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*The Earliest Campbells—Norman,  
Briton or Gael?*

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## *The Earliest Campbells—Norman, Briton or Gael?*

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Our peerage writers and family historians have given many and varying accounts of the origins of the Campbells, accounts which derive that family sometimes from Norman, sometimes from British and sometimes from Gaelic ancestors, and not infrequently from all three at the same time. George Crawford wrote in 1716 in his *Peerage*:

This noble ancient Family is deriv'd from a series of illustrious Ancestors, who possess'd Lochow in Argyle-shire, according to the traditional Accounts by the Bards and Sanachies, as early as the Time of King Fergus II who restor'd our Monarchy (Anno Christi 404).

The first Appellation they us'd was Odwbin [O'Duibne], which, according to an early Custom they assum'd from Diarmid Odwbin, one of their Ancestors, a brave and warlike Man, . . .

From this Diarmid Odwbin, the Bards have recorded a long series of the Barons of Lochow whose Actions they tell us, were very renown'd both for valor and courage.

Crawford derives the descent of the later Campbells from one of Diarmaid's successors, 'Paul Odwbin . . . call'd Paul in Spuran, so denominate from his being the King's Treasurer', from the marriage of whose daughter Eva with one 'Gillespick Odwbin, a Relation of her own' he traces the later family (Crawford 1716:13).

Wood's edition of Douglas' *Peerage*, published in 1813, while not ignoring Diarmaid O'Duibne, concentrates on Eva's husband, described as 'Gillespick Campbell, a gentleman of Anglo-Norman lineage' (Douglas 1813:85). Another believer in the Norman ancestry of the Campbells was John Pinkerton whose views were repeated with general approval in Anderson's *Scottish Nation* in 1866 (Anderson 1866:1.543). The name 'Campbell', according to those in favour of the Norman theory, derives from 'de Campo Bello'.

However, co-existing beside these claims to descend from Norman knights and Fenian heroes (for Diarmaid O'Duibne was a companion of Finn), there has also been a claim to descend from King Arthur. So late as 1871 the anonymous author of *The House of Argyll* opted for this theory: 'Various conjectures', he wrote, 'have been formed with respect to the origins of these ancient barons, and the most probable and prevalent is, that they descended from Arthur, Prince of the Silures whose heroic valour sustained the declining state of his country in the invasions of the Saxons, and who is so much

celebrated by the songs of Thaleissin [*sic*]; . . . he is said to have married Elizabeth, daughter of the King of France, which behoved to be Childobert, the fifth in descent from Pharamond . . .' (Argyll 1871:4).

Most nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians, however, have been more cautious in their approach, taking to heart no doubt the strictures of Buchanan of Auchmar (1723) on 'the fondness of people's having the origin of their most famous men screwed up to as great a pitch of antiquity as possible, yea, sometimes above measure' (Buchanan 1820:5). The balance of modern opinion seems to be in favour of a Gaelic, although non-Fenian, origin. Skene, in his *Highlanders of Scotland* (1837), repudiated the 'de Campo Bello' story, saying that there was no early authority whatsoever for it, and suggesting that Campbell ancestors might have formed part of the ancient inhabitants of the district of Garmoran (Macbain 1902:356). Skene's later opinion, in *Celtic Scotland*, was that the original seat of the Campbells was the district of Lochow and Ardskeodnish, that is, Lochawe and Kilmartin Glassary (Skene 1886-90:3.330-1). A more recent historian of the clan, Andrew McKerral, describes the traditional genealogical material as being 'surrounded by the usual nimbus of myth and fable, or at best uncertain tradition' and goes on to quote with approval the opinion of the 8th Duke of Argyll who described the Campbells as 'the purely Celtic family from which I am descended—a family of Scots—that is to say belonging to that Celtic colony from Ireland which founded the Dalriadic kingdom, and to whom the name of Scots originally and exclusively belonged' (McKerral 1953:6).

However, the tradition of a British origin has not been entirely without support, albeit rather muted. Alexander Macbain, while not denying the strength of the Lochawe claim, commented significantly, 'If the Campbells did not originally belong to Argyle, we must not go further than Dumbartonshire for their habitat. The old genealogies trace them back to the British King Arthur, a tradition which may indicate that the Campbells originally lived on the borderland of the Strathclyde Briton and the Gael. The name Arthur is common among them' (Macbain 1902:421). Sir Iain Moncreiffe follows the same tack in his *Highland Clans* (1967:110). Finally, Professor Barrow has written in his *Robert Bruce*: 'The precise origin of the Campbells is not known. There is no doubt that their greatness as territorial lords dates from King Robert's reign. But they were certainly not landless adventurers' (Barrow 1965:406). The aim of this paper is to investigate the 'nimbus of myth and fable' and uncertain tradition, to try to separate the original Campbell tradition as to origins from the genealogical chaff which later surrounded it and to assess, if possible, the authenticity of this original tradition.<sup>1</sup>

The first step is to establish a foundation of fact by considering the accepted record evidence for the earliest Campbells. (Useful secondary sources here are Balfour Paul's *Scots Peerage* and Barrow's *Robert Bruce*.) The earliest Campbell of whose existence contemporary record survives is one Gillespie Campbell, whose name appears in 1263 in connection with the lands of Menstrie and Sauchie in Clackmannanshire, and again in 1266 as witness to a charter granted at Stirling by King Alexander III (Exch. Rolls:

1.24; Lindores Liber 1841:8). Next on record appears Gillespie's son Colin (otherwise Nicholas) who witnesses a charter c. 1281 and thereafter figures quite prominently in Scottish affairs for some 15 years—for example, in 1291 he acted as one of the auditors of Bruce the Competitor (Lennox Cartularium 1833:21; Barrow 1965:406). Next named in point of time is Colin's son Neill (otherwise Nigellus) who witnesses, in 1282, during his father's lifetime, a grant of land to the Abbey of Cambuskenneth, by Stirling (Cambuskenneth 1872:70). This is the Neill Campbell who later became one of King Robert Bruce's most constant supporters and intimate companions and who is described by Barrow as 'one of that small band of noblemen without whose help in 1306 and 1307 Robert Bruce would hardly have survived, let alone recovered the kingdom' (Barrow 1965:406-7). He died about 1315. The relationship of these three men, Gillespie, Colin and Neill to each other is well vouched by the record evidence, and the descent of the later family of Argyll from them undoubted. Colin is usually taken to be—I believe rightly—the original Cailean Mór, from whom the style 'MacCailein Mór' derives.

