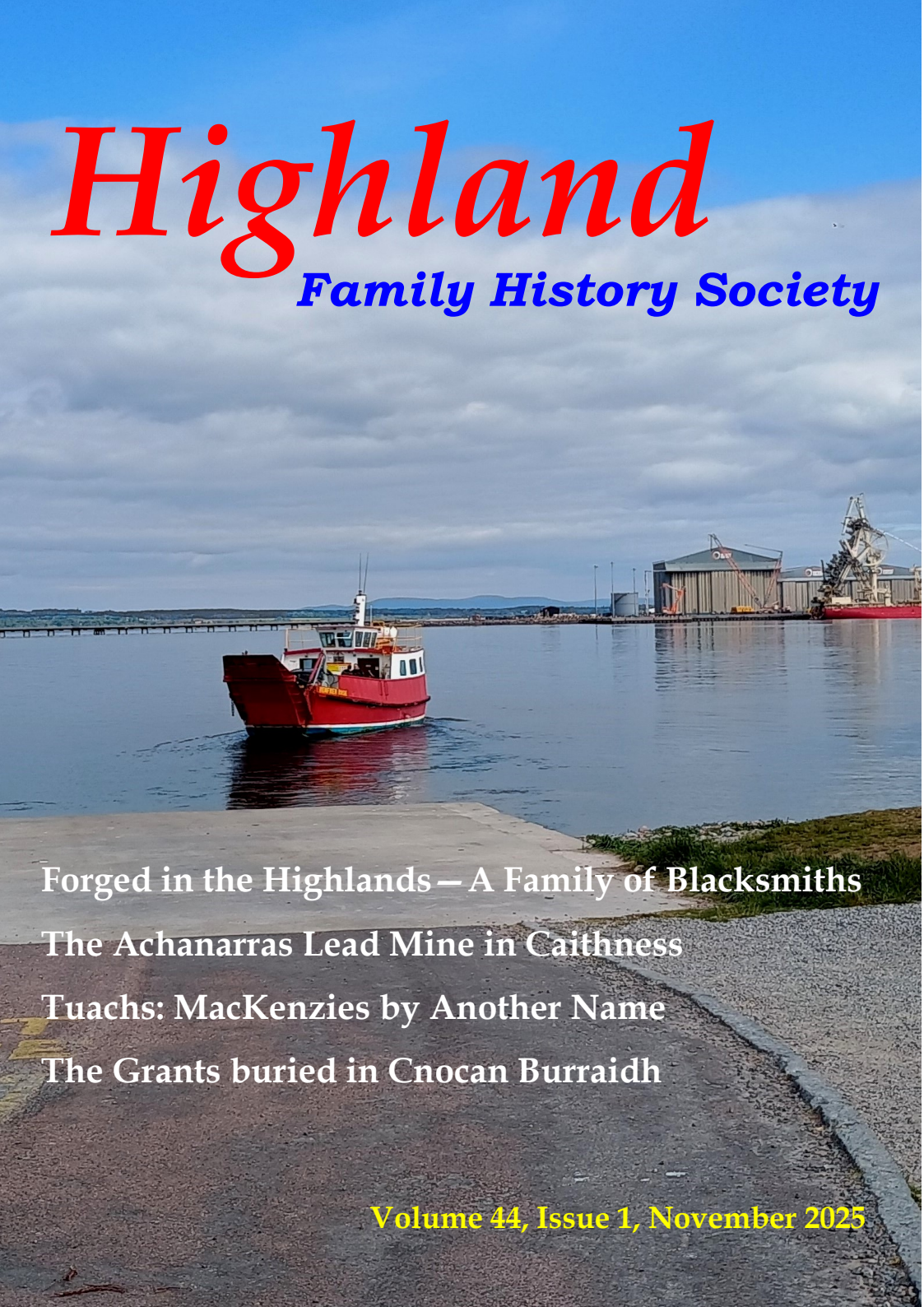




Highland

Family History Society

Forged in the Highlands – A Family of Blacksmiths
The Achanarras Lead Mine in Caithness
Tuachs: MacKenzies by Another Name
The Grants buried in Cnocan Burraidh

Volume 44, Issue 1, November 2025



highland family history society

Comunn Sloinntearachd na Gaidhealtachd

Scottish Charities No. SCO15987

HFHS Journal, Volume 44, Issue 1, November 2025

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Cover Photo: The Nigg Ferry arriving at Cromarty

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Please mark each item for the attention of the appropriate official

NEWS

Our Next Talk

Thursday 20 November at 2.30pm:

Jamie Gaukroger of Highland Archive Service on “Early Newspapers in the Highlands” upstairs in the Highland Archive Centre.

Our latest publications, and discounted copies of old publications, will be on sale outside the meeting room.

Recent Publications:

Tarbat Free Church Births & Baptisms 1843-1862 & 1873-1899

112 pages. £8 plus post & packing.

NB. *The information from this book is not available on Find My Past or anywhere other than from the HFHS (or the original unpublished register).*

Chisholm Burial Ground, Clachan Comar Burial Ground, and Eskadale Churchyard, Parish of Kilmorack, Inverness-shire, Monumental Inscriptions.

