

## 1467 MS: The Camerons (1)

I am dividing my account of this important clan into two, partly for reasons of space and partly because its genealogy in the 1467 MS falls naturally into two halves. It is at the bottom of one column (1rc50–56) and the top of the next (1rd0–7), fifteen lines in all. The bottom of column c is easy to read and the top of column d is not. However, the natural break occurs not at 1rc56 but at 1rd1, two lines later, in the most difficult area of all. In fact 1rd1 is the crucial line, and I am pleased to be able to report that, thanks to the ‘spectrally imaged’ photographs referred to in previous articles, it has proved possible to read and understand it definitively, after 175 years of trying.

The outstanding fact about the origin of the Clan Cameron is that it is a confederation of tribes welded together by force under imposed leadership. Different writers have presented this differently. Alexander Mackenzie described the confederation *c.* 1396 as consisting of four tribes, the Clan Gillanfaigh, the Clan Soirlie, the Clan Mhic Mhartain and the Camerons of Lochiel. “The latter were the sept whose head became Captain of Clan Cameron and adhered to the Lord of the Isles, while the three former represented the part of the clan who seceded from him in 1429.”<sup>1</sup> Mackenzie viewed his alleged fourth tribe in entirely Gaelic terms as *Camshronaich*, ‘Bent-Nosed People’; for him, the only question as to their origin was whether they were renegade Macintoshes.<sup>2</sup> Sir Iain Moncreiffe, on the other hand, saw the original Camerons as a branch of the Clan MacDuff from the parish of Cameron behind St Andrews; ‘in 1296,’ he pointed out, ‘Sir Robert Cameron (Cambron) was Sheriff of Atholl, the great highland district bordering on Lochaber’. He assumed that one of them married an heiress of the MacGillonies.<sup>3</sup> Somerled MacMillan was sceptical about such a marriage, but had no doubts about the de Cambron connection: he believed that around the mid-fourteenth century Sir Robert’s grandson John Ochtery ‘came into Lochaber to act as Bailie or Caretaker in the interests of John, first Lord of the Isles’, and set himself up as the feudal overlord of the district.<sup>4</sup> The author of the most recent history of the Camerons treads a careful path, acknowledging both principal theories and putting the known facts at their most basic: “Some time towards the end of the 14th century a chief or leader called Donald Dubh, whose surname was Cameron, arose in Lochaber.”<sup>5</sup>

The 1467 MS may have been written in 1467, but all authorities agree that the text is earlier, and it has now been suggested that it was compiled *c.* 1400 and updated between 1440 and 1448.<sup>6</sup> That puts it very close indeed to the events and persons described above, so its voice is crucial. What exactly does it tell us about the origins of the Camerons? Were they Macintoshes, Fifers or local heroes? And what of the name itself? Did it begin life as Gaelic *Camshron* ‘Bent Nose’ or British/Pictish *Cambren*, *Cambrun*, ‘Crooked Hill’? Ironically, onomasticians now concede that the former dominated the latter: discussing how *Cambren/Cambrun* in Edinburgh, at Markinch and behind St Andrews all turned into ‘Cameron’, they say: “The later development, both written and spoken, of all three place-names was no doubt influenced by the surname Cameron (*G cam shròn* ‘crooked nose’).”<sup>7</sup> The name continues to spread. For no obvious reason, Taylor Wimpey’s new housing development at Bilston, Midlothian, is called ‘Cameron Gardens’.

As always, I will begin by citing the text as given by Skene in *Collectanea*, then as given by Skene in *Celtic Scotland* (1880), then as given by my wife Máire and myself in our website (2009), rearranging the nineteenth-century versions to make them correspond to the lines of the original. As I am restricting myself here to lines 1rc50–56 and 1rd0–1, there is a sense of incompleteness about some of this material; that hardly matters, however, as it is superseded by the present article.

(1) *Collectanea* (1839):

50	<i>Genelach Clann Maelanfaig .i.</i>	The Genealogy of the Macmillans.—
51	Eogan ic Domnaill dubh	Ewen son of Donald du
52	mc Ailin Maeilanfaig	son of Alan the servant of the Prophet
53	ic Poil ic Gillap	son of Paul son of
54	atruig mc Gilla	Patrick son of
55	martain ic P	Martin son of P
56	oil ic Mailanfaig	aul son of Millan
0	mc Neill . . . . .	son of Niell . . . . . <sup>8</sup>
1		

