

## **Changes in Mediaeval Lorn** Diarmid Campbell, Kilmelford

### **Forward**

Much of this has to do with my interest in the MacDougalls. They have long been treated unfairly. While Campbells have had academic histories written by Alastair Lorn Campbell of Airds and Stephen Boardman, other than work on the early generations by Sellar etc, there is no adequately researched history of the MacDougalls. The current published material is not based upon academic research. The article in Burke's *Landed Gentry* for example is highly creative.

For the past two hundred years the MacDonald and Jacobite PR machines have told us so much about the Lords of the Isles (1336-1493), that the great MacDougall Lords of Argyll and the Isles have been completely overshadowed. From the time of Somerled (1100-1164) to 1308 they were far grander and more influential than the family on Islay.

### **Introduction**

This attempted overview singles out four incidents to highlight the events that would influence changes in the leadership of Lorn more than once between 1308 and 1470. The first and best known was the ambush and battle that took place in the narrows of the Pass of Brander between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of August in 1308. The second was a galley fight in the Sound of Kerrera in 1460, shortly after James II King of Scots was killed on the 3rd of August that year. The third was a meeting of two nobles on the Isle of Innestrynich on Lochawe on the 11th of December 1462, while the last and fourth event examined here took place on the 20th of December that same year of 1462, and is said to have occurred at the Chapel of Dunstaffnage Castle.

By 1462, the cumulative influence of these and other events precipitated a conflict in Lorn that took almost eight years to resolve. The first incident had led to the ending of the reign of the MacDougall Lords of Argyll, heirs of Somerled. The second temporarily dashed the ambitions of Alan of the Wood, son of MacDougall of Dunollie and nephew of the powerful Donald

*Balloch* MacDonald, Lieutenant of the Isles, for his cousin the Earl of Ross. The third had the heir to the Lordship of Lorn enlist the support of Colin, Earl of Argyll, with promises of a generous reward. The last left that heir, Sir Walter Stewart, unable to control his inheritance and unwilling to reward Argyll for his support. The young King James III finally ended the conflict in Lorn between Argyll and Sir Walter through a land exchange and a new lordship to recommence the latter, and by placing Lorn in the hands of Argyll. Yet these highlights are only some of the incidents that came together to weave a complex story that takes concentration to absorb.

### **Changes in Lorn 1308-1470**

When Robert Bruce murdered the ‘Red’ Comyn in the kirk at Dumfries in 1306, he made an enemy of the most powerful man in the west. That was because Comyn’s sister was Alexander of Argyll’s wife. Bruce faced the most powerful coalition of enemies imaginable: Alexander de Ergadia (Lord of Argyll), the Comyns, the Pope and Edward of England. Although early on the de Ergadia (Lords of Argyll) do not appear much on record using the name MacDougall or even MacSorley – sons of the senior line of Somerled, they have since been known as ‘MacDougall’, due to their descent from Somerled’s son Dougall.

As many likely know, the initial downfall of the MacDougall Lords of Argyll took place in the battle of the Pass of Brander in 1308 when Robert Bruce and his army, including Douglass, Campbell and MacDonald allies, overcame the men of Argyll under Alexander MacDougall, Lord of Argyll, and then besieged and captured Dunstaffnage. Sir Arthur Campbell, ancestor of the Campbells of Strachur, was made Constable of Dunstaffnage for the Crown, and Lorn came under Crown governance, if any.

However, it has to be remembered that the battle of Bannockburn in 1314 did not end the War to keep Independence, and at times the Edwards of England re-invaded and had John Balliol, their candidate for the throne of Scots, in power, so at times MacDougalls turned up in Lorn. One of these was Ewen (or Iain/John) MacDougall who was in Argyll in 1334.

After their defeat in 1308, Alexander Lord of Argyll and his son John *bacach* were not killed but went into exile at the English court where Alexander died in 1310. John became the first admiral of the English navy and captured the Isle of Man for Edward. His son Alan appears to have spent his life at the English court and had a son John.

Here we are on uncertain ground in the MacDougall of Argyll genealogy. Alan's son John who granted charters in 1334 and 1338. Then there was John *gallda* or the outlander or stranger who had charters in 1358 and 1369. These are seen by David Sellar as being the same man, not father and son. The dates fit. The bye-name *gallda* means outlander or stranger, fitting his arrival in Argyll from the south.

