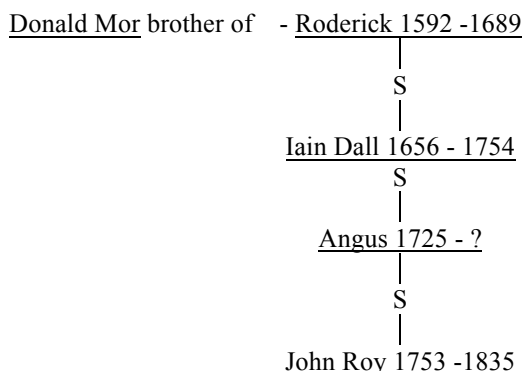


THE MACKAYS OF GAIRLOCH

The MacKays were Hereditary Pipers to the MacKenzies of Gairloch for almost two centuries and during that time there were eight Chiefs of Gairloch but only four piper. All these pipers, as will be seen, lived to remarkable ages. they were in close touch with the MacCrimmons of Skye, and in consequence they are a most important link in the chain from MacCrimmons to present day piping. Authorities for statements made herein are noted by number (ie (1), (2), etc) and by checking these against Appendix "A" the authors name will be found

FAMILY TREE



FACTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE MACKAYS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>ACCOMPLISHMENT OR FACT</u>
<u>DONALD MOR</u>	-	-	Born.
	1608 (?) (2a)	?	Piper to the 12 sons of John Roy Mackenzie, 4 th Laird of Gairloch.

<u>RUARIDH DALL</u>	1592 (2)	-	Born.
	1609 (2b)	17	Became Piper to John Roy MacKenzie of Gairloch.
	1628 (2c)	36	Became piper to Alastair MacKenzie on former Chief's death.
	1638 (2c)	46	Became piper to Kenneth MacKenzie on former Chief's Death.
	1652 (2)	60	Married.
	1656 (2a)	64	Had son Iain Dall
	1669 (2c)	77	Became Piper to Alexander MacKenzie on former Chief's death.
	1689 (2a)	97	Died.

<u>IAIN DALL</u>	1656 (2a)	-	Born.
	1663 (about) (2a)	7	Lost sight through smallpox.
	1689 (2c) (2e)	33	Became piper to Alexander MacKenzie on death of his father.
	1694 (2c) (2e)	38	Became piper and bard to Sir Kenneth MacKenzie on former Chief's death.
	1703 (2c) (2e)	47	Became piper to Sir Alexander Mackenzie on former Chief's death.
	1723 (about)	67	Married.
	1725 (2)	69	Had son Angus.
	1750 (About) (2)	94	Retired from appointment as Hereditary Piper.
	1754 (2e)	98	Died

<u>ANGUS</u>	1725 (2)	-	Born.
	1750 (About) (2)	25	Succeeded father as piper to Sir Alexander MacKenzie.
	1751 (about) (?)	26	Married.
	1754 (2)	28	Had son John Roy.
	1761 (1) (4) (6)	36	composed "MacLeod of Raasay's Salute".
	1766 (2c)	41	Became piper to Sir Alexander Mackenzie on former Chief's death.
	17??	??	Died

<u>JOHN ROY</u>	1753 (2)	-	Born.
	1794 (5)	41	Had son John.
	1805 (3)	52	Retired from appointment as Hereditary Piper.
	1805 (5)	52	Emigrated to America.

PUPILS AND TEACHERS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>TAUGHT BY</u>	<u>PUPILS</u>
<u>RUARIDH DALL</u>	Not known	His son, Iain Dall (2a)

<u>IAIN DALL</u>	(2a) His Father, Ruaridh Dall. (2a) Patrick Of MacCrimmon	His son, Angus.

<u>ANGUS</u>	His Father, Iain Dall	His son, John Roy.

<u>JOHN ROY</u>	His Father, Angus	John MacKay of Raasay (4)

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE MACKAYS

DONALD MOR

Very little is known of him except that he was the older brother of Ruaridh Dall and seems to have been the first of the MacKay family of pipers. He is said to have been a great piper and was piper to the 12 sons of John Roy Mackenzie (2a), 4th Laird of Gairloch. It is also said that he helped his brother Ruaridh Dall, when the latter became piper to John Roy in 1609. In 1610 (2b) he accompanied John Roy and his 12 sons to a meeting with one of the Chief's old enemies, Lord MacKenzie of Kintail, who was staying in Toridon. It was feared that it was a trap to kill the Chief, but Lord Mackenzie, after seeing such large escort, must have had second thoughts, because the meeting went without incident. On the return home Donald Mor played his pipes all the way (2d).