A4, 64 pages over 350 memorials recorded. £7 plus post & packing.

***Clan MacKenzie: Septs, Related Names, and Branches* by Graeme Mackenzie.** A5, 118 pages, with colour illustrations. £8 plus p & p.

***May We Be Britons? A History of the MacKenzies* by Andrew McKenzie.** Crown Quarto, 375 pages, colour pics. £18 plus p & p.
Though this book – the first complete history of Clan MacKenzie since Alexander Mackenzie’s late 19th century work – is not published by HFHS, the Society has obtained copies from the author to sell on at a bargain price.

You can order all our books online at the HFHS stand on GenFair:

<https://genfair.co.uk/supplier/highland-family-history-society-comunn-sloinntearachd-na-gaidhealtachd-65/>

NEW MEMBERS

2923. Mr. A. Fraser.

2924. Ms. S. Bannister.

2925. Mr. B. Wilson

2926. Mrs A. Fraser

DEATHS

2805. Mrs. M. Mackay.

Share your family history with other members by contributing to the Journal

Email Address for articles, enquiries etc: HighlandFHS@gmail.com.

Editorial

After a busy summer of gatherings and games, it's back to reading and research as autumn arrives in Scotland. Once upon a time, reading meant paper and ink, but these days it all too-often means a screen of some sort; and while books do furnish my room and nothing gives me more pleasure than thumbing through a well-produced volume, I have to admit these days to carrying a Kindle on my travels (not least because, as the days close in, it doesn't require an external source of light to read by). My most frequent travels are to Edinburgh to work in the National Library of Scotland [NLS] and/or the National Records of Scotland [NRS]. The journey itself can be a pleasure when the sun is shining but, given that it's a three and half to four hour journey, every minute counts once you're in the capital city.

However, these days you don't get as many minutes as you used to in our premier research institutions. The NLS, which used to open weekdays until 8.00pm now closes at 7.00pm, and the NRS, which used to close at 4.30pm now closes at 4.00pm. What's more, the readers' and researchers' experiences at these beloved institutions, when they are open, has also deteriorated. Whereas the NLS's main Reading Room used to be properly furnished with books, it has recently started exhibiting instead empty shelves as some of it's most useful volumes have been removed because they are considered to be too old (not because they are worn out, but simply because of their publication date). They can of course still be seen by order, but no longer just by browsing. That not only negates one of the chief delights of a proper library (learnt for so many of my generation as a child when visiting our local village, city, or school libraries), but it severely sets back the progress of the sort of research conducted by many clan and family historians. As my Tuach talk shows, many of the most significant early records of them were found by browsing the printed Registers of the Privy Council, which are amongst the series now withdrawn from the open shelves of the NLS.

In the NRS, it used to be the case that "last orders" was 45 minutes before closing time; now it's 60 minutes; and furthermore, whereas you used to be able to work right up to the actual closing time, now the staff in the Historical Search Room (who are invariably as kind and helpful as could be) seem to be under orders to start hassling you out as soon as the warning bell is rung 15 minutes before closing. That lost 45 minutes means a lot when you have come all the way from Inverness (well actually, for me, from Fortrose, which is another half-hour away).

Most frustrating of all is the fact that, these days, you have to pre-order items held outwith Register House (which is the majority of records) three days in advance. It used to be the case that you could order records held off-site the day before; indeed, I think I recall, in the dim and distant past—at least 35 years ago, when I first started using what was then the Scottish

Record Office—that you could order something in the morning for delivery that same afternoon (though I may just be kidding myself about that). While I understand that a day’s grace may be needed to find and transport a record from Edinburgh’s suburbs to its centre, three days seems excessive (especially as I’ve heard Search Room Assistants telling researchers that their records have arrived at Register House a day before they were due, but the rules do not allow them to be produced until the specified day).

I have no idea why such rules now apply; nor would I get an explanation were I to complain about it since, as I learnt during the pandemic, the high heid yins at the NRS never explain, let alone consult, most users about the rules they decree from on high. It rather reminds me of the situation when I was a very young researcher, when many archives and libraries were not open to the general public, but only to academics and those who could produce a letter of introduction or reference from an academic or recognised “authority”. That was no problem for a lucky lad like me with a Cambridge University degree, but it was hardly fair on many others struggling to access the records needed to research their family history (and what a contrast to the situation in the United States, where access to federal and state archives and libraries has always been a guaranteed right for all). While our libraries and archives have learnt better in the succeeding decades—since so many of their users are now doing family history—the disdain of some academic historians for genealogists remains a not-so-distant echo of those days.

In the pre-pandemic era (which now seems like another age), the Scottish Government sought to address some of these problems—because it recognised how important clan and family history was to tourism—by establishing advisory committees where clan representatives and working genealogists sat alongside senior archivists and librarians to discuss how records and knowledge might better be made available to Scots at home and abroad. The Scottish Clan and Ancestry Forum, on which I sat both as a clan representative and a working genealogist, disappeared with the pandemic, and so far as I know, nothing similar has since been reconstituted. So once again, the powers that be in Edinburgh can make the rules without the indignity of having to explain themselves to those who are affected by them.