At the English court it seems that John *gallda* had been befriended by David II who was there in exile from 1346 to 1357 following his capture at Neville's Cross while invading England. In these charters David II granted John *gallda* John's ancestral MacDougall lands in Lorn with Dunstaffnage as his messuage or seat of power. By 1354 John *gallda* was in Lorn and again using his ancestor's title of 'Lord of Argyll.'

Back in 1334, John of Islay started calling himself 'Lord of the Isles.' This re-granting of MacDougall lands to John *gallda* caused both the lord of Islay (John MacDonald, first Lord of the Isles) and the lord of Lochawe (Gillespie Campbell) some concern, because both had been granted formerly MacDougall of Argyll lands. But with his patron David II still in England, John *gallda* was not in a strong position and so he was obliged to negotiate. He came to an agreement with John of Islay on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 1354. Before December 1355 John *gallda* had also concluded a mutual alliance with Gillespie Campbell of Lochawe. These agreements were both necessary due to conflicting charters of Robert I and David II. David II had evidently disregarded Robert I's earlier grants in Argyll, perhaps due to being in England and without records of those earlier charters.

John *gallda* of Lorn (circa 1314-1375) is said in tradition to have married firstly Christina of Craignish. By her he had a daughter Catherine who would marry Gillespie of Lochawe's son, Sir Colin *Iongantach* (odd or unusual) and the date of the dispensation allowing their marriage is in

1362. This ties in well with gifts of land towards Colin, some through an intermediary, by Catherine's mother Christina in 1361.

John *gallda* and Christina also appear to have had a son Alan *Ruadh* (of the red hair), ancestor of the MacDougalls of Dunollie who, after John *gallda*'s death, became the senior representative of the male line of Somerled. It seems that the idea of a senior line, or succession by primogeniture, was originally a Norse concept and therefore natural to Somerled. That, if true, could be why Dougall's son Duncan ended up with the heartland of Somerled's inheritance, while the other sons, Ranald, Angus and Ruaraidh, ended up with the peripheral lands. So Duncan (MacDougall) was truly 'Lord of Argyll and the Isles.'

John *gallda*'s friend David II, King of Scots, may well have suggested a different and second marriage for John, a royal one. David had looked for a suitably powerful husband for his royal niece, Janet or Joanna Isaac. He was certainly keen to set up a different line of royal descent to his kinsman who would in fact become Robert II, a man whom David mistrusted and disliked, due to the way he had grabbed power and resources to himself during David's exile.

So David II's choice for a second and royal wife for John *gallda* was Janet Isaac whose mother was Robert Bruce's daughter. This royal marriage appears to have involved repudiating an earlier marriage to Christina of Craignish. John of Islay had earlier done the same with Amy MacRuaraidh in order to marry a royal Stewart wife. An echo of this repudiation may lie in the tradition of Christina's MacDougall husband imprisoning her and of her escape to Loch Craignish where she was succoured by Sir Colin *Iongantach* Campbell. Some kind of divorce must have been arranged, for Christina of Craignish later married MacNachtan of Fraoch Eilean on Lochawe.

This royal marriage put John *gallda*'s descendants among those in line for the throne of Scots. But, John *gallda* and Janet had two daughters but no legitimate sons. Two daughters were known as Janet of Lorne and Isabel of Lorn.

John *gallda*'s patron David II, died in 1371 and was succeeded by Robert II whom David had tried to exclude from the succession by use of the Lorn royal marriage. Naturally Robert II was therefore not too keen on John *gallda* of Lorn. Perhaps in retaliation, Robert II took some of John's recently granted Perthshire lands for his own sons. But John *gallda* of Lorn died not long afterwards, in about 1376-77. He was the last MacDougall Lord of Argyll and Lorn.

Why did the Lordship of Lorn not go to the Dunollie family? They start with Alan *ruadh*. Alan *Ruadh* – likely son of John *gallda* and Christina of Craignish, has been said to have been illegitimate. But perhaps that was said to explain why he did not get Lorn. Perhaps he was legitimate but his cousins, the daughters of John *gallda* by Janet Isaac, being royal, took precedence. Certainly they did in the mind of David II. Alan cannot have been a son of Janet Isaac and John *gallda* or he would have been considered more of a threat to Robert II's succession. Yet he seems clearly to have been the son of John *gallda* Lord of Lorn. A part of the evidence for this is the extraordinarily generous grants to Alan *Ruadh*'s son and grandson by John *gallda*'s Stewart son in law who became Lord of Lorn.

