

The MacMaster / MacInnes Connection

The MacMasters of the West Highlands of Scotland such as Ardgour, Morvern and Ardnamurchan are of MacInnes stock. The name Master is taken from the Gaelic title "maighistir" which is used in a number of contexts including a person of learning - an academic. In the Lowlands it is often used for the eldest son of a family. So MacMaster in the Gaelic is the son of the Master. Other members of the family may also take-up the name MacMaster. In some instances in the Gaelic West the name of MacMaster and MacInnes seem interchangeable.

A simple example of this kinship is illustrated by the MacMasters of Ardgour (said to descend from an academic). Donald MacLean murdered the chief when the MacLeans seized the land of Ardgour from the MacInneses. In Clan MacLean history this chief is cited as "MacMaster, MacInnes of Ardgour" (*"History of Clan MacLean"*, J.P. MacLean -1889, and the recently published *"Priests and Warriors"*, Bristol MacLean). In Clan Donald and other clan histories he is simply known as "MacInnes of Ardgour" (*"History of the MacDonalds"* by Hugh MacDonald of Sleat). There is little doubt that many of the Ardgour MacInneses became known as MacMasters: possibly following the style of their chief. These MacMasters still recognized their MacInnes kinship with the Kinlochaline Chiefs of Morvern and others.

When the MacInneses were purged by Alexander the Second and later lost the favor of the Lords of the Isles (MacInnes or MacMaster of Ardgour was at one time the chief councilor to the Lordship) both the MacMasters and MacInneses became fragmented. Some MacMasters allied themselves with the Campbell-MacDougalls of Craignish and others with Clan Cameron. Indeed a MacMaster from Corribeg supported the Royal Standard at Glenfinnan to launch the '45. This MacMaster is often erroneously quoted as being a member of Clan Cameron, but my own research and information from the present Cameron of Locheil and the Captain of Clanranald indicates that this Duncan, or Aeneas MacMaster, was the standard bearer or bodyguard to young Clanranald (see appendix 3 in *"Romantic Lochaber, Arisaig and Morar"*, Donald B. MacCulloch - 1996 edition).

Skene wrote of a confederation of the "Siol Gillebride" (Seed of Gilbert) consisting of MacInneses, MacMasters, MacGillivray and MacEacherns - but this "confederation" is now discontinued (see Frank Adams - 1908). This theory is replaced by the premise that these Highlanders have common Celtic origins.

Dr John MacInnes the greatest living authority on the oral traditions of the Highlands and Islands has a fascinating theory on the origins of the MacMasters. Including that the MacMasters gained their titles as "masters" from their captaincy of the MacInnes strongholds, castles and fortresses rather than emerging from an academic lineage. The early MacMaster castle at Glensanda in Morvern would perhaps support this view.

There is a diorama of the "Raising of the Standard" in the National Trust for Scotland Glenfinnan Center. The display was made by Sydney Ellerington (one of Scotland's best military model makers) of East Kilbride and depicts MacMaster and MacPhee supporting the standard while Tullibardine holds the post in a symbolic gesture. It was MacMaster who physically raised the Standard. The Oban times in 1956 reported the death of Duncan MacMaster a descendent of " MacMaster of the Banner"

When I was researching the "Raising of the Standard" Myra Lawson of the National Trust for Scotland made a trawl through the Trust's archives and found a painting of Bonnie Prince Charlie and his younger brother Prince Henry. What was exiting about this painting was the legend on the frame that the donor was "MacMaster of Glenaladale" - a descendent of the supporter of the Royal Standard. Although "MacMaster of the Standard" was from Corribeg the family were from Glenaladale near Glenfinnan. It is said that about 300 MacMasters lived around Glenaladale at one time. These MacMasters were the allies of the Camerons of Glenn Nevis and not the Cameron's of Lochiel. The Cameron's of Lochiel aided the MacLeans in driving the MacMasters from Ardgour!

.. from a letter from Donald MacInnes of Cumbernauld, Scotland, Dec. 2000.