2 2·1 Rob Roy and the Jacobites

Rob Roy MacGregor, the third son of Donald Glas MacGregor of Glengyle and Margaret Campbell, was born in Glengyle, on Loch Katrine-side, in 1671. He spent much of his life in the Trossachs, the area of lochs and rugged hills lying east of Loch Lomond. From Aberfoyle to Killin, the Way skirts the eastern edge of the Trossachs.

Rob Roy was a man of property and was involved in large-scale cattle droving and dealing. He and his brother Iain developed the Lennox Watch, a body that offered 'protection' to cattle owners in return for money. When protection money was not paid, cattle tended mysteriously to 'disappear'. Activities like this by the MacGregors and some other clans gave us the word 'blackmail', black for nefarious deeds and the colour of most of the cattle of past times; mail from Scots and Gaelic words for rent or payment. (The larger, and mainly red-brown Highland cows that we see today are a 19th century cross-breed.)

After his father was captured and imprisoned, at the age of only 30 Rob Roy effectively became the Chief of a leading section of his pugnacious and persecuted clan. In those days the powerful Duke of Montrose was his patron.

His luck changed and his business collapsed when his drover Duncan MacDonald disappeared, taking with him the enormous sum of £1000 intended for cattle purchase. In 1712 the Duke of Montrose (to whom he owed money) turned against him and had him bankrupted and outlawed. His wife and family were evicted, and several of his houses were burned or ransacked.

Rob Roy swore vengeance, and took to the hills in a long campaign of thieving cattle, occasionally kidnapping Montrose's servants and swiping his enemies. His frequent escapes, popularity with local people and generosity to the poor all gained him a reputation as a Scottish Robin Hood. Unlike the legendary Robin, Rob Roy's life is well-documented and factual: see page 79 for some sources.

In all, he and his family lived in seven houses; two on Loch Katrine-side, two in Balquhidder and one each in Glen Dochart, Glen Shira (in Argyll) and on Loch Lomond-side. Most were ransacked or burned on occasion, and in addition he used a network of caves and hidey-holes.

Chronology

Year	Event
1671	Rob Roy MacGregor was born in Glengyle on Loch Katrine-side
1689	Battle of Killicrankie was won by the Jacobites. Rob Roy and his father fought on the successful side in the first campaign of the Jacobite cause. The MacGregor surname was proscribed by William of Orange.
1693	Rob Roy married his cousin, Mary MacGregor of Comer.
1702	William of Orange died; Anne succeeded as Queen.
1707	Union of Scottish and English Parliaments took place.
1712	Rob Roy was made bankrupt by the Duke of Montrose after his drover absconded with the funds, and Rob Roy was declared an outlaw.
1713	Montrose's men evict Rob Roy's family, and they moved to Glen Dochart. Rob Roy was sheltered in Finlarig Castle, Killin for a while.
1714	Queen Anne died, and was succeeded by George I under the Act of Settlement, 1701.
1715	First Jacobite uprising ends indecisively after the Battle of Sheriffmuir, 13 November 1715.
1717	Rob Roy was captured at Balquhidder, escaped while crossing the Forth, was recaptured in Dunkeld, imprisoned in Logierait, and promptly escaped again.
1720	Rob Roy moved to Inverlochlarig in Balquhidder Glen.
1725	Rob Roy submitted to King George I via General Wade.
1730	Rob Roy converted to Catholicism at Drummond Castle.
1734	Rob Roy died at Inverlochlarig and was buried at Balquhidder.

Many stories arose from Rob Roy's fighting strength and striking appearance, with his fiery red hair: Roy comes from the Gaelic ruadh, meaning red. His air of command was backed up by impressive qualities of leadership. He was romanticised in the novels of Sir Walter Scott who claimed that Rob had unusually long arms, but there is no confirmation of that.