Now we should leave Dunstaffnage and take a brief look at the Lorn's Campbell neighbours of Lochawe where Gillespic's father Sir Colin, son of Bruce's friend Sir Neill, had been granted the Lordship in 1315. They lived at Innis Chonnell Castle. Although David II had supported Gillespic of Lochawe, Robert II did also, seeing Gillespic Campbell's power grow in the west, partly due to his Stewart grandfather Sir John Menteith, Lord of Knapdale. In 1382 Robert II granted a heritable royal lieutenancy to Gillespic and his son Sir Colin *Iongantach*. This gave them great power about Lochawe and included Ardsceodnish, the old name for the Kilmartin area. Both Alastair Lorn Campbell of Airds and Stephen Boardman point out the strength of the Stewart backing for the Campbells, not only on Lochawe but on Loch Fyne and in Cowal. Sir Colin's son Duncan would be made first Lord Campbell, and Duncan's grandson Colin would be made first Earl of Argyll.

Returning once again to Dunstaffnage: In those days most heiresses were vulnerable, their inheritance could slip away, so marriage was vital. These MacDougall girls of Lorn, Janet and Isabel, married two brothers, John and

Robert Stewart of the Innermeath family. Their great-grandfather had been Alexander, 4<sup>th</sup> Gt. Steward of Scotland. Initially the girls were co-heiresses, so who would be Lord of Lorn? In 1388 Robert Stewart (the younger brother) and Janet agreed to relinquish Lorn to John and Isabel.

John Stewart was of course an in-comer. So, in order to solidify his position as Lord of Lorn, he had to start off on a solid footing in his relations with his neighbours, his wife's MacDougall cousins at Dunollie, who had an obvious genetic claim to the lordship. By then Alan *Ruadh* had evidently died, and the family at Dunollie consisted of Alan's son John *Maol*, who had married a Campbell lady, and their son John *Ciar*. John Stewart, Lord of Lorn, granted these heads of the MacDougall kindred the bailiary of all the lands of Lorn, plus one third of the income from them, and fosterage of the heir. They also confirmed them in all their lands in the lordship. These grants made the MacDougall leadership immensely powerful and virtually allowed them to continue in the power that had been held by John *gallda* in all but the title 'Lord of Lorn' and a reduced income from the fines and courts. John Stewart, Lord of Lorn, and Isabel MacDougall had a son whom they also called Robert.

Back at Innis Chonnell on Lochawe again, Boardman's view of Gillespie of Lochawe was that he was so much a Gael that he did not even seem to bother with knighthood, yet he was so well trusted that his lands and responsibilities increased. By 1395 Gillespie's son Sir Colin *Iongantach* was using the title 'de Ergadia.' of Argyll. The wife of Alan *Maol* of Dunollie was likely a daughter of Sir Colin's, certainly close kin of the Lochawe family.

Once again at Dunstaffnage, Isabel and John Lord of Lorn's son Robert had grown to maturity. In 1397 the Pope gave a dispensation allowing Robert Stewart, son of John of Lorn to marry Joan, daughter of Robert Duke of Albany, who was a son of Robert II.

The Duke of Albany, son of Robert II was immensely powerful and his many children he married into a great number of the powerful houses of Scotland. This, then, was another royal link for the Lords of Lorn but also a link to an array of power all over Scotland.

Robert Stewart at Dunstaffnage eventually succeeded his father John as Lord of Lorn. He and Joan had several sons, John, Walter and others. Eventually John would inherit Lorn, while Walter came into Innermeath. So, of the Stewart Lords of Lorn there was John, followed by Robert, followed by John. Boardmann suggests that John's wife may have been a daughter of the Earl of Ross. But she and John Stewart Lord of Lorn had no legitimate son but two daughters. One daughter married Colin Earl of Argyll and one married Colin's uncle Campbell of Glenorchy. The Lordship would not pass to either of them since their father had several brothers. The eldest of these was Sir Walter Stewart of Innermeath. So, in 1452, John of Lorn confirmed his brother Sir Walter Stewart as his heir in the Lordship of Lorn, and failing him, their younger brothers in turn if need be.