Skene adjusts and completes the transcription and translation of lines 0–1 in a later number of *Collectanea* (1847): “pro McNeill lege Mc Gillroid a quo clann Gillcamsroin agus Clann Maelanfaig o fuiled. Clann . . . . . i. *Son of Gillroid, from whom descended the Clan Cameron and Clan Millonoy. The Clan . . . . . or*”.<sup>9</sup>

(2) Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, with Skene’s footnotes:

50	GENELACH CLANN MAELANFHAIGH (CLANN GILLA-CAMSROIN)*	GENEALOGY OF THE CLAN MILLONY OR CLAN CAMERON.
51	Eoghan mac Domnall duibh	Ewen son of Donald dubh
52	mic Ailin maelanfaid	son of Allan Millony
53	mic Poil mic Gillap	son of Paul son of Gillap
54	adruig mic Gilla	atrick son of Gilla
55	martain mic P	martan son of P
56	oil mic Mailanfaid	aul son of Millony
0	mic Gillroid a quo Gillacamsroin agus clann Maelanfaigh	son of Gilleroth,*** from whom descended the Clan Cameron
1	o fuilid . . .**	and Clan Millony,

\* From MS. 1467.

\*\* There is a sentence here so defaced as to be hardly legible. [I omit the rest of this footnote from the present article as it applies to line 2. R.B.]

\*\*\* This is the Gilleroth mentioned by Fordun in 1222 as a follower of Gillespic Macohecan in his insurrection, along with whom he witnesses a charter as Gilleroth son of Gillemartan.<sup>10</sup>

(3) www.1467manuscript.co.uk, with our footnote (unclear or illegible text shown in the website in red, here in italic):

50	genelach cloinni maeil anfaigh .i.	The genealogy of the Clann Mhaoil Anfaigh i.e.
51	eogan mac domnaill dhuib	Eoghan son of Domhnall Dubh
52	mhic ailin maelanfhaid	son of Allan: Maol Anfaigh
53	mac foil mhic gillap	son of Paul son of Gille
54	adraig mhic gilla	Pádraig son of Gille
55	martain mhic p	Mártainn son of
56	foil mhic mhailanfaid	Paul son of Maol Anfaigh
0	<i>mhic gillanfoid a quo clann gillacamsronic 7 clann m</i>	son of Gille Anfaigh from whom are the Clan Cameron and the Clan <i>Maol Anfaigh</i> [?]
1	<i>ofuilid . . . clann bininci* .i. genilach</i>	from whom are the Clan [ <i>Banquo</i> ] i.e. the genealogy

\* There seems to be an ‘x’ here, possibly a caret for the top margin where there is illegible matter.

It will be noticed that Skene originally thought that this was the genealogy of the MacMillans. In line 0 he first saw ‘Neill’, then changed this in 1847 to ‘Gillroid’, whom he later identified, with complete confidence, as Fordun’s Gilleroth of 1222. This identification was used in good faith by subsequent historians: it is a good example of how an error can spread like a virus through historical writing.<sup>11</sup> Needless to say, the 1467 MS provides countless such examples. None of us are blameless, however, as is proven by the rather desperate introduction of Banquo, Thane of Lochaber, into the website. Fortunately his connection with the 1467 MS has lasted only five years.

I now proceed to my usual line-by-line analysis with pen-and-ink sketches. It is plain sailing until we get to column d (i.e. line 0). Italics are here used for the expansion of the less obvious contractions.

50 

“**genelach cloinni mhaeil anfaigh .i.**” = “**The genealogy of the Clann Mhaoil Anfaigh i.e.**”

The Clann Mhaoil Anfaigh are the MacGillonies. The name Maol Anfaigh means ‘Servant of Storm’, or as Ó Corráin and Maguire put it, ‘Devotee of the Storm’. It was quite common in medieval Ireland.<sup>12</sup> The base word ‘storm’ in Irish is *anfadh*, in Scottish Gaelic *onfhadh*. At line 0 we will meet Gille Anfaigh, same meaning.

51 

“**eogan mac domnaill dhuib**” = “**Eoghan son of Domhnall Dubh**”

Domhnall Dubh is the first Cameron chief on historical record. From him all subsequent Cameron chiefs were known as *Mac Dhomhnaill Dhuibh*. According to Drummond of Balhaldy and Hugh MacDonald, the Sleat historian, he fought

at Harlaw in 1411.<sup>13</sup> ‘Piobaireachd Dhomhnaill Dhuibh’, one of the oldest Gaelic songs, refers to another of his battles (Inverlochry, 1431). He is believed to have died *c.* 1460. He is known to have had two sons, Allan and Ewen (Eoghan). Allan, known as *Ailean nan Creach*, ‘Allan of the Forays’, was chief *c.* 1460–80.<sup>14</sup> The fact that Ewen, not Allan, is named here suggests that he was the older, that he succeeded his father *c.* 1460, and that he died shortly after.