It might behave them however to think again about that, since with Ancestry coming for Scotland’s records (see pages 23 & 24)—which, if they were to succeed, apparently might cost the NRS £3.7 million a year—they could probably do with all the support its users can muster. While some of us might complain about some aspects of its services, we all know what a wonderful resource it is and how it needs to be defended against the Musk-like predators who want to chain us perpetually to screens and the content over which they seek monopoly control.

Graeme Mackenzie.



Forged in the Highlands

A Family History of Blacksmiths and Survival

The MacQuian/Macqueen/Macdonald Blacksmiths 1765–1964

This is the story of a Highland family whose identity was shaped not just by name or place, but by their craft, a legacy of blacksmithing that spanned nearly two centuries. From the shadows of the Battle of Culloden to the quiet closing of a forge in Ballindalloch in 1964, this family's history is one of skill, resilience, and quiet pride.

Origins: Identity in Flux

The story begins with John MacQuian, born in 1765 in the parish of Kirkhill, Inverness-shire, land once held by Fraser of Lovat and scarred by military occupation after the 1746 Jacobite defeat at Culloden, for more than a decade.

Like many Highlanders, John lived in the long shadow of a dismantled clan system. In a time when names could mean survival, he changed his surname twice; marrying as John Macqueen in 1792, in Inverness, to Mary Chisholm, and just a year later baptizing his first child under the name John Macdonald.

His evolving identity, sometimes recorded as Macqueen alias Macdonald, likely reflected an effort to realign with more powerful clan connections, to legitimize his family's place in a changing Highland world, and perhaps to secure opportunity for his children. This dual identity allowed John to be called Macdonald formally, whilst retaining his Macqueen identity to friends locally



The forge at Bunchrew

The Forge at Bunchrew

By trade, John was a blacksmith in Bunchrew, a village west of Inverness. Blacksmiths occupied a central role in Highland society, skilled, respected, and economically vital. His forge would have served local tenants, estate workers, and passing travellers. It was here that the family tradition took root.

Among his children was Donald Macdonald, born in 1799. Following his father's footsteps, not just in name, but in skill, Donald married Anne MacPherson in 1819 and moved north to Charleston, a planned village on the shore of the Beaully Firth. There, the blacksmith trade continued.

Other siblings of Donald continued the family tradition on the southern shore of the Beaully Firth, in Kirkhill parish.

Charleston to Rothiemurchus: A Craft Passed Down.

Through Donald and Anne, the blacksmith's fire burned on. Sons and grandsons, including Hugh, James, Sween, and John, picked up the hammer, continuing the trade across generations, in Avoch, Suddie, Munloch, and Conon Bridge.



As times changed, so did the work, from horseshoes to agricultural machinery, from estate tools to wartime repairs.

Hugh Macdonald, born 1888, learned his craft at Conon Bridge, and then moved his forge from the Black Isle, to Rothiemurchus, nestled under the Cairngorms, and then to Ballindalloch, where the final chapter was written.

There, Hugh, the last in a long line of Highland smiths, worked until his death in 1964, closing a chapter that began almost 200 years earlier.

A Legacy in Iron and Spirit

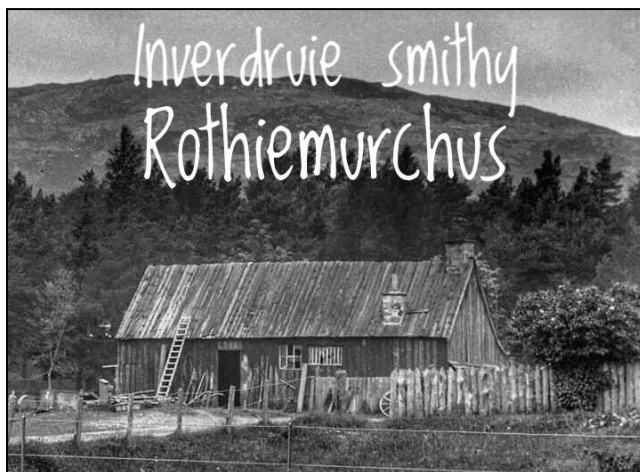
What endured through all these generations wasn't just the skill of the blacksmith, but the values that came with it: precision, independence, resilience, and respect.

In a time when families were cleared from the land, emigrated in desperation, or lost their trades to machines, this family adapted, moved, and persisted.

Their story is not just one of survival, but of dignity through work. They forged tools, yes, but they also forged identity, stability, and pride, handed down one generation at a time.

Today, their forges may be cold, their anvils silent, but the shape of their lives remains: in names recorded across parish books, in soot-blackened ledgers, and in the living memory carried now by descendants still resident in these areas today.

Neil Macdonald



The relationship of the names MacQuian and MacQueen, and how and why they may relate to the MacDonalds was discussed – in response to a query by Neil – in the HFHS Journal for August 2023 (Volume 41, Issue 41).

An Early 20th Century Lead Mine in Caithness

By Stuart Farrell

An article in The Northern Times newspaper of 25 October 1917 describing a lead mine in Caithness was the starting point of the author's research. Chance findings such as this in newspaper files often trigger further study; however the growing number of digitised newspapers on sites such as the British Newspaper Archive will mean that in future researchers will be able to make discoveries such as this much more easily.

