

Setting the scene

– some background concepts

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www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com

About this series

SERIES: This document is one of a series of 38 being prepared for this website by the C&D McLean Committee. The notes should be read in conjunction with each other. Look at [‘Overview of Donald’s life’](#) for summaries of each of them.

ACCESS: The notes will be in the Small Print on the left of the home page. Some have already been placed there, and others are in the process of preparation.

RESEARCHERS: The notes were compiled by Don Gordon – in collaboration with others, particularly Lorna McLean.

VERSIONS: Each document has been updated several times – please discard earlier versions.

RESTRICTION: You are welcome to use any of this material, but be cautious:-

- It is a work-in-progress and still drafts requiring checking and major editing.
- It includes some opinions and proposals which need further consideration.
- There might be copyright issues yet to be finalized regarding some borrowed material.

SCOPE: The notes include:-

- Issues and questions – and why it matters
- What we know so far
- What questions remain
- How we are going about finalizing these matters.

STRUCTURE: We are gathering together anything we could find. These notes are lists of details – headings and dot points which create a framework for placing new material as it comes to hand. Eventually we can decide which details to retain and which ones are less relevant.

READABILITY: The notes are not intended to be easy reading. However, it is a starting point for creating readable narratives. At present, it is placed within the Small Print section of the website so it is not easily accessed by the public. Once we have developed this further, it is our intention to place something on the website in the Stories section to invite public viewing. Indeed, this is our main objective. The notes are the raw material from which we can draw just a few highlights which can be expanded into lots of wonderful stories. The notes also provide the context for these stories to enhance their authenticity.

DETAIL: These are notes are for serious researchers rather than casual readers who will get lost in the details. New readers will find it best to read the summaries at the start each set of notes because these summaries cover all that is essential towards understanding ‘our’ McLean story.

COLLABORATION: Your contributions, corrections and comments are welcome. Do this via ‘Contact us’ on the homepage of www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com.

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Purpose

This document sets the scene for a series of researcher's notes which centre around Donald McLean and Christina McPhee who were born in the Scottish Highlands in the late 1700s. They migrated to South Australia in 1837.

These notes explain some of the concepts which arise in the other documents in this series:-

- Researcher's notes – a list of all the 38 documents in this series.
- Places – a brief outline of some locations which are mentioned in the other documents
- Clan structure – explanations about Chiefs, Lairds, tacksmen, branches and inheritance
- Land ownership - how acquiring land has changed over the centuries
- Names – some notes about people's names in these documents
- Collaboration – how this is arranged
- Glossary – definitions of terms used
- Sources – books, articles and internet materials we have used in this series – and how to access them

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The list of research notes

The documents need to be read in conjunction with each other.

We are gathering a history of the Chiefs and Lairds over many centuries to try (unsuccessfully) to find what connection Donald has in the formal clan structure (see [#02, 04 & 05](#)). We explain how we are searching for Donald's and Christina's ancestors ([18, 19 & 20](#)). We describe the places of clan events and where predecessors and descendants lived ([8 to 14](#)). We identify some of the changes swirling around them and discover what their lives were like in Scotland and in Australia. Finally, we summarize the generations of descendants ([34 to 37](#)). All this in the context of the family tree, individual profiles and biographies on the website.

Series of research notes being compiled

	Years	On website?	Location	
GENERAL				
01	Setting the scene – background concepts	Yes	Homepage	
CLAN HIEARCHY IN SCOTLAND				
02	Maclean chiefs in Duart	1200s to present	Yes	Small print
03	Jump where the wall is lowest	1420	Yes	Small print
04	Maclean lairds in Ardgour	1420 to present	Yes	Small print
05	Maclean lairds in Blaich	1480 to 1760	Yes	Small print
06	Macleans in the Jacobite Uprisings	1715 & 1746	Yes	Small print
07	Time line for chiefs, lairds & our family	1200s to present	Yes	Small print
PLACES				
08	Blaich & Duisky		Yes	Small print
09	Ardgour – the district, the estate, the house & Sallachan		Yes	Small print
10	Kilmallie & Lochaber		Almost	Small print
11	Tour of Fort William, Ardgour, Blaich & Duisky		Almost	Home page
12	Duart Castle		Yes	Small print
13	Other places of our Macleans in Scotland		More work	Small print
14	Places of our McLeans around Adelaide		Hardly	Small print
15	Places of our McLeans around Strathalbyn		Hardly	Small print
16	McLean tour around the Strathalbyn district		Almost	Home page
17	Other places of our McLeans in Australia		Hardly	Small print
SEARCHING FOR SCOTTISH ANCESTORS				
18	Donald's parents & grandparents – our strategies	1700s	Yes	Small print
19	Donald's parents & grandparents – searching original records	1700s	Yes	Small print
20	Christina McPhee's parents & grandparents	1700s	Yes	Small print
LIFE IN SCOTLAND				
21	Lives of generations before Donald McLean	1700s	Almost	Small print
22	Overview of Donald's life	1779 to 1855	Yes	Home page
23	Donald's childhood	1779 to 1800	Yes	Small print
24	Donald's initial working years	1800 to 1820	Yes	Small print