It is worth noting at this point that most secondary sources from Crawford onwards have confused the careers of Colin and Neill owing to a failure to appreciate that the latinised form 'Nicholas' normally represents the name 'Colin' and not the name 'Neill'; 'Neill' is generally rendered 'Nigellus' in Latin.<sup>2</sup> Thus, for example, it is Colin and not Neill who appears as baillie of Lochawe and Ardskeodnish in 1296, and who figures in the *Ragman Roll* in the same year as 'Nicol Cambel' (Barrow 1965:406). In Barron's *Scottish War of Independence* this confusion over nomenclature is worse confounded because of a failure to realise that 'Neill' and 'Nigel' are synonymous.

Others of the surname Campbell begin to appear on record with increasing frequency from about 1290 onwards. Donald Campbell, Dugald Campbell, Duncan Campbell and Arthur Campbell all figure, and are taken by *The Scots Peerage* to be brothers of Neill (Scots Peerage: 1.321-2). A strict construction of the record evidence, however, will only admit Dugald, and perhaps also Donald to that relationship (*infra*, p. 10). However, it is clear enough that the later Campbells of Loudoun descend from Donald, and the Campbells of Strachur, the designation of whose chief is 'MacArthur' from Arthur. Also on record are Thomas Campbell in 1293 and 1309, and a clerical Master Neill Campbell who figures *inter alia* as an envoy of the Earl of Carrick in 1293 (APS:I.447, 289; Cal. Docs. Scot. 2. no. 675).

Apart from the early record evidence for individuals named Campbell, it may also, I think, be accepted that the earlier and original name of the family was O'Duibne or O'Dhuibne. It would appear, in fact, that the appellation 'O'Duibne' survived in popular speech until at least the eighteenth century. Thus Duncan Forbes of Culloden refers to the Campbells as 'Clan Guin', while the author of the Craignish family history c. 1720 says that the Campbells are 'also to this Day called Clan Oduine, or Clan O'Guine', adding later that although the surname Campbell had been used for 650 years or more (an exaggeration) 'yet the ancient Surname of Oduine so far prevails, that the other is

scarce ever mentioned in the paternal tongue of the ancient Highlanders, but always as above Clan O'Guine' (Skene 1886-90:3.339, n. 13; Campbell 1926:194).

Other instances of the use of the name O'Duibne could be multiplied, but three more should suffice. John Carswell in the dedication to his Gaelic prayer book in 1567 addresses Archibald, Earl of Argyll as 'O'Duibhne': 'Do Ghiolla Easbuig Ua nDuibhne Iarla Earra Gaoidheal' (Thomson 1970:3). The sixteenth-century *Book of the Dean of Lismore* also uses the form Ua Duibhne ['oy d(o)uine'] (Watson 1937:116). The last and oldest example occurs in the well known charter granted in 1369 by David II to Gillespie (Archibald) Campbell. There Gillespie is granted various lands 'with all the liberties of the said land as freely as Duncan M'Duine, progenitor of the said Archibald Campbell did enjoy in the barony of Lochow or any other lands belonging to him' (Hist. MSS Comm:4.477). This charter shows clearly that in 1369 the Campbell connection with Lochawe was believed to date back at least to the time of one Duncan—of whom there is no contemporary record, but who must have lived earlier than the Gillespie of 1263 and 1266—and that this Duncan was believed to be the descendant of one Duibne. Like Skene in *Celtic Scotland*, I am inclined to believe that Duibne, the eponym of the clan, was a historical character. Indeed, with the possible exception of Diarmaid, who it will be argued below is a special case, I doubt if it can be shown that the eponym of any highland family is a fictitious character.

I should like to consider next the traditional accounts of the bards and the seanachies mentioned by Crawford, the accounts, that is, on which ultimately Crawford, Douglas, Pinkerton and others based their own. The writing of manuscript histories of the Campbells appears to have been a considerable growth industry in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and of these accounts quite a number still survive. The fullest and most readily accessible in print is *Ane Account of the Genealogie of the Campbells*, edited for the Scottish History Society by Sheriff J. R. N. MacPhail. Other printed sources are Buchanan of Auchmar's *Genealogy and Present State of Ancient Scottish Surnames*; the manuscript history of the Campbells of Craignish written by Alexander Campbell about 1720, and edited by Herbert Campbell for the Scottish History Society; and the anonymous *History of the House of Argyll*, to which reference has already been made, published in 1871. These accounts, most of which make both interesting and entertaining reading, all tell roughly the same story, a story which might be termed the later approved Campbell tradition.

All these accounts derive, as they usually acknowledge explicitly, from two earlier, seventeenth-century manuscript histories, the one compiled by Neill MacEwan, the last of the hereditary seanachies of the family of Argyll,<sup>3</sup> and the other by Alexander Colville or Colvin, a strong and bloody man who sat as Justice Depute in Edinburgh for the best part of fifty-seven years from 1607 until 1664.<sup>4</sup> Let the Craignish history tell the tale:

It's well known to any that have the least smatterings of the Old Scottish affairs that every considerable Family in the Highlands had their Bards and Shenachies. The Bard was a

Family Poet, and the Shenachie their prose writer, but very oft the Bard supply'd the place of both. These Offices were heretable, and had a pension, commonly a piece of land annexed to that Office. Their work was to hand down to posterity the valorous actions, Conquests, battles, skirmishes, marriages and relations of the predecessors by repeating and singing the same at births, baptisms, marriages, feasts and funeralls, so that no people since the Curse of the Almighty dissipated the Jews took such care to keep their Tribes, Cadets and branches, so well and so distinctly separate. Aarne, or Saturn McEune, who lived in Earl Archibald Gruamach's time and had for pension the Lands of Kilchoan in Netherlorne, and his son Niel mach Aarne vic Eune were the heretable Genealogists of the Family of Argyll. This Niell dyed about the year 1650, and was the last of them. Printing of Hystorie becoming then more frequent, the necessity of maintaining these Annalists began to wear off.

