

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE SURNAME OF  
MACLEAN, OR MACGHILLEAN; FROM THE  
MANUSCRIPT OF 1751, AND A SKETCH  
OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF LACHLAN  
MACLEAN, WITH OTHER INFORMATION  
PERTAINING TO THE CLAN MACLEAN**

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An account of the surname of Maclean, or Macghillean; from the manuscript of 1751, and A sketch of the life and writings of Lachlan MacLean, with other information pertaining to the clan Maclean by J. P. MacLean

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**J. P. MACLEAN**

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## INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS

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The first published account of the Clan MacLean, of any moment, was that printed in London in 1838, under the title: "Account of the Clan MacLean," a book of 358 pages. It is an anonymous work, under the name "Seneachie." The late Alexander Thomas Maclean, Fifteenth Maclean of Ardgour, informed me when I visited him in 1888, that the writer, or compiler was Rev. John Campbell Sinclair, and the expense was borne by Charles Hope Maclean. He went even still further and made uncomplimentary comments on the author. The statement of Ardgour fixes the internal origin of the book, for no one would be more likely to know. After the publication of my history of the Clan, I placed a copy in his hands, and I never heard of his demurring to the statement, as to the authorship, I made in that work.

All histories treating of the Western Isles of Scotland make more or less notice of the MacLeans. Among the earliest works that treat of the origin of the various Clans of Scotland are the Book Ballymote, 1383; the Book of Leccan, 1416; the Skene Manuscript, 1467; and MacFirbis's Book of Genealogies, 1650 to 1666. Among the manuscripts particularly devoted to the Macleans, the oldest known is that of 1716, now in the Advocates Library, Edinburgh, and attached to the Macfarlane MS. I have specially treated this MS. in another work, which was generously published by our enthusiastic clansman, Colonel John Bayne Maclean of Toronto. The edition is quite limited. Probably the next point of time is that of 1751. This was entirely new to me until November, 1913, when a copy was placed in my hands by John MacLean, chairman of the Great Gathering of the Clan in 1912. It was published in Edinburgh in 1751, being a part of a collection by Thomas Moncrieff, entitled: "Memoirs concerning the ancient alliance between the French and Scots and the privileges of the Scots in France, faithfully translated from original records of the king-

dom of France." It also appears in "Miscellanea Scotica, a collection of tracts relating to the history, antiquities, topography and literature of Scotland," in Volume IV, published in 1819. It is herewith reproduced. It is possible that the Ardgour MS. goes back to as equally as great a date. It is a well known MS. as is also the Pennycross. It is more or less currently reported that there is still another in the Vatican at Rome. Whether or not this has ever been confirmed I am unable to say. Mr. John MacLean, above referred to, in an address, before the Clan MacLean Association, of Glasgow, in February, 1900, made use of this language: "There is in existence an MS. history of the Clan, which was given on loan by the late Mr. Dugald Campbell, banker, Tobermory, to a friend. This history Mr. Campbell had himself on loan; it is in reality the property of our good friend and clansman, Mr. J. A. Maclean, bank agent and solicitor, Forfar. Mr. Campbell received it from Mr. Maclean's grand uncle, Mr. Allen Maclean, schoolmaster, Iona. We are anxious that this history be restored to its rightful owner, or to the Association." The late Maclean of Lochbuie, informed me that there was a history of that Sept written by Lieutenant Colonel Murdoch Maclean but it had been loaned from the Charter Chest, and trace of it had been lost.

A true clansman must be interested in Lachlan MacLean of Arnabost, Coll. For many years I have attempted to pick up everything I could find pertaining to him. With such efforts as I have made I have been unable to add anything to the paper prepared by the late Henry White, in 1894. Even after careful attempts to secure Lachlan's books, I have been unable to add but five to my collection. All that I have learned of this most worthy Gaelic scholar I have, in this contribution attempted to place the substance in an acceptable form.

Such fugitive poems relating to the MacLeans, as I have observed, not in books, I have included, as also the names of the departed bards, and the patronymics of various Septs or branches of the Clan.