25	Donald's continuing work and growing family	1820 to 1837	Yes	Small print
LIFE IN AUSTRALIA				
26	Migration of the McLean family on the 'Navarino'	1837	More work	Small print
27	Donald's life in Adelaide	1837 to 1841	Hardly	Small print
28	The first wheat grown in South Australia	1838	Yes	Small print
29	Donald's life in Strathalbyn	1842 to 1855	Almost	Small print
30	McLean properties around Strathalbyn	1842 to present	Hardly	Small print
31	Highway robbery	1847	More work	Small print
32	Donald's final year	1855	Almost	Small print
33	Christina's final years	1869	Almost	Small print
DESCENDANTS				
34	Children of Christina & Donald	1810 to 1910	Hardly	Home page
35	Grandchildren of Christina & Donald	1840 to 1940	Hardly	Home page
36	Great-grandchildren of Christina & Donald	1900 to 2000	Hardly	Home page
37	Present generations	1940 to present	Hardly	Home page
SOURCES				
38	Library: references & sources		Almost	Home page

Note [22 'Overview of Donald's life'](#) is particularly useful because it gives brief explanations of each of the notes in this series.

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Places

Ardgour is a district in the Scottish Highlands bounded by Loch Eil on the north, Loch Linnhe on the east and the district of Morvern to the south. Clovulin is the only village and there are no cities. Fort William is just outside Ardgour's north-east corner. (See [#09](#))

Blaich and Duisky are of particular relevance to Christina & Donald McLean. They are within the district of Ardgour and parish of Kilmallie. Blaich is not a village – just a string of cottages and crofts. Duisky is a farming estate next to Blaich. They are located on the southern shores of Loch Eil. ([08](#))

For most of the past six centuries, the seat of this branch of McLeans was Ardgour House which is near Loch Linnhe which joins the northern end of Loch Eil. It was sold in 1996 and the current laird lives at Sallachan Farm nearby. ([09](#))

Duart Castle ([12](#)), which is the world-wide seat for the Chiefs of Clan McLean, is on the Isle of Mull. It is about 40 kilometers from Ardgour House.

After migrating to South Australia, the family were in Adelaide for three years ([14 & 27](#)) and then pioneered 70 kilometres away to the Strathalbyn area ([15, 16 & 29](#)). Over the generations, the families have spread to other parts of Australia – and a small number, to other countries.

For details, have look at other notes in this series – 08 to 17 or take a virtual tour:-

[11. 'Tour of Fort William, Ardgour, Blaich & Duisky'](#)

[16. 'Tour of the Strathalbyn area'](#)

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Clan structure

In past centuries, the Clan was bound together (or at times in conflict) by force of arms. In the present day, there is no single MacLean Clan organisation which has authority over the whole clan. There are several Clan associations which see themselves as independent of each other but acknowledge the Chief in Duart Castle. Their loyalty is not put to the test because the associations act as social and cultural alliances rather than having to take up arms to defend their properties as they did in the past. The associations are:-

- Strathalbyn: Donald & Christina McLean Genealogical Council Inc functioned from 1986 to 1997 and its role is now undertaken by the Steering Group of the C&D McLean Committee which is linked to the Strathalbyn

museum. The current members of the Steering Group are Trevor McLean, Heather McGrath, Lorna McLean & Don Gordon. Contact via www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com.

- Clan Maclean International: This connects the whole clan, worldwide, with the Chief in Duart Castle on Mull. Contact www.maclean.org.
- NSW: Clan Maclean in New South Wales. The archivist Edwin MacLean has provided material to help trace Donald's origins in Scotland. One of Donald's descendants is a member of this association – Trevor McLean.
- Victoria: Clan Maclean Association in Australia. Contact www.clanmacleanaustralia.com.
- WA: Clan Maclean of Western Australia. Four of Donald's descendants are members of this association - including Don Gordon and Lorna McLean. Contact www.clanmacleanwa.asn.au
- NZ: Clan Maclean Association of New Zealand. Allan Lachlan MacLean of Willowburn might be a member. He has provided material about the MacLeans around Blaich in the 1700s and early 1800s.
- Scotland: Clan Maclean Association of Scotland
- England & Wales: Clan Maclean Association of England and Wales
- Canada: Clan Maclean Atlantic
- USA: Clan MacLean Association in the United States. <https://maclean.us.org>
- USA: Clan Maclean Association Pacific NW
- California: Clan Maclean Association of California
- France: Clan Maclean Association of France
- Facebook:
 - Maclean International Youth Group
 - Clan Maclean Net Central – Maclean.net

Now, we need to look at it is by key figures of the clan in order to understand their roles and authority.

