

The Campbells are coming! A 16th-century experience.

[A Campbell push into the Lennox and Menteith]

An earlier version was delivered to

Drymen and District Local History Society

on 22 November 2007

Let us start with a sense of how 16th-century Scots looked at their own country by examining the map of the whole kingdom produced by Abraham Ortelius in 1574. It has west at the top rather than north and although it has got the rough shape of the country right, to our eyes and geographical knowledge there are lots of things wrong with it. As the closer view of the central strip of Scotland shows the internal geography of Scotland can seem very askew. It does show that for Scots in the early modern period the central strip of Scotland was not the same as today's Central Belt. A further zoom in shows the importance given to Loch Lomond which is a major feature and one associated with Loch Tay. In 16th-century Scotland, Stirling was central in many senses of the term. While Drymen was not shown in the close-up of the district, the parish, and in this case probably the castle, of Kilmoronock, held by the Cunninghams of Drumquhassill, were one of the relatively few local places noted on this map of all Scotland.

At the end of the century, Timothy Pont changed Scottish map-making. During the 1590s he put on his walking boots and took his satchel and walked through Scotland making his surveys. Many of his sketches survive and are housed in the National Library of Scotland and are available for viewing on their website. Unfortunatley, Pon'ts interesting sketch of

Loch Lommond seems to have Drymen torn off! Typically, the sheet to the east is missing, though Strathblane is shown on another sketch. However, the mid-17th century shire maps produced by Blaeu, based on Pont's sketches, contain fine maps of the Lennox and parts of Stirlingshire, though not northern Menteith. The importance of water courses in the mapping and thinking of early modern Scots leaps out of the map of the Lennox. The Drymen district of the Lennox was drawn around the Endrick Water with the River Blane also a focus. On a close magnification, the various parts of Drymen show clearly with the Kirk and the crucial bridge across the Endrick and Buchanan and Kilmoronock castles in their parkland.

The individual shire maps do not reveal the way Drymen and its district sat in the middle of 'frontier country' during the 16th century. The Lennox and Menteith were part of a multi-linguistic area with both Gaelic and Scots spoken as a vernacular, as well as the legal, ecclesiastical and literary language of Latin which could provide a bridge between the two. This linguistic plurality brought together two cultures, one Gaelic-speaking and the other Scots-speaking. During the early modern period the awareness of a division running through the kingdom between the Highlands and the Lowlands increased and the kingdom was seen as comprising two distinct regions. Drymen and district straddled that divide and provided one key area of interaction.

As can be seen on the modern sketch map of Argyll and Central Highlands, the 'frontier zone' between the Central Highlands and the Lowlands formed a crescent. Starting on the Clyde with Dumbarton, itself very much a frontier town, the 'frontier' ran up Loch

Lomond and through Drymen into Menteith, skirting Stirling and up through Strathearn to St Johnstone [Perth]. In geological terms this roughly follows the Highland fault line. It is interesting the Drummond family who originated in Drymen, follow this crescent in their rise to power. In 1491 they were building their castle near Crieff and they held important lands in Strathearn, while still retaining a seat at Drymen, thereby moving along that frontier crescent.

As a region the Lennox played a significant role in 16th-century national politics, partly because it was the heartland of that important kindred, the Lennox Stewarts. They were a rising aristocratic family and in 1490 King James IV restored the Stewarts to the earldom of Lennox. The earls' close links to the royal family and particularly their place in the line of royal succession made them one of five major magnate families in Scotland, alongside the Hamiltons, also in the royal succession, the Campbells, the Douglasses and the Gordons. The death of James IV at Flodden in 1513 brought losses to most noble families and, for our purposes it should be noted the 2nd earl of Lennox, the earl of Argyll and Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy perished on the battlefield. However during the extremely unsettled minority of King James V, the Lennox Stewarts suffered a second dynastic blow when the 3rd earl was killed in 1526. Although technically in rebellion against the young king and the minority regime of Angus, Lennox's death was more like a murder. The strong suspicion that James Hamilton of Finnart, the illegitimate son of Arran, had killed Lennox after he had been taken prisoner was enough to start a bloodfeud between the Hamiltons and the Lennox Stewarts which lasted for the next 50

years. Since both families had claims to the succession the feud had great significance within national politics.