## AN ACCOUNT OF THE SURNAME OF MACLEAN OR MACGILLEAN

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This brave and heroic surname is originally descended from that of Fitzgiraldd, in Ireland, being once the most potent surname of any other, of English extract in that kingdom. Speed, and other English historians, derive the genealogy of the Fitzgiraldds from Seignior Giraldo, a principal officer under William the Conqueror, at his conquest of England, *anno* 1066. This Giraldo got from the conqueror the lordship of Windsor, from which he was afterwards designed of Windsor, as were his posterity, from his proper name Fitzgiraldds, or Giralddsons. Maurice Fitzgiraldd, grandchild to this first Giraldd, by orders of Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke, with four hundred and ninety men, in the year 1169, went, in aid of Dermud MacMurcho, provincial king of Leinster, to Ireland, being the first Englishman, who, in a hostile manner, invaded that kingdom, whatever Atwood, and other obscure English writers, assert to the contrary: the ground of Fitzgiraldd's invasion being briefly as follows:

In the reign of Roderick Oconer, last principal king of Ireland, the said Dermud took away, by force, Orork, provincial king of Meath's lady, or queen, which injury while Orork endeavoured to resent, he and his party were defeated by the Leinstrians; in which exigence having recourse to the principal king, he was so effectually assisted by him, as obliged MacMurcho, after some defeats to abandon Ireland, and betake himself to the court of king Henry II of England, to whom, relating his misfortune, he implored his aid for recovering his principality, which, upon being done, he offered to resign in his favor. King Henry being a prince who measured the justice of most causes, if in any way beneficial to him, by the length of his sword, would willingly have complied with MacMurcho's request, had he not been engaged in a war with



France. However, he issued out proclamations authorizing any of his subjects, that pleased to adventure in behalf of that justly distressed prince, promising to maintain them in possession of what they could acquire in that kingdom; upon which Richard Strongbow, earl of Pembroke, a nobleman, no less powerful than popular, in Wales, condescended to go to Ireland with Dermud, upon condition that, upon recovery of Leinster, he should give him the same, and his only daughter in marriage, which being readily agreed to, Pembroke sent first over Maurice Fitzgerald, as already mentioned, and went afterwards himself, with greater forces; and, having defeated the Irish in a conflict, recovered Leinster, and married MacMurcho's daughter. King Henry bearing of his subjects' success, patched up a peace with France, and, in the year 1170, or, as others, 1171, went over into that kingdom, with an army of twenty thousand men, and, by the assistance of the treacherous Leinstrians, obtained a victory over Oconor, the principal king, who in a short time thereafter died. After his death the king of England settled his conquest of that kingdom, as the same has continued ever since, notwithstanding of the many efforts, at divers junctures, used by the native Irish for shaking off that yoke.

The family of Strongbow, in a little time, became extinct, to which, in grandeur, succeeded that of Fitzgerald, being divided into two powerful families, the earls of Desmond and Kildare, concerning each of which two I shall relate a certain remarkable passage, ere I proceed to my designed subject. The first is in relation to that of Desmond, of which family were seven brethren, in the beginning of the reign of queen Elizabeth, or rather queen Mary, of England, who being accused of some practices against the government, were, by the queen's orders, carried into England, and relying either on their innocence, or the interposition of powerful friends, appeared very cheerful for some hours after they went on board, till at length enquiring at the captain the name of the ship, they were told it was named the Cow; upon hearing of which they all fell a-weeping; the reason of which sudden change being demanded by the captain, he was told there was an old prophecy among the Irish, that seven brethren, the most noble of the kingdom, should be at once carried to England, in the belly of a cow, none of which should ever return, and now, though the thing appeared to be very ridiculous, they were afraid that it would be accomplished; as accordingly it was, none of them having ever returned, some of them banished, others executed, and their estate

forefaulted, so that, in a short time, that flourishing family was ruined. The other, relating to Kildare, is, that in the reign of king Henry VII of England, that earl was very ungovernable, against whom frequent complaints were made to the king, concluding with this, that all Ireland could not govern the earl of Kildare. Then, said the king, shall that earl govern all Ireland. Upon which he sent him a commission for being lieutenant of that kingdom, which unexpected favour had such effect upon him, that he continued afterwards a very dutiful and loyal subject to that king.

