

1467 MS: The Nicolsons

The Nicolsons have been described as ‘the leading family in the Outer Hebrides towards the end of the Norse period’, but any consideration of their history must also take account of the MacLeods.¹ The MacLeods do not appear on record until 1343, when David II granted two thirds of Glenelg to Malcolm son of Tormod MacLeod of Dunvegan, and some lands in Assynt to Torquil MacLeod of Lewis;² nor do they appear in the 1467 MS, which the late John Bannerman described as ‘genealogies of the important clan chiefs who recognised the authority of the Lords of the Isles *c.* 1400’.³ According to Bannerman’s yardstick, either the MacLeods had failed to recognise the authority of the lords of the Isles by 1400, or they were simply not yet important enough to be included. History shows that they took the place of the Nicolsons, who are not only included in the manuscript, but given generous space in the fourth column (NLS Adv. MS 72.1.1, f. 1rd27–33) between the Mathesons and Gillanderses, both of whom are given much less. It seems that the process of change was far from over by 1400.

The circumstances were these. From *c.* 900 to 1266 Skye and Lewis belonged to the Norse kingdom of Man and the Isles. During the last century of this 366-year period, from *c.* 1156, the Norse-Gaelic warrior Somerled and his descendants held the central part of the kingdom, including Bute, Kintyre, Islay, Mull and all the islands as far north as Uist, Barra, Rum, Eigg, Muck and Canna. In the early thirteenth century the *vice-comes* of Skye under Olaf, king of Man, was Páll Bálkason, a possible ancestor of the MacLeods. Olaf’s wife was a daughter of Fearchar ó Beolláin, earl of Ross, and Fearchar helped Olaf and Páll defeat their rivals in Skye. In 1266, by the Treaty of Perth, Magnus IV of Norway ceded the whole of the Hebrides and Man to Alexander III of Scotland. By 1300 the Nicolsons were the leading family in Lewis, but they also held Waternish and other lands in Skye, along with Assynt and Coigeach on the mainland.

As for the province of Ross, from *c.* 900 to *c.* 1050 it appears to have been inhabited mainly by Picts but tenuously ruled by the Norse earls of Orkney, whose hold on Caithness and Sutherland was much more secure. On its west coast there were numerous Norse settlements. After 1050 the authority of the Scots kings in Ross, Sutherland and Caithness grew steadily, though punctuated by periodic rebellions. By 1266 the earldom of Ross and the thanage of Dingwall covered the east of the province, while the Mathesons and MacKenzies were emerging as powerful Gaelic clans in the south-west. Fearchar’s grandson William, who was earl of Ross from 1274 to 1323, was made lord of Skye, and perhaps also of Lewis. In 1366 William’s grandson, also William, granted Gairloch to Pál ‘Mac Tíre’, chief of the Gillanderses, whose original base may perhaps have been in the Black Isle, in lower Strathconon or around Dingwall.⁴

Tradition and place-names testify to the power of the Nicolsons in their day. They are said to have held ‘Castle Sween’, presumably the castle in Stornoway Harbour (now under the pier), for three centuries before the MacLeods, and to have had another on the shore near Garrabost in Point. *Caisteal Mhic Creacail*,

Nicolson's Castle, is a chambered cairn by Shulishader, also in Point. Their seat in Coigeach, in what is now the village of Ullapool, is variously on record as *làrach taigh MhicNeacail* ('the site of Nicolson's House') and *Caisteal MhicNeacail* ('Nicolson's Castle'). In Skye, twenty-eight chiefs of the Nicolsons are said to be buried on St Columba's Island in the River Snizort, close to the ruins of the medieval cathedral of the Isles. A detached chapel there is known as *Àit' Adhlaic MhicNeacail*, 'Nicolson's Burial Place'. Latterly, at least, the chief lived at Scorrybreck near Portree, where the cliffs became known as Nicolson's Rock.⁵

At some point shortly before 1343 the Nicolson empire was taken over by the MacLeods, apparently through the marriage of Margaret, the Nicolson heiress, to Murchadh son of Tormod son of Leód. Their son Torquil thus became the first of the MacLeods of Lewis. As was briefly mentioned above, in 1343 Torquil received a charter from David II of four davochs of land in Assynt, together with the castle there, for the service of a galley of twenty oars.⁶ This must have been to confirm possession of that part of his inheritance which was in the gift of the king of Scots, as opposed to the parts in the gift of the earl of Ross, whose charters have not survived. None of this is reflected in our pedigree, whose purpose is presumably to bolster the claim of the surviving Nicolson chiefly line to their inheritance. By the time of our text the earldom of Ross was subject to rival claims by the families of Sir Walter Leslie (d. 1382) and Donald of the Isles (d. 1423), both of whom had married heiresses to the title. Seemingly the MacLeods were favoured by the Leslie/Stewart interest, the Nicolsons by the lords of the Isles; this appears to be confirmed by Hugh MacDonald's listing of 'MacNicoll in Portree in Skye' as one of the lord of the Isles' councillors, ranking him with MacKay of the Rhinns, MacEachern of Killellan, MacKay of Ugadale, MacGillivray in Mull and MacMillan of Knap as 'freeholders, or men that had their lands in factory'.⁷

Certainly the marriage of *c.* 1343 had been a murky business. It was recalled in later tradition as having involved coercion or murder. Writing *c.* 1683–85, John Morison of Bragar said that MacLeod 'did violentlie espouse' Nicolson's daughter 'and cout [= *cut*] of[f] immediatlie the whole race of Macknaicle, and possessed himselfe with the whole Lews'.⁸ William Matheson's understanding of the event was that it involved the deliberate drowning of Nicolsons by MacLeods, perhaps by ramming their vessel at sea.⁹ But it is unlikely that the full truth will ever be known.

I will now give the Nicolson pedigree as it stands in five versions known to me: (1) W. F. Skene's *Collectanea* of 1839, (2) his *Celtic Scotland* of 1880, (3) the on-line version published by my wife Máire and myself in 2009, and (4, 5) for comparison, two manuscripts now in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin. Of these, MS 23 G 4 was written in Irish script by Seán Ua Catháin in a place called Cluain Ua Muirín, 1722–29. It was apparently copied from an exemplar of *c.* 1600. And MS 23 H 22 was written in Roman script by Pettar Ua Conaill in a place called an Cheathramha Dhoithte in Co. Clare, 1803.¹⁰ There is clearly a close

relationship between the two manuscripts, which probably go back to a common original. In both cases the text begins with nine generations of the MacLeod pedigree from Roderick back to Angus, then slides straight into twenty-seven generations of the Nicolson pedigree from Nicol back to the king of Norway. There is no historical justification for this, as Angus would have lived *c.* 1160, and Nicol *c.* 1280–1310. This allocation of Angus to the MacLeods is a guess on my part, as his true identity is unknown.¹¹ I believe that the Nicolson genealogy began with Nicol, so its heading was lost, and that by 1600 Irish scribes knew nothing about obscure medieval Scottish families, so the two pedigrees were duly run together.