Most people in Caithness have seen a flagstone quarry, and more than likely have explored every nook and corner of it. But how many have been down a coal mine or lead mine? Not many, I should think. Going down into a quarry hole you can reach the lowest depth by easy access, and you can have the blue sky above you always, and you feel safe. But going down a mine is something widely and altogether different. And yet this experience is now within reach of the dwellers in these northern regions. My advice to all who have a "day off" is to pay a visit to the Achanarras Lead Mine.

Where is the Mine? To those who don't know let me tell where the mine is to be found. It is situated on the face of the hill on Achanarras Farm, overlooking the low ground between it and the Spittal and Georgeman road, and distant from it rather more than half a mile. It is about three miles from Georgemas Junction and the same distance from Halkirk Station. Coming from the direction of either of these places, you pass Achanarras Farm House, the kindly inmates of which will willingly direct you on the right way.

The Manager. I had the pleasure and the profit of visiting the mine the other day and was warmly welcomed by the genial and capable manager, Mr Stanners. One glance at the manger tells you are in the presence of a model British workman. The clear cut features, the well knit figure and the boundless energy all proclaim that here is a man who knows his work and can do it. Mr Stanners is an expert miner, and what he doesn't know of the business is not worth knowing. More than that, in a social capacity, he can crack a good joke, tell a good story and sing a good song, and all together is a "jolly good fellow."

The Mine. On the occasion of my visit, above ground, a workman was hard at work pushing a "bogie" loaded with rubbish along a set of rails leading to the "tip" over which the rubbish was "tipped." The rubbish, as well as the valuable ore is hauled up to the top by an engine. The mine is a vertical shaft sixty feet deep, the opening being about twelve feet by six. The shaft is portioned into three divisions - one for hauling up the ore, etc., another occupied by a steam pump which works day and night, and the other the workmen's access to the mine.

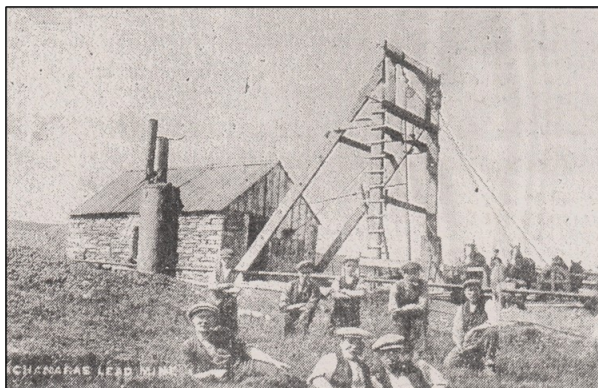
"Will you go down?" says the manager to me. "Is it safe?" says I. "Yes, perfectly safe." Was the reassuring reply. "Come on." I screwed my courage to the sticking point, and I can tell you it is a case of "sticking" on to the ladders with hands and feet. I descended one ladder and reached a platform, where I breathed freely; down another ladder, to another platform, where I breathed as before; down a third ladder and I reached the point where a horizontal "drive" branches off. I entered the "drive." I was now in the heart of the earth forty feet from the top and daylight. It was total darkness, but preceded by the manager with a lighted candle, I followed on as best I could.

The "drive" is a cutting about six feet square, strongly supported on the roof and sides with battens. At the present time it extends to about 300 feet into the heart of the hill. Along the bottom of the "drive" runs a set of rails on which "bogies" run between the shaft end of this "drive" and the working face. Imagine a railway in the heart of Achanarras Hill!

I scrambled along on what seemed to me "a long, long trail a-winding." Rounding a bend in the "drive" I saw, though the Egyptian darkness, several candles twinkling in the distance, while various weird forms were flitting to and fro, casting shadows fearful and wonderful. It was a scene unique in the county of Caithness. A minute more and I was at the working face, where the men were busy with mining operations. "How are you getting on, lads?" I asked. "Not too bad," came the cheery reply from an experienced miner. I may explain that "not too bad" in miner's language means "very good, indeed."

The men were preparing a blasting charge, all being ready the manager started the fuse, and we all made off at head long route for the safe end of the drive, which we reached in less time than it takes to write it. We listened, and although I was expecting it, the dull booming sound, as the earth shook, made me jump off my feet, to the hilarious merriment of the experienced miners. There was no going back to the "face" that day, as the fumes had to clear away. We all reached the top in safety, and when I saw Spittal Hill looming before me, I realised I was still in Caithness.

As I said before, to all interested, take a holiday and visit the lead mine, and I will guarantee you a warm welcome from the manager and an experience which will last you a lifetime.



Achannarras Lead Mine [courtesy of The Northern Times]

A number of contemporary sources provide additional info on the mine:

The Valuation Rolls for Caithness, 1917-1918 and for the next few years under the parish of Halkirk listed the landowner as Colonel William Murray Thriepland DSO of Fingask and Toftingall, Perthshire, with the tenant being The Toftingall Lead Syndicate Ltd, 34 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh.

