



THE CLAN MACDOUGALL

The MacDougalls of Lorn in Argyll are the senior branch of the royal house of Somerled, a famous warrior king of the Hebrides and ruler of Argyll. Somerled died in 1164 in the Battle of Renfrew fighting the forces of the King of Scots near the River Clyde. Dugal (now more commonly spelled Dougall), his oldest living son, inherited the central portion of his father's kingdom and became the founder and first Chief of Clan MacDougall. The principal seats of our chiefs were Dunstaffnage and Dunollie Castles. Today Clan MacDougall is one of the oldest surviving Highland clans. Madam Morag MacDougall of MacDougall is the 31st Chief.

Mac (or the abbreviated Mc) means "son of" while the term "clan" comes from the Gaelic word for children. Thus, Clan MacDougall (Clann Mhic Dhùghaill) means "the children of the son of Dougall." The name Dougall derived from the Gaelic words "dubh" meaning dark or black and "gall" meaning foreigner or stranger. Hence, Dougall translates as "Dark Foreigner" or "Black Stranger," a Gaelic term for persons of Norse descent. Many spelling variations of MacDougall have evolved, with or without Mac or Mc. Most were attempts to phonetically translate the Gaelic name MacDhùghaill into Scots or English.

During the centuries that Clan MacDougall was a powerful influence along the West Highland Coast, a number of other families had important roles in the Clan and became permanently associated with it. Descendants of these associated families continue to share our connection and are welcome members of the Clan. These family surnames, with or without the "Mac" or "Mc" and in various spellings, include Carmichael of Argyll, Conacher, Livingston(e) of Argyll, MacCowan, MacCoyle, MacCulloch, MacCullagh, MacEwen, MacKichan, MacClintock, MacLucas, MacLugash, MacLulich, and MacNamell. In addition, the separate and distinct Clan MacDowall has a special, historic alliance with Clan MacDougall rooted in historical connections and common purposes.

Origins in Scotland

This is only a brief summary. See the Sources of Further Information to learn more.

Our seagoing clan was based on the Hebrides isles of Mull, Coll, Tiree, Jura and Kerrera, which were then owned by Norway, and on the mainland in Argyll on the west coast of Scotland. In their dual roles of *King in the Hebrides* for Norway and *Ruler of Argyll* for Scotland, Dougall and his successor chiefs protected their islands and mainland territory with a ring of castles and a strong fleet of galleys while carefully navigating allegiances.

During the summer of 1249, King Alexander II of Scotland sailed to the Hebrides intent on taking these Norwegian-owned isles for Scotland. He ordered **Ewan, the 3rd Chief of Clan MacDougall**, to surrender his Cairnburgh Castle in the Treshnish Isles (Norwegian property) to the Scottish Crown. Ewan refused and declared

that he had already sworn loyalty to **King Haakon** of Norway. Alexander II exclaimed angrily, “*No man can serve two masters!*” to which Ewan calmly replied, “*One man can easily serve two masters if they are not enemies.*” Alexander II died on Kerrera days afterwards and Ewan fled for safety into Norwegian exile until returning in 1355 to swear feudal allegiance for his territory on the mainland of Scotland to Alexander’s young son Alexander III, the new King of Scots.

When King Haakon invaded the islands in 1263 and demanded that Ewan make the same choice, but this time to fight for Norway against Alexander III, Ewan chose to side with Scotland. Ultimately Haakon’s invasion ended in a stalemate, but under the 1266 Treaty of Perth the Scots purchased the Hebrides. Alexander III then returned the MacDougall’s old island possessions for them to rule for the King of Scots. The MacDougalls no longer served two masters.

Already a powerful clan in western Scotland, the MacDougalls became allied by marriage to the even more powerful Comyn family. **John, the "Red" Comyn** of Badenoch was the nephew of our Chief’s wife. The MacDougalls loyally supported **John Baliol**, a Comyn ally, as King of Scots even after **King Edward I of England** deposed him in 1296 for daring to act independently for Scotland. Edward I then imprisoned Baliol’s supporters, including **Alexander, the 4th Chief of Clan MacDougall**, and forfeited the lands of Alexander and his son John of Lorn to the crown. One of those required to enforce his order was Edward’s local administrative officer **Colin Campbell**, Chief of the Campbells of Loch Awe. **Sir John (Iain) of Lorn**, later our 5th Chief, took some of his armed warriors to a meeting with the Campbell leader at the *Stream of the Conference* in Netherlorn. They were surprised to meet the Campbell 4th Chief Cailean Mor (“Big Colin”) and his followers who had passed the designated meeting place and entered MacDougall lands. The two factions clashed, fighting so ferociously that the river ran red with blood from casualties, which caused the conflict to be named The Battle of the Red Ford. The outnumbered MacDougalls fatally wounded the pursuing Campbell Chief with an arrow during their retreat and ended the pursuit. The battle was indecisive, but the rivalry with the Campbells and their MacDonald allies then supporting Edward I would continue for a long time.

In May 1297 after his release from imprisonment, Clan MacDougall Chief Alexander immediately began a rebellion in Argyll against Edward I and his Scottish allies, especially the Clan Donald. During the decade after John Baliol was deposed by Edward I, John the "Red" Comyn was the prime candidate for the vacant crown of Scotland, but the Comyns still supported Baliol’s right to the crown. However, another contender, the fiery warrior **Robert the Bruce**, was determined to gain the crown at any cost.