The five texts are all presented below according to the seven-line structure in which they appear in the 1467 MS, which was written by Dubhghall Albanach mac mhic Cathail, who was probably a servitor of John, lord of the Isles.

(1) *Collectanea*, with Skene's note:

d27 *Genelach ic Nicaíl.**—Eoin ic Eogan ic Eoin ic Nicaíl
d28 mc Aigh ic Neailb ic Nicaill ic Gregall ic Gille-
d29 mare ic Seailb ic Toircill ic Totin ie Torstain
d30 mc Sdacaill ic Erble o fuiled ic Erble
d31 mc Arailt ic Muireachach ic Fogail ic Poil ic Ailin
d32 mc Carfin ic Taidg ic Amlaemh ic Turc
d33 Ataliath ic Arailt ic Asmain ic Ard.

d27 THE GENEALOGY OF THE MACNICOLS*.—John son of Ewen son of John son of Nicol
d28 son of Hugh son of Neailb son of Nicol son of Gregall son of Gil-
d29 mor son of Seailb son of Torquill son of Totin son of Thorstein
d30 son of Deacuill son of Erbhle from whom M'Kerly,
d31 son of Harold son of Murdoch son of Fogal son of Paul son of Allan
d32 son of Carfin son of Teague son of Olave son of Torc
d33 of Dublin son of Harold son of Osman son of Ard.

* The descent of this tribe from one *Kry-cul* (the *Gregall* of the MS.) is corroborated by the tradition of the country, as stated in the account of the parish of Eddirachylis.—*Stat. Acc.* vol. vi. p. 278.¹²

(2) *Celtic Scotland*, with Skene's notes:

d27 GENELACH MIC NICAIL Eoin mic Eogain mic Eoin mic Nicaíl
d28 mic Aigi mic Neailb mic Nicaíl mic Gregill mic Gille-
d29 mure mic Sealbar mic Toircinn mic Tottha mic Trostain
d30 mic Sdacaill mic Erble o fuiled ic Erble
d31 mic Arailt mic Murechaich mic Fogacail mic Poil mic Ailin
d32 mic Airfin mic Taidg mic Amlaim mic Turcinn
d33 Ataliath mic Arailt mic Asmainn mic Airdil

d27 GENEALOGY OF THE NICOLSONS.* John son of Ewen son of John son of Nicaíl
d28 son of Aigi son of Neailb son of Nicaíl son of Gregill** son of Gille-
d29 mure son of Sealbar son of Toircinn son of Tottha son of Trostain
d30 son of Sdacaill son of Erble, from whom Mac Erble,
d31 son of Harald son of Murechach son of Fogacail son of Paul son of Allan
d32 son of Airfin son of Teague son of Amlaimh son of Turcinn
d33 of Dublin son of Harald son of Asmainn son of Airdil.¹³

* This genealogy is added from MS. 1467, as it contains a jumble of Gaelic and Norwegian names somewhat similar to that of the Macleods. It will be observed that the Pictish name Trostain or Drostain occurs among them.

** The author of the Statistical Account of Edderachylis (*Stat. Acct.*, vi. p. 278) mentions that the Nicolsons are traditionally descended from a certain Krycul, who must have lived in the thirteenth century, and so far the pedigree may be genuine.¹⁴

(3) www.1467manuscript.co.uk, with our notes:

d27 clann mhic nicaíl eo[in] mac eogain mhic eoin mhic nicaíl
d28 mhic aiga mhic neailb* mhic nicaíl mhic grogall** mhic gille
d29 muire mhic sealbaigh mhic toircinn mhic tortha mhic trostain
d30 mhic sdacaill mhic erble o fuilid mic erble
d31 mhic arailt mhic murchaidh mhic fhoghail mhic poil mhic ailín
d32 mhic airfinn mhic thaidhg mhic amlae[o]im mhic turcaill
d33 atha cliath mhic arailt mhic asmainn mhic arai[l]l[t]

* seailb? compare sealb[aigh] in next line. Could he have written an ‘n’ by accident for an ‘s’?

** gregill?

d27 The Nicolsons: John son of Eoghan son of John son of Nicol
d28 son of Aodh son of Sealbhach(?) son of Nicol son of Grogall (Gregill?) son of Gille
d29 Muire son of Sealbhach son of Toircinn (Toircill, Thorkell?) son of Tortha son of Trostán
d30 son of Sdacall son of Erble from whom are the sons of Erble
d31 son of Harald son of Murchadh son of Foghal son of Paul son of Allan
d32 son of Airfinn son of Tadhg son of Aulay (Olaf) son of Thorkell
d33 of Dublin son of Harald son of Asmann son of (?)Harald.

(4) RIA MS 23 G 4, p. 396, with my translation:

d27 Ruaidhrí mac t urcaill [*sic*] mhic murchadha mhic tormoitt mhic leóid mhic
olbair mhic raoige mhic olbair snaige mhic aonguso mhic nacaill
d28 mhic guite mhic ndédhuilbh mhic coichill mhic cuichill mhic giolla
d29 muire mhic sealbhaidh mhic toirchinn mhic tordair mhic trostáin
d30 mhic stachail mhic erbile
d31 mhic arailt mhic turcuill mhic murchadha mhic ofoghaill mhic póil mhic ailín
d32 mhic airfinn mhic taidhg mhic amhlaoibh mhic torcaill
d33 mhic arailt mhic asmainn mhic ímair mhic toronaigh mhic airdrí lochlainn

- d27 Roderick son of Torquil son of Murchadh son of Norman son of Leod son of Oliver son of Raoige son of Oliver Snaige son of Angus son of Nicol
d28 son of Guite son of Dédhulbh son of Coichill son of Cuichill son of Gille
d29 Muire son of Sealbhach son of Toircheann son of Tordar son of Trostán
d30 son of Stachall son of Erbile
d31 son of Harald son of Torquil son of Murchadh son of Ofoghall son of Paul son of Allan
d32 son of Airfinn son of Tadhg son of Aulay (Olaf) son of Torquil/Thorkell
d33 son of Harald son of Asmann son of Ivor son of Toronach son of the high king of Norway.