Mr Alexr. Colvin, I doe believe Laird of Blair in Fife, who was much with the Late Marquis of Argyle, revised these Genealogies as the McEunes left them betwixt the years 1650 and 1660 and his Second Edition of them is it that goes by the name of Colvin's Genealogy of the Campbells (Campbell 1926:190-1).

The Craignish history mentions that the ninth Earl of Argyll 'who suffered for the pure Religion and Liberties of this Countrey in the year 1685, sett about this work by the help of Mr Robert Duncanson, who dy'd minister of Campbelltown, assisted by several other good Shenachies betwixt the year 1670 and 1676, and is it, that goes by the name of Duncanson's Genealogie'. A copy of Duncanson's genealogy is still preserved at Inverary, and it is clear from this that Duncanson's genealogy and *Ane Account of the Genealogie of the Campbells*, the author of which was unknown to Sheriff MacPhail, are identical.<sup>5</sup> However, when Craignish continues that 'all of them [the genealogies] are lame in the matter of Chronologie which is the life of History and want much to be mended in that and other parts' it is not far wide of the mark. Boece, Holinshed and Geoffrey of Monmouth were clearly no strangers to Mr Colville. Yet, critically handled, I believe that the MacEwan/Colville tradition can tell us much.

The most convenient account to take is Duncanson's *Ane Account of the Genealogie of the Campbells*. 'Although' it begins 'the common and ordinary account of the genealogie of the name of Campbell or Clann oduibhn doth commence from Arthur of the round table, King of the Britons as a very famous and great person yet wee shall commence it some ages before him' (MacPhail 1916:75). For our purposes, however, it will suffice to begin with Arthur. Arthur is given a son Smerevie or Merevie [called Mervin by Buchanan], described as 'a great and famous person of whom diverse and strange things are spoken in the Irish traditions; it is said that he was born in Dumbarton on the south syde thereof, in a place called the redd hall or in Irish Tour in Talla Dherig that is Tower of the redd hall or redd house, he was called to his agnomen or by-name the fool of the forrest because he was a wild undaunted person'. The pedigree continues with a series of clearly fictitious persons of whom nothing of interest is related (Fig. 1): after Smerevie, Ferrither, after Ferrither, Duibne Mor, then Arthur Og and another Ferrither. 'Some reckons', says *Ane Account*, 'this Ferrither to have married a daughter of Diarmid oduibhn who was a great man in Ireland and to have had of her

his son Duibhne falt dhearg, to which,' says our author, 'I cannot so readily agree.' One reason why this alternative tradition is rejected, reasonably enough, is that if it were true it would mean that the Campbells' descent from Diarmaid would not be in the direct male line, but through a female. Another reason given is 'Because thereby diverse generations contained in the genealogical tree which generally passes for current will fall to be unmentioned as lost or as never to have been' (MacPhail 1916: 77-8).