He mobilised most of Clan Gregor on the Jacobite side (see page 16) and he took part in the Battle of Sheriffmuir in November 1715. Later he was accused of treason because of his Jacobite activities.
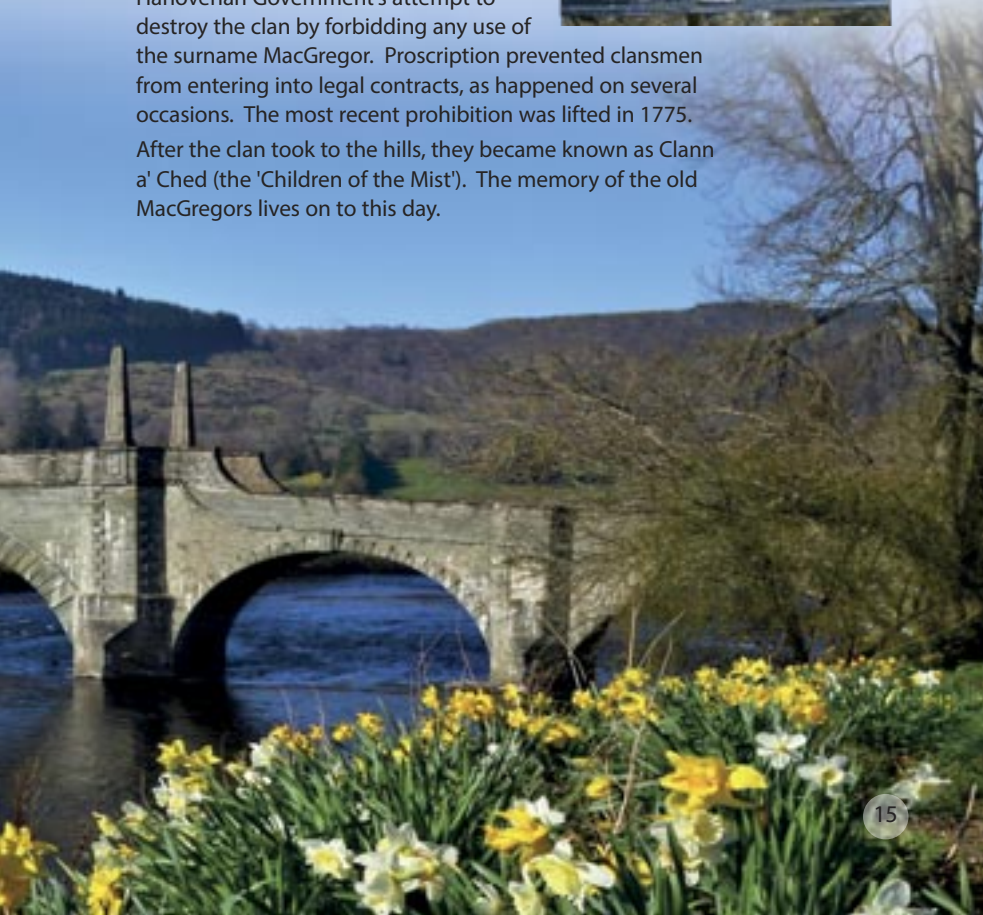
The Duke of Montrose captured him at Balquhidder in 1717, but he made a daring escape while fording the River Forth en route to Stirling Castle. He was recaptured by the Duke of Atholl in Dunkeld and imprisoned in Logierait, but he escaped again after only one night. Eventually, with support from the Duke of Argyll, he received the King's pardon in 1725.

Rob Roy's grave, Balquhidder: its legend asserts the surname

He died in his bed at Inverlochlarig nine years later, and was buried in the Kirkton of Balquhidder where his wife and two of his sons were also later interred. There was a massive attendance at his funeral. He had outwitted two dukes and the British Army, and much that was good in the life of the old Highlands went with his passing.

The legend on his gravestone 'MacGregor despite them' is a defiant response to proscription – the Hanoverian Government's attempt to destroy the clan by forbidding any use of the surname MacGregor. Proscription prevented clansmen from entering into legal contracts, as happened on several occasions. The most recent prohibition was lifted in 1775.

After the clan took to the hills, they became known as Clann a' Ched (the 'Children of the Mist'). The memory of the old MacGregors lives on to this day.

The Jacobites

In 1688, James VII of Scotland (who also became James II of England after the Union of the Crowns in 1603) was deposed by popular demand, largely because he was promoting the Catholic Church. His Protestant daughter Mary was enthroned instead, along with her Dutch husband, the Protestant William of Orange.

Those who continued to support the direct Stuart line of James VII and his son James (the 'Old Pretender') became known as Jacobites: *Jacobus* is Latin for James. The unpopularity of the 1707 Treaty of Union, together with the sense of distance from decisions made in London, gave the Jacobite cause a nationalist flavour. Additionally, most Jacobites were Roman Catholics or Episcopalians, and Highland Jacobites felt that the Gaelic way of life was under threat.

During 1689-1745, contact was kept up between Scotland and the exiled Jacobite court, first in France and then in Italy. Two famous Jacobite risings took place in 1715 and 1745. The 'Fifteen' focused on the Old Pretender and effectively ended after the Battle of Sheriffmuir in 1715. The Jacobites heavily outnumbered the Government forces, but failed to win the conclusive victory that they needed.

However, Jacobite discontent continued to flourish in the Highlands. A small Rising took place in 1719 when the Jacobite clans, including Rob Roy, were joined by a contingent of Spaniards, but it fizzled out after a short battle in Glen Shiel. The next main rising, the 'Forty-five', focused on the Old Pretender's son, Charles Edward Stuart, also known as 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'.

Although warmly acclaimed on arrival in Scotland from France, his march southward into England gained so little support there that the Jacobites retreated and hoped to hold 'Fortress Scotland' until the arrival of more French aid. The Battle of Culloden in 1746 marked their final defeat. However, Bonnie Prince Charlie remained in Scotland for another five months, living in hiding and being pursued all over the Highlands and islands by the military.

In those unsettled times, Government control of the Highlands depended on good communications, intensive patrolling and key forts. A key figure in this was General George Wade (1673-1748), Commander-in-Chief of the Hanoverian army in North Britain (i.e. Scotland). During 1724-40, he and Major William Caulfeild built 240 miles of military roads and many forts and barracks in the Highlands.

Although Wade is famous for his military roads, he thought his finest achievement was the Tay bridge in Aberfeldy: see the photo on pages 14/15. It was built in 1733 to a design by William Adam. After 280 years, it still carries vehicles without any weight restriction, thanks to its superb design and construction.

Battle of Culloden, oil painting by David Morier