(5) RIA MS 23 H 22, p. 48, with my note and translation:

- d27 Ginelach Mc Leoid sonn~: Ruaidhri Mc Turcaill Mc Murchadha Mc Tormoit
Mc Leoid Mc Olbair Mc Raoige Mc Olbair Snaige Mc Aongusa Mc Nacaill
d28 Mc Guite Mc Ndedhúilbh* Mc Coichill Mc Cuichill Mc Gilla
d29 Muire Mc Sealbhaigh Mc Toirchinn Mc Tordair Mc Trostain
d30 Mc Stachail Mc Erbhile
d31 Mc Arailt Mc Turcaill Mc Murchadha Mc Ofoghail Mc Poil Mc Ailin
d32 Mc Airfinn Mc Taidg Mc Amhlaoibh Mc Turcaill
d33 Mc Arailt Mc Asmainn Mc Miair Mc Torannaigh Mc Airdrigh Lochlann~

* Glossed in Gaelic script *dedhulbh* and in Roman script *betius*~. Is this the scribe's way of pointing us to Indulph, king of Scots, mentioned by Hector Boece (Boethius) in his history of Scotland?

- d27 The genealogy of MacLeod here: Roderick son of Torquil son of Murchadh son of Norman son of Leod son of Oliver son of Raoige son of Oliver Snaige son of Angus son of Nicol
d28 son of Guite son of Dedulbh son of Coichill son of Cuichill son of Gille
d29 Muire son of Sealbhach son of Toirceann son of Tordar son of Trostan
d30 son of Stachall son of Erbhile
d31 son of Harald son of Torquil son of Murchadh son of Ofoghall son of Paul son of Allan
d32 son of Airfinn son of Tadhg son of Aulay (Olaf) son of Torquil/Thorkell
d33 son of Harald son of Asmann son of Miar son of Torannach son of the high king of Norway.

I move now to my usual line-by-line discussion of Dubhghall Albanach's 1467 text using pen-and-ink sketches, based on spectrally-imaged colour photographs which are superior to those in the website. As always, square brackets indicate illegible, indistinct or uncertain text, italics indicate expanded contractions (the less obvious ones, at least). The MacLeod part of the two RIA manuscripts was discussed some years ago by David Sellar, so our concern here is solely with the Nicolson's.¹⁵

ḡt̃ ḡ ncail eoin mac eoghain mhic eoin mhic ncail

genelach mhic ncail eoin mac eoghain mhic eoin mhic ncail = “The genealogy of Nicolson: John son of Eoghan son of John son of Nicol”

The line is easily read, only the initial *genelach* and the first *eoin* being a little faint. Presumably these are all real people, but John son of Nicol appears to be the only one on historical record, for the good reason that he lived during the Wars of Independence. There are three separate references to him in contemporary English records. In October 1306 Cristin of the Aird, near Inverness, was paid his expenses for carrying letters from Edward I to his master William earl of Ross, to the MacRuairi brothers Lachlan and Roderick (descendants of Somerled), and to ‘John mak Nakyl’. This came immediately after Bruce’s proclamation as king, his defeat by MacDougall at Dalrigh, and William’s capture of his wife and daughter by violating the sanctuary at Tain, following which they were delivered up to Edward I. The letters may have concerned these momentous events. The other two references date from 1314 and 1315: in March 1314 Edward II instructed John MacDougall of Argyll to receive Donald de Insula, Godfrey his brother, John ‘Macnakild’ and Sir Patrick Graham (a brother-in-law of MacDougall’s) into the King’s peace, and the instruction appears to have been repeated in 1315, after the battle of Bannockburn. All of these references put John son of Nicol in pretty exalted company while demonstrating, sadly for his future reputation, that he was no friend of the Bruce.¹⁶ On the other hand there are two tantalising references in John Barbour’s epic poem ‘The Bruce’, written *c.* 1375, which show ‘Maknakill’ fighting gallantly at Carrickfergus on Edward Bruce’s side in 1316. *For to ye fycht Maknakill yen / Com with twa hundreth sper-men / And yai slew all yai mycht to-wyn.* “For to the fight MacNicol then / Came with two hundred spearmen / And they slew all they could reach.” *Yis ilk Maknakill with a gyn / Wan off yar schippis four or fyve / And haly rest ye men yar lif.* “This same MacNicol by a ruse / Captured four or five of their ships / And wholly deprived the men of their lives.” Whether this MacNicol was our John or not, as David Sellar says, it shows him ‘as a Hebridean leader, as much at home in his galleys at sea as on land’.¹⁷

Martin MacGregor accepts that our pedigree could have been written *c.* 1400.¹⁸ If we apply the usual thirty years per generation, and describe John son of Nicol’s floruit (for the sake of simplicity) as *c.* 1310–40, we have floruits for the others of John son of Eoghan *c.* 1370–1400, Eoghan *c.* 1340–70, and Nicol *c.* 1280–1310.

ḡt̃ ʳɪŋr̃f̃.ncailb.ḡ ncail.ḡ ḡr̃g̃aill.ḡ gille

mhic [in]g[r] mhic neailb mhic ncail mhic gr[e]g[a]ill mhic gille = “son of (?)Ingr son of Ralph son of Nicol son of Gregor son of Gille”

The first name in the line offers different possible readings. The letter *g* is both preceded and followed by three minims, not of equal length. The first three minims could represent *ai*, *m*, *in* or *ni*, of which *ai* was the chosen reading in 1839, 1880 and 2009. With regard to the last three minims, the first is the longest, and the last is surmounted by *c* and followed by a dot, thus giving *mhic*, as we would expect. The readings for what comes between *g* and *mhic* were *h* in 1839, *i* in 1880 and *a* in 2009. A fourth possibility would be to infer that the three minims represent the *m*-based *mhic*-compendium (though the *c* is clearly above the last minim, and the *m*-based *mhic*-compendium is generally used only at the beginning of a line). This was perhaps Skene's interpretation in 1839, or else he may have thought that the first two minims represented *h*, giving *aigh*, a possible genitive spelling of the Gaelic name *Aodh*, earlier *Áed*, 'Hugh' (though wherever this appears in our manuscript it takes the form *Aidh* or *Áidh*). His interpretation of 1880 is still more bizarre: it depends on noting that the *i*-based *mhic*-compendium is normally preceded as well as followed by a dot, treating the second of the final three minims as a dot, and reading *aigi mhic*. In fact, I now think that what follows *g* is *r* with a shortened descender, making it *n* or *r*, which following *c* or *g* would be pronounced the same in any case, as in the following name *neailb* or *reailb*.