Chiefs

- This is the title of the leader of the whole McLean clan (but this is often contentious - see below).
- The current chief of Clan MacLean is Sir Lachlan Hector Charles MacLean who resides at Duart Castle (but see seat, below).
- Maclean-Bristol seems to avoid the appellation of 'Chief' and prefers 'head of kindred'.
- Generally, the role passes from father to eldest son (but see hereditary, below)
- Our research notes:-

[02. 'Chiefs of Clan MacLean'](#)

Lairds

- The current laird of Ardgour is Robin MacLean, the 18th Laird of Ardgour. There is no current laird for Blaich.
- Laird is a Scottish term for owner of substantial land or estate.
- In the Scottish order of precedence, a laird ranks below a baron and above a gentleman.
- Laird is a courtesy description for a land-owner with no other rights assigned to it. Although he has no formal authority, the laird has considerable power as landlord and also controller of hunting and fishing. From time to time, the laird may carry considerable moral authority and leadership in the clan area – this often went well beyond roles directly related to land ownership - depending on his personal qualities and the prevailing circumstances. Alexander 13th Ardgour is an example of substantial authority.
- Sometimes the laird is referred to by the name of their main property – as if it was his own name. For example, at the time, the 15th Laird, was referred to as Ardgour rather than Alexander Thomas MacLean. Another example is Laird Cameron of Locheil who are known as just Locheil.
- The laird is sometimes referred to as chieftain and is typically subordinate and loyal to the Chief. For example, our Laird Robin is styled as a chieftain and he is loyal to Sir Lachlan of Duart.
- Lairdship is hereditary – passing to the eldest son who inherits the land and the title when his father dies. But see our notes on inheritance, below.
- Maclean-Bristol seems to avoid the appellation of 'Laird'
- Other researcher's notes:-

[04. 'McLeans in Ardgour'](#)

[05. 'Lairds of Blaich'](#)

Tacksman

- Donald held the lease of Duiskey.
- A tacksman leases an estate from the laird but does not have a formal position within the clan.
- He subleases crofts to farmers and generally acts on behalf of the laird within the estate.
- The position is not hereditary but there is often an ongoing family connection.

- Rents for crofts and cottages “were paid through the channel of tacksmen, a lesser gentry acting as estate managers who allocated strips of land, lent seed-corn and agrarian tools and arranged droving of cattle, taking a minor share of the payments made to the clan nobility, the fine” (Rev JA Carruth, ‘The Bonnie Prince Charlie Country’, Norwich, 1996).

Variations

The arrangements with chiefs and lairds often depart from the ‘normal’:-

- **Seat:** The chief or laird is usually associated with a ‘seat’, often a castle or stately home, and this is usually his place of residence. However, there are long periods when the clan is not centered at a particular seat because either they have been divested of it, or he is living elsewhere for personal reasons. For example, Alexander, the 13th Laird of Ardgour, for many decades was living in Edinburgh and also was overseas for extensive military service.
- **Role:** We expect that he is actively involved in the affairs of the clan. But this is not always the case. Sometimes the nominal chief or laird has little to do with the wellbeing of the clan. At times, he might have little ability, or show no interest, or it might be a low point when he is impoverished, without substantial properties or subjugated by more powerful forces – a chief in name only.
- **Contention:** Highland history is replete with arguments, intrigues and battles with disputes over which branch is in the ascendancy. The Duart line has often been challenged by the Lochubie MacLeans and Coll MacLeans – but never by the Ardgour MacLeans.
- **Numeration:**
 - The various scholarly works number the 5th Laird or 12th Chief etc
 - It is not clear cut, particularly the first few in the line.
 - The incumbents might not have been referred to in this way in their lifetimes.
 - In order to write the history, especially with many men of the same name, sometimes scholars numerate the line long after these times. It is a way of making the sequence clear to those reading the historical account. For example, we devised our own numbering system in our article ‘[Lairds of Blaich](#)’ because the main source, Sinclair, did not give the lairds a number, even though he had done so when detailing other lines in his book. Another example is that Alexander 13th is usually referred to in this way even though he referred to himself as 12th.
 - Although most scholars use numeration, Maclean-Bristol avoids giving a fixed sequence – ie does not use 1st Chief, 8th Laird etc.
- **Ownership:** The mantle of chief or lairdship comes with a substantial parcel of land and other riches – or vice-versa. But there were many generations where the MacLean Chief was landless and impoverished.
- **Hereditary:** The practice of passing to the eldest son is most often the case, but we can identify some exceptions among the Duart chiefs and Ardgour lairds. For example, the 17th Laird of Ardgour (Catriona) was a woman and 18th (Robin) is her nephew. For more about inheritance, see below.
- **Wills:** We do not have details of the formal documentation which facilitated new chiefs and lairds inheritance of the role over past centuries. Presumably the current Laird of Ardgour has these arrangements in place.

Clan hierarchy

- While generally the lairds are loyal to the Chief, he does not have any direct authority over them. Also, although there is no formal hierarchy of one laird over another, in our case, since the Laird of Ardgour initiated the lairdship in Blaich, and because the Blaich line faulted a few times, the Laird of Ardgour took back the role, and thus asserted his ascendancy by default.
- **Feudal superior:** The chief of the clan can, through a court, become the feudal superior of a barony if the next laird apparent is not legally ‘entered’ to the estate. For example, after the death of John, the 4th laird of Ardgour, he “was presumably succeeded by his second cousin Allan, who failed to be legally ‘entered’ to the estate. As a result, the barony of Ardgour was for many years held from Duart as feudal superior. The Ardgour family remained in occupation but it was not until 1685 that they were to hold their barony again directly from the Crown” (Maclean-Bristol p144)

Branches

- Branches are also called ‘cadets’. Also of course, there can be sub-branches where there is a close alliance.
- As we see it, whether or not a group of Highlanders are considered to be a branch depends on:-
 - **Leadership:** Whether they have an acknowledged figurehead – a Chief or Laird.
 - **Seat:** Whether there is a specific castle or grand house which the family has occupied for many generations.
 - **Territory:** Whether this is a defined geographical area - particularly if they control extensive properties which indicates their dominance over the district.

