



John L. Roberts. *Clan, King and Covenant: History of the Highland Clans from the Civil War to the Glencoe Massacre.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. xii + 258 pp. \$23.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7486-1393-9.



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Roberts has written a good derivative history of the Highland clans involvement in Scotland's national affairs in the seventeenth century. Starting with James VI's attempts to transform the clans into a productive and orderly part of the kingdom, he continues the study through the first Jacobite rebellion. Roberts' work depends upon the works of historians such as Stevenson, Cowan, Dow, Lenman, Hopkins, and Macinnes.[1] He relies on previous studies even for his primary sources. The work is a synthesis with few original observations, but should not be ignored for that reason since so few works of merit exist for the Highlands.

Roberts proceeds chronologically from 1609 until 1692 with some additional material at either end. His accounts of the leaders of the mid-seventeenth century—Argyll, Huntly, Montrose, and Alasdair MacDonald—closely follow his predecessors. However, his writing style makes the story of royalist resurgence under Montrose and Alasdair accessible to non-academics and undergraduates. Unlike previous Highland clan historians, Roberts avoids the error of correlating Gaelic speakers with Roman Catholic or Episcopalian royalists. He continually refers to the Presbyterian clans, such as the Campbells, Munroes, and Sutherlands. He notes how personality issues prevented the Gordons and their allies from first assisting Montrose in the 1640s, and then

viscount Dundee in 1689. However, he concentrates his attention on royalist clans (a familiar leitmotiv when writing about the Highlands in the 1600s and 1700s)—for example, the various branches of Clan Donald and the Macleans. The maneuverings of the Camerons (according to Macinnes a pro-Campbell clan located in the midst of anti-Campbell ones) is somewhat lost in the account. Equally, the author tends to focus on the clans of Lochaber and Badenoch (home to the adherents of Montrose and Dundee) to the neglect of others. That concentration is acceptable given the restrictions in length and those clans' contributions to the more dramatic actions of the period.

The book consists of fourteen chapters that clump into six coherent sections. The first section (chapters one-three) introduces the shift in government policy (James VI's) and details the background to the savage warfare that erupted in the Highlands in 1644. Roberts explains how the union of crowns allowed the king to implement his long-desired policy of integration of the "barbarous" Highlands into the "civilized" Lowlands. However, he tends to read too much into the effectiveness of the Statues of Iona. Of equivalent, if not greater, importance for the dynamics of the western Highlands were the decline of Clan Donald and the establishment of part of the clan in Ulster accompanied by the aggrandizement of

the Campbells led by the earls of Argyll, which Roberts explains well. Likewise he gives sound treatment to the outbreak of rebellion in Scotland against Charles I. Chapters two and three detail the activities between 1639 and early 1644 when the ninth earl of Argyll held sway over much of the Highlands south of Inverness, while the earls of Sutherland and Seaforth controlled the remainder—all in the cause of the National Covenant.

The entire tone of the story changes in the second section (comprising chapters four-seven) with the arrival of the Irish under Alasdair MacDonald and Montrose in Perthshire in late August 1644. Until the former's evacuation of Scotland in June 1647 and the latter's execution in May 1650, they would shake the foundations of the covenanter state. Roberts ably retells the familiar story of how Montrose's presence as leader persuaded clansmen, suspicious of the Roman Catholic Irish interlopers, to ally with the foreigners and win a series of victories that left the covenanters prostrate in Scotland. Roberts makes a telling point that Montrose's fear of losing leadership of the militant Scottish royalists partially inspired his actions in 1644. This rivalry certainly adds another element to the two men's feud. He continues the story with defeats of Montrose (at Philiphaugh in September 1645), and his inability to revive his fortunes due to Alasdair's concentration on hammering the Campbells, and the Gordons' refusal to assist their fellow royalist owing to Montrose's involvement in the arrest of Huntly in 1639. The royalist cause presented the covenanters with a real security menace following their victory in September 1645, but one they could control.

The third (chapter eight) and fourth (chapters nine-ten) sections bring the story of the Highland clans from summer 1650 through March 1689. The first portion details the service of the clans in the Scottish regular army in 1651, their part in Glencairn's rising (1652-54), and how they interacted with the Protectorate regime. Roberts provides a straightforward account of how disastrous service with army was for the clans—the Buchanans, Macleans and Macleods, for instance, suffered horrific losses at Inverkeithing and Worcester. He explains how the MacDonalds and Camerons sustained Glencairn's effort to raise Scotland for the exiled Charles. Of equal importance is his discussion of how the English brought peace and order to the Highlands, while utilizing the clans against each other.