The Geological Survey of Scotland (Wilson, 1920, 114) noted the mine as follows: '..this vein, as noted by Dr. Crampton, began to attract notice in 1912. Shortly afterwards work was started on it. The mine was visited by Mr. G. V. Wilson in 1915. At that time the workings were mainly on the surface of the vein. He reported that the vein has a north-west course and is nearly vertical; its width is about 5ft., of which 1ft. consists of dirty white barytes, and 1ft. 6in. of broken stuff with galena; the remainder is made up of crushed country-rocks, which are reddish-grey, drab and bluish Caithness flagstones.

Mining operations were continued on a small scale for several years. A shaft was sunk and drives were made on the vein; galena was the only mineral sought for, and the product of the mine was carted to Georgemas Junction, where it was put on rail. In August 1919 the mine was visited again, and it was found that operations had ceased; the shaft was full of water, but most of the gear remained and seemed in good order. From the heaps of ore lying around the shaft it was ascertained that galena occurred mostly in the form of lumps or crystalline nodules embedded in barytes, calcite and rusty iron oxides.

In the List of Mines, published in the Home Office Reports, this mine appears as active in the years 1917 and 1918 under the ownership of the Toftingall Lead Syndicate; seven or eight men were employed at it.'

To be continued.

The Grants buried in Cnocan Burraidh



Chris Grant told us in the last issue of the Journal that, though the monument that dominates the Cnocan Burraidh burial ground in Drumnadrochit had been erected in memory of Patrick Grant of Lochletter (1724-1800), there were many older Grant graves on the site—as he discovered in 2022 when he found a letter in the National Records of Scotland that Lochletter had written in 1798 to his chief, Sir James Grant.

Lochletter 7th July 1798

Dear Sir

I have no doubts but you may be a little surprised upon the subject I mention below. A few years agoe, my brother Col Grant, Capt Gregor and Major sandy asked me frequently to apply to you for getting your leave to build a decent burial place in a small spot near Pitikerelbeg, if I remember I spoke to you of it some time ago and I think you saw the plan, it never can cost you a shilling of your interest; I am certain if either of us thought so it would never be asked. This is the spot our first predecessor was buried with his wife who was a daughter of Glenmoriston and all their children.

If you now give the liberty of a small building put up there we all will be highly obliged to you and none more than myself, as in all probability and in course of nature I will be the first that is buried there, tho no man has greater reason to be thankful than I have, a man of seventy five years of age, and may say that my health is pretty good tho you may believe that my abilities can not be much, or otherwise I would see you oftener. But while I keep as I am I will give every attention in my power to your country here with the help of Delshangie, who is really a good honest sensible man and very much attached to your interest and to the interest of every honest man here. All I beg now is that you drop me a few lines concerning the burial place. I know that Delshangie has writ you concerning the asosiation and told you the number of men we got. we could not make up the hundred and seventy owing to a good many worthless people in the country, not a man from Corimoneys bounds nor a man from buntate tho in this districts there is some more than sixty that has enrolled.

Major Wilson and Mrs Wilson join me in best respects and compliments to Lady Grant, Miss Grant and you. May always my best wishes attend you and your good family

I am My Dear Sir always your most faithful servant

Patrick Grant

The above letter was the original application, wherein Patrick of Lochletter asks Sir James Grant's permission to build the stone walls and a Mausoleum at the site. In that letter Patrick then states that "this is the spot that the first of our predecessors was buried with his wife who was a daughter of Glenmoriston and all their children". This meant that Alexander Grant 1st of Shewglie (Alisdair Roy) who had been born in 1570 and died in 1628 was also buried there. He had married Lillias who was the only daughter of Patrick Grant 2nd of Glenmoriston (1511-1581). The letter also stated that all their children had been buried there, which meant that Robert Grant 2nd of Shewglie would also have been buried there in 1661. That had been the reason why James Grant 3rd of Shewglie had wished to be buried there, because this is where his father and grandfather had been buried before him. Alexander Grant 1st of Shewglie was the great grandson of John Grant 2nd of Freuchie (The Red Bard) who had been born at Castle Grant, Strathspey, in the year 1468.

Others interred within the walls at Cnocan Burraidh are:

Colonel Alexander Grant of Red Castle, the son of the Jacobite veteran Patrick Grant of Lochletter. This is the man who built the beautiful marble monument, using the finest marble imported from India in 1802.

Major Gregor Grant of Lakefield, 12th son of Alexander 4th of Shewglie, served with the 39th Regiment at the siege of Gibraltar which I believe was the longest naval siege in British military history, lasting just under four years between 1779 and 1783.

Colonel Hugh Grant of Moy, 10th son of Alexander 4th of Shewglie who commanded a regiment of 1000 men and an artillery train at the Battle of Buxar in India in 1764. This was a pivotal battle contributing to British control of India over the next 170 years.

Major Alexander Grant of Polmaily

Captain Hugh Grant of the Bombay Cavalry

Lieutenant William Grant of Hazelbrae of the 16th and 92nd Regiments

General Sir Charles John Cecil Grant KCB, KCVO, DSO, DLJP, Coldstream Guards, Governor of Edinburgh Castle, grandson of Robert Grant, Lord Glenelg, and grandson of Charles Grant, Chairman and Director of the Honourable East India Company, Member of Parliament for Inverness-shire 1802-1818.