All in all, this gives us *aigr*, *mgr*, *ingr* or *nigr* – clearly a Norse name. First we may reject *mgr* and *nigr* as non-existent. *Aigr* could represent *Ágeirr*, one of many names based on *geirr* 'spear', but it is so rare that it fails to appear in Lind's dictionary. The safest interpretation appears to be *ingr*, derived from *Ingvarr* or *Yngvarr*, a common by-form of *Ívarr* which appears in Irish sources as *Inwar* and *Imhair*.¹⁹

In place of this, the two RIA manuscripts have *Guite*. In 23 G 4 it appears as ~~SVTE~~. This is not a matter of palaeographic interpretation: it is simply a different name. It is presumably Norse *Gutti*, a diminutive form of *Guðþormr*, *Guttormr* or *Guðbrandr*.²⁰

The second name in the line, *neailb*, is clearly the one which became English 'Ralph'. It is found in Old Danish as *Rathulf*, in Old Swedish as *Radholf*, and in Old West Norse as *Ráðúlfr*.²¹ Aware that the consonant pair *cn* tends to be pronounced *cr* in Gaelic, the scribe has 'corrected' *mhic reailb* to *mhic neailb*. In any case *r* with shortened descender is common in our manuscript. The final *b* should have been dotted to give the pronunciation 'v' or 'f', but our scribe is sparing with his dots. The RIA manuscript readings *ndédhuilbh* and *Ndedhúilbh* (in which *nd* is pronounced *n*) strengthen this interpretation, given that they provide the medial consonant *dh/ð* which is present in the Norse name but becomes gradually lost in the Gaelic one. It is fascinating to see Pettar Ua Conaill, in Co. Clare in 1803, struggling to make sense of it (no. 5 above). Having no knowledge of Old Norse, he appears to have resorted to Hector Boece and there found Indulphus – Indulbh, known to modern scholarship as Ildulb, king of Scots 954–62, whose name is believed to represent Germanic *Hildulf*, possibly Norse *Hildulfr*.²² It was a good try, but not, I think, the right one.

The third name in the line is clearly *nicail*, but the fourth is more problematic. In 1839 Skene read *Gregall*, in 1880 he read *Gregill*, and in 2009 Máire and I read *grogall* but were willing to concede that it might be *gregill*. The argument hinges on whether or not there is a horizontal hairline stroke through the middle of the little superscript *o*, turning it into *e*. Curiously, the hairline stroke is less obvious in some of the spectrally-imaged photographs (which can of course be magnified) than in the original (which can of course be viewed through a magnifying-glass). In the end, the matter is best resolved through interpretation. The reading *grogall* (it seems to me) would push us towards the Gaelic word *crogall* ‘crocodile’, necessitating discussion of its antiquity, of whether it also existed in Old Norse, of whether it could be used of a hero and so become a name, and of the likelihood of its becoming *grogall*. All a little bizarre. The reading *gregill*, on the other hand, gives us a name, Gregory, with an ending which anticipates the form which it was to take in the sixteenth-century song ‘Griogal Cridhe’. Admittedly this is not the form used by Dubhghall Albanach in the MacGregor pedigree, where he writes it twice as *grigair*, but the song-name ‘Griogal Cridhe’ (as opposed to ‘Griogar Cridhe’) comes to us from Skye and the neighbouring islands, and so do the names in the Nicolson pedigree.²³

In both 1839 and 1880, Skene footnoted *Gregall/Gregill* to link it with ‘Krycul’, who was, according to the Old Statistical Account, the ancestor of the MacNicol. What Skene did not realise was that ‘Krycul’ is the regular pronunciation of ‘*c Neacail* in *Mac Neacail* or *mhic Neacail*. Skene’s reference is wrong in any case. He attributes the statement to the author of OSA Eddrachillis, citing the first page of that account. It was in fact made by the author of OSA Assynt. The full statement is as follows: “Tradition, and even documents declare, that it [= *Assynt*] was a forest of the ancient Thanies of Sutherland. One of these prime Thanies gave it in vassalage to one Mac-Kry-cul, who, in ancient times, held the coast of Coigach, that part of it at the place presently (1793) called the village of Ullapool. The Noble Thane made Assint over in the above manner, as Mac-Kry-cul had recovered a great quantity of cattle, carried off from the county of Sutherland by foreign invaders [= *Scandinavians, as explained in a footnote*]. Mac-Kry-cul’s family, by the fate of war in those days of old, being reduced to one heir-female, she was given in marriage to a younger son of Macleod, laird of Lewis, the Thane of Sutherland consenting thereto; and also making this parish over to the new married couple, together with its superiority. The result of this marriage was fourteen successive lairds here of the name of Macleod.”²⁴

The name Gregory or Gregor derives from post-classical Greek *gregōrein* ‘to watch, be vigilant’; it was therefore popular with the early Christians, and was borne above all by Pope Gregory the Great (c.540–604). If historical, Ingr will have lived c. 1250–80, Ralph c. 1220–50, Nicol c. 1190–1220 and Gregor c. 1160–90.