Section four deals with the Restoration period in the Highlands. The chief themes addressed in it are the prosecution of the first marquis and eighth earl of Ar-

gyll; the recovery of his son (whose crushing burden of debt led to government sanctioned campaigns against the Macleans). The campaign pitted Campbells versus a Maclean-MacDonald alliance from 1669 to 1681. Roberts also treats John Campbell of Glenorchy's bid for the earldom of Caithness, the murder of MacDonald of Keppoch and his brother, and the last clan battle between a MacIntosh-government force and the MacDonalds and Camerons at Mulroy in 1688. The return of disorder fomented by rapacious clans (MacGregors, Camerons, MacDonalds of Glencoe and Keppoch), and cateran bands (unaffiliated brigands) exercised the Edinburgh government throughout the period. The clans' support of the Stuart dynasty—service in the Highland Host that occupied the Presbyterian southwest in 1678 and the suppression of the ninth earl of Argyll's (Whig) rising in 1685—also receive coverage. By late 1688 the Highlands had returned to a pattern of earlier in the century—endemic disorder and pockets of committed loyalty to the crown (especially among anti-Campbell clans—MacDonalds and Macleans—and clients—Camerons).

Section five (chapters 11-13) deals with a deteriorating situation of international complexity. Unlike 1660 or 1638 the situation in 1688 differed, because the British context had become intrinsically entwined with great matters of European politics—the struggle between Louis XIV of France and his enemies led by William of Orange, the stadtholder of the Netherlands. William's presence in southern England with an army following his invasion of November 1688 led to James VII and II's flight; and to political conventions in England and Scotland and a civil war in Ireland. French interference in the last threatened to overturn William's plan of integrating the island kingdoms into his coalition and gave hope to John Graham, viscount Dundee and various Highland chiefs. Here Roberts is at his best (following Hopkins) as he details the saga of Dundee's rising, Killiecrankie, Dunkeld, and the end of war in Scotland. His account of the events leading to the massacre of Glencoe and the atrocity itself covers just over ten percent of the book. Roberts adjudicates blame for the atrocity to a wide number—not only the dishonorable perpetrators, the cold fury of Dalrymple of Stair the younger, the guilt by denial of Colonel Hill, the connivance of William II and III, the blind obedience of Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton and Major Duncanson, but also the greed of the Jacobites chiefs (that delayed negotiations and submissions) and the perorations of James in releasing his supporters. Only the earl of Breadalbane (for his attempts at negotiating submissions) and two officers who refused to participate in the

massacre escape the tragedy with any credit. Roberts, like contemporaries, remains appalled at the lack of consequences endured by the guilty parties.

The final section (seven page-long chapter 14), contains a summation of the remainder of William's reign, the career of the colorful scoundrel Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat and a brief conclusion on the royal succession and divisions in Highland society. A much longer book would easily have taken the story through the '15, '19, '45 and abolition of heritable jurisdictions. In effect we receive only part of the story of the struggle between the Stuarts and their Presbyterian opponents. Having reached the crescendo of Glencoe, Roberts sweeps crumbs together in way of concluding the book. His failure to discuss Jacobite plots, government efforts at imposing control (for instance, disarming acts, garrisons, military roads, and patronage to clan chiefs), and innovations in the economy—forestry, iron works—leaves the reader unsure of what happened in the first half of the eighteenth century. Perhaps the author is already contemplating a second book that will cover these matters as well as the later Jacobite risings, and the impact of the abolition of heritable jurisdictions. Such a volume would be a welcome addition for the reading public.

The book possesses limited supporting material. The single map shows battle sites and little else. Those without a good internal geography of Scotland or an atlas at hand while reading the book may lose all sense of place. The absence of a map generally locating clans (as in the *Scottish Historical Atlas* or Adams' book on clans) is also regrettable. As a popular work the book lacks the apparatus of scholarly footnotes. A bibliography of book length secondary sources appears after the text. Lacking any references to articles or printed primary resources, it provides only the foundations for further research. The index is serviceable. The publisher's decision to omit illustrations is problematic. Doubtless that reduced the book's cost, but the absence of images automatically reduces its appeal to the intended audience and distances the reader from the people and places discussed. Perhaps someone will be inspired by Roberts to produce a documentary, virtual or traditional exhibit or website. (The last would allow the inclusion of portraits, photographs of places, historical paintings, contemporary and modern maps, documents in both original and typeset format, and artifacts all sustained by hypertext.) The dramatic and important nature of the story told by Roberts will certainly attract some readership, just not one as large it could have.