For the Lennox region the circumstances of the earl's death had very serious consequences. With Hamilton of Finnart riding high in favour with the adult King James V, Matthew Stewart, the young 4th earl of Lennox, went into voluntary exile from 1532-43, joining his French relatives and serving in the armies of the French King. Although Finnart was executed for treason in 1540, Matthew did not return to Scotland until after the death of James V. This followed shortly after the defeat of the Scots at Solway Moss but was not, as tradition has it, that the king simply turned his face to the wall and gave up. James, who had been with his troops but had not taken part in the battle, contracted a virulent disease, probably cholera, rife in nearly every 16th-century army.

Whatever its cause, James' death left his baby daughter Mary, Queen of Scots, as a perfect prize for the two international rivals, England and France, both anxious to secure the marriage of the young Queen and so control over Scotland. The pro-French Lennox returned to Scotland in 1543 and immediately became embroiled in the complex politics. Being her closest male relative, Lennox's great rival, the earl of Arran, was Regent. When Arran changed alignment, dropping his pro-English policy and joining Cardinal Beaton in supporting a French alliance, Lennox promptly switched sides. By becoming part of the English party, Lennox gained a prestigious marriage to Margaret Douglas, granddaughter of Henry VII of England but lost his place in Scotland. For the next 20 years, Lennox was in exile in England, settled in Yorkshire and there seemed no way he could make a come-back. As a result of the intersection of regional and national political

rivalries, the Lennox region found itself for over 40 years [1532-64] without an earl. Such a power vacuum was just the sort of golden opportunity that Clan Campbell was able to exploit.

After such a long introduction concerning the particular politics of the region in the first half of the 16th century, it is time to examine Clan Campbell. As is shown in the picture of these three Campbells in the *Black Book of Taymouth* [the family history of the Campbells of Glenorchy written at the start of the 17th century], the Clan managed two things very well: first, rising into the Scottish peerage and becoming earls of Argyll and second, establishing strong cadet branches, such as the Campbells of Glenorchy. Despite the many cadet branches and unlike similar large kindreds, the Clan retained its clan unity and cohesion and remained prepared to act as a single unit under one chief, the earls of Argyll. Overall Clan Campbell was the most successful kindred group in early modern Scotland. The Campbells had developed the facility of functioning both as a Highland clan and a Lowland surname and they could work within two languages and cultures, that of Scots and Gaelic, with Latin as well where necessary. This enabled them to operate successfully in the arena of Lowland politics and the royal court whilst at the same time thriving amidst the clan-based structure of Highlands' politics. The major military power they drew from their extensive landed base, kinsmen and large affinity gave the earls of Argyll a powerful voice in national and international affairs, providing them with a British dimension to their power. Since the Campbells also remained very close to the Stewart monarchs and acted as their trusted servants for most of the 16th century, their power was not seriously challenged by the crown.

Clan Campbell used these strengths to expand successfully into many parts of Scotland, as can be seen on the map of Scotland giving the major areas into which they moved during the 16th century. From their heartland in Argyll the Campbells spread south across the Clyde to Ayrshire, north to Moray and the base at Cawdor; east to Breadalbane and right across into Angus. The earls' main base was Inveraray on Loch Fyne, with its access to the Firth of Clyde and the western seas. Their move from their original base at Innischonnell on Loch Awe to Inveraray demonstrated one of the key strengths of Clan Campbell, their ability to exploit the communications networks to the full. When they expanded, the Campbells often did so along the main land routes though they were also keenly aware of water communications. Being involved in both the Highlands and the Lowlands, the Campbells also targeted the 'frontier' areas between them.

In this respect the Glenorchy Campbells were the most successful cadet branch. They had sprung from 'Black Colin of Rome' [d. 1475] the second son of Duncan Campell of Lochawe and brother to the 1st earl of Argyll, who had built Kilchurn castle at the top of Loch Awe where Glen Orchy and Glen Strae meet at the base of Ben Cruachan. The Glenorchy Campbells expanded east from their patrimonial lands in Glen Orchy alongside and in co-operation with the MacGregors of Glenstrae. The modern sketch map of Argyll and the central Highlands shows their expansion went across the Drum Alban range and down to Loch Tay. At the same time branches of the MacGregors moved into Rannoch and Balquhidder and other parts of Breadalbane. Since in the early modern period Loch Lyon was far smaller than the great flooded expanse of reservoir we