- Property: Whether there is substantial land or wealth to be handed down through the generations.
- Identity: Whether the descendants identify themselves as a separate branch.
- Capability: Whether they can organize themselves to act together. In the past, this might be the assembling a small army for attack or defense. Or, in current times, the ability to convene a major reunion.
- Size: A large group, with fecundity in its earliest generations, have a stronger claim to being a branch.
- Biases: Certain groups will push their claim. For example, as descendants of Donald and Christina, we could consider ourselves to be a sub-branch of the McLeans of Blaich and/or Ardgour.
- Origination: Sometimes a branch has a clear beginning – eg when Donald ‘The Hunter’ overpowered the McMasters and took control of Ardgour in 1420. Or sometimes it is after a family moves to another area and has many sons and grandsons – then in retrospect, it comes to be regarded as a branch – eg this is how our branch of the McLeans developed after getting established in Strathalbyn.
- Heraldry: Most branches have created their own patronymic, shield or tartan etc
- Boxes: Rarely can a branch tick all these boxes. In many cases, a branch may base it’s claim on just a few of these considerations.
- Other researcher’s notes:-
 - [02. ‘Chiefs of Clan MacLean’](#)
 - [04. ‘Macleans of Ardgour’](#)
 - [05. ‘Lairds of Blaich’](#)
- How various researchers describe the different branches depends on:-
 - The author’s biases: For example, Gregory was writing for McDonald so would have, perhaps unconsciously, tilted the story to the patron’s liking.
 - The era: For example, the branches identified in the 1400s are different from those in the 1800s.
 - This partly explains why there are so many different listings of the branches at the beginning of our notes [‘Chiefs of Clan MacLean’](#).

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Our Branch

It has not been claimed that the descendants of Christina and Donald McLean are a branch. Any claim would not be strong as it would rest only on size, origins and perhaps identity - but cannot tick the boxes of leadership, capability, heraldry, territory, property or seat (except perhaps Trevor McLean’s farm, ‘Navarino’ in Strathalbyn).

Leadership: But let’s imagine that the descendants of Christina and Donald McLean have formed a branch, and that mantle of leadership has passed to the oldest living son. The succession could have been:-

- Donald – died 1855
- Allan ID 3 – died 1890
- William Donald ID 6 – died 1911
- William Dawson ID 11 – died 1941
 - He is the second son of William Donald whose first son, Donald Sinclair Homer ID 10, died before him in 1909.
- Laurence Albert Allan ID 1434 – died 1956
 - William Dawson had no sons.
 - The oldest brother of William Donald was James Dawson ID 1240 who died in 1931, but had no sons
 - The next brother of William Donald was Allan ID 1430 who died in 1930, and whose eldest son was Laurence Albert Allan
- Angas Allan ID 1472 – died 1976
- Allan ID 1480 – he was born in 1946 and might still be living
- Shannon ID 1486 – he was born in 1974

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Succession and inheritance

How did the McLeans organise themselves when they were in control of their lands?

The McLean lands were passed down from one laird to another. Sinclair (p495-497), explained the rules of inheritance of the McLean (Gillean) chief. Presumably the same rules applied to the lairds:-

- Male descendant: The general law of succession prescribes the eldest legitimate son descended in the male line from the founder of the clan. This of course includes a son born in wedlock, but it also includes an illegitimate or 'natural' son, who has been validated by an act of parliament, a letter of legitimation, or the marriage of his parents after his birth. However, a different male descendent may be appointed if the eldest son does not have the capability.
- Capable: He must possess the intellectual and physical qualifications required for the performance of the duties required of him as chief.

If there are questions about either of the above, it is resolved by:-

- Chief: The current chief designates his heir
- Inner circle: Those 'attached' to the chief provide advice to him
- Election: The electors and process is not specified
- Deposing: A clan has the right to depose a chief and to elect a more suitable person
- Assassination: There have been incidents when a group of clan members with the means, have murdered their chief and placed themselves under the command of another relative. (Sinclair p497)

So, in effect, it is usually the eldest son, but only if he has the general support of powerful clan members. *'In order to be chief, it was always necessary that a person should be acknowledged as such by the majority of the clan. It is no use for a man to call himself chief unless he had enough followers to maintain him in that position..... Theoretical claims are not of much value to a man unless he can obtain a possession of that which he claims.'* (Sinclair p497)

There is another facet, which Sinclair does not highlight, that is the question of who has the real control when someone becomes heir at a very young age. Presumably it is those 'attached'. They are sometimes called 'tutors'. Examples from our 18 lairds are xxxxx. Also, there is a question of who, in effect, is in charge when a laird is old and frail? Examples of this are Allan 7th, Crubach 8th and xxxxx.

The last few changes of the Lairdship of Ardgour are examples of how the transfer from one to the other is changing – ie the 17th was a woman and the 18th is a nephew rather than the son.

