

Early History of the Clan in Ireland and Scotland

The early history of some clans is often obscure through lack of written records, but perhaps the poems of Ossian may afford some clue as to our own clan's early origins, in which it is related how one Colmar MacMahon of Ireland assisted in the Scottish and Irish battles of the Gaelic foke lore hero Fingal. Some mention is said to have been made of this in the lomaire Manuscript of Roderick Matheson.

It is known that at some time in the 11th and 13th Centuries AD certain Irish personages sailed North from Ireland to seek the assistance of the Norwegian ships, mainly in repelling influxes of peoples from the Southern parts of Scotland into Ireland, and a MacMahon is thought to have sailed into Loch Alsh to have offered his assistance to the Scottish King, mainly in repelling Norwegian incursions on this part of the coast, and for this was awarded with lands in the Loch Alsh district. This may have been during the time of the Norwegian raids of Magnus Barefoot (ccAD1098) or a period between the reigns of Kings MacAlpin and Alexander I (843-1124 AD). Could somewhat similar incidents have occurred twice within 3 centuries?

Perhaps early Irish history may help to throw some light on these early events, for it begins to be fairly well recorded in many respects from about the time of Cormac MacAirt (AD275 – 300), somewhere at about which time the Fionna was founded and from which came the celebrated Fingal, (Finn), of whom there is such scanty historical evidence, and whose son Ossian related the many tales of war and valour of the various tribes of Ireland and Scotland.

The Irish clan system began to emerge historically in the 11th Century AD, and Clan MacMahon, along with other Irish clans, can be traced back to earlier origins than this period.

The spelling of names from these early times often differed considerably, before they were Anglicised from the Gaelic (and even since in some cases), but perhaps somewhere among these obscure facts and names and dates there may lie some approximate indication of our own clan origins in Scotland.

R. J. MATHESON (Secretary)