*'Ane Account of the Genealogie of the Campbells'*

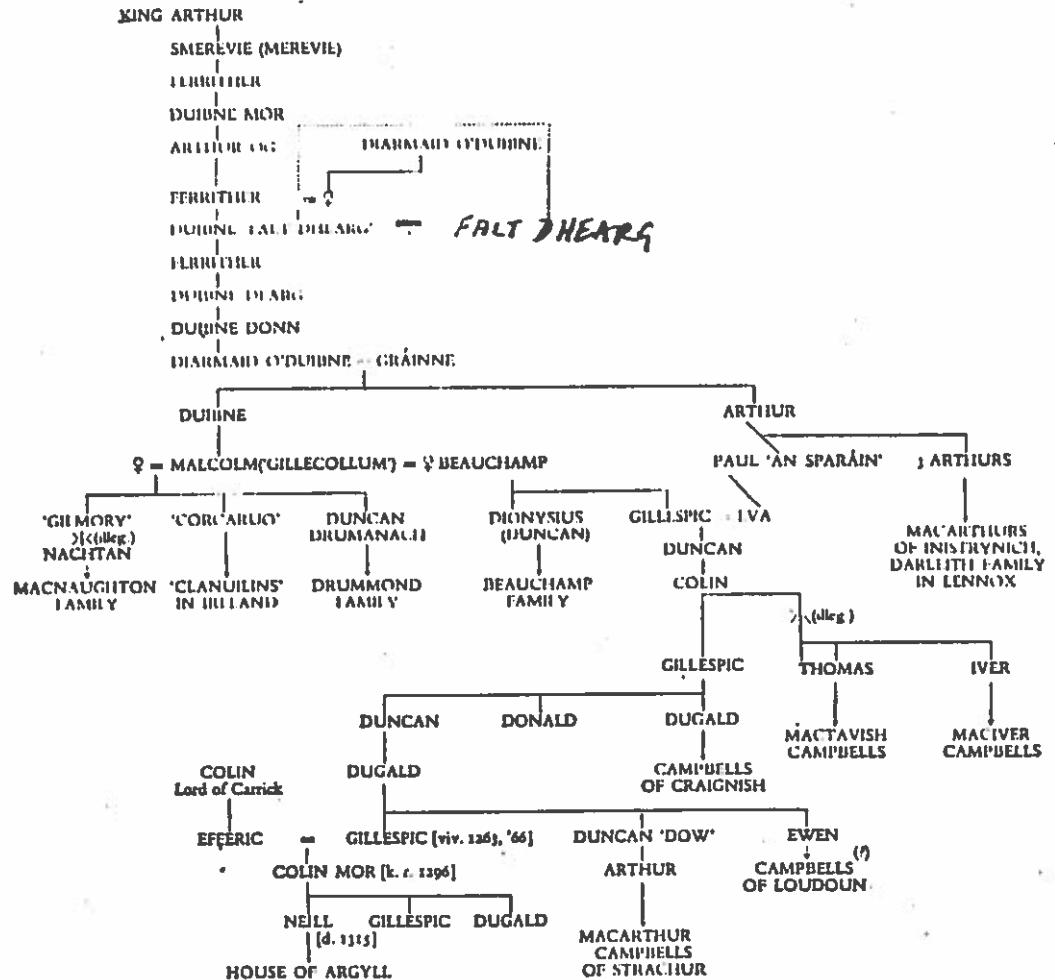


FIG. 1 The Campbell Pedigree according to *Ane Account*. (Note: Some attempt has been made to standardise the spellings of the original.)

After Ferrither, comes Duibne, then another Ferrither followed by two more Duibnes and then, at last, ten generations below Arthur, Diarmaid O'Duibne. *Ane Account*

explains that this is the famous Diarmaid who married Gráinne, and thus identifies him with that legendary follower of Finn MacCool the story of whose love affair with Gráinne is well known in Gaelic tradition and has so imprinted itself on the Irish folk memory that to this day every second dolmen in Ireland is known as the 'Bed of Diarmaid and Gráinne'.<sup>6</sup>

After Diarmaid follows another Duibne whose son Malcolm travels to France where he 'took in marriage the heretrix of Beochamps (that is to say Campus Bellus or pleasant field) being sister daughter of William the Conqueror'. Malcom's eldest son Dionysius or Duncan stays in France and founds the family of Beauchamp, but his second son Gillespic returns to Scotland where he marries his cousin Eva, called heiress of Lochawe and daughter of one Paul O'Duibne alias Paul an Sparáin. Paul himself is made a grandson of Diarmaid O'Duibne and is given three brothers all called Arthur from whom, it is said, descend the MacArthurs of Inistrynich on Lochawe, and the family of Darleith in the Lennox. Paul an Sparáin is so named because he was 'Purse-master or Treasurer to the Kings for the tyme'.

So far *Ane Account* has valiantly attempted to incorporate the British, the Gaelic and the Norman traditions of ancestry into one direct male line descent. Included too, is the popular etymology of the surname Campbell from 'de Campo Bello', transmogrified by way of 'Campus Bellus' and 'Bellus Campus' to Beauchamp. In fact, the name 'Cambel'—the intrusive 'p' does not appear until the latter half of the fifteenth century—almost certainly originated as a nickname meaning simply, in Gaelic, 'twisted mouth': according to MacFirbis (*infra*, p. 117) the first 'Caibéil' was Dugald, grandfather of Colin Mor. Again, the tradition that Lochawe came originally to the Campbells by an heiress is incorporated but that heiress too is made an O'Duibne in the male line.

Malcolm, father of Gillespic is given three other sons, 'Gilmory, Corcaruo and Duncan Drumanach' by a different wife. From these sons, we are informed, descend respectively the MacNaughtons, 'the Clanuilius in Ireland' and the Drummonds (MacPhail 1916:81). Gillespic and Eva's son Duncan also marries a Lochawe heiress, with issue Colin. Colin is given two illegitimate sons, Thomas and Iver, as well as his legitimate successor Gillespic. Thomas is said to have conquered Cowal from the Lamonts 'being a man of great valor and couradge', and to have founded the MacTavish Campbells, while from Iver, 'begotten on the daughter of a great man called Swinceruo he was owner of Castle Swine in Knapdaill and was Thane of Knapdaill and Glassrie', descend the MacIver Campbells.<sup>7</sup> Gillespic has three sons: Duncan his successor, Donald and Dugald *a quo* the Campbells alias MacDougals of Craignish. Duncan's son Dugald marries a MacNaughton kinswoman and also has three sons: Gillespic—and here at last we are on firm ground for this is the Gillespic of 1263 and 1266—Duncan Dow and Ewen. Duncan Dow, is represented as the father of Arthur Campbell *a quo* the Campbells of Strachur, this Arthur being Bruce's contemporary, while Ewen with rather less certainty is made ancestor of the family of Loudoun. Gillespic's wife is named as Efferic, daughter to Colin Lord of Carrick, and their son is Colin Mór. Colin, for



what it is worth, is given three sons, Sir Neill, Gillespie and Dugald the parson. There let us pause and take stock.

Firstly, and briefly, how reliable is *Ane Account* regarding the collaterals and descendants of Gillespie of 1266? In making Arthur Campbell a cousin and not a brother of Colin Mór (*pace Scots Peerage*: 1.321), I believe *Ane Account* to be correct. At any rate, there is some record evidence for the existence of Arthur's reputed father, Duncan Dow: thus, it seems, Duncan 'Dow' (i.e. 'Dubh'), ancestor of Strachur, is to be identified with the 'Duncan Duf' who appears in 1293 as a landowner in Balliol's newly-created sheriffdom of Kintyre (*APS*: 1.447). Loudoun's descent from Ewen, however, is more doubtful; rather it seems probable the Loudoun's ancestor Donald was indeed a brother of Sir Neill as *The Scots Peerage* suggests, although the evidence is admittedly tenuous.<sup>8</sup>