Mhic nicail mhic gregaill would be pronounced roughly *vihk rahkal vihk rikal*. That is, I think, why at this point the RIA manuscripts give us *mhic Coichill mhic Cuichill*. There are no such names in Gaelic or Norse. It is a descent into gobbledegook, more influenced by sound than by spelling.

d29 *m̄e .i. ſhealb .i. toirceī .i. to[r]ta .i. t[r]cāī*

muire mhic shealbaigh mhic toircinn mhic to[r]tha mhic trostain = “Moire son of Sealbhach son of Toirceann son of Þórðr son of Trostan (?Þórsteinn)”

The first name, carried over from d28, is *Gille Muire*, vernacular *Gille Moire*. It contains the name of the mother of Christ, classical *Muire*, vernacular Scottish Gaelic *Moire*. The second is *Sealbhach*, which was fairly common in medieval Ireland, also much used in Scotland, giving us the surname MacKelvie (*MacShealbhaich*). It is of particular interest, as Sir Robert Gordon speaks of a struggle in Robert I’s time between the earl of Ross (aided by the Munros, Dingwalls and Gillanderses) and three tribes of central and western Ross who had close associations with the MacKenzie chief Coinneach na Sròine. He names these three tribes as (1) ‘Clan-juer’ or ‘Clan-Iver’, clearly the MacIvers; (2) ‘Clantalvigh’ or ‘Clantalvich’; and (3) ‘Clanleajwe’ or ‘Clan-Laiwe’. The last-named have been identified by William Matheson as the MacLeays, *Clann Dhuinnshléibhe*, who at the time in question possessed lands in Strathconon and elsewhere in central Ross. According to tradition, their chief lived on the crannog in Loch Achilty. They were originally from Lorn, followers of the MacDougalls, and Matheson points out that one of the early MacKenzie chiefs, probably Coinneach na Sròine himself, is said to have married a daughter of MacDougall of Lorn, so the MacLeays may have come as members of her *léine-chneas* or bodyguard; they were known in later times as physicians, which would have made them doubly useful in the north. As for the ‘Clantalvigh’ or ‘Clantalvich’, they are clearly the *Clann t-Sealbhaich*. They were sometimes mistakenly called MacAulays, MacErlichs or MacKerleys, though with regard to the last-named, Skene pointed out in 1839 that these might well be represented by our *mic erble* (d30). Given the presence of Sealbhach in our pedigree, the *Clann t-Sealbhaich* may also have been a segment of the Nicolsons.²⁵

The third name in the line, *toircinn*, can only, I think, be the genitive form of a name or nickname consisting of *torc* ‘boar’ and *ceann* ‘head’ – ‘Boar’s Head’, properly *Toirccheann*, or *Toirceann* for short. William Matheson interpreted it as a variant of *Toircill*, ‘an example of the frequent confusion of the lingual consonants’, but the evidence of the Irish manuscripts is against this.²⁶ RIA MS 23 G 4 clearly has *toirchinn* at our d29, *turcuill* at our d31 and *torcaill* at our d32, employing no contractions whatever except the routine superstroke on *n* for *nn*. It is unlikely (but not impossible) that the same name would be written in the same source in two entirely different ways. If the name here *were* to be interpreted as Torquil, and if additionally the following name were to be interpreted as Tormod instead of Þórðr, it could be successfully argued that here we have, in Matheson’s words, the ‘Hebridean chief called Torquil son of Thormod, who was killed in a fight off the coast of Skye, together with two of his sons, in 1231; while a third son Thormod escaped by jumping into a cask

floating by the side of his ship, and survived to turn up later in Lewis'.²⁷ The date 1231 is acceptably close to Toirceann's likely floruit of *c.* 1270–1300.

The fourth name in the line was read *Totin* in 1839, *Tottha* in 1880, and *tortha* in 2009. The third letter could be *t*, but looks more like *r* in the form frequently used by Dubhghall Albanach following *o*. In theory, *tottha* could be a short form of *Pórsteinn*, found in Old Danish as *Toti* and in Old Swedish as *Tote* or *Totte*. However, the RIA manuscripts provide the decisive evidence that is needed – they have *Tordair*, clearly the Old West Norse name *Pórðr*, a contracted form of *Pórfreðr* or *Þorrðr*.²⁸ Our form *Tortha* probably arose through the misreading of the contraction used for the final syllable – the same one that is used in *muire* at the beginning of this line.

Finally we have *trostain*, which presents us with a minor dilemma. In 1839 Skene read *Torstain* 'Thorstein', then in 1880 he switched to *Trostain* 'Trostein', a Pictish name, presumably because it had been pointed out to him by an Irish scholar that superscript *o* means *ro*, not *or*. It is true that, read very literally, *trostain* is the Gaelic genitive case of the Pictish name *Trostan* or *Drostan* (Tristram), but equally I see no difficulty in understanding it as *Pórsteinn* with metathesis.²⁹ Again, however, there is an extra piece of evidence which tips the balance a little – the names of the four brochs of Glenelg, given by Alexander Gordon in 1726 as Castle Chalamine, Castle Chonil, Castle Tellve and Castle Troddan, on the basis of a rather odd piece of Gaelic verse which describes them as monuments erected by a grieving mother for her sons Calman, Conil, Tellve and Trodden.³⁰ Presumably in conventional Gaelic spelling these are *Dùn Chalmain*, from Calmán or Colmán, the ancestor of the MacCalmans or Murchisons; *Dùn Chonaill*, from some unknown magnate; *Dùn t-Sealbhaich*, from Sealbhach of the *Clann t-Sealbhaich* and/or our pedigree; and *Dùn Trodain*, very possibly from Trostan of our pedigree.³¹ It should not be forgotten that in 1343 David II granted granted two thirds of Glenelg to Malcolm son of Tormod MacLeod of Dunvegan at the same time that he granted lands in Assynt to Torquil MacLeod of Lewis – the presumption is that both territories had belonged to their predecessors the Nicolsons, and that on the failure of the Nicolson line they had reverted to the crown. Nowadays brochs are understood to have been built by Picts; earlier in the modern era they were routinely called 'Danish forts'; of these four chieftains and their names, three are Gaelic, of whom one (Sealbhadh) appears to have belonged to the Nicolsons, a Norse clan; the fourth may be Norse or Pictish, but also appears to have belonged to the Nicolsons.