Now we return to Dunollie and take a look at John *gallda's* kinsman of the Dunollie family. Allan *Ruadh* MacDougall son (or brother?) of John *gallda's*, was certainly a close Kinsman to the Lord of Lorn for whose people he was responsible as bailie. Allan Ruadh's son John *Maol* at Dunollie had first married a Campbell lady, likely daughter of Sir Colin *Iongantach* of Lochawe who died in 1412. They had a son John *Ciar* MacDougall; *Ciar* in one sense meaning swarthy. But John's mother died. His father John *Maol* then had a liaison that may later have resulted in marriage. His mistress was Finguela, sister of Donald *Balloch* MacDonald. They had a son who was known as Alan *na Choille* or 'of the wood'.

Who was Donald *Balloch*? In 1460 he commanded the southern Isles for his cousin John MacDonald, Lord of the Isles. John's father Alexander had gained the earldom of Ross, and John was having such a good time there in Ross being earl and raiding his neighbours that he left control of the southern Isles to Donald. Donald's father John *Mor* MacDonald was brother of Alexander's father Donald of the Isles who died in 1420-23.

In 1460 James II was killed when his cannon exploded at Roxburgh. He was succeeded by James III who was then only 9 years old and minorities usually loosened the ties that bound the Scots leadership into a semblance of abiding by the laws of the nation. Colin of Argyll was head of the royal household.

Young Alan *na Coille* or ‘of the wood’ would seem to have been a natural leader and ruthless. He evidently led a band of outlaws in the woods of Lorn, jealous of his half-brother John *Ciar*’s position and inheritance. Likely inspired by his mother and Donald *Balloch*, Alan kindapped his brother John *Ciar* in that year of 1460 and held him on Kerrera. He must have been aiming to inherit Dunollie.

But John *Ciar*’s close kinsman, Colin first Earl of Argyll, heard of this and came storming down the Sound of Kerrera in his galleys and slaughtered many of Allan’s gang and burned their boats. John *Ciar* returned safely to Dunollie. Allan of the wood, however, escaped to fight again. He would aim higher next time.

And so, back once again to Dunstaffnage: Meanwhile, John of Lorn had a natural son Dougall by his mistress, a McLarren lady. There were signs that he desired to marry the boy’s mother and so legitimate Dougall. John’s brother Sir Walter therefore got concerned about his own expected inheritance of the Lordship of Lorn. He saw Colin of Argyll as the main power in the area and asked to meet with him. The meeting took place on Innestrynich, then an island on Lochawe, suggesting that Colin was still then living partly at Innis Chonnell and had not yet moved to Inveraray. The two men met on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1462. One imagines a chill in the air.

Sir Walter explained his concerns to Colin of Argyll and, in return for his support of Walter’s claim to the Lordship, promised that on his gaining that title he would grant to Argyll the land between Lochawe and Loch Etive. Since sea-access on the west would be of great advantage to Argyll, he agreed to support Walter in his claim to be Lord of Lorn. A document was written up and duly signed to that effect. The lands in question included those of Inverawe – along the Awe, giving Argyll vital western sea access from Lochawe to Loch Etive.

Off in the woods of Lorn, Alan *na Coille* had evidently recruited a new gang. While the evidence is soft, the conjecture is made by historians that he was further influenced by his uncle Donald Balloch. He now aimed for the Lordship.



The Stewart of Appin legend has it that John of Lorn had now decided to marry his MacLarren mistress at Dunstaffnage. And that while all were in procession from castle to chapel, Alan of the wood and his gang charged up and knifed John of Lorn and then captured the castle. The marriage would have made John's son Dougall his legal heir, with preference over Sir Walter.

So much for the legend. The record shows that on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1463 Alan MacDougall murdered John, Lord of Lorn, at Dunstaffnage. In the ensuing chaos, Alan of the wood also captured and held the castle of Dunstaffnage. Boardman finds the conjecture that this Alan was Alan *na Coille* a natural one. The legend continues that John of Lorn married his MacLarren mistress with his last breath. But the Crown made Sir Walter Lord of Lorn, leaving his nephew Dougall Stewart supported by the late John's followers, but without title and with his home occupied by Alan *na Coille*.