"Once a family obtained landed rank it was determined to maintain its status and to ensure that its possessions, reputation and honour were handed down intact. In order to make sure that its position was at least equal to that enjoyed by previous generations, it was essential that the inheritance was not divided. Younger sons, if they did not enter the church, were given land which was held from their father or his successor. In the Scottish Gaeltachd in the fifteenth-century the kin-based system of inheritance by which brother might succeed brother, just as son might succeed father, was often the custom. It evidently was in the Ardgour family and probably in Clann Tearlaich. However, Duart, Lochbuie and Coll handed down their estates by primogeniture and the eldest son succeeded his father in his ancestral home and retained that portion of the inheritance, where the lineal memory was most deeply rooted, in his own hand. Only Duart established cadet branches which survived for any length of time" (Maclean-Bristol p 63).

Land ownership

How have methods of the transfer of land ownership in Scotland changed in the different eras?

Some examples :-

- By force on a small scale: In the 15th century a small band of McLeans raided the area in Ardgour occupied by the McMasters – they were a stronger force and slaughtered the McMasters and then took over – and this was later ratified by the King.
- By force on a large scale: Large regions, or even whole countries have been taken over by an invading army, in the name of the King.
- By colonization: An outside group establishes control – with or without use of armed force – and with or without formal sanctions. For example, South Australia.
- Treaty: This happened in New Zealand with the Maoris – but not in Australia with the aborigines.
- Clearances: During the 18th and 19th centuries a significant number of people were forcibly displaced from traditional land tenancies in the Scottish Highlands, where they had been small-scale farmers. This was by the actions of the land owners, punitive actions by the government (eg after Culloden) or from enclosures of common lands for farming sheep.
- By grant: The Lord of Isles or the King or some other authority can grant an area of land as a reward for someone's support – they would be granted a favour for having organised their family members to fight on the side of the Lord or King.

- Inheritance – ie to eldest son: This is the method for the LaIrd of Ardgour.
- Wakefield scheme: The new colony in South Australia was based on the idea that the government should not grant land or sell it too cheaply. This would be an incentive to use the land productively and the funds raised would bring out migrant labourers. It would ensure that there were enough workers for the land and the workers would need to keep working for a period to save up to buy land of their own. Our Donald paid for his property before he left for the colony.
- Purchasing: The present arrangement where anyone can buy any land they want, providing the owner is willing to sell at an agreed price – and then this agreement is registered with the government lands department in the form of a title deed.

Over six centuries, our family has been part of this evolution - from armed force to the rule of law:-

- Donald the Hunter killed the MacMasters to take over their land.
- The Lord of the Isles encouraged this action at the time
- The King ratified it 70 years later.
- The arrangements for the establishment of the lairdship in Blaich (including the creation of a Balony)
- The colonization of South Australia and the Wakefield scheme.
- In London, Donald purchased South Australian land.
- Donald continued to buy and sell farming land around Strathalyn.
- Robin sold part of the Ardgour Estate in 1996.
- Up to the early 1900s huge areas of Scotland were owned by just a few major land owners and there were few changes over many decades. This was the case that, for six centuries, Blaich and Duiskey, along with a score of other farms, had been part of the massive Ardgour Estate owned by the laird. But soon after Donald migrated, half of the estate, including Blaich and Duiskey, was sold to the Earl of Morton. Then in more recent years, these properties were sold by the Earl to smaller land owners. Thus, the present owners are xxxx.
- In the past century, property was sold rather the conquered – eg we bought Duart in 1911 and sold Ardgour House inn 1996.

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Distinctions

- Land title Vs clan title – the nexus between land ownership and chief/laird
 - What is the difference between the title of laird/chief and a land title? For example, could a person be the 5th McLean of Ardgour, but not own any of the land? Is inheritance of the lairdship the same as inheritance of the property?
 - What are the interconnections between the various titles and methods of holding land – barony, ‘seat’, estate, owner, proprietor, leaser, laird, tack, tenant, crofter, chief & chieftain etc.
- Estates Vs farms Vs crofts

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Names

- McLean Vs MacLean Vs Maclean Vs Gillean. In our notes, the different spellings are interchangeable.
- Not Maclaine?? (of Lochbuie)
- Donald signed his name variously as - McLane - MacLean - McLean - McClean
- Duiskey = “Duskey Farm” in Hilton, or - undoubtedly poor spelling of the Duiskie or Duiskey Estate. Also correspondence about Aboriginal Reserve =
- We refer to ‘our’ Donald, ‘our’ Christina and ‘our’ McLeans. The use of the apostrophe is a shorthand way of identifying those we are trying to track - when there are so many people with similar names.
- Using capitals for lairds and chiefs when it is the title of a specific person, and lower case when discussing these positions generally. For example, Alexander was the laird in ‘our’ Donald’s time – he is known as Alexander Maclean, the 13th Laird of Ardgour.