If historical, Gille Moire will have lived *c.* 1130–60, Sealbhach *c.* 1100–30, Toirceann *c.* 1270–1100, Pórðr *c.* 1040–70 and Trostan/Pórsteinn *c.* 1010–40. This seems to put Gille Moire into the period of a comment about Olaf king of Man by the Sleat historian Hugh MacDonald, who says that during an expedition to the north, 'Olay, surnamed the Red, killed MacNicoll in North Uist'. This expedition took place about 1140, but David Sellar thinks that the story may belong more properly to the reign of Olaf the Black (d. 1237). He

also points out that the reference to ‘MacNicoll’ is anachronistic, given that Nicol, the Nicolson eponym, lived *c.* 1190–1220.³² As for Trostan/Pórsteinn, we can say with confidence that he provides us with an example of Norse/Pictish interaction which is entirely appropriate to the period *c.* 1010–40.

d30 

mhic sdacaill mhic erble o fuilid mic erble = “son of Steinkell son of Erble from whom are the sons of Erble”

The reading *sdacaill* is perfectly clear. In the RIA manuscripts it is *Stachail*. It must, I suppose, be the Norse name *Steinkell*, found in Old Danish and Swedish as *Stenkil*.³³ *Erble* is equally clear (and written twice). In the RIA manuscripts it is *erbile*/*Erbhile*, and the phrase about his sons is omitted. It is probably the Norse name *Erpr*, which may bear some relationship to Gaelic *Eruilb*, *Feruilbh*, *Ferblai*, *Ferbla*, all of which are rare.³⁴ Less likely, it may perhaps be derived in some way from *earball* ‘a tail’; conversely there is *eirbleach* ‘decrepit man or beast’ (a Uist word), which has no obvious connection with tails, but which could be derived from *Erpr*, *Erble* or *Ferble*.³⁵

The words *o fuilid mic erble* were presumably intended for readers who had heard of this kindred. Skene chose to interpret the *mhic*-compendium here as *mac*. For his perspicacious ‘from whom M‘Kerly’ translation of 1839 see notes on d29. In 1880 Skene modified the translation to ‘from whom Mac Erble’, persisting with the surname idea. I prefer to interpret the compendium as *mic* ‘sons’, on the assumption that Steinkell and his brothers were famous warriors.

If historical, Steinkell and his brothers will have lived *c.* 980–1010 and Erble *c.* 950–80.

d31 

mhic arailt mhic murchaidh mhic fhoghail mhic poil mhic ailin = “son of Harald son of Murchadh son of Foghal son of Paul son of Allan”

No palaeographic comments are necessary, other than that *arailt* could be transcribed as *aruilt*, which makes no difference. This line is a mixture of Norse and Gaelic names: Harald and Foghal are Norse, Murchadh and Allan are Gaelic, Paul could be either (though possible Norse influence is more apparent in vernacular Gaelic *Pál* than in classical Gaelic *Pól*). *Foghal* (Gaelic genitive *Foghail*) is derived from *fugl* ‘fowl, bird’. It is found in Norway *c.* 1150 as a name for a man from Orkney. Anglo-Scandinavian forms include *Fugel*, *Fughel* and *Fugell*.³⁶ The RIA manuscripts make it *Ofoghall*, and also insert a Torquil (*turcuill*, *Turcaill*) between Harald and Murchadh.

If historical, Harald will have lived *c.* 920–50, Murchadh *c.* 890–920, Foghal *c.* 860–90, Paul *c.* 830–60 and Allan *c.* 800–30.

d32 

mhic airfīnn mhic thaidhg mhic amlaeim mhic turcaill = “son of Airfīnn
son of Tadhg son of Olaf son of Thorkell”

Airfīnn is clearly the Norse name *Arnfinnr*; *thaidhg* is the genitive form of the Gaelic name *Tadhg*, very common in Ireland, less so in Scotland, anglicised as Timothy or Teague; *amlaeim* is a Gaelic genitive form of the Norse name *Óláfr*, which often appears in medieval Gaelic as *Amlaib*, and in modern Gaelic as *Amhlaigh*, hence *MacAmhlaigh* ‘MacAulay’.³⁷ A subscript *-o* (which could perhaps be *-c*) appears after *amlaeim*, and in our website Máire and I took it to be part of that name, given that the usual modern Irish spelling is *Amhlaoibh*, as in our two RIA manuscripts, and as in the celebrated early nineteenth-century diary ‘Cín Lae Amhlaoibh’.³⁸ I now think it more likely however that the *-o* (or *-c*) is connected with line d33, so it is shown there as well. It might have been thought to have something to do with the final name here, given that *turcaill* is heavily abbreviated and followed by a dot, but that would imply *turco*, *turcaich* or the like. Thorkell (*Dórkell*, Gaelic *Torcall*, *Turcall*) of Dublin is a well-known historical figure (see d33), so *turcaill* it is.³⁹ In any case the RIA manuscripts have *torcaill*, though without the following *atha cliath*.

If our pedigree were chronologically accurate, Airfīnn would have lived *c.* 770–800, Tadhg *c.* 740–70, Olaf *c.* 710–40 and Thorkell *c.* 680–710. This seems impossible *prima facie*, as Scandinavian settlement in the British Isles and Ireland only began *c.* 800, so no Viking at that date was likely to have a father with a Gaelic name. But in any case the presence here of Thorkell of Dublin (who actually lived *c.* 1133) shows that, in his anxiety to set out a collection of names in neat father-to-son succession, the author’s chronology has come adrift of the facts.

d33 

atha cliath mhic arailt mhic asmainn mhic ardiarla o[rc] = “of Dublin son
of Harald son of Asmund son of the high earl [of Orkney].”

The author’s master-plan is revealed: his purpose throughout has been to connect the Nicolsons with a famous warrior of the past – Thorkell, one of the last Norse kings of Dublin, who fought the Irish under Donnchadh Ua Cearbhaill in a battle at Fīnnabhair on the Boyne in 1133, and left a formidable brood of sons who went on to fight the Anglo-Norman invaders.⁴⁰ For us today, the intriguing thing about Thorkell is that he is alleged to have fled Dublin for the safety of the Scottish Highlands.⁴¹ This belief, which has no foundation whatever in twelfth- or thirteenth-century sources, may have come about in modern times (1) by

deduction from our pedigree, which has after all been in the public arena since 1839, and (2) by deduction from some clan history of the MacAskills, who are occasionally hypothesised, on no good evidence, to descend from Thorkell's grandson Ascall, last king of Dublin, who was executed by Henry II in 1171.⁴²

It is a well-known fact that the Gaelic for Dublin is *Baile Átha Cliath*, presumably meaning 'the Town of the Ford of Wattles'. Similar examples of strengthened fords are the Stock (i.e. log) Ford on the Beaully and Anacra, apparently *Áth na(n) Crá(bh)* 'the Ford of the Cruive(s)', on the Ederline in Argyllshire.⁴³ We should probably visualise structures of timber or wattles filled with stones through which the water found its way.

