandfather hailed from the Mackintosh heartland of Moy, and as such is likely to have been bona fide Clan Chattan.

Finally, it's worth mentioning an enduring tradition (6) that the celebrated Macintyre pipers from Rannoch also ranked among the bard's progeny. This might explain Fraser-Mackintosh's otherwise puzzling comparison between the Macintyre poets of Badenoch not only with their fellow wordsmiths from the MacVurrich family, but also with the peerless MacCrimmon pipers of Skye. A now forgotten oral history may well have told of a line of piper-poets. If there was indeed such a line, the best of the pipers had left Badenoch for Rannoch by the 17th century, from which time – though perhaps earlier – they served as pipers to Menzies of Menzies over several generations. Their proudest possession was the famous instrument now known to us as the Faery Pipes of Moidart, the oldest extant Highland bagpipes, which are said to have been played at Bannockburn. Donald Mor is the first recorded member of the family. His son John, who studied under the MacCrimmons, wrote the well-known pipe tunes "*The Field of Sheriffmuir*" some time after the battle in 1715, and *My King Has Landed at Moidart* in celebration of Prince Charles Edward Stuart's arrival in Scotland a generation later. John's son, Donald Ban, continued the tradition, and lived to a great old age, leaving two sons, Robert and John. Robert inherited the Faery Pipes, and became piper to Macdonald of Clanranald on account of his father's great longevity, while John remained with the Menzies chief in Rannoch, the last of the Macintyre pipers there. He died in 1835. His son Donald farmed at Allarich at the head of Loch Rannoch. Robert emigrated to America, on Clanranald's death in 1793, leaving the venerable pipes with Lt. Col. Donald Macdonald of Kinlochmoidart, whose family own them still. During recent years they have been on regular display at the West Highland Museum, Fort William, and at the Clan Donald Centre on Skye.

The number of Macintyres in Badenoch dropped dramatically during the first half of the 19th century. The first Badenoch clearances took place in 1797, at the township of Biallidbeag, where Glen Truim meets the Spey, and the location of the ancient Macpherson/Macintyre cemetery, St. Patricks. (20) It's worth mentioning that this burial ground, which accommodated Macintyre burials not only from Glen Truim, but from the whole of Badenoch, comprises of graves, almost without exception, from people bearing these two names. As Alan G. Macpherson points out in relation to interments of both from much further afield, - i.e. from those whose homes were closer to other cemeteries – "the explanation for their preference must lie in lost ties of kinship between the two clans". By 1840 the Macintyre population of Laggan had been reduced to a quarter of its pre-1800 level, and three years later there was just one family left in Glen Truim. (21) The last Macintyre to have been laid to rest at St. Patrick's is Alexander Macintyre, shepherd, from Dalchully, near Laggan, in 1923.

Alistair K. Macintyre, March 2015



Macintyre gravestones at the Macintyre-Macpherson cemetery of Biallidbeag, close to the mouth of Glen Truim. Few stones remain standing, and fewer still are legible, though the weathered stumps of many others bear witness to earlier interments. Nearby are the remains of the township of Biallidbeag, the first victim of the Badenoch clearances, emptied of its people during the final decade of the 18th century.

Endnotes

1. S.F.Mackintosh of Farr states in his *"Collections"* of 1832 that the Badenoch Macintyres were, "a branch of the Macintyres of Gleno(e), who formerly possessed the sides of Loch Laggan; many of the families of whom are still in that quarter." Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, in *"The Minor Septs of Clan Chattan"* writing six decades later, is equally unequivocal about the Clan Chattan Macintyres' Glenoe origins. Farr's assertion of a Lagganside homeland, however, is not borne out by Alan G. Macpherson's exhaustive research into the settlement patterns of Upper Strathspey, (1967), which finds no documentary evidence either of direct land ownership by the clan, or of specific settlement by Macintyres along the banks of the loch. As he points out, the south shore was uninhabited, while its northern bank formed part of the Keppoch Macdonell lands. Mackintosh must have been referring to the well-documented Macintyre presence in and around Strathmashie, touching the extreme north-east tip of the loch, not far from the village of Laggan.

2. The Gaelic scholar Rev. Alexander Cameron, in his later 19th century "Reliquiæ Celticae" distinguishes between the indigenous Clan Chattan groups -- Mackintoshes, Macphersons, Shaws, etc - and "intrusions of longstanding from neighbouring clans", including, (from further afield), the Macintyres who, in this context, he places specifically in Glen Tromie. Cameron's observation would seem to lend weight to the author's hypothesis, in *The Bard Macintyre, First Voice of the Clan, (Electric Scotland)*, that Creag Mhic an t-Saoir, half way up the glen, was named after the original Macintyre in Badenoch, and that the clan settled other parts of the district from Glen Tromie.

3. A Latin translation was made from the original, written in Scots, and – for reasons unknown - another back into Scots from the Latin, leading to slightly different interpretations. The other available translation reads as follows: (*William*), "in the aforesaid expedition to Rannoch, brought away Bard Macintyre, from whom the Macintyres of Badenoch, now called Clanchattans, are descended." So, either Appin was added to a later translation as a result of common knowledge of the event within Clan Chattan; or – more likely - it was edited out from the Latin version for brevity's sake.

4. There were least two others of the clan among the raiders, one from Auchnahad, (a son of Patrick there), and another Auchnakint man, (also the son of a Patrick Macintyre).

5. Charles Fraser-Mackintosh gives John's birthplace as nearby Knappach, where his mother spent part of her childhood and the birthplace of some of her siblings, though John himself is listed in the Kingussie Old Parish Register as having been born at Gordonhall, and his sister at Braeruthven. He spent his boyhood years at the hearth of his maternal grandparents, Andrew and Ellen Macpherson, along with his aunts and uncles, among them the poet James "Ossian" Macpherson.

6. To put this tradition into context, one of the Macintyre pipers is said, in the late 19th century *Red and White Book of Menzies*, to have led Clan Menzies into battle in 1314. The account, however, has been embellished, showing clear signs of contemporary romanticism – clan tartans, (now known to have been largely mythical), blue bonnets many centuries before they were actually worn, etc., etc. If true though it would dispel the possibility of a Badenoch origin for the piping dynasty, Bannockburn having been fought nearly two centuries before the bard's arrival in Badenoch. Either tradition may be accurate, though of the two the pipers' Badenoch origins seem less likely to have been born of wishful thinking, and suggest a very plausible flourishing of creative talent at a known centre of cultural production. The reference to the tradition of a Badenoch genesis comes courtesy of Martin L. MacIntyre, who was informed of it by the distinguished piper Archie Macintyre. Archie had the rare honour of playing the Faery Pipes at the 2008 Macintyre Clan Gathering in Oban. His people come from Sunart, where the name Macintyre is scarce, so it's very likely that they were connected to the piping family there. The tradition has been passed down by Archie's forebears by word of mouth over successive generations. It should be pointed out that Angus MacKay, in his *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, (1838), suggests the Isles as the place of origin for the family, though MacKay's historical notes are considered by many authorities to be unreliable.

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