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Conversions

The values used in these notes can be converted as follows:-

Area		Distance	Pounds
1 square mile =	640 acres = 4,856 hectares	1 mile = 1.6 kms	1 = guess
6.25 squ miles =	4,000 acres = 1,619 hectares	2.5 miles = 4 kms	Note that this xxxx
18.75 squ miles =	12,000 acres = 4,856 hectares	30 miles =	
20 squ miles =	12,800 acres = 5,180 hectares		
156.25 squ miles =	100,000 acres = 40,469 hectares		

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Sources – references, library

‘Donald and Christina McLean and Their Descendants’ was published in 1995 and it has all been placed on the website www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com (except that details of living people are not normally visible). This is our primary source and is the starting point for all subsequent research. The book was originally produced in a big red book so we refer to it as the BRB. It was compiled before the internet and sources were not as available as they are now. It does not identify sources for most family details but does acknowledge the contributions of Margaret Stephenson, Douglas MacLean, Dianne Facey and some others.

All our sources are listed in [‘Library’](#). This list includes comments about each of the sources, and how to access them.

Access:

- You are welcome to ‘Contact us’ on the website www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com if you want assistance in accessing any of the following sources.

Sources for Scotland

- Our interest is in the Highlands before Donald and his family left there in 1837.
- Ancestors
 - OPRs
 - Scotland’s people
- Maclean history
 - Gregory – 1836: This was written about the same time as Seneachie but is a broader history of the Western Highlanders and the neighbouring Isles - ie all the clans in that area whereas, Seneachhie focuses on the Macleans.
 - Seaneachie – 1838 – See appendix A
 - ‘A Breif History of the Maclean Ffamily’ - written before 1850 – see appendix B.
 - JP MacLean
 - Sinclair
 - Wikipedia
- Scottish history
 - Wikipedia
- Places in Scotland
 - Webster
 - Statistical accounts
 - Wikipedia

Sources for Australia

- Births deaths & marriages
- Places around Strathalbyn
 - Wikipedia

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Collaboration

The researcher's notes are drafts and anyone is welcome to contribute via 'Contact us' on www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com.

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Glossary

- Baillie: An local official – an alderman or magistrate
- Branch: See above
- Cadet: See branch
- Chamberlain: eg Ewen, 2nd Laird of Ardgour
- Chief: See above
- Chieftain: See above
- Croft:
- Dower house: A dwelling that is intended by the widowed mother of the owner of an ancestral estate.
- Laird: See above
- Liferent:
- Lord of the Isles:
- Manrent:
- Merkland: An amount of land in Scottish deeds and legal papers. It was based upon a common valuation of the land.
- Merk: A merk was a Scottish silver coin.
- Progenitor:
- Seat:
- Seneachie: *"It was customary with the best and almost all the families in the highlands of Scotland to keep their Seanachies, or family historians to record the publick Exploits of the great men of their families, as also their Genealogyes, marriages, and all their notable transactions"* (13th MacLean, p2).
- Seneschal: eg Ewen, 2nd Laird of Ardgour
- Tacksman: See above
- Teinds: Property assessed for tithes – ie one tenth to be paid to the church

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APPENDIX A

Seneachie:

‘An Historical & Genealogical Account of the Clan Macleans from its first settlement at Castle Duart in the Isle of Mull, to the present period’

AUTHOR

- The author’s actual name is not stated in the book. He just referred to himself as ‘a Seneachie’. Seneachies were Gaelic story-tellers.
- JP Maclean and the National Library of Scotland attributed the authorship to John Campbell Sinclair (catalog record MARCXML & JP Maclean p390).
- However, Lachlan MacLean (1798 to 1848) is attributed by Libraries Australia (ref: 22965433). It is not known where this Lachlan fits in the family tree.
- In our document, we refer to the author as Seneachie, as though it was the proper name.

“In 1838 appeared the first published history of the Clan MacLean, a work of 358 pages, to which is added a list of one hundred and forty-one subscribers, taking in all two hundred and thirty-three copies—the chief of the clan, with commendable zeal, subscribing for forty copies. The name of the author is concealed under the title of Seneachie, but published at the expense of Charles Hope MacLean of Ardgour. The work has been severely criticised. The Monthly Review for April, 1838, contains a lengthy, but bitter notice of it. MacAulay animadverts on the severity of the language employed in the history. With all its faults, its bigotry, its narrowness, and its fulsome flattery, there is much in it that is commendable. With the resources at his command, and the opportunities then offered, it is to be deplored that a more complete history was not published. Charles Hope MacLean was persuaded into its publication by the author and against the will of his father. The name of the author has long been kept a secret by the Ardgour family, but in 1879 was revealed by the publication, at Columbus, Ohio of a short account of the life of the author. It would also appear that the "Duart MS" alluded to in the work was none other than the Ardgour MS. The author was related to the Clan MacLean through his wife, who was of both the Brolass and Kingerloch families. Rev. John Campbell Sinclair, the author, was born in Tiree in the year 1800 ; in 1822, married Mary Julia MacLean ; emigrated to Nova Scotia in 1838; to the United States in 1852, and in 1878 died at Wheeling, West Virginia. The book belonged to a new era in Scottish history, and was a pioneer in setting forth the operations of the clans. The work was certainly deserving of more credit than it has received” (JP MacLean, p390).

PUBLICATION

- Published in 1838.