The third name here, *asmainn*, is a genitive Gaelic form of *Ásmundr*, which occurs frequently in Iceland and Norway from the 900s onwards; it also appears as *Osmundr* after 1290. Anglo-Scandinavian forms include Osmund and Asmund.⁴⁴

Our pedigree is perhaps the only source for the descent of Thorkell king of Dublin, though its reliability is another matter. It is unclear whether Thorkell was descended from the dynasty of Ívarr who had ruled Dublin until 1094, but later records suggest that his family were major landowners in the Dublin area. The king of Dublin until 1094 was Gofraid MÉRánach, who was also king of Man; his son Harald had at least two sons raised in Dublin, one of whom was Ragnall, king of Man (d. 1153), so with regard to Harald our pedigree may well be correct, in which case Thorkell was Ragnall's brother. On the other hand, as already stated, the father of the historical Harald was Gofraid MÉRánach, not Asmund.⁴⁵

All parts of the last name or word *ardiarla* are straightforward except for the second *ar*-compendium, which is faint in places, but may be read with confidence. The final *-a* is supplied by a stroke. We are obviously not finished, however, and this is where the mysterious superscript *-o* (or *-c*) explains itself. *Ardiarla* means 'high earl or jarl'. The earl or jarl of Orkney ruled Shetland, Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland, and occupied the most senior rank in medieval Norway below the king himself. It now seems clear that *-o* is for *Orc* 'Orkney'. The hyphen links it with *ardiarla*.

We are therefore being told that an unnamed earl of Orkney had a son Asmund who had a son Harald whose son was Thorkell, king of Dublin in 1133. If this is even partly accurate, we are looking for an earl of Orkney who lived *c.* 1043. This is pretty straightforward. From 1014 (the year of Clontarf) this was Thorfinn Sigurdsson, 'the Mighty', grandson of Malcolm II of Scotland; from *c.* 1036 he ruled jointly with Rögnvaldr Brusason, then following Rögnvaldr's death in 1046 he ruled alone again until his own death in 1064, when he was succeeded by his sons Paul and Erlend. The Orkneyinga Saga is quite explicit that he had these two sons by his wife Ingibjorg, but of course he may have had sons by other women. As for Rögnvaldr, the saga calls him one of the most popular and gifted of all the earls of Orkney, but says nothing of marriage or sons; Asmund may have been his.⁴⁶

The two RIA manuscripts end differently. Asmund, we are told, is *mac ímair mhic toronaigh mhic airdrí lochlainn* ('son of Ivor son of Toronach son of the high king of Norway') in one, and *Mc Miair Mc Torannaigh Mc Airdrigh Lochlann* ('son of Miar son of Torannach son of the high king of Norway') in the other. *Miair* is a misreading of *ímair*, obviously. Perhaps an effort is being made here to link Asmund with the celebrated Viking warrior Ívarr Beinlaus ('Ivor the Boneless', d. 873), founder of the kingdom of Dublin, whose father was the semi-mythical Ragnar Lodbrok. *Torannach* is a good Gaelic word (both Irish and Scottish) meaning 'thunderous, loud, rumbling, arrogant'. Presumably it reflects the Norse name *Pórunnr*.⁴⁷ Ragnar is said in one source to have been a son of Sigurðr hringr, king of Denmark.⁴⁸

Conclusion

In other pedigrees we have noticed a tendency for Norse names to be edited out. The situation here is entirely different. Lewis, Harris, Skye, Raasay and the seaboard of Wester Ross had perhaps never been Gaelic-speaking territories. They had belonged to the kings of Man and the Isles, and were as Norse as Orkney and Shetland. Now, in the early fifteenth century (when we may assume our text was compiled), they appear to have been in the lordship of Ross, which was controlled by earls of Ross and the Stewart kings. The transfer of regional power from the Nicolsons to the MacLeods was still a living memory, and was no doubt hotly disputed. Now, too, the earldom and lordship of Ross were being claimed by Donald, lord of the Isles. The MacLeods had been recognised as legitimate lords of Lewis, Skye, Glenelg and Assynt by the earls of Ross and the kings of Scotland; it was natural, therefore, that the lords of the Isles should support the claim of the MacLeods' still-powerful rivals the Nicolsons. If it is true that shortly before 1343 the legitimate Nicolson line ended in an heiress and her immediate family were drowned, the first few names in our pedigree must represent an alternative line of claimants, while the last few are designed to showcase their regal Norse credentials – certainly the best card that a descendant of Somerled could play in such a region.

In the brief space of time allowed to the lords of the Isles as masters of Lewis, Harris, Skye, Raasay and Wester Ross, however, from 1435 to 1475, the MacLeods went from strength to strength. The political significance of our Nicolson pedigree was soon forgotten, but that did not prevent copies of it being seized upon by collectors of Irish genealogies.

Ronald Black

Notes

- 1 William Matheson, 'Notes on North Uist Families', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness [TGSi]*, vol. 52 (1980–82), pp. 318–72: 359.
- 2 William Matheson, 'The MacLeods of Lewis', *TGSi*, vol. 51 (1978–80), pp. 320–37: 331, n. 2; W. David H. Sellar, 'History of the Clan', in W. David H. Sellar and Alasdair Maclean,