More interesting is the account of Gillespie's marriage with 'Efferic', daughter of Colin of Carrick. This has been generally disbelieved, the reason being, in the words of *The Scots Peerage* 'there was no Colin of Carrick known to history' (*Scots Peerage*: 1.319). A record of Colin of Carrick under that name there may not be, but a Nicholas of Carrick appears on record more than once, and this Nicholas, there can be no doubt, was a son of Duncan, Earl of Carrick: for example, 'Nicholaus filius Dunecani de Carric' confirms his father's grant of the church of Maybole to the Priory of North Berwick, c. 1250 (*North Berwick Carte* 1847: 14). Chronologically Nicholas fits. Unfortunately, as in the case of Colin Mór Campbell and his son Neill, a mistaken assimilation of the names Nicholas and Neill has led to confusion. Duncan of Carrick was succeeded in his earldom by his son Neill, and this Neill, Earl of Carrick, and his brother Colin, otherwise Nicholas, have been taken (e.g. *Scots Peerage*: 2.426) to be one and the same. The story of Gillespie's marriage then is feasible. More than that, it is probable. Colin Mór is the first Campbell to bear that christian name (the earlier Colin appearing in the pedigree being discounted, *infra* p. 119). It is quite probable he took his name from his mother's father. Similarly, the clerical Master Neill Campbell, appears to be the first Campbell to bear that christian name. He must, I think, be a brother of Colin Mór and a grand nephew of Neill, the last Celtic Earl of Carrick. When one discovers that both Master Neill and Colin Mór have associations with the County of Ayr the case is virtually complete: as mentioned above (p. 111) Master Neill Campbell was an envoy of the Earl of Carrick in 1293, while he appears in the Ragman Roll in 1296 as 'Mestre Neel Cahibel . . . del counte de Are' (*Cal. Docs. Scot.*: 2. 199); Colin Mór was involved in 1293 in a transaction concerning the lands of Symington in Ayrshire (*Newbattle Registrum* 1849: 137-42). I would suggest, then, that the christian names 'Colin' and 'Neill' came into the Campbell family from the family of the Celtic Earls of Carrick by way of a marriage contracted about the middle of the thirteenth century. If this conjecture is correct, then the mother of King Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, and the mother of Colin Mór were first cousins, and the strong and consistent support given to Bruce by the family of Campbell is partly explicable on a kinship basis.<sup>9</sup>

What credence is to be given to the earlier part of the pedigree, to the generations

before Gillespic of 1263? I believe that an examination of the later approved Campbell tradition, based as it is on MacEwan and Colville, viewed in the light of some older, shorter and altogether less corrupt genealogies leads inescapably to the conclusion that the original Campbell tradition of ancestry was neither Gaelic nor Norman, but British.

The older, shorter, and less corrupt genealogies relied on are three in number, the same three in fact relied on by Skene in Appendix VIII to *Celtic Scotland*, 3. The first is the early genealogical account of various Scottish clans known usually as 'MS 1467',

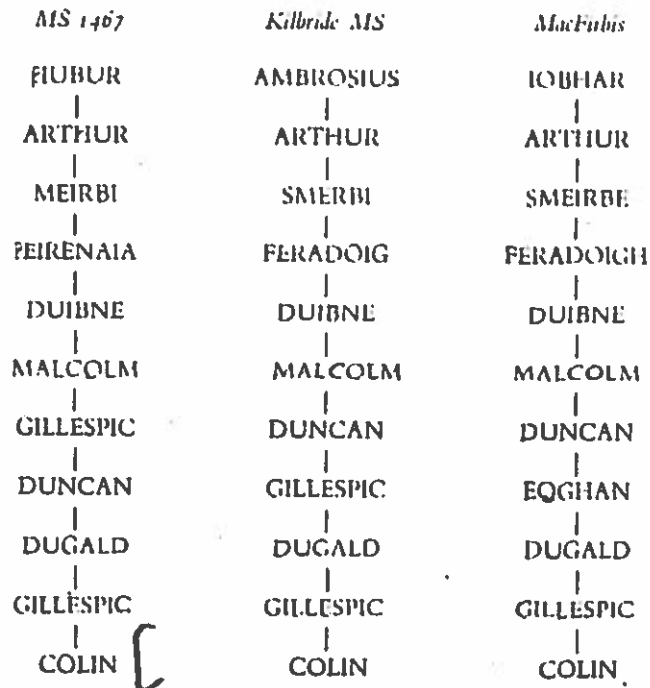


FIG. 2 The Ten Generations above Colin Mór.

after its supposed date, but which, it now appears was probably written rather earlier in the fifteenth century.<sup>10</sup> The second is the Kilbride MS c. 1550, edited in *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis* in 1847, but now lost (Mackinnon 1912:217-19). A further garbled genealogy still extant (Maclagan MS 196) and dating from c. 1700 appears to be based on the Kilbride MS. Thirdly there is the Campbell pedigree given by the great seventeenth-century Irish genealogist Duaid MacFabis but certainly dating from before his time. Fig. 2 sets out the ten generations before Colin Mór given in each of these pedigrees. The 1467 MS only gives ten generations but that is enough to take the pedigree back to King Arthur, whose father's name, difficult to read, is probably intended to be 'Uther'. The Kilbride MS also goes back to Arthur, giving him as the son of Ambrosius (i.e. Ambrosius Aurelianus) and grandson of Constantine. Beyond that it carries back

through a succession of Arthurs, Beinne the Britons and others to Briotain, the eponym of the British race. MacFirbis' account is more interesting: it is not clear that the Arthur in this pedigree is in fact King Arthur, and beyond him appear a string of curious names like 'Coel' and 'Catogain', which have an archaic Welsh or British look about them.

Now there are some obvious points to be made about these pedigrees. In the first place, they do give substantially the same account of the eight generations or so before Colin Mór. Secondly, there is no hint of a Norman descent. Third and more surprisingly no Diarmaid O'Duibne appears, indeed no Diarmaid at all appears. A Duibne appears however, and all the accounts give this Duibne a grandson or great grandson Duncan, who corresponds well enough with the Duncan of the 1369 charter (*scapuz* p. 112). Fourth, and most significant, each of these pedigrees unquestionably claims a British ancestry for the Campbells, although the particular descent from King Arthur is, of course, incredible.