SOURCES

- This account is very useful because it is earliest work - and later works have relied on it. JP Maclean (1889), Sinclair (1899), and have used much of the original wording, have added very little to the facts which were collated by Seneachie, and have not questioned any of those details.
- So, if the scholars of the late 1800s relied on material from Seneachie, where did Seneachie get his material from? He says from the records of the Privy Council and xxx and xcxxx.
- What other resources did the scholars of the later 1880s have at their disposal which Seneachie did not have half a century before?

CRITIQUES

- Monthly Review

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APPENDIX B

'A breif genealogical account of the ffamily of McLean from its first settlement in the Island of Mull and parts adjacent'

In 1872, just before he died, Alexander 14th of Ardgour, arranged for 25 copies to be printed. *"In 1872, 'A Breif Genealogical Account of the Ffamily of MacLean' was published at the expense of Alexander, fourteenth MacLean of Ardgour. He died while the work was passing through the press. Only twenty-five copies were struck off, and these were intended solely for private circulation. The manuscript from which it was taken in the handwriting of Alexander, thirteenth MacLean of Ardgour. The MS is preserved at Ardgour Houser, and exhibits its age. It was compiled while Sir Allan MacLean was still chief of the clan. Only the family of Duard and its various branches are given. No mention, only incidentally and where necessary, is made of the Lochbuie family and its cadets. The work contains 108 pages"* (JP Maclean p391).

AUTHOR

- There are some indications that it was compiled by Alexander 13th:-
 - Handwriting: JP Maclean asserted that *"the manuscript from which it was taken is in the handwriting of Alexander, thirteenth MacLean of Ardgour"* (JP Maclean p391).
 - Family tree: Alexander 13th added his family tree (on the last page, p108) but it is not certain whether or not he wrote any of the rest of this book.
 - Events: It does not include any events which occurred after the 13th died in 1855. For example, the family tree just has all the children of the 13th and nothing about the life of the 14th (who arranged for the manuscript to be published).
- On the other hand, we have concluded that it was not compiled by Alexander 13th because:-
 - Under the chart, the 14th has noted *"The above is in the handwriting of my father"* and it appears that JP Maclean mistakenly thought this note was referring to the whole manuscript rather than just to the chart.
 - This was published 17 years after he had died (this of course, in itself, does not preclude that he had written it).
 - The only place that the 13th's name appears is the chart on the very last page (p108) of the book which might have been added later.
 - The only mention of his own family is the basic chart of his family tree which includes the names of his children – but no details of these children, or even the name of the 13th's wife.
 - The account stops chronicalling the Ardgour line at the 12th Laird of Ardgour who was the father of 13th. It gives nothing about the life of the 12th except his childhood. There are no personal details of his family – just some scant details of his childhood in the late 1730s and nothing personal for his next three decades – just general information about how the estate fared - the *"estate being quite neglected and in a manner quite sunk"* and how, with the assistance of others *"the estate was recovered from the very brink of ruin"* (Ffamily p64). It does not cover the death of the 12th, which occurred in 1768.
 - The account does not focus on the 13th's line. The Ardgour line is described from page 56 to 76 – only 20 pages of the 108.
 - Only three Ardgour branches are identified - Borrera branch with 10 lairds (p64-68), Tressinish also with 10 lairds (p68 to 74) and Inverscadle with 6 lairds (p74 to 76). It does not name Blaich as a branch even though Blaich was within Ardgour and was owned by the 13th. The Blaich line had ceased some time after 1758, but the extinction of a line did not prevent the writer from chronicalling other branches that they ceased. Inverscadle, which became extinct, was near Ardgour House and Blaich was just 12 miles away whereas Borrera and Treshinish were great distances away. This lack of details about Blaich line is a disappointing gap in recorded family memories. This is particularly frustrating as it gives some details of the other lines which developed from the other sons of John Crubach.
 - It likely that, if the 13th had written the whole book (rather than just adding a chart on the last page), he would have included more details about his own father – and probably about himself and his own children. It is inconceivable that he would barely mention his father and his considerable achievements. And it is improbable that the 13th would not have included anything about his own life (long and eventful as it was) and his 14 children (many of whom also had noteworthy lives). On the other hand, we know that the 14th arranged for the MS to be printed, but did not take the opportunity to append anything about himself.

- Conclusion: It seems that the only role of the 13th was to add his chart to the original manuscript. He might have expressed a high regard for the manuscript and might have expressed a desire to see it printed. Maybe this is what prompted, one of his sons, Alexander 14th, to eventually have it printed.
- So, who compiled it?
 - Perhaps the question of whether or not the 13th was the author could be settled by an examination of the original manuscript. *“The MS is preserved at Ardgour House, and exhibits great age”* (JP Maclean p391). Ardgour House is no longer in MacLean hands, but Robin the 18th, the present Laird of Ardgour, would know where the manuscript is now.
 - The scholarship and the collation of so many details, of different branches, covering many centuries, and presented in such an orderly manner, is an impressive achievement, especially when we consider the difficulty of accessing sources at that time. The earliest comprehensive history of the Macleans is acknowledged (by xxxJP Maclean?) p xxx) to have been compiled by a seneachie in 1838 and, as far as we can ascertain, the Ffamily did not rely upon this source – indeed it might have been compiled before the Seneachie. There are no indications that the seaneachie used the Ffamily as a source. The two do not share any wording [research: We need to check this] although their substance is consistent. We can conclude that were both compiled independently in the early 1800s. So the Ffamily must have existed as a manuscript for up to half a century before it was eventually published in 1872.
 - We conclude that the book was written by someone else. We have no idea who this scholar was. In the absence of a known author, in these notes we are referring to the book as ‘Ffamily’ when we are quoting it as a source.