Certain quirks and statements detract from the work. Roberts' constant need to cite people by their full name and title (for example, Archibald Campbell, eighth earl of Argyll [pp. 23, 27, 29] or Angus MacDonald of Glengarry [pp. 61, 65, 79], etc.) is slightly demeaning to the reader and consumes space that could have been used to provide more details. He states (p. 21) that only 140 ministers attended the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1638, ignoring the fact that the body has always been representative. On the same page he ignores the fact that Argyll made his first public stand with the covenanters at the assembly—a significant addition of military strength to their cause. He also states the establishment of Presbyterianism in the church dates from 1707, when it is actually 1690. He portrays (p. 32) the royalist/anti-Campbell/anti-covenanter alliance as pitting Roman Catholic MacDonalds against Presbyterian Campbells, ignoring Protestant Episcopalian clans such as the Camerons. While understanding (p. 35) that activity by Randal MacDonald, 2nd earl of Antrim and Roman Catholic clans would hurt the crown inside Scotland, he fails to recognize that unleashing that alliance would have been disastrously short-sighted as viewed from England and Wales. Equally, he fails to see that the grant of Sunart and Ardnamurchan to MacDonald of Sleat and the transference of feudal superiority of William MacIntosh, Captain of Clan Chattan, from Argyll to Huntly not only harmed the Campbells (p. 35), but also clan Cameron which had a claim to those lands and disliked the Gordons as much as they detested their ancient enemies the MacIntoshes. The fixation with Ulster in reference to the Irish rising (p. 37) overlooks the primacy of the Dublin plot by the Irish Confederates; Ulster was the more successful sideshow. Although Alasdair MacDonald may have had a royal commission (pp. 47-8), being backed by an army of Roman Catholic Irish made it hardly surprising that men such as Seaforth, Sleat, and Dunvegan ignored his blandishments. The use of "Argyllshire" (p. 62) instead of the shire of Argyll or simple Argyll violates conventions of rendering Scottish counties. His claim (p. 102) that the English New Model Army sought religious freedom of conscience overlooks the army's denial of it to Episcopalians and Roman Catholics. His assertion that Charles, in early 1647, had little chance of negotiating successfully with Parliament (p. 103), overlooks the latter's disastrous mishandling of the army that prevented an agreement. Claiming that David Leslie (p. 104) could have received command of the Engager Army is nonsensical, since he refused to accept the Engagement and would later become a leader of the Whiggamore Raid against the Engager party.

Roberts' argument that the Engagers should have levied Highland clans (p. 104) overlooks the degree of contempt that Lowlanders held them in for allying with the Irish and slaughtering Lowlanders without quarter. Their inclusion in the Engager movement would have caused some supporters to abandon the cause. It is essential to remember that the Engagers were moderate and conservative covenanters. Their agreement with Charles I included a trial period of Presbyterianism in England, which indicates that they were not an Episcopalian or more generally royalist party. In the forces of the Whiggamore Raid, Roberts omits (p. 104) the Fife and Borders elements. (The former's inclusion is important, since it gave the Dutch potential allies in eastern Scotland.) His list of nobles on the raid unaccountably neglects the earl of Buccleuch. In discussing Charles II's need "to sign away almost all his powers" (p. 108), overlooks the fact that Charles I had already done so in 1641. (This is repeated on p. 113, when he says the king became "a figurehead"—in effect the very aim of the movement and nothing new in 1650.) When listing the causes of defeat at Dunbar (p. 114) Roberts omits the unreadiness of the Scots army due to the extinguishing of matches for the muskets and the officers' desertion of their units to find covered lodging. In recounting the battle of Inverkeithing, the author oddly fails to state that the Maclean motto (which translates as "Another one for Hector") came from the clan's desperate attempt to save the chief's life. In recounting the impact of the Popish Plot in Scotland, Roberts states "Argyll" erred (p. 150), when he meant Lord Macdonell. In referring to the firearms of the Highland Host of 1678 he calls the Highlanders' matchlocks "old-fashioned" (p. 153), which is incorrect since British regulars did not entirely receive flintlocks until after 1700. His claim that Sir Ewan Cameron of Lochiel fought at Worcester (p. 175), is simply wrong—the chief never left Scotland in 1651. In discussing Lord Strathnaver in 1689 (p. 183) it would be more accurate to say that he "rallied to the" Presbyterian, not Protestant, cause since the Jacobites Dundee and the Camerons (at least) were Episcopalian—hence Protestants, too. In discussing the effect of the Highland charge (p. 185) he overlooks the critical role at Culloden and Sheriffmuir of musketry not cannon fire, while entirely overlooking the ability of cavalry to defeat Highlanders. Likewise the entire concept of effective musket fire as developed in the British army in the 1700s, when troops were trained to hold their initial volley until the enemy reached merely 40-50 yards away, is ignored in his discussion of Killiecrankie (pp. 190, 192). The discussion of Hugh Mackay of Scourie's order of battle at

Killiecrankie (p. 187) seems to have changed three additional infantry regiments into "three more companies of foot." The statement that Mackay's army carried "old-fashioned" plug bayonets (p. 190) is incorrect; they were the best British regulars had until socket bayonets became standard c.1700.