The Crown was invested in a boy of only ten as heir to the throne, James III. Colin Earl of Argyll had been made Master of the King's Household and his influence would have been important in confirming Walter as Lord of Lorn. However, Sir Walter of Innermeath had no following in Argyll. And Sir Walter failed to attempt the ousting of Allan *na Coille* from Dunstaffnage, and notably refused to pass on the promised lands between Lochawe and Loch Etive to Colin of Argyll.

Meanwhile Young Dougall Stewart fought Alan *na Coille* with help from his MacLarren kinsfolk and likely also from John *Ciar* MacDougall and his men. Meanwhile the people of Lorn are said to have suffered conflict for six years.

So Colin of Argyll took Walter to court and claimed some of his eastern lands for his Stewart Countess as her dowry. Walter then resorted to violence, burning Castle Gloum above Dollar, the inheritance of his niece the Countess of Argyll, and since known as Castle Campbell. The repairs to the roof of the great hall can be seen to this day. Argyll was awarded compensation from Walter by the courts, and also claimed many Lorn

lands in the east of Scotland in the name of his wife, lands related to the Innermeath inheritance.

In Argyll the Donald *Balloch* threat through Allan *na Coille* still had to be dealt with. In August 1464 the king and Argyll met with the Earl of Ross at Inverness. Ross was of course Donald Balloch's kinsman and patron. That may have removed Alan from Dunstaffnage. Or, as the Stewart of Appin tradition holds, Alan was killed by Dougall Stewart and his McLarren supporters at a place overlooking Stalcair Bay in Appin.

Sir Walter finally capitulated to the reality of having no support in Lorn. In November 1469 Sir Walter ended his dispute with Argyll and agreed to resign Lorn to the King in return for the extensive eastern Innermeath lands granted to Argyll in settlement of his Stewart wife's dowry. A land exchange took place.

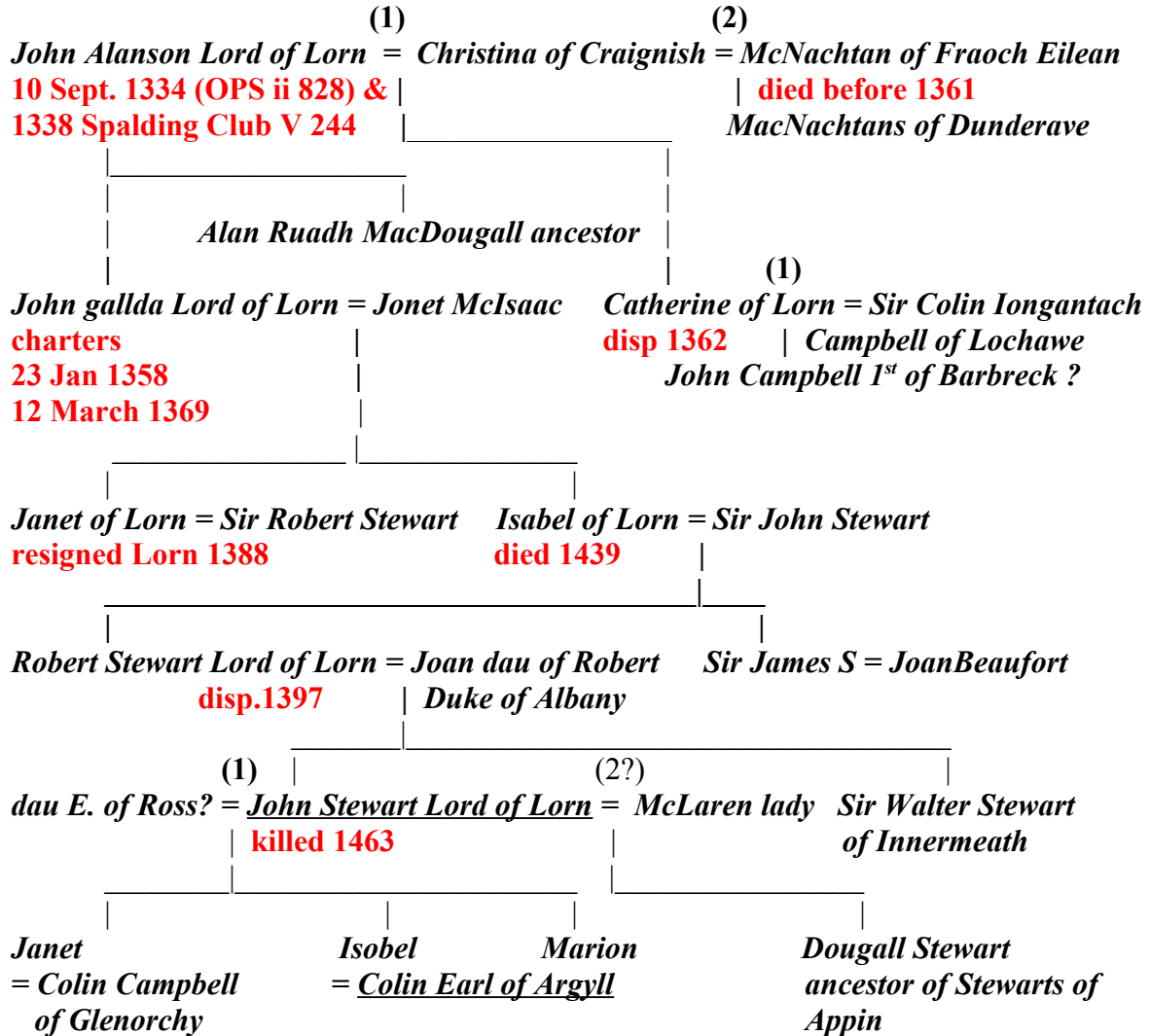
On the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1470, Sir Walter Stewart was granted the title of Lord Innermeath and the following day resigned the lordship of Lorn to James III. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April James III granted the Lordship of Lorn to Colin Earl of Argyll. His son Archibald would include the galley of Lorn quartered on his arms.