Sir Theodore Gervase Chambers, Chairman and founder of Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, 1919-1948. Vice Chairman of the National Savings Committee of the United Kingdom.

The Tuachs: MacKenzies by Another Name in Ross and Lochaber.



An adapted version of the text, along with some of the illustrations, from the talk recently given to the Society by **Graeme Mackenzie**.

The gravestone shown above in the burial ground at Garve remembers Alexander Tuach whose death in January 1859 inspired the following notice in the Inverness Advertiser:

Died on the 18th inst., in the parish of Contin, at an advanced age, Alexander Tuach, tacksman of Arileterach, who was greatly and deservedly esteemed as the head of a family, a friend and neighbour. ... He was the lineal descendant of the Tuachs of Loggie Roach, and the first of the family is believed to have been armourer to the famous Ulliam dhu, Marquis of Seaforth, at a time when arms prevailed and charters were disregarded This suggests the Tuachs were once an important family; so who were they, where did they come from, and where did they all go?

Though the Tuachs are now listed as a sept of Clan MacKenzie, they do not appear as such in Frank Adam's "Clans, Septs and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands" – the standard work on septs in the early 20th century – and when I started looking at this name for my book on the MacKenzie septs, I discovered that very little was known about it. As ever, any investigation into a Scottish name starts with George Black's "Surnames of Scotland".

TUACH. A scarce surname in Ross. Macbain v (p. 72) says this is evidently from G. *tuathach*, 'northern,' but I doubt this. In 1598 Ewen Mac Ian Tuich and John Mac Ian Tuich were assisers of the Roses of Kilravock in acts of reif and 'briggancie' (RPC., v, p. 498). John Tuach of Logiereich took the Test in 1685 (ibid., 3. ser. xi, p. 418). There is a Touch in Kintore parish, Aberdeenshire.

As you'll see, Black knew little about the name either, and could only cite two examples of it. But what is most striking about this entry is his comment in the middle of it that he doubted Alexander Macbain's claim that it came from the Gaelic for a "northerner". Why would he question the judgement of the then leading authority on Gaelic etymology? Perhaps because, according to the earliest example of the name that Black had seen—a Privy Council record of 1598—the Tuachs appeared to be amongst the followers of a northern laird; amongst whom it would hardly make sense to call anybody else a 'northerner'. When however we look more closely at this record, we see that while the list of 200 "broken highland men" amongst whom they occur is headed by the northern laird Rose of Kilravock, the brothers Tuich actually appear in the midst of a large number of followers of a more southerly Highland chief, Allan Cameron of Lochiel; and, if we conduct a more thorough search than Black or his informant had done, we discover this was not the first record of a Tuach associated with the Camerons.

In 1572, *John Towach McEwin VcAne*—who could well have been the *Johnne McEan Tuich* of 1598—was among followers of Lochiel who had their goods escheated [confiscated by the Crown]. Though he's the only one of them with the byname Towach/Tuach, the Privy Seal record shows he was one of what looks, from their shared patronymics, like a family group; the others being: *Allane McEwin Vicane*, *Johnne McAllane VcAne*, *Alester Dow McAllane VcAne* and *Ewin McAne*. If so, the last of these would presumably have been the *Ewne McEane Tuich* of 1598.

The Tuachs appear again 19 years later in a Privy Council entry that says where in Lochaber they then lived: *Ewne McEane Twiche* is in *Tyrlandie*, and *Johnne McEane Towche* is in *Auchmadaill*. Torlundy and Achnadall are to the northeast of Inverlochy, between Fort William and Spean Bridge. Entries for 1661 and 1681 name the tenant of Torlundy as Donald Cameron; but he appears there in 1675 as *Donald Cameron, son to McLantuach*.

We don't know what happened at Torlundy in the decades after 1681, and it's quite possible the Tuachs there become Camerons permanently; but it's also possible, of course, that they were Camerons in the first place. Indeed, it has been suggested that, in Lochaber at least, the name Tuach may not come from the Gaelic for "northerner" at all, but from the Gaelic for an axe; i.e. *tuagh*.

There was in fact a famous axe-wielding Cameron in Lochaber at this time; a cousin of Lochiel who is remembered as *Donald MacEwen Tàillear Dubh na Tuaighe*. The descendants of this famous warrior chose however a name that remembered him as the tailor rather than the axe-man; i.e. they became the Cameron sept of Taylor. Given how famous the Tailor Dubh was, it seems inconceivable that if the Tuachs were also his descendants, that fact would not have been recognised somewhere in the traditions of Lochaber.

Traditions there – related by Somerled MacMillan in his book “Bygone Lochaber” – instead tell us there was a branch of Clan MacKenzie on Lochiel’s lands with a collective name that does appear to come from *tuathach* for a northerner: ‘This branch of MacKenzies was brought into Lochaber from Brahan, Easter Ross, during the second half of the 16th century, and for timely help given to the Camerons against the MacKintoshes ... they were granted lands in North Ballachulish.’ Many MacKenzies can be found there in the mid to late 18th century Lochiel rentals, and the local traditions say two of them – brothers Duncan and Donald – performed heroically whilst serving in Lochiel’s regiment during the ‘45. One of the brothers ran the ferry across Loch Leven, and was therefore known as *Am Portair Cam* (“the one-eyed ferryman”).