- The Highland Clan MacNeacail (MacNicol): A History of the Nicolsons of Scorrybreac* (Lochbay, Waternish, 1999), pp. 3–41: 8–9.
- 3 John Bannerman, ‘The Lordship of the Isles’, in *Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Jennifer M. Brown (London, 1977), pp. 209–40: 211.
 - 4 Alexander Grant, ‘The Province of Ross and the Kingdom of Alba’, in *Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Edward J. Cowan and R. Andrew McDonald (2nd edn, Edinburgh, 2012 [1st edn E. Linton 2000]), pp. 88–126: 100, 114, 116, 123; Sellar, ‘History of the Clan’, pp. 6, 10.
 - 5 Sellar, ‘History of the Clan’, pp. 3–4, 9; Dr Alasdair Maclean, ‘Some Nicolson Traditions’, *TGSI*, vol. 57 (1990–92), pp. 100–15: 101.
 - 6 Sellar, ‘History of the Clan’, p. 10; Matheson, ‘The MacLeods of Lewis’, p. 327.
 - 7 J. R. N. Macphail, ed., *Highland Papers*, vol. 1 (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1914), p. 24.
 - 8 Iain F. Maciver, ‘A 17th Century “Prose Map”’, in *Togail Tir, Marking Time: The Map of the Western Isles*, ed. by Finlay MacLeod (Stornoway, 1989), pp. 23–31: 30; cf. Sir Arthur Mitchell, ed., *Geographical Collections relating to Scotland made by Walter Macfarlane* (Scottish History Society, 3 vols, Edinburgh, 1906–08), vol. 2, p. 214.
 - 9 Matheson, ‘The MacLeods of Lewis’, pp. 325–26, cf. Maclean, ‘Some Nicolson Traditions’, p. 100.
 - 10 Kathleen Mulchrone, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, Fasc. XVI (Dublin, 1935), p. 2054; Lilian Duncan, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy*, Fasc. XVII (Dublin, 1935), p. 2101; W. D. H. Sellar, ‘The Ancestry of the MacLeods Reconsidered’, *TGSI*, vol. 60 (1997–98), pp. 233–58: 246.
 - 11 Matheson, ‘The MacLeods of Lewis’, pp. 324–25; Sellar, ‘History of the Clan’, p. 5.
 - 12 The Iona Club, *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis* (Edinburgh, 1839), pp. 54, 55, 62.
 - 13 The reason for Skene’s italics is unclear. Perhaps their purpose is to highlight the shift from mainly Gaelic names to mainly Norse names.
 - 14 William F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland* (2nd edn, 3 vols, Edinburgh, 1886–90 [1st edn Edinburgh 1876–80]), vol. 3, pp. 461–62.
 - 15 Sellar, ‘The Ancestry of the MacLeods Reconsidered’, pp. 244–51.
 - 16 W. D. H. Sellar, ‘John Mak Nakyl – An Early Hebridean Nicolson?’, *WHN&Q*, ser. 2, no. 7 (May 1991), pp. 3–6; Sellar, ‘History of the Clan’, pp. 6–7.
 - 17 Sellar, ‘History of the Clan’, pp. 7–8.
 - 18 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: 138.
 - 19 E. H. Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn ock Fingerade Namn från Medeltiden* (Uppsala, 1905–15), cols 643, 1117–18. Having no specialist knowledge of Old Norse or modern Norwegian, for all Norse names (especially this one) I have also used <http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/ONMensNames.shtml>, accessed 22 Aug. 2017.
 - 20 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, col. 427.
 - 21 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, col. 836.
 - 22 Alex Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba 789–1070* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 192–93.
 - 23 Frances Tolmie, *One Hundred and Five Songs of Occupation from the Western Isles of Scotland*, repr. from the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, no. 16, 3rd part of vol. 4, 1911 (2nd repr., Llanerch, 1997), pp. 196–97.
 - 24 Rev. William Mackenzie, ‘Parish of Assint’, in Sir John Sinclair, ed., *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. 16 (Edinburgh, 1794), pp. 163–211: 191 = new edn, vol. 18 (Wakefield, 1979), pp. 273–321: 301.
 - 25 Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun, *A Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland* (Edinburgh, 1813), p. 36; William Matheson, ‘Traditions of the MacKenzies’, *TGSI*, vol. 39/40 (1942–50), pp. 193–228: 202–03.
 - 26 Matheson, ‘The MacLeods of Lewis’, p. 332, n. 3.

- 27 Matheson, ‘The MacLeods of Lewis’, p. 321. His source is Hakon Hakonsson’s Saga and the Konunga Sögur as presented in Alan Orr Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1922), vol. 2, pp. 475, 478.
- 28 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, cols 1152–56.
- 29 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, cols 1207–11.
- 30 Alexander Gordon, *Itinerarium Septentrionale: or, A Journey Thro’ most of the Counties of Scotland And Those in the North of England* (London, 1726), pp. 166, 167, cf. Matheson, ‘Traditions of the MacKenzies’, p. 225, n. 33.
- 31 Matheson, ‘Traditions of the MacKenzies’, p. 203.
- 32 Macphail, *Highland Papers*, vol. 1, p. 8; Sellar, ‘History of the Clan’, pp. 10–11.
- 33 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, col. 955.
- 34 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, cols 244–45; Séamus Pender, ed., *The O Clery Book of Genealogies (Analecta Hibernica, no. 18, Dublin, 1951)*, p. 41; M. A. O’Brien, ed., *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1976), p. 629.
- 35 Edward Dwelly, *The Illustrated Gaelic–English Dictionary* (9th edn, Glasgow, 1977), p. 391.
- 36 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, cols 292, 485–87, 827–29.
- 37 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, cols 40–42, 810–15.
- 38 Rev. Michael McGrath, S.J., ed., *Cinnlae Amhlaoibh Uí Shúileabháin: The Diary of Humphrey O’Sullivan* (4 vols, Irish Texts Society, London, 1936–37).
- 39 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, cols 1184–87.
- 40 William M. Hennessy, ed., *The Annals of Loch Cé* (2 vols, London, 1871), vol. 1, pp. 132–33, cf. John O’Donovan, ed., *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters* (2 vols, Dublin, 1851), vol. 2, pp. 1042–43; Clare Downham, ‘Living on the Edge: Scandinavian Dublin in the Twelfth Century’, in *West over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement before 1300*, ed. by Beverley Ballin Smith *et al.* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 33–52: 39–41, 43, 48.
- 41 See for example <http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsBritain/GaelsDublin.htm>, accessed 10 Aug. 2017.
- 42 For Ascall see for example Downham, ‘Living on the Edge’, pp. 33, 43. I am grateful to Dr Alex Woolf for suggesting the MacAskill explanation.
- 43 William Mackay, ed., *Chronicles of the Frasers: The Wardlaw Manuscript . . . by Master James Fraser* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1905), pp. 163, 176, 316, 450; R. Black, *The Campbells of the Ark: Men of Argyll in 1745* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 2017), vol. 1, p. 361.
- 44 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, cols 82–84.
- 45 Downham, ‘Living on the Edge’, pp. 39, 43.
- 46 Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, eds, *Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney* (London, 1978), pp. 71, 75–76.
- 47 Lind, *Norsk-Isländska Dopnamn*, cols 1211–12.
- 48 Rory McTurk, *Studies in Ragnars Saga Loðbrókar and its Major Scandinavian Analogues* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 69, 167; Katherine Holman, *Historical Dictionary of the Vikings* (Lanham, Md, 2003), p. 220.

Apology

In the article ‘1467 MS: The MacNeils’ in our last issue, p. 11 was repeated as p. 12 and what should have been p. 14 was omitted entirely. The missing p. 14 is now printed opposite. The full article appears correctly on the web at www.1467manuscript.co.uk/MacNeil%20for%20web.pdf.