

Early MacKenzie History

The fate of the Clan Mackenzie was famously foretold by the Brahan Seer (Brahan, near Dingwall, was where the castle stood until it was demolished in 1951). Having risen in power an influence to hold lands which stretched right across Scotland, and to become one of the four most important Highland Chiefs in 1726 (the others were the Dukes of Argyll, Atholl and Gordon), Lord Seaforth's line ended in the 19th century when all four of his sons died before him.

In a charter granted by King David II in 1362 confirming the lands of Kintail to the Mackenzies, the Clan Mackenzie Chief Murdo is described as a descendant of Gilleoin of the Aird. From that same dynasty of the 12th century stemmed Clans Ross and Matheson. Two centuries later Clan Mackenzie had territories which stretched from the Outer Hebrides right across Scotland to the Black Isle.

Alasdair Mackenzie 7th chief, who d. 1488, was the most prominent supporter of the Crown against the all powerful Lord of the Isles and got his reward in forfeited MacDonald lands. Originally in Kintail around Loch Duich with Eilean Donan Castle (right) as their base, they spread throughout Ross-shire, and into Lewis on the Outer Hebrides. They moved their seat to Kinellan near Strathpeffer, before building Brahan Castle. Alasdair's son, Kenneth d. 1492 and his stone effigy can be seen at Beaulieu Priory where he was buried. Iain, his son, fought at both Flodden and Pinkie, but survived and lived until the mid 16th century. The Mackenzies continued their rise to power by joining the forces of Mary, Queen of Scots, and James VI against their Gaelic neighbors. In 1609, the chief was made Lord Mackenzie of Kintail, while in 1623 his eldest son became the Earl of Seaforth. The 2nd Earl was Charles II's secretary of state for Scotland. Another branch of the Mackenzies became the Earls of Cromartie. *

*Learn more at www.clan-mackenzie.org.uk

How can I join? Ask the representative at the Clan Tent for an application or visit the website at www.ClanMackenzie.com.

You may also email us at membership@clanmackenzie.com 5.18.2005



Castle Eilean Donan
Once a stronghold of Clan Mackenzie; one of
the most photographed castles in the world

Our crest (below) shows flaming mountain peaks with the motto: "LUCEO NON URO" (I Shine, Not Burn). It is thought the motto relates to burning fires on high hills as a signal or warning beacon.



A second Crest (below) associated with the Clan is that of the Mackenzie of Seaforth. It shows a Stag's Antlers with the motto: "CUIDICH' N' RIGH" (Save or Help the King)

The legendary origin of this crest goes back to the 13th century. Kenneth of Kintail was in a royal hunting party. When a wounded stag charged the King, Kenneth shouted "Cuidich 'N Righ" (Save or Help the King) and shot the stag. As a result, the King awarded Kenneth the stag's head as his crest.

A perhaps more historically accurate version is that the stag's head represented the tribute that Kenneth paid to the King each year.

Whichever, the chief of the clan is known in Gaelic as "Cabarfeidh" (cāb-er-fa') or deer's antlers. The stag's head or the flaming mountains, by themselves, is the Chief's crest. The belt around it indicates loyalty to the chief and clan members may wear this form.



The name MacKenzie, or MacCoinneach in Gaelic, means literally, "Son of Kenneth." The original Kenneth lived in the 13th Century and was descended from a younger son of Gilleoin of the Aird, from whom can also be traced the once powerful Earls of Ross.

Clan MacKenzie rose rapidly in importance during the 15th Century through the acquisition of lands extending across Scotland from the west to east coasts, in the counties of Ross and Cromarty, and parts of Sutherland shire. Kenneth, the 12th Chief was created Lord MacKenzie of Kintail (1609). Kintail's brother Sir Roderick MacKenzie, the "Tutor of Kintail," was progenitor of the present Chief of the clan, the Earl of Cromartie. On December 3rd, 1623, Kintail's son Colin was raised to the dignity of Earl of Seaforth.

A number of famous regiments have been raised from the MacKenzie clan, including the Highland Light Infantry (raised in 1777), the Seaforth Highlanders (raised in 1778), and the second battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders, known as the Ross-shire Buffs (raised in 1793). All those regiments wore the MacKenzie tartan.

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Examples of tartans can be seen on the website.

The tartan colors:

Green for forest and fields, Blue of the sky and the free sea, drawn through with White for purity and Red for blood and bold fighters.

All denote freedom, fairness, purity, honor and courage.

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