YEAR WRITTEN

- [research: We need to examine the book closely to work out when it was written. What was the latest event recorded – maybe nothing since the 1760s.]
- It was published in 1872
- At least some of it was in the handwriting of Alexander 13th who died in 1855 – so obviously he cannot have been written any of it after 1855.
- JP MacLean stated that *“it was compiled while Sir Allan MacLean was still chief of the clan”* (MacLean p391). Allan was chief from 1751 to 1783. The latest events in the whole book are the 1760s [research: We need to check this] and it was probably written many years before the 13th died in 1855. So, does this mean that the manuscript existed long before it was published?
- There are blank spaces left when specific detail (eg the name of a wife) was not known, but that it was anticipated that this detail would be soon found, so that the blank can be filled in.
- It uses old style spelling – an expert could judge when this spelling ceased to be used in that area. The spelling in Ffamily clearly pre-dates the spelling in Seneachie.
- [research: A language expert would be able to assess (a) what era/region was the spelling the way it is used in ‘Ffamily’?, and (b) whether the author of the letter the 13th wrote to his crofters in 1850 is the same person who wrote Ffamily.
- So, it might have been written before Seneachie and might thus be the first history of the Macleans.
- So, the indications are that it was compiled in the late 1700s or early 1800s and remained in manuscript form, for much more than half a century until it was published in 1872. Where was it all this time? Who knew about it? Why didn’t anyone update it before it was published?
- These considerations are relevant to us, as descendants of Christina and Donald McLean, because potentially, the 13th is our best source of information about the life of Donald around Blaich and Duiskey. So, it is regrettable that we cannot say with any confidence, that he was the author of the Ffamily.

SOURCES

- We can only guess at why Alexander 13th was against the publication of the Seachhie’s account in 1838, yet wrote his own account (if he did) some time after (and which was eventually published 34 years later).
- Also, we are left to guess how this ‘Ffamily’ was compiled. We know, because it says so on page 108, that the chart at the end of the book was in his own handwriting. And we are told that the manuscript from which the book was taken was in his handwriting (JP MacLean, p390). Does this mean that 13th wrote it all himself? Or maybe he just contributed the chart and someone else is the author of the book. If it was written by the 13th, he would have had some assistance and undoubtedly he relied on other sources.
- SENEACHIE: JP Maclean stated that Charles had published the Seneachie *“against the will of his father”* but this might not have been the case because it’s list of subscribers includes 2 copies for the 13th, 2 for the 14th and 20 for Charles – also 1 for Miss Maclean of Ardgour, 1 for Thomas, 2 for George, 2 for Henry, 3 for William

and 2 for Peter. How much did the contents of the Seneachie find its way into 'Ffamily'? A careful comparative examination of the wording and substance of the two books will reveal whether or not Ffamily used the Seneachie's material.

- We have one instance (there might be others if we look close enough) where the wording of the two demonstrates that either one might have copied from the other (we do not know which because we are not sure which was written first – although we suspect that Ffamily could have been first for reasons above - 'Year written') – or whether they were both using the same source. The examples are:-
 - *“Donald the 3d. MacLean of Brolass who tho' he was left Fatherless when young and burdened with many Distresses in his own Private affairs and the affairs of his Clans, yet by the greatness of his mind and Prudent Management he bravely overcame them. He was some time Lieut in Coln McGill's Regt. where he was very severely wounded by a Troopers Shable”* (FFamily p106).
 - *“Donald, 3rd Maclean of Brolas was left fatherless at an early age. He entered the army and served for some time as lieutenant during the reign of Queen Anne; but in an attempt made by her brother for the recovery of the crown of his ancestors in the year 1715, Maclean of Brolas served as lieutenant-colonel of the clan Maclean under his cousin Sir John at the battle of Sheriffmuir, where he received two severe wounds in the head”* (Seneachie p228).
 - The use of the word 'fatherless'. and similarities of the style of these accounts of the same events, are the only indicators that one compiler might have seen the other, or that both had seen something written by a third party.
- A quick scan of the rest of Ffamily does not come up with other instances where the wording indicates that Ffamily was taking from the Seaneachie, or vice-versa. They were of course addressing the same history but there is little congruence of their text and particulars and the Ffamily does not mention the Seneachie's account or specifically quote the Seneachie even though the Ffamily is quite thorough in quoting other sources. So, we have the impression that the Ffamily did not have access to the Seneachie's book and we are left wondering what was the main source for the Ffamily.
- The Ffamily account includes some material which we have not come across in other sources. However, it is clear that 17 years later, some of the wording used by JP Maclean is identical to that of Ffamily - this demonstrates that either JP Maclean quoted (without acknowledgement) from the Ffamily or they were both using the same source.

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