So, we’ve found Tuachs in Lochaber in the 16th and 17th century and local traditions there suggesting they were in origin MacKenzies; but is there any actual evidence to confirm that origin?

The 17th century Applecross MS history of Clan MacKenzie tells us the first laird of Gairloch, Eachan Ruadh/Hector Roy had a younger son *John Tuach Mac Heachin Roy of Davochpollon*. He can be found on the record in 1551 when John Mackenzie of Kintail and his son Kenneth were given a royal remission for the imprisonment of *John Hectour M’kenzeseone of Garlouch, Doull Hectoursone*, and *John Towach Hectoursone* (who were incarcerated because Kintail feared his cousin Gairloch had designs on the chiefship). Gairloch is said to have died in the dungeons of Eilean Donan, and it used to be thought that his brothers perished with him; but it turns out that there is a record of John Tuach Hectorson still alive in 1561 when he – as *John Tawachter vic Eachin* – and his wife Christina MacKenzie, were being pursued by Fraser of Guisachan for “the wrongous and masterful occupation” of Davochpollo.

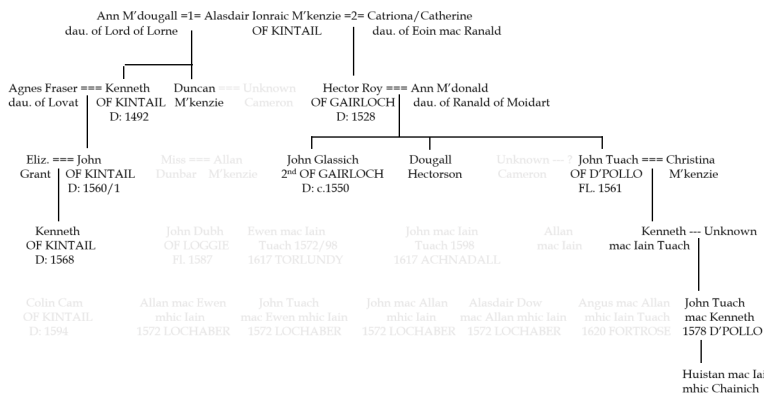
Where was Davochpollo/pollo? William J. Watson tells us in his “Place Names of Ross and Cromarty” that it was one of three farms that later made up the estate of Brae; and, though Davochpollo has disappeared from most maps, Brae can be still be found on Ordnance Survey sheets.



Applecross goes on to tell us that John Tuach Hectorson 'had one son called Kenneth Mac ean Tuoach who died without Succession, excepting one Natural Son called John John Mac Chainich vic ean Tuoach his Son was called Huistan Mac ean vic Chainich'. There is a record in 1578—in Volume Four of the Register of the Great Seal—of a *Joanni Torrach M'Kenyth* which we can be pretty sure is a mistranscription of *Joanni Towach M'Kenyth* since it also concerns the lands of Davochpollo.

No record has so far been found of John mac Kenneth's son Huistan, which presumably stands for Hugh. Given the prominence of the name Ewen amongst the Tuachs in Lochaber, it's interesting to note that while the Gaelic name Eoghan usually appears in English as Ewen, the name Hugh was also sometimes considered its English equivalent.

Leaving that thought aside for now, let's look at how John Tuach Hectorson and his immediate descendants fit into a tree of the early MacKenzies.



So what of the Tuachs in Lochaber; can they be linked to the Ross-shire family, and how might they fit into this family tree?

We've already noted what appears to be a family group amongst Lochiel's followers associated in 1572 with John Towach McEwin VcAne. They included the brothers Johnne McAllane VcAne and Alester Dow McAllane VcAne.

Two years before that, in Ross-shire we find a record of *Jhone McCallan McAne in Lochaber and Alexandir, his bruder there*, making an agreement with leading Camerons—one of whom, *Donald mac Allan mhic Ewen in Mamore*, may have been a grandson Lochiel himself—that was witnessed by 'six servants of MacKenzie'. This agreement was signed at Davochmaluag, which Watson says was adjacent to Davochpollo and also sometime part of Brae.



Whether or not the Donald mac Allan mhic Ewen in Mamore who made the agreement in 1570 with the Tuachs was the grandson of Lochiel (who we're told lived at Inverlochy, on the northern edge of the Mamore range and right beside Ian mac Ewen Tuach's home at Torlundy), the fact that another signatory to this agreement was the chief of the MacMartins, whose lands lay to the north of Inverlochy and Torlundy, shows that these Tuachs were dealing with leading members of Clan Cameron; why might that have been?

Prior to becoming the lairds of Lochiel, the Cameron chiefs held lands in Lochalsh and Lochcarron, which adjoined the MacKenzie lordship of Kintail. These lands included Auchtertyre, which was later the seat of the MacKenzie sept of Murchison who, their traditions say, had come from Lochaber (and who, in the 18th century, had a close connection with the Tuachs). Like their then neighbours in Kintail, the Camerons had an up-and-down relationship with the Lords of the Isles as they struggled to get independent recognition by the crown, and it was not until 1492 that they received their first charter for the lands of Lochiel. Their chief concern as they struggled to establish themselves in Lochaber was their feud with the Macintoshes for control of the old Clan Chattan lands on Loch Arkaiside, and in 1532 it provoked the Crown to issue a royal commission to suppress the disorderly Macintoshes which was directed, amongst others, to John Mackenzie of Kintail.