know today, the modern sketch map of Breadalbane shows Glen Lyon was an excellent route from the Druim Alban range to Loch Tay and acted as a hub connecting the northern routes through Rannoch Moor with the main routes south into the Lowlands. The Glenorchy Campbells established their main base at Balloch Castle at the east end Loch Tay and at the easternmost extent of their territories. Their base on Loch Tay meant the Glenorchy Campbells were aware of the key communication routes running through Breadalbane and they made particular efforts to control points along main arteries of communication running into Lowlands. As well as Glens Lyon and Dochart, this gave Loch Earn and GlenOgle/Strathyre added importance for the Glenorchys. Clan Campbell was also particularly aware of the west-east route through Glen Falloch at the top of Loch Lomond as a route giving access between Argyll and Perthshire and south into Menteith and the Lennox.

Substantial expansion was achieved by acquiring and holding land and jurisdiction and the Glenorchy Campbells successfully gained control of Breadalbane baronies and the lease of the royal lands of *Discher* and *Toyer* on the northern and southern banks of Loch Tay which they were able to consolidate in a major regality. They also carefully extended their affinity through bonds of manrent, with Grey Colin, 6th laird, producing his own *Book of bandis* in order to keep track of his servitors. Control was partly enforced through legal process and also directly exercised by military muscle, using the kind of Highland warriors depicted on the West Highland tombs [such as these well-equipped soldiers from Kilmory, Knapdale, graveslabs] In the great eastward push into

Breadalbane it was the MacGregors who were often used to do the Campbells' dirty work!

One of the most important ways to prepare the way for expansion into an area was by marriage alliances. They frequently formed the first move in the long-term strategies devised by the Campbells. A sense of Clan Campbell marriage strategy can be seen on the map Campbell marriages in the 16th century. There was a near universal rule that the marriage of Campbell heiresses was restricted to other Campbells, thereby ensuring that the lands remained in Campbell hands. Other marriages, particularly those of the major cadets and invariably for the earls' family were made outwith Clan Campbell. The map of Glenorchy marriages demonstrates a similar pattern to that of the whole Clan. The Glenorchys used marriage as an initial way of targeting the Lennox region where the power vacuum left by the exile of the earl of Lennox in France and England offered a magnificent opportunity. As a whole, Clan Campbell seem to have devised a strategy in the Lennox involving Argyll and the Campbells of Glenorchy and Ardkinglas which would help the clan extend its influence and increase its landholdings in the area.

During the 1530s and 1540s the Glenorchy lairds looked to Loch Lomond and the Lennox for their own brides. Duncan, 4th laird of Glenorchy, married Elizabeth Colquhoun of Luss thereby gaining an ally on Loch Lomond and the southern end of the strategic Glen Falloch route. There were no surviving sons only daughters from that marriage, and on his death in 1536 Duncan's brother John succeeded as 5th laird. He married Marion Edmonstone of Duntreath, gaining an ally in Strathblane within the

Lennox. Their daughter Christine reinforced the alliance with the Colquhouns of Luss by marrying James, tutor of Luss in 1558.

In a similar way Argyll took the opportunity of earl of Lennox's absence to extend his network into the region. Archibald, 4th earl, [1498-1558] already had a legitimate son and heir from his first marriage to Helen Hamilton, Arran's daughter, and the Lennox Stewarts' rivals. On 21 April 1541 Argyll married Margaret Graham, daughter of the 3rd earl of Menteith, allying himself with the Grahams who controlled Menteith from their base at Inchamahome on the Lake of Menteith. Archibald and Margaret's son Colin was born c 1542 and significantly he was fostered among his maternal kin in Menteith. For rest of his life Colin was known by his Gaelic by-name *Cailein Teach* or *Tealach*, Colin from Menteith. This decision was a clear indication that Colin being planted in Menteith with the expectation he would found a cadet branch of Campbells in that area. To give him a start when he was still a small child in 1546 and 1548 Colin was granted the lands of Boquhan, east of Kippen [just off the Blaeu map] and Easter Leckie or Shirgarten . There were also Campbell holdings at Touch just west of Stirling and Arngibbon further along the route westwards from Stirling [now A811]. Together these holdings show an awareness of the communications network and one of the classic Campbell expansion patterns of gaining land in a string along a route. A second marriage alliance between Colin's sister, Margaret, and James Stewart of Doune in 1563 reinforced the Campbell links with Menteith and the route into the Lowlands via Strathyre.