There are divers other good families of this kingdom descended of those two honourable families as the MacKenzies of Colin Fitzgiraldd, son to the second earl of Desmond, who, for his service at the battle of Largs, against the Danes, anno 1264, obtained from king Alexander III the lands of Kintail, from whose son, Kenneth, the MacKenzies are denominated, by contraction instead of Kennethsons. The Adairs, and divers others, are also descended of the Fitzgiraldds; as are the MacLeans, so termed contractedly, but more properly MacGilleans, Fitzgiraldd, brother, as some say, to Colin, ancestor of the MacKenzies. But others, with more probability, assert this Gillean to have been a son of the earl of Kildare, and, either at, or in a little time after his cousin's coming, to have come to Scotland, where, falling into great favour with MacDonald, lord of the Isles, he obtained from him the lands of Aros, afterwards in a small time, the whole isles of Mull, Tyree, Coll, and others, being a very large estate. While the family of MacDonald continued in grandeur, MacLean was always his lieutenant in martial expeditions, as in the battle of Harlaw, in which MacLean, and Irwin of Drum, upon account of some ancient quarrel betwixt their families, and having no knowledge of one another till they had got it from their armorial bearings, or coats of arms, painted, as was usual in those times, upon their shields, engaged hand to hand, and died both upon the spot.

MacLean, with his name and dependants, was at the battles of Flowdon and Pinky; as was Hector MacLean, and his regiment, consisting of six hundred men, at the conflict of Innerkeithing, in the reign of king Charles II in which he, and his regiment, after a valiant resistance, were killed by the English, few or none escaping. This surname has been known, for some ages bygone, in bravery and loyalty, to be inferior to no other of this kingdom. The laird of MacLean's estate was evicted for debt, by the present

duke of Argyll's grandfather, and is now in the duke's hands. Hector, the present laird, is abroad. The principal residence of the lairds of Maclean is the strong castle of Dowart, situated upon the north shore of the isle of Mull. There was another impregnable fort belonging to this family, at a little distance from Mull called Kerniburg.

The next to the laird of MacLean, is MacLean of Brolois. The person of best estate now, of that name, is MacLean of Lochbuy, who hath a good castle and estate in Mull. There is MacLean of Coll, being a considerable island at some leagues distant from Mull. There is also, upon the opposite continent to Mull, a gentleman of good account, designed MacLean of Ardgower. He is designed ordinarily MacMhicewin, or the son of Hughson, his ancestor, a son of the laird of MacLean, being properly named Hugh. There are also a great number of other gentlemen of that name in those parts. There is a gentleman, termed MacGuire, of Uluva, being a pretty large isle to the south-west of Mull, of which this gentleman is proprietor, and was a dependant upon the family of MacLean while in a flourishing condition, but since the decline of that family, continues peaceable in his own island, not much concerned with any affairs that occur in any other part of this kingdom. There is in Athole, and other northern places, a sept termed the MacOlays, some of which are in Stirlingshire, termed MacLays, descended also of the family of MacLean.

Divided by a small arm of the sea from the west point of Mull, is the isle Jona, or I-calm-kill, famous for the ancient monastery and church situated therein, and no less so upon account of the burial-place of forty-eight of our Scottish kings, with divers of the kings of Ireland and Norway, as also of most of the principal families of our Highland clans. The ruins of these once stately edifices and monuments evince their beauty when in repair. There are two singular kinds of stones to be found there, of which are a great many tombs and crosses, and which composes the very mould round that church, and of which consists a great deal of the more ornamental parts of all these structures; the one of them being of a crimson-red colour, the other white, the nature of which cannot be easily discovered. These stones, in outward appearance, resemble marble, but are much harder, and not so brittle, and are somewhat porous, and fully as light as any ivory or ebony. There is none of that kind of stone to be found in any other part of Britain or Ireland, but only in that island, and in an-