It seems likely that one of the MacKenzies who went south to assist the Camerons in their fight to establish themselves in Lochaber was Kintail's cousin John Hectorson, and since there in the south he would have been considered a "northerner" that might be why he acquired the nickname *tuathach*. It's possible indeed that this military alliance was strengthened by a marriage alliance, similar to that made in the previous generation by John Hectorson's uncle Duncan MacKenzie. His marriage to a daughter of the Cameron chief brought the name Allan—which, though common amongst Camerons, was rare amongst MacKenzies—into his family, with the result that his descendants were later known as Clan Allan. The fact that the Tuachs in Lochaber also had the names Allan and Ewen (another common Cameron name) suggests that they too may have come into the family as a result of a MacKenzie-Cameron liaison. In this case, we may speculate that it was the marriage of John Hectorson himself to one of Lochiel's daughters; with the resulting award to their children by Lochiel of farms on the lands their father had helped secure from the Mackintoshes.

To be continued.

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The BIG Business that is Ancestry

When I give how-to-do genealogy lectures, I have to start these days with a five-minute warning about the dangers, and delights, of Ancestry.com. The dangers are all those user-submitted family trees, many of which contain impossible so-called “facts” (such as a child being born before their parents, or a couple married after one of them had died—both impossibilities I’ve found, amongst others, on a tree purporting to be the family of Sir Alexander MacKenzie the explorer). The delights are the copies of so many actual records that Ancestry has available; many of which can show how impossible some of those trees are, if you know to look for them. So what of Ancestry?

Wikipedia tells us that: “Ancestry.com LLC is an American genealogy company based in Lehi, Utah. The largest for-profit genealogy company in the world, it operates a network of genealogical, historical records, and related genetic genealogy websites. It is owned by The Blackstone Group, which acquired the company on December 4, 2020, in a deal valued at \$4.7 billion.” That network of websites includes *RootsWeb* which Ancestry acquired in 2000; *Newspapers.com* which it spun off into a standalone service in 2012; *Find-A-Grave*, which it acquired in 2013; and *Geneanet* which it acquired in 2021. In October of 2010 it had purchased *iArchives*, which included *Footnote.com*. In 2011, Footnote.com was rebranded as *Fold3* in a move intended to create the premier site for military records. As of 2022, the company said it had provided access to 30 billion historical records, tripling its November 2018 figure of 10 billion records. In 2018 it also reported having 3 million paying subscribers, and to have sold 18 million DNA kits. Now it says it has 60 billion records & 130 million family trees. **Graeme Mackenzie.**

The Battle for Scotland's Genealogical Records

"A major dispute is unfolding between Ancestry.com and the National Records of Scotland (NRS). At the centre is access to millions of Scottish records that are vital for tracing family history. The outcome of this battle could reshape how genealogists around the world access Scotland's past."

This comes from a report on the website www.tracingroots.co.uk.

The report tells us Ancestry is seeking access to centuries of Scottish historical records, including: Civil birth, marriage, and death certificates (from 1855 onwards); Parish Registers dating back to 1538; Census records; Wills and testaments; Valuation rolls and property records; Prison and court registers. Currently, these records are accessed through ScotlandsPeople, the official NRS portal, where users pay per search or record image. Ancestry wants to license and host them on its subscription-based platform. For genealogists, this could mean a shift in where and how Scottish research is done.

It tells us the dispute has been playing out in regulatory and legal arenas since 2022 with NRS initially refusing Ancestry's request, citing concerns about revenue and data control, and Ancestry challenging this decision through the UK Information Commissioner. The case was heard by the General Regulatory Chamber who ruled that producing the records is indeed part of NRS's "public task". However, it stopped short of declaring NRS's refusal unlawful, saying that question lies outside its jurisdiction. So, Ancestry won a partial victory, but the case is far from resolved.

The Arguments

Ancestry cites convenience for users by integrating Scottish records with Ancestry's global collections; technology benefits with better indexing, cross-referencing, and DNA integration; market demand since millions of people worldwide with Scottish roots would benefit.

NRS cites financial survival since it earns significant revenue from ScotlandsPeople (losses could be £3.7 million annually if records are licensed to Ancestry); control, with NRS arguing it must retain stewardship of Scotland's historical data; privacy and context, since records are not just data points, but require careful handling and explanation; precedent, because if archives must license records cheaply to commercial firms, the sustainability of public record services could be undermined.

Preparations for possible changes

Download and save copies of records you purchase from existing platforms; when/if Scottish records appear on Ancestry, cross-check them with originals for accuracy; stay flexible and use multiple platforms since no one site holds everything and combining sources often produces the best results.



Highland Archive & Registration Centre
Tasglann agus Ionad-Clàraidh na Gàidhealtachd

The Family History Centre
Ionad Eachdraidh Teaghlaich

Archives

COMHAIRLE NA GÀIDHEALTACHD

Tasglann

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Scottish Charities No. SCO15987

ISSN 0262-6659