How then should one interpret the extended MacEwan/Colville account? Clearly the British tradition appears there too, and I would suggest that the references to Diarmaid O'Duibne and a Norman descent bear all the appearance of later additions to original material. The juggling with various heiresses, the appearance of Diarmaid O'Duibne, somewhat disembodied, at an uncertain point in the pedigree, the trip to Normandy and back, are simply not convincing. Nor for that matter are the extra Duibnes, Ferrithers, etc., who were clearly included to pad out the glaring chronological gap between the historical Campbells and King Arthur. The Norman claim is barely worth refuting: its artificial nature is manifest, and there is the clearest record evidence, already mentioned, that the intrusive letter 'p' was not added to the surname until the fifteenth century.

The appearance of Diarmaid O'Duibne in the Campbell pedigree is more difficult to account for. Clearly the name Duibne occurred in the original pedigree. It seems clear also from an examination of the older genealogies that this Duibne figured as the father of one 'Malcolm', rather than as father or ancestor of Diarmaid. Why then Diarmaid O'Duibne? It could be argued that the mere presence of the unusual name Duibne was in itself enough to stimulate the seanachies to introduce Finn's famous companion. However, I think it more likely that the answer is to be found in the name of Duibne's father in the original tradition. In the later MacEwan/Colville tradition Duibne's father is given as Diarmaid, this being curiously at variance with the older genealogies: MacFirbis gives 'Feradoigh', MS Kilbride gives 'Feradoig', while MS 1467 gives a strange and almost illegible name read by Skene as 'Eirenaid'—although 'Eirenaia' would be equally possible. Now just as 'Norman' has become a recognised equivalent for 'Tormod' and 'Hector' for 'Eachunn' so too the equivalent for 'Diarmaid' is 'Jeremy' or 'Jeremiah'. I would suggest, albeit tentatively, that it was the name 'Jeremiah' (written as 'Ieremaia'), which originally appeared in the Campbell genealogy as the father of Duibne and that this name rapidly became corrupted or mistranscribed in manuscripts, giving the Eirenaia of MS 1467, and, at several removes, the Feradoig

of the other accounts. Meanwhile the MacEwan oral tradition had preserved Jeremiah in its equivalent form of Diarmaid: 'Ane Accompt' indeed derives the Campbells 'From the famous knights and champions the oduibns, and especially from Diarmad (or *Jeremie*) oduibnes famous in the Irish genealogies' (MacPhail 1916:72). The step from a Duibne son of Jeremiah (otherwise Diarmaid) to the inclusion of Diarmaid O'Duibne was an easy one. Later, I would argue, the position was further complicated by the MacEwan/Colville attempt to allow for the 'Feradoig' variation of the other tradition by incorporating numerous 'Ferrithers' in the padded out genealogy. At some stage too antiquarians began to refer occasionally to the Campbells as 'Siol Diarmaid' on the strength of the inclusion of Diarmaid O'Duibne, although this designation never superseded the older family name of O'Duibne. There are admittedly some difficulties in supporting this theory of a Campbell ancestor named Jeremiah, not least the rarity of the name, but the theory does have the merit of interpreting the curious name in the 1467 MS, of explaining the discrepancy between the 'Diarmaid' of Campbell tradition and the 'Feradoig' of MacFirbis and the Kilbride MS, and of explaining the intrusion of the story of Diarmaid and Gráinne into the Campbell pedigree.

Once the MacEwan/Colville account has been purged of Diarmaid O'Duibne, of the Norman descent, of the numerous extra Duibnes and Ferrithers, and also of the Colin, Gillespie and Duncan below Duibne, and who (I would argue) are mere doublets of Malcolm, Gillespie and Duncan above them,<sup>12</sup> we are left with a basic pedigree remarkably like that in the 1467 MS. However, some additional information remains: the information that Smerevie or Merevie figured in various tales and was born at a place called the Red Hall in Dumbarton; and the belief that the MacNaughtons, 'the Clauuilins', and the Drummonds, were of the same stock as the Campbells. These traditions are helpful in the attempt to assess the likelihood of a British descent for the Campbells. Again there is the tradition that Lochawe came to the Campbells through the heiress of one Paul an Sparáin, and there are the accounts of the descent of the MacTavish Campbells, the MacIver Campbells and the Campbells of Craignish. On these last, for the purpose of this paper, I would only affirm without elaboration my belief that the MacEwan/Colville account is substantially correct.<sup>13</sup>

In testing the tradition of British origin I would follow Alexander Macbain and Sir Iain Moncreiffe in looking to the Lennox, that part of the ancient Kingdom of Strathclyde lying to the north of the Forth/Clyde axis, and contiguous with the district of Argyll. In fact, once one begins to look in this quarter, evidence supporting a British descent for the Campbells is not difficult to find. No detailed study has yet been made of the possibility of a late British survival in some shape or form in the Lennox, yet one of the leading families of the area, the Galbraiths, already prominent at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and married even then into the family of the Earls of Lennox, has consistently claimed a British ancestry. In Gaelic to this day they are known as 'Clann a Bhreatannaich'—'children of the Briton'; in the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* a Galbraith is termed 'Mac an Bhreatnaigh' (Watson 1937: 14-15). Further, the suggestive

christian name 'Arthur' was used by the thirteenth-century Galbraiths, as it was by the thirteenth-century Campbells.