The third Campbell strand came from the Campbells of Ardkinglas, based at the top of the southern Cowal side of Loch Fyne. They looked to move eastwards, protecting the key routes through Glen Fyne into Glen Falloch or via Arrochar to the shores of Loch Lomond. John, 4th laird, married a daughter of the 5th laird of Buchanan from the Drymen district and their second son Dougal was married to Janet Graham of Boquhapple, near Thornhill [between the Lake of Menteith and Doune, the A873]. As one of the senior Campbell cadets and the right-hand men of the earls in the middle of the century, Ardkinglas took a keen interest in the Loch Lomond and Menteith.

The strategy of marriage alliances and land holdings was augmented by a drive from the earls to extend their affinity along the whole crescent from Dumbarton to Perth. The Drummonds who operated along that crescent were marital kin to the Glenorchy Campbells and there were links to other peers such as the Erskines, Lords Erskine and later earls of Mar, who were based at Cardross and Stirling. Lennox's former clients such as the Buchanans, the Cunninghams of Drumquhassill and the MacFarlanes of Arrochar were deliberately drawn into Argyll's affinity.

The use of marriage alliances had its drawbacks. The Scottish Lowland aristocracy operated within a system of primogeniture and were vulnerable to the dynastic 'trap' of only producing female children [the chances are approximately one in four]. The Glenorchy Campbells hit this difficulty for a second successive time when John, 5th laird, died in 1550 with daughters but no sons and so the lairdship passed to his brother, Colin. It had been fortunate that their father, Colin 3rd laird, had three sons to continue

the line. However, in 1550 the dynasty looked very precarious with the new laird inheriting when he was in his late forties and with only female children from his first marriage. In the event Grey Colin's second marriage to Katherine Ruthven, daughter 3rd Lord Ruthven, produced eight children and safely secured the Glenorchy line. Despite his relatively advanced age. Grey Colin proved a very dynamic laird ruling for 33 more years until his death in 1583.

One of the ways in which Grey Colin asserted himself was to be tough on his own affinity and in particular to drive a hard bargain with Gregor, the young chief of the MacGregors of Glenstrae in an attempt to make the MacGregors Campbell servitors rather than junior partners in a joint enterprise. During the personal reign of Mary, Queen of Scots, such pressure helped cause a breakdown and the start of the major feud between the MacGregors and the Glenorchy Campbells in 1562. In its various stages the feud ran through into the 17th century and provoked the infamous proscription of the 'name' of MacGregor by King James VI just before he left for England 1603. The feud affected a vast area with the whole Central Highlands and the frontier areas especially the Lennox and Menteith being caught up in the raiding and counter-raiding and in the resetting of the stolen goods - one use of the communication routes!

The feud also created tensions and difficulties for the broad Campbell strategy of expansion into the Lennox. In 1565 Sir George Buchanan thought that Grey Colin's men had killed his servant and taken 160 of his tenants' cattle and 20 horses and mares. Since he had given his bond of manrent to Argyll, he therefore complained to the 5th earl as his

lord and demanded redress. Argyll in his turn wrote to Grey Colin telling him to return Buchanan's goods and provide recompense and reminding Glenorchy that Buchanan was an important servitor who needed to be satisfied. Grey Colin sent an angry reply to the earl, declaring that particular raid had not taken Buchanan's cattle and pointing out with some asperity that as a Campbell he was more important than Buchanan. The letters have survived in the Breadalbane Collection in the National Archives [NAS GD112] and my transcripts are available online [<http://www.div.ed.ac.uk/scottishletters>]

The 16th-century Scots provides a very pithy exchange. Argyll wrote to Grey Colin on 11 March 1565, about Buchanan,

'he is ye man yat we maun do for. And he hes dependit wpoun us and dois zit. And hes refusit and refussis ony oder to his maister bot us onlie. And he hes tynt my Lord off Lennox alradie for ye saymin causs.' [GD112/39/3/24] ['he is the man that we [Argyll and his clan] must support. And he has depended upon us and does still. And he has refused and refuses any other to be his master except us alone. And he has freed himself from the earl of Lennox already for this reason.']

Grey Colin replied on 16 March 1565, 'it is na caus to zour Lordship to lychlie zour awin quhilk man be zour best quhen it cummis to ye vpwith. For my forbearis servit zour Lordshipis predecessouris quhen the Boquhennanis wer to seik and speciallie quhen yair wes mayst ado.' [GD112/39/5/2] ['there is no reason for your Lordship to undervalue your own kin which are your best help when it comes to the crunch. For my forbears served your Lordship's predecessors when the Buchanans were not to be found and especially when there was most trouble.']