52      *mhic maelanfaid*

“**mhic Ailin Maelanfhaid**” = “**son of Allan. Maol Anfaigh**”

The absence of *mhic* shows that a new pedigree begins in the middle of this line. It is of great interest that the chiefly line stops almost as soon as it has begun. In the ‘official’ Cameron pedigree recorded by Balhaldy in the eighteenth century, Domhnall Dubh is son of Ewen, son of Allan, son of John Ochtery; then there is a 250-year gap until we reach Gillespick, son of Angus the first chief.<sup>15</sup> Mackenzie fills the gap with five chiefs (all Johns and Roberts), which is good going.<sup>16</sup> The 1467 MS thus omits not only Ewen but also John Ochtery (the Camerons’ alleged connection with the de Cambrons) and his chiefly predecessors (who, if genuine, would have given him legitimacy). The author of the 1467 MS is telling us that the Cameron chiefs were upstarts. Perhaps it is no coincidence that *Domhnall Dubh* is a name for the devil. From this point, then, the pedigree is of the MacGillonies, for which our manuscript is the only source. We will notice that the scribe sometimes spells *Anfaigh* with *g*, sometimes (as here) with *d*; given the location of the dot, we should perhaps read *Maelanfaidh* rather than *Maelanfhaid*.

53      *mac foil f. gillap*

“**mac foil mhic gillap**” = “**son of Paul son of Gille**”

Strictly the scribe should have written *phoil*, not *foil*, but the sound is the same. Paul is a traditional Cameron name; our text shows where it is coming from.

54      *adraig f. gilla*

“**adraig mhic gilla**” = “**Pádraig son of Gille**”

The superscript letter above *d* is truncated *r*, a conventional abbreviation for *r* + vowel. If the writer wishes to specify the vowel, he can write the vowel instead, as is done in line 0.

55      *mhartaín f. p*

“**mhartain mhic p**” = “**Mhártainn son of**”

The dot above the first letter (meaning *h*) is faintly visible under spectral imaging. There are more cases of this in lines 56 and 0.

**foil mhic mhailanfaid** = “Paul son of Maol Anfaigh”

This time the scribe opts for *pfoil* to represent *phoil* (strictly *phóil*, but he seldom uses accents). Superscript *d* is not a conventional abbreviation – he does it to save space, having reached the bottom of the page.

0 mshlaid aq. ct gill camronich m

**“mhic gill[anf]oid a quo clann ghille (ghilla?) c[h]amsronich 7 clann m”** = “son of Gille Anfaigh from whom are the Clan Cameron and the Clan M,”

The letters between *gill* and *oid* are blurred, but enough can be seen to suggest that they consisted of *a* surmounted by a misshapen *n*-stroke and followed by *f*, albeit truncated. A *quo* is Latin; for more Latin see line 1. We should probably understand what follows as *Clann a' Ghille Chamshronaich* ‘the Children of the Bent-Nosed Lad’. The diagonal beneath the *c* of *clann* will be explained in ‘The Camerons (2)’. The *m*-compendium above *ca* is overdone, but its meaning is clear. For *-sron-* see line 54. The *-ich* ending (as opposed to *-igh*) is characteristic of Scottish Gaelic; this may be the earliest example on record. Perhaps this phrase accounts for the change from *Maol Anfaigh* to *Gille Anfaigh* – these mean the same, but names in *maol* are usually regarded as older than names in *gille*. Finally, we need not doubt that the ‘Clan M’ are the MacGillonies.

We are being told that Gille Anfaigh is the ancestor of both the MacGillonies and the Camerons, even though we have not been told how the Camerons connect to the MacGillony stem. This line marks the earliest appearance of the name Cameron in Scottish Gaelic. It occurs in Irish as an epithet, e.g. *Muiris camshronach* ‘bent-nosed Maurice’.<sup>17</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that *An Gille Camshronach* was a forename of the type *An Gille Dubh*; there is a slight tone of mockery in its use, perhaps because the Camerons were low-born natives of Lochaber, perhaps because they were de Cambrons from across the mountains, whose unfortunate name was regarded as worth a snigger.