The record evidence for the Campbells before 1300, sparse though it is, also discloses a connection with the Lennox. Thus the first appearance of Colin Mór, c. 1281, is as a witness to a charter by the Earl of Lennox; in 1289 Dugald Campbell together with William Fleming, a burghess of Dunbarton, gives the Exchequer returns for the sheriffdom of Dunbarton on behalf of the sheriff; in 1294, a third member of the family, Donald, *inter alia*, is warned by the Bishop of Glasgow not to take the part of the Earl of Lennox in the long-standing dispute between the Lennox family and the Church over the lands of Old Kilpatrick, (Lennox Cartularium 1833:21; Exch. Rolls: 138; Paisley Registrum:203\*).<sup>14</sup>

There is further evidence of a more circumstantial nature pointing to Britons and the Lennox. A witness of the name 'Duibne' appears in the *Book of Deer*, c. 1131/1132. On him Professor Jackson comments that the name 'Duibne' is almost unique (Jackson 1972:68). Curiously, Jackson makes no mention of the Clan O'Duibne *alias* the Campbells. In fact, another Duibne appears on the Scottish record at the beginning of the thirteenth century. This is Duibne ('Duvne', 'Dufne') who witnesses various Lennox writs and was the chamberlain of the Earl of Lennox (Glasgow Registrum 1843:1. 87, 88; Kelso Liber 1846:1. 181; Lennox Cartularium 1833:25, 26). He cannot be the same man as the Campbell ancestor, but given the rarity of the name the Lennox example is at least worthy of mention.

Then there is the account of Smerevie or Merevie, the fool of the forest, born in An Talla Dearg, the Red Hall. The Galbraiths too are associated with An Talla Dearg in the Gaelic saying,

Bhreatunnach o'n Talla Dheirg  
Uaisle 'shliochd Albann do shloinne

—'Britons from the Red Hall, the noblest race in Scotland' (Black 1946:285). In fact, the name 'the Red Hall' occurs in Gaelic folk tales associated with the Arthurian cycle as the name of Arthur's capital: 'King Arthur's capital is not Camelot but "Dúnadh an Halla Dheirg", the fortress of the Red Hall, using the English word "halla", though no English source for the name has been established' (Bruford 1966:22). Thus the British descent of the Campbells is further emphasised.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, there are the claims that the MacNaughtons, the Drummonds and 'the Clanuilins' branched off early from the Campbell stem, claims which have not, I think, been investigated in recent times. Of the early MacNaughtons little in fact is known; it is, however, clear that they had close and early ties with the Campbells. Thus Alexander III granted Gilchrist MacNaughton the keeping of the castle of Fraoch Eilean in Loch Awe, while various thirteenth- and fourteenth-century writs connect the MacNaughtons with the burial island of Inishail, also in Loch Awe (Inchaffray

Charters 1908:xlii; Campbell, 1885:76). Again the 1467 MS pedigree of the MacNaughtons does include among their reputed progenitors one named 'Arthur'.<sup>16</sup>

The Drummonds, like many other Scottish families, claim a Hungarian descent, alleging that their ancestor came from Hungary to Anglo-Saxon England with St Margaret and afterwards to Scotland. Whatever may be the case as regards other families—an interesting topic for further research—there appears to be not a word of truth in the Drummond claim. The earliest ancestor whom the Drummonds can point to with any degree of conviction is one Malcom Beg, an early thirteenth-century character who was steward to the Earls of Lennox and figures largely as a witness to their charters (e.g. Lennox Cartularium: *passim*).

'Of Corcaruo descended the Clanuilins in Ireland' says *Ane Account*. The name 'Corcaruo', that is 'Core Ruadh', or 'Core the red', immediately establishes another Lennox connection, for the Celtic Earls of Lennox claimed descent from the Irish Conall Core, reputed ancestor of the Dark Age Eoganacht Kings of Munster (Chadwick 1949:97-8; Byrne 1973:176-99). The christian name 'Core' was used by the family of the earls of Lennox in the thirteenth century (Scots Peerage:8.330). But who are the Clanuilins? I would suggest that they are the MacQuillans of the Route, in County Antrim, prominent in Ulster politics in the sixteenth century: the Inveraray copy of Duncanson's MS, indeed, gives 'Clanquillans' rather than 'Clanuilins' (Duncanson MS c. 1675:fo. 4). What is known of their descent? Earlier this century Edmund Curtis attempted to prove that the MacQuillans were Gaelicised de Mandevilles, but the proofs which he adduces are far from convincing and have in any case recently been rejected in Ireland (Curtis 1937-8:99-113; Nicholls 1972:134). In fact, as Curtis's article itself makes clear, the MacQuillans' own tradition was that they were of Welsh, or British descent, deriving themselves according to one account from King Arthur son of Ambrosius, an interesting parallel to the Campbell genealogy in the Kilbride MS. In 1542 there is a reference in the *State Papers of Henry VIII* to MacQuillan 'which is an Englishman', his ancestor having 'cam oute of Waales'—an excellent early example, incidentally, of unconscious English nationalism (S.P.H. VIII:3.357, 381).<sup>17</sup>

To sum up, the object of this paper has been to elucidate the Campbells' own earliest tradition as to their origins, and to attempt to assess the veracity of that tradition. It is submitted that the original tradition of the Campbells derived them quite clearly from British stock and that there exists considerable circumstantial evidence to support this claim. It is submitted further that the origins of the family are to be looked for within the confines of the old Kingdom of Strathclyde in the district of the Lennox. The archaic names in the MacFirbis pedigree may reflect an older particularised descent including a North Briton named Arthur who could have flourished in the tenth century. A more general British descent was later claimed and traced, with scant regard for chronology, back to the famed King Arthur. Later the story of Diarmaid O'Duibne was woven into the Campbell pedigree, either because of a confusion over the name

Jeremiah, or simply on the strength of the name Duibne. Later still a wholly fictitious Norman descent was also superimposed. The persistent tradition that the Campbells acquired the lands of Lochawe through the marriage of two ancestors of Colin Mór with heiresses, one of them the daughter of one Paul an Sparáin, is, I believe, entirely credible, even if not susceptible of proof.