Before his death he returned to the Reay Country, the native land of his family and there died (2a).

RUARIDH DALL

Born in the Reay Country in 1592 (2). His ability on the pipes earned him the position as piper to the Chief of the MacKay.

In 1609 he accompanied his master in escorting John Roy MacKenzie, 4th Laird of Gairloch, who was returning home after paying a visit to the MacKay Chief (2b). The party escorted John Roy as far as the Meikle Ferry, on the Kyle of Sutherland and on their arrival, they found another groom detaining

the boat for his own master. Ruaridh Dall in fit of temper, cut off the groom's hand with his dirk, consequently MacKay told him he must flee that part of the Country. John Roy came to his aid by offering him the job of piper to his household. Ruaridh gladly accepted the offer in exchange, John Roy sent one of his gamekeepers to the MacKay Chief (2b). Thus Ruaridh Dall became the first Piper to the MacKenzie Chiefs'. It can be seen from this incident that he could not have been born blind, and must have lost his sight at a later date.

In his lifetime Ruaridh was piper to four chiefs of Gairloch, they were:

John Roy Laird	-	from 1566 - 1628 (2c)
Alastair Laird	-	from 1628 - 1638 (2c)
Kenneth Laird	-	from 1638 - 1669 (2c)
Alexander Laird	-	from 1669 - 1694 (2d)

During the lives of the first two, who lived on the Islands of Eilean, Ruaridh and Eileen Suthainn, he lived at Talladale. He then moved to Flowerdale, where the latter two chiefs resided at Stank House.

In his youth he was assisted by his brother Donald Mor, although very little is known of this.

He was over sixty when he married and had one son, Iain Dall (2). He died, at this home in Flowerdale in 1689 (2a) and was buried in Gairloch church yard. During his life he was said to have been a handsome and powerful man. It is also said that his playing was second only to that of the MacCrimmons. His only composition as far as we know is:

Corrienessans Salute (1).

IAIN DALL

Only son of Ruaridh Dall. He was born at Talladale in 1656 (2a). Some authorities say he was born blind, but this is contradicted by Dixon in his book 'Gairloch' (2a), where it is said that he lost his sight after contracting smallpox when about seven years old.

He was first taught to play pipes by his father and then sent to the famous MacCrimmon College under the immortal Patrick Og MacCrimmon. During the early part of his apprenticeship he was disturbed in his sleep by insects. This gave him the inspiration to compose his first Piobaireachd, 'PRONNADH NAM MIAL' (2e). In a short time he had outstripped the other eleven pupils in his class, and this caused them to envy him and on one occasion when he was playing the same tune as another pupil. MacCrimmon reprimanded the other pupil and asked him why he did not play as well as Iain Dall, the pupil, replied "I'd do son, but my fingers are sticky from eating the skate". This saying was an excuse for pipers for years after the above incident. On another occasion the pupils tried to murder Iain Dall by throwing him over the top of Dun Borreraig. He landed unharmed on his feet and the spot is still known as "Blind Man's Leap".

After seven years under Patrick Og he returned to the Gairloch and all the best judges though he had no equal except in his teacher. He at first assisted his father as piper to Alexander MacKenzie, and on his father's death, he became Hereditary Piper to the Gairloch Lairds:

Sir Kenneth Laird	from	1694 - 1703 (2e).
Sir Alexander Laird	from	1702 - 1766 (2e)

He is said to have composed 24 Piobaireachds (2e) Angus Mackay (Raasay) puts it at 30 (3). The 'Lament of Patrick Og', was composed after hearing a false report of his teacher's death. 'The Half Finished Piobaireachd' is accredited to Patrick Og and Iain Dall. Angus MacKay (Raasay), says in his book (3b), that Patrick Og was intending to pay a visit on MacDonald of Clanranald on the Island of Uist and determining to compose a Piobaireachd which would be complimentary to Lady MacDonald, he retired to his room for this purpose. He commenced the groundwork, two parts of which he repeated many times without being able to satisfy himself with them. Iain Dall, who was listening at the door, unobserved, struck up a measure so well adapted to those which Patrick Og had been playing, that the master opened the door with delight and exclaimed "Ah, you have done it; but it shall not bear the name I designed for it, but shall be called "The Half Finished Tune", as I made two parts and you have made the other".