In February 1306, Robert the Bruce stabbed the Red Comyn during a meeting in the cloister, or covered walkway, outside Greyfriars Kirk at Dumfries. This sacrilegious murder led to nearly fifty years of blood feuds, civil war, and more English invasions. After he was crowned King Robert I six weeks later, the Bruce’s enemies considered him to be a usurper of the crown. In the warring that followed, the MacDougalls were closely allied with the **Macdowalls of Galloway**, the Comyns, and other clans with Edward I. They fought against Edward’s former Scottish allies the MacDonalds, Campbells, and others who had turned to supporting the Bruce. The MacDougalls and Macdowalls/MacDowalls, already deeply connected in common purpose, continue a historic alliance to this day.

In June 1306 at Dalrigh in Strathfillan near Tyndrum, the MacDougalls and their allies ambushed Bruce’s party of about 300, decimated it, and nearly captured Bruce. To narrowly escape, he was forced to abandon his torn-off

cloak brooch in the clenched hand of a dead MacDougall warrior. Thus, the famous **Brooch of Lorn** came into the hands of the MacDougall Chiefs. Bruce's luck changed when the Chief of Clan Donald deserted King Edward's side in late 1306 to support Bruce. In the late summer of 1308, Bruce returned to Argyll with new forces to attack the MacDougalls and their few remaining allies. He defeated them in the narrow **Pass of Brander** alongside of Loch Awe. Clan MacDougall's island possessions and lands on the mainland were forfeited, and many MacDougalls were forced into exile.

Most MacDougall leaders like our 5th Chief Sir John of Lorn continued to fight the Bruce kings for decades as part of "**The Disinherited**," a group of exiled Scottish families. In 1346 the English captured Bruce's only son **David II, King of Scots**. Sir John's grandson, **John Gallda**, befriended David during ten years in English captivity, and Gallda was eventually allowed to return to Scotland. David II restored some of the forfeited MacDougall lands to Gallda including Dunstaffnage Castle. Gallda later married David's niece, Joan, reviving the Clan's fortunes until Gallda died in 1375, leaving two daughters who had married **Stewart** brothers. This meant that the prestigious title and lands of *Lords of Lorn* passed by marriage to the Stewarts. However, Clan MacDougall's present Chief's family line retained lands around **Dunollie Castle**. More MacDougall lands were confirmed in 1451 by the 3rd Stewart Lord of Lorn to reward Clan MacDougall for their loyal support.

Clan MacDougall remained loyal to the Stewarts as the rightful Kings of Scots but suffered greatly for its faithfulness. Their steadfast loyalty brought them into conflict with other clans, most notably the MacDonalds and Campbells, resulting in the eclipse of their power and the loss of most of their remaining domain. During the Civil Wars, the religious Covenanters in Scotland opposed the rule of the Stewart Kings. In 1647 a Covenanter army attacked the royalist clan force at Dunaverty Castle and massacred the defenders who had surrendered, including many from Clans Donald and MacDougall. They then pillaged the lands of the loyal clans in Argyll and laid siege to the MacDougall's Gylen and Dunollie castles.

The clan continued to fight for the Royal House of Stewart under Viscount Dundee "*Bonnie Dundee*" at Killiecrankie in 1688, and under its fighting **22nd Chief Iain Ciar** in the **Jacobite Risings** at Sherrifmuir in 1715 and at Glenshiel in 1719. Our **23rd Chief Alexander** of Dunollie did not join the Jacobite Rising of 1745 in support of Charles Edward Stuart "*Bonnie Prince Charlie*" but his brother Duncan fought at Prestonpans and **Culloden**.

Since those days of strife, our now peaceful Clan has spread throughout the world, but retains its ancient base at Dunollie in Oban. Our Chief plays an active role in the Clan's affairs from the official residence at **Dunollie Manor House**, a portion of which is now a museum and visitors center. Its web site is <http://www.dunollie.org/>

Sources of Further Information

1. The newsletters and website of Clan MacDougall Society of North America. Our excellent website www.macdougall.org features cultural and historical information, biographies of the Chiefs of Clan MacDougall, reviews of our clan books, and much more.
2. See *Journeying in MacDougall Country*, a book Walter M. Macdougall. A full book review is available at <http://www.lulu.com/shop/walter-macdougall/journeying-in-macdougall-country/paperback/product-2242050.html> This descriptive travelogue of our Clan's Highland countryside has extensive notes on our history and geography, with maps, sketches and historical anecdotes to enrich any journey in the land of

Lorn. It is based on Prof. Macdougall's visits to the historic places of Clan MacDougall and the people most knowledgeable about the area and its history. It can be purchased online, and all the net proceeds are donated to the Dunollie Preservation Trust.

3. An excellent reference is *An Official Short History of the Clan MacDougall*, Michael Starforth's brief but highly regarded publication, This concise history was authorized by Madam Coline MacDougall of MacDougall, 30th Chief of the Clan and the aunt of our current Chief. The family provided Starforth with extensive background information and access to previously unpublished papers.

Discover and celebrate your heritage by joining Clan MacDougall Society of North America

Our Clan MacDougall Society, which includes the associated clan family MacDowall, is a registered 501c3 non-profit whose purposes are literary, educational, and historical. Our current Chief, Madam Morag MacDougall of MacDougall, is an Honorary President of the Society, as is the Chief of the Name and Arms of MacDowall, Fergus D. H. Macdowall of Garthland.

The Society promotes and supports:

- The study of Scottish heritage and Clan MacDougall and Clan MacDowall histories.
- Preservation of our historic sites in Scotland.
- Educating the public about Scottish cultural traditions by participating in Highland Games.
- Creating connections and a sense of belonging among its members through fellowship, newsletters, website (www.macdougall.org), and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/groups/262542704399201).

Membership in the Society is open to all persons and their descendants who support Clan MacDougall or Clan MacDowall and the families historically associated with these two clans.

Information on membership is available at www.macdougall.org

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