In referring to the relief of Londonderry in 1689, Roberts implies (p. 197) that the British military units lifted the siege. In fact two ships of the Royal Navy saved the town. The relief of Londonderry marks a tremendous failure of French naval strategy in British and Irish waters between 1689 and 1692. The British and Dutch, on the other hand, appreciated the advantages of naval power—secure movement of troops and supplies, interdiction of enemy movements of the same, and devastation of enemy trade and preservation of friendly commerce. French failure to understand these concepts allowed Mackay of Scourie to bring his troops from the Netherlands to Scotland, saved Londonderry, permitted an anti-Jacobite buildup in Ireland (1689-1690), and meant that Dundee and his successors could not adequately tap the resources of Ireland. In essence France's inability to utilize its naval resources ensured the defeat of its allies in Scotland and led to a waste of investment on behalf of its client James Stuart in Ireland. Roberts' discussion of post-1688 bigotry against Scots Episcopalians overlooks the fact that they had implemented the same draconian policies against Presbyterians from 1660 to 1685.

Although many deserted Simon Fraser to gain the favor of the earls of Atholl, Fraser retained the loyalty of the Forbeses of Culloden, the Brodies of Brodie and some of the Grants. Either for personal or political reasons he maintained ties with some respectable families until the '45. Roberts' retailing of Fraser's story without reference to the Scots Plot is unfortunate. The Jacobites sent Fraser to Scotland to sound out their supporters. When he realized he could use Jacobite plotting to his advantage, he incriminated his enemy Atholl. By doing so he stirred up a hornet's nest in Scotland, forcing him into exile again, but equally disturbed the French and their Jacobite allies by whom he was imprisoned. The account of the '15 (p. 245), which neglects the Jacobite activities of Mackenzie of Fraserdale (titular Lord Lovat and thus Simon Fraser's rival) compresses the story rather too much and makes the revival of Simon even more remarkable than it was. Roberts would have done better to have removed Simon Fraser and treated matters such as government attempts to control the Highlands after 1700 or Jacobite intrigues. On the same page he underrates the enhanced political power of the dukes of Argyll, whose control of politi-

cal patronage allowed them to control many more parliamentary seats than the seventeenth century earls had done. Along the same line, he observes that chiefs abandoned violent feuding for politics, but overlooks the legal feuds in which they indulged. The list of later Jacobite risings (p. 245) omits the '19, which while ineffectual allowed the Hanoverian government to raise the specter of Tory disloyalty. Although Roberts is correct that "the very nature of clanship had begun to dissolve" before 1745 (p. 246), he overlooks the insight of at least one important contemporary. The duke of Argyll in the prelude to the '45 realized the dangers of leasing land solely on economic grounds. To preserve his power base he instructed his factors to favor Campbells as leaseholders overturning his predecessor's policy of taking the highest bid. His decision turned largely on the recognition that a highland chief's power still came out of the barrel of a gun. Indeed government policy of commissioning chiefs as regular and militia/fencible colonels after 1748 indicated that latent military power could still serve useful purposes in maintaining one's status and wealth. The closing statements (p. 247) that Jacobite chiefs and clansmen had a commitment to the Stuart restoration, neglects the corollary Whig allegiance of the same classes in maintaining the Hanoverians. The author's failure to evaluate the impact of the abolition of heritable jurisdictions in 1748 is remarkable. Without their jurisdictions the chiefs lost the power of pit and gallows—an essen-

tial coercive element in clan control. Ignoring its demise, seen by lowland lawyers as a rational act of improvement (along the lines of the Statues of Iona), seems unimaginable given its tremendous immediate and long-term impact on Highland society. Despite these problems, the book remains one worthy of attention for those uninitiated in the seventeenth century struggles between the House of Stuart and their opponents in the Highlands.

Note

[1]. D. Stevenson, *Alasdair MacColla and the Highland Problem in the Seventeenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1980); E.J. Cowan, *Montrose: For Covenant and King* (London, 1977); F.D. Dow, *Cromwellian Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1979); B. Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain 1689-1749* (London, 1980); idem, *The Jacobite Clans of the Great Glen 1650-1784* (London, 1984); P. Hopkins, *Glencoe and the End of the Highland War* (Edinburgh, 1986); and A.I. MacInnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart 1603-1788* (East Linton, 1996).

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