This paper has also touched on, but only so far as relevant to the main theme, the origins of septs such as the Campbells of Craignish, the MacIver Campbells and the MacTavish Campbells, and of families such as the MacNaughtons, the Drummonds and the MacQuillans. Each of these families deserves fuller treatment based on further research. On a wider scale, the thesis put forward in this paper underlines the need for a closer study of the early medieval Lennox in all its aspects, a study for which, on the record side at least, abundant evidence still exists in the shape of the charters issued by the thirteenth-century Earls of Lennox. How far can the transition, north of the Clyde, from Briton to Gael, from the Kingdom of Strathclyde to the Earldom of Lennox, be traced? This paper also raises the question of the standing of the Campbells before Robert Bruce's reign. As Professor Barrow remarks, in the quotation already cited, 'they were certainly not landless adventurers'. As holders through several branches of the family of large tracts of land in Argyll (*cf.* note 13), as landowners also in Clackmannanshire and, one presumes, Dumbartonshire and Ayrshire, allied by marriage to the Earls of Carrick, were they not already great territorial lords?

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#### NOTES

- 1 The seventeenth-century Irish antiquaries such as Roderick O'Flaherty, mistaking the origin of the name M'Duibne or O'Duibne, invented yet another ancestry for the Campbells, deriving them from the mythical king Lugaid Mac Con.
- 2 The forms 'Col' and 'Colin' are well recognised diminutives of Nicholas and therefore it was natural that Nicholas should be regarded as the equivalent of the Gaelic name 'Cailean'. The forms 'Colin' and 'Neill' have been used in the text on account of their familiarity, instead of the more correct 'Cailean' and 'Níall'.
- 3 The MacEwan seanachies of the Campbells are discussed by Professor Angus Matheson in his article on Bishop Carswell in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 42 (1953-9), 200-1; see also, Thomson (1970: App. II).
- 4 For Colville's career see, *inter alia*, Stair Gillon's introduction to *Selected Justiciary Cases 1* (1953), Stair Society, p. 5 and J. Irvine Smith's introduction to *Selected Justiciary Cases 2* (1972), Stair Society, p. xxvi.
- 5 I am indebted to Eric Cregeen, School of Scottish Studies, for bringing the existence of the Inverary MS to my attention and allowing me to study a copy, and to the Duke of Argyll for permission to cite it.

- 6 There is a recent attractive account of the tale of Diarmaid and Gráinne by R. A. Breatnach—'Tóraigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne', in *Irish Sagas* (1968), ed. Myles Dillon, Cork. See also, Bruford (1966).
- 7 For Suibhne Ruadh ('Swimeruo') and his kin, see W. D. H. Sellar 'Family Origins in Cowal and Knapdale', *Scottish Studies* 15 (1971):21-37.
- 8 The best evidence for this relationship appears to be the seal tag attached to 'Responsum Magnatum Scocie ad Dominum Regem Francie' in 1309 reading 'Doucnaldi et Nigelli Cambel Fratrum' (APS:1. 289).
- 9 The Carrick connection may also explain the early Campbell acquisition of the lands of Loudoun in Ayrshire.
- 10 I am indebted for this information to Dr John Bannerman, Department of Scottish History, Edinburgh, who has made a close study of MS 1467.
- 11 In MacFerbis the pedigree above Arthur reads 'in Iobhair in Lidir in Bearnaird in Muiris in Magoth in Coiel in Catogain in Caidinoir in Catogain in Bende in Mebrece in Grifin in Briotain in Fergusa Iethderg in Nemiidh.'
- 12 Apart from the duplication of names—Malcolm (Calum) and Colin being used sometimes as equivalents—there is the telling fact that no wives are given for Gillespie or Duncan while Colin's lawful wife is rather lamely said to be 'King Alexander's niece'. The exclusion of the three names also makes the story of a marriage with a daughter of Suibhne Ruadh (*supra*, p. 115, and n. 7) more feasible chronologically.
- 13 Principal P. C. Campbell in his *An Account of the Clan Iver* in 1873 was of the view that the MacIvers were not originally Campbells. The proofs he adduces, however, are quite unconvincing. There can be no doubt that by the fourteenth century the MacIvers were already closely associated with the family of Argyll. The Malcolm MacIver who appears in Balliol's sheriffdom of Lorne in 1293 may be of this family. Also appearing on the same record, in Lorne, are Dugald of Craignish and Colin Campbell; and, in Kintyre, Duncan Dubh (*supra*, p. 116) and Thomas Campbell, conceivably the MacTavish eponym (APS:1. 447).
- 14 For an account of the Kilpatrick Church litigations see Lord Cooper's *Select Scottish Cases of the Thirteenth Century*, Edinburgh, 1944, Nos 22-7.
- 15 The curious name Smerevie is rendered 'Mervin' by Buchanan, 'Meirbi' in MS 1467, 'Smerbi' in Kilbride, and 'Smeirbe' by MacFerbis: perhaps these are all variants of 'Myrddin' as there seems to be a connection between Smerevie 'the fool of the forest', the tale 'Eachtra an Amadain Mhór'—'the Adventures of the Great Fool'—for which see Bruford (1960: 147-9), and the various 'Wild Man of the Woods' tales considered by Professor Jackson in 'The Motive of the Threefold Death in the story of Suibhne Gedi' (Feil-sgríbhinn Fómh Mic Néill, Dublin 1940, 515-550). I am most grateful to Dr Bruford, School of Scottish Studies, for bringing this use of 'An Ialla Dearg' to my attention.
- 16 For a traditional MacNaughton account of the family's origins see, *inter alia*, 'MacNaughton of that ilk', *Highland Papers*, 1 (1914), ed. J. R. N. MacPhail (Scottish History Society).
- 17 Another tenuous Lennox family connection is provided by *One Account's* claim that the Family of Darleith in the Lennox descended from a brother of Paul an Sparáin (*supra*, p. 115). It is hoped that an account of the Darleiths, tracing them back to the thirteenth century and emphasising the frequency of the Christian name 'Arthur' among them, may shortly appear in *The Scottish Genealogist*.

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