The reason this exchange was so heated was the particular pressure created by national politics. A few months before in September 1564 the earl of Lennox had been allowed to return to Scotland from his long exile and received a full restoration of his lands and offices from the Queen. He was once more able to exert direct influence in the Lennox which made Argyll extremely anxious to retain his servitors such as Buchanan. From a Campbell perspective to make matters worse, in February 1565 Lennox's son Henry, Lord Darnley, joined his father in Scotland and within a few months was married to Mary, Queen of Scots. Argyll was one of the Scottish peers who vehemently opposed that marriage and rebelled against the Queen. The 'Chase-about Raid' of the summer and autumn of 1565 was disastrous for the rebels with Queen Mary, donning a helmet and carrying pistols at her saddlebow, enjoying herself as she chased the rebels through southern Scotland. They would not face a reigning monarch on the battlefield and were therefore driven into exile in England.

In the meantime Argyll produced the only successful rebel military effort. Campbell troops raided the Lennox and put the earl of Lennox on the defensive, making it impossible for him to take the military initiative. Since this made Lennox appear to be a failure Mary, Queen of Scots, sacked her father-in-law as overall military commander and gave the post to the earl of Bothwell. His promotion was the first major sign of royal favour and enabled the earl to establish himself at the heart of the Marian regime. As is well known, that story ended with the murder of Darnley at Kirk o Field, the disastrous marriage of the Queen to Bothwell and her deposition in 1567. Scotland then faced Civil

Wars until 1573. As grandfather to the young King James VI, Lennox did return to Scotland in 1570 and became Regent but was killed in 1571.

The demise of the Lennox Stewarts should have signalled a renewed period of opportunity for the Campbells but they also had bad dynastic luck. In 1573 the 5th earl Argyll died when only aged 35 and his brother Colin of Boquhan succeeded as 6th earl. Since Colin's his first marriage was childless, there were no heirs to pass on his Menteith lands and influence. Though Colin's second marriage to the redoubtable Lady Annas Keith, widow of the Regent Moray, gave an heir for the earldom it was too late and the opportunity to establish a Campbell cadet family in Menteith in the 16th century was lost. In Breadablane the MacGregor feud and Grey Colin's own kin ties and eastward-looking expansion drew the Glenorchy Campbells into Perthshire politics rather than back into the Lennox region.

On the map of Campbell expansion in the 16th century the Lennox is not marked. Although in the middle of the century there were all the signs that the Campbells were coming - they never arrived in Lennox. That does not invalidate the famous song, 'The Campbells are coming, Oho, Oho'. Clan Campbell was so strong throughout the early modern period because there were so many areas in which it sought to expand and the clan did succeed in establishing itself permanently within a great swathe of Scotland. Examining their push into the Lennox during the mid-16th century and its lack of long-term success helps to highlight why the Campbells were able to expand so efficiently

elsewhere in Scotland. Campbell failure in Lennox was the exception that proved the rule!

Jane E A Dawson,
School of Divinity
University of Edinburgh

Some references

Campbell publications by Jane Dawson [also see the Breadalbane Letters site]

Breadalbane Letters 1548-1583 [324 transcripts of letters and background material]

<http://www.div.ed.ac.uk/scottishletters>

Campbell Letters, 1559-83 (Scottish History Society, 5th ser. Vol 10, Edinburgh, 1997) (out of print). [202 of the Breadalbane Letters with full scholarly apparatus]

The Politics of Religion in the age of Mary, Queen of Scots: The Earl of Argyll and the struggle for Britain and Ireland, (Studies in Early Modern British History, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002 & 2007)

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>) biographies of 3rd-6th earls and Campbells of Glenorchy

On communications

'The Origin of the 'Road to the Isles': Trade, Communications and Campbell Power in Early Modern Scotland', in *People and Power in Scotland: Essays in honour of T.C. Smout*, eds. R. Mason and N. Macdougall, (Edinburgh, 1992), 74-103.

Other recent work on the Campbells

Stephen Boardman *The Campbells, 1250-1513* (Edinburgh, 2006)

Alastair Campbell of Airds *The History of Clan Campbell Vols I-III* (Edinburgh, 2000-4)