He is also said to have composed a number of Strathspeys, Reels and Jigs. Two of the jigs accredited to him are 'CALLEACH A MHUILLEIR' and 'CAILLEACH LIATH R THARSAIR (1). Some authorities say that the tune 'MacKenzie of Gairloch's Lament' is accredited to Iain Dall, but this most unlikely. Sir Hector MacKenzie, for whom the tune is composed, died in 1826 (2c), and Iain Dall died in 1754 (2c). Iain Dall's grandson John Roy, was Sir Hector's piper for about sixteen years, so it is more likely to be John Roy's composition.

In his old age he was given a pension and the remainder of his life was spent visiting gentlemen's houses in the Reay Country and in Skye. "The Munro's Salute" was probably composed during this period. He composed it as a tribute to the Munro's of Fearndonel for their kindness and hospitality towards him (3c).

He died in 1754 (2e) at the age of 98 and was buried in the same grave as his father at Gairloch. Like his father he had married late in life and had left only one son, Angus (2). He had a daughter who married a Ross. She had a son, William Ross and was born in 1762 (2f) in Skye, and who died in 1790 (2f). He was known throughout the country as "The Gairloch Bard".

Iain Dall besides being a piper to the MacKenzies, was also their bard. He made a number of Gaelic poems and songs. One of them 'Coire an Easain' was composed on the death of MacKay Lord Reay (2e). Another poem was in praise of Lay Janet Mackenzie of Scatwell, on her marrying Sir Alexander Mackenzie, 9th Laird of Gairloch (2).

Although the tunes composed by this famous piper are supposedly numerous, we were only able to find the following:

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | The Blind Piper's Obstinacy. | (1) (4) (6) |
| 2. | Patrick Og MacCrimmon's Lament. | (1) (4) (7) |
| 3. | The Unjust Incarceration. | (1) (4) (7) |
| 4. | The Battle O Glenshiel. | (3f) (7) |
| 5. | Munro's Salute. | (3f) |
| 6. | The Half Finished Piobaireachd. | (3f) (1) |
| 7. | Capt Donald MacKenzies Lament | (8). |

ANGUS

Only son of Iain Dall. He was born in 1725 (2). Succeeded his father as piper to the Lairds of Gairloch. While piper to Sir Alexander, he was sent to Edinburgh for tuition (2). While in Edinburgh he entered a competition. The other competing pipers were jealous of his superior talents and they thought up a plan to destroy his chances of winning the prize. The day before the competition they stole his pipes and pierced the bag in several places. But Angus had a friend Mary, possibly his wife. She found him a sheepskin which although undressed, formed a new bag. The next day he carried off the prize and in honour of his kind helper composed the tune 'Mary's Praise; He married Mary Fraser, daughter of William Fraser of Gairloch (2). They had one son, John Roy (2).

Angus is said to have taught a Roderick Campbell of Guilchonich who was the son of Norman Campbell. It is said that Roderick made such good progress, that when his apprenticeship was but half finished he had learned all his master could teach him. His career was short lived, for he was drowned while attempting to cross the River Ewe by means of the Cruive Dyke, when still a young man.

Angus composed a number of Piobaireachds and one, 'MacLeod of Raasay's Salute' was composed in 1761 (4) (3f). It came into being on the birth of James MacLeod of Raasay. Six daughters had come before him and there was much rejoicing in the Clan when he was born (3d).

The other tunes accredited to Angus were:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. | MacLeod of Raasay's Salute. | (1) (4) (6). |
| 2. | The Desperate Battle. | (1) (3f). |
| 3. | MacKenzies of Applecross' Salute. | (1) (7) |
| 3. | Mary's Praise. | (10) (2) |

Through all our research we were unable to find out the date that Angus died but our assumption is about 1770.

<u>REFERENCE NO</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>ARTICLE</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>PAGE NO</u>
2b	Gairloch	Hereditary Pipers of the Gairloch Family	John H Dixon	41
2c	-----"	-----"	-----"	391
2d	-----"	-----"	-----"	42
2e	-----"	-----"	-----"	178
2f	-----"	William Ross the Gairloch Bard.	-----"	182 and 184
2g	-----"	Hereditary Pipers of the Gairloch Family	-----"	176
3	Angus MacKays of Raasays Collection of Piobaireachd.			Frontice
3b	-----"			Back 13
3c	-----"			Back 9
3d	-----"			Back 3
3e	-----"			See Index
3f	-----"			Comp Book
4	The Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor.			See Index
5	The Oban Times 1935 Iain Dall MacKay's Charter.			Cutting
6	Ceol Mor		Gen Thomason	Comp Book
7.	Piobaireachd Society Collection of Piobaireachd.			Comp Book
8.	Glen's Collection of Piobaireachd.			Book 2