Before long Dougall Stewart was granted Appin as his part of Lorn. He was the ancestor of the Stewarts of Appin.

And as for the MacDougall senior line of Somerled: Although today the families of Dunollie, Gallanach and Lunga have gone through the female line, that of Raray would seem to have survived through the line of Craiganich on Lismore, now across the Atlantic – but that is another story.

---

**THE STEWART LORDS OF LORN** *Conjectural Tree*



**NOTE:**

This tree separates John Alanson (top left) and gives John gallda as his son. These were very possibly the same person, with John's first wife being Christina of Craignish and his second wife being the grand-daughter of Robert Bruce. That would mean that Allan Ruadh, ancestor of the Dunollie MacDougalls, was Alan's son by Christina.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The clearest and most current description of these events by an historian is given in Stephen Boardman's recent book *The Campbells - 1250-1513*. That, a series of papers by David Sellar, now Lord Lyon, and *A History of Clan Campbell* by Alastair Campbell of Airds, are the main sources used here. What is missing is a scholarly academic style History of Clan Dougall, once the princes of Argyll and numbers of the Isles.

The secondary sources I have used to compile this simplified sequence of events about the flow of power through various families in Medieval Lorn are contained in the works described in the Bibliography.

The insertion of information that one of John *Gallda's* wives was Christina of Craignish was provided by Dr. Lorne Campbell PhD, the historian (Courtauld Institute and now National Gallery, London) and by Andrew B. MacEwen (see Boardman's comments on his contributions to his work).

David Sellar, formerly Edinburgh University Law, now Lord Lyon King of Arms.

MacDougall Pedigrees in MS 1467 in NOTES & QUERIES of the Society of West Highland and Island Historical Research, Number XXIX, August 1986, pp.3-16.

Alastair Campbell of Airds, *A History of Clan Campbell – From Origins to Flodden*, vol. 1, Edinburgh University Press.2000.

Stephen Boardman, Department of Scottish History, Edinburgh University, The Tale of Leper John and the Campbell Acquisition of Lorn, in *Alba, Celtic Scotland in the Medieval Era*, E. J. Cowan & R. Andrew McDonald, Ed, Tuckwell Press.

Stephen Boardman, *The Campbells 1250-1513*, John Donald pub., an imprint of Birlinn, 2006.

R. Andrew McDonald, *The Kingdom of the Isles – Scotland's Western Seaboard, c.1100 – c. 1336*, Scottish Historical Review Monograph Series No. 4, Tuckwell Press 1997.

**Address for correspondence:** Diarmid Campbell, Kilchoan Farmhouse, Kilmelford, Argyll PA34 4XD