1 o bfuilid genelaigh binme i tighib ut

**“o bfuilid genelaigh binme i tighib ut”** = “from whom are generations rich in houses, as”

Parts of this line have now been revealed by spectral imaging – and the ‘x’ referred to in the website has disappeared! The first few letters remain illegible, but can easily be guessed. The letters *binme*, which are now very clear, are for *bu inmhe*. *Bu* is the copula ‘who have been’, *inmhe* is ‘wealth’ (Scottish Gaelic *inbhe* ‘rank, status’). I would have been happier with *inmheach* ‘wealthy’, but *inmhe* is perfectly comprehensible. The first letter of *tighib* looks like a strangulated *g*, perhaps the product of hesitation between classical *dt* and vernacular *t*. Final *ut* prepares us for the two pedigrees that follow. I cannot explain the mark above the final *t*.

This genealogy is remarkable. It declares itself to be the pedigree of the MacGillonies, gives three steps (Eoghan, Domhnall Dubh, Allan), then stops. It recommences with Maol Anfaigh, provides six steps (all Peters, Pauls, Martins, Gillonies, no Ewens, Donalds or Allans at all), then declares itself to be the pedigree of the Camerons *and* MacGillonies ‘from whom are generations rich in houses’. There is no attempt to explain the first three names, but they clearly constitute the Camerons who are stated in line 0 to be descended from Gille Anfaigh, eponym of the MacGillonies. As there are no names in common, it is open to us to guess that this descent is through a female, for example if Eoghan were the offspring of a liaison between Domhnall Dubh and a MacGillonie woman; nor are there any names in common with the Macintosh pedigree (no. 5 in website).

On the Fife connection the evidence of the manuscript is helpful but not conclusive. The tag *An Gille Camshronach* has a low-status ring to it; potentially, the ‘de Cambron’ theory offers an excellent explanation for both its appearance and its survival. Unfortunately neither of the theory’s chief proponents was able to prove it. The marriage suggested by Moncreiffe, and the factorship of Lochaber suggested for John Ochtery by MacMillan, are hypothetical. The fact that the 1467 MS does not even mention John Ochtery is worrying. Until proof is forthcoming, therefore, I would prefer to see Domhnall Dubh mac Ailein as a local hero of the same type as Alastair mac Colla two centuries later. The name *Camshron* suggests toughness, and will have been borne with pride if backed up by a suitable anecdote, such as one that spoke of the horrors of Harlaw.

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- 1 Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Camerons* (Inverness, 1884), p. 4.
- 2 Mackenzie, *History of the Camerons*, pp. 1–7.
- 3 Sir Iain Moncreiffe, *The Highland Clans* (London, 1967), pp. 139, 141.
- 4 Somerled MacMillan, *Bygone Lochaber: Historical and Traditional* (Glasgow, 1971), pp. 13–14, 110.
- 5 John Stewart of Ardvorlich, *The Camerons: A History of Clan Cameron* (Glasgow, 1974), p. 3.
- 6 Martin MacGregor, ‘Genealogies of the Clans: Contributions to the Study of MS 1467’, *The Innes Review*, vol. 51, no. 2 (Autumn 2000), pp. 131–46: 145–46.
- 7 Simon Taylor with Gilbert Márkus, *The Place-Names of Fife* (5 vols, Donington, 2006–12), vol. 3, p. 90.
- 8 The Iona Club, *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis* (Edinburgh, 1839), pp. 52–53.
- 9 The Iona Club, *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis* (Edinburgh, 1847), p. 357.
- 10 William F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland* (3 vols, Edinburgh, 1876–80), vol. 3, pp. 479–80.
- 11 See for example Mackenzie, *History of the Camerons*, p. 9, Moncreiffe, *The Highland Clans*, pp. 141–42, and Stewart, *The Camerons*, p. 3.
- 12 Donnchadh Ó Corráin and Fidelma Maguire, *Irish Names* (2nd edn, Dublin, 1990), p. 129; M. A. O’Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1976), p. 685.
- 13 John Drummond of Balhaldy, *Memoirs of Sir Ewen Cameron of Locheill* (Abbotsford Club, Edinburgh, 1842), p. 15; J. R. N. Macphail, ed., *Highland Papers*, vol. 1 (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1914), p. 30; Ian A. Olson, *Bludie Harlaw: Realities, Myths, Ballads* (Edinburgh, 2014), pp. 54–55.
- 14 Stewart, *The Camerons*, pp. 10–14.
- 15 Drummond, *Memoirs*, pp. 3–21.
- 16 Mackenzie, *History of the Camerons*, pp. 10–11.
- 17 Royal Irish Academy *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, s.v. *camm*.