

## MacFarlanes at Bannockburn?

**Whilst this year Scotland celebrates the 700th Anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn on 24 June 1314, we search for Clan MacFarlane.**

A fair number of MacFarlanes from all over the world will visit Scotland this year and take part in the Remembrance activity being re-enacted near the battle site, of 1314. However, a question arises; did Clan MacFarlane take part in the actual battle of Bannockburn all those 700 years ago?

MacFarlanes who know the basics of their Clan's history will be aware that our lineage stems as a branch of the ancient Celtic Earls of Lennox. Our first clan chief was one **Gilchrist**, who was the fourth son of Alwyn, 2nd Earl of Lennox, and who in 1225 received the lands and barony of Arrochar in Dunbartonshire from his brother Malduin (3rd Earl).

**Gilchrist** was succeeded by his son Duncan (c.1284), listed among the many Scottish nobles who later signed the infamous document which came to be known as the 'Ragman Roll' in 1296, as homage to England's King Edward I. His signature appears as 'Duncan MacGilchrist of Levenaghes' (Lennox).

From this we see that the earliest name of the family was MacGilchrist (Son of Gilchrist). In fact, the MacFarlane name did not appear until the time of the 4th Chief, Parlan MacGilchrist, circa 1329, grandson of Chief Gilchrist. Parlan was succeeded by his son Malcolm MacParlain in 1329, after which date the members of the clan decided to adopt the name, which in time evolved as the present MacFarlane variation. Indeed, prior to the name change, some old maps of Lennox show Arrochar parish as "Gilchrist's" land.

History relates how in March 1306, with the aid of a few supporters, Robert the Bruce seized the Scottish throne only four weeks after having murdered the main contender, James Comyn. From then until scoring his famous victory at Bannockburn (1314), Bruce had lived the life of a fugitive, and for a while was obliged to skulk among the remote glens and forests of his own realm.

One of his ablest supporters was Malcolm 5th Earl of Lennox. Bruce suffered several early defeats at the hands of the Balliol supporters, including the powerful MacDougalls of Lorn, the

Comyns and, of course, the forces of King Edward I of England.

Following his conflict with the MacDougalls at Dalrigh (near Tyndrum, Perthshire), Bruce and his small army retreated southwards into the Lennox district by way of Glen Falloch. It is told that he took the east side of Loch Lomond, until it became necessary to be ferried across the loch to the Arrochar side, where he then enjoyed the additional support and hospitality of Earl Malcolm along with the predominant clan chief Malduin MacGilchrist, father of the aforementioned Parlan. It is told that the Lennox men escorted the king's party safely out of the district. They again proved themselves at the Battle of Bannockburn under Earl Malcolm's banner, when our Clan was led by Chief Malduin.

King Robert the Bruce is again associated with the district when, in March 1316, he confirmed a

charter by Malcolm, Earl of Lennox to one John de Luss for the lands thereof, which also included a three-mile wide sanctuary girth centred on the ancient church dedicated to Saint Kessog. What is generally not known, is the fact that for much of his life the king suffered from skin eruptions, thought to be leprosy, for which he was constantly seeking the ultimate cure. He appeared also to have been a staunch believer in the power of spiritual healing, which probably led to his many visits and lavish patronage of various churches throughout Scotland.

Early in 1325 the king's attention was again drawn to Lennox. In March that year he

began a series of complex land deals with various land holders, including the mutual exchange of certain lands with local proprietors. Among the property acquisitions were 104 acres of land in Cardross parish, plus another 70 acres at Pillanflat, beside the River Leven (also in Cardross parish) close to the Royal Burgh of Dumbarton. This was where the hero of Bannockburn built his retirement home, and where he died in 1329 – incidentally, being the same year that **Parlan MacGilchrist** became the 4th Chief and eponym of our *Clann Pharlainn*.

Bruce's internal organs (viscera) were removed and taken to Cardross parish church (now Levensgrove Park) for burial, while the rest of his body was carried to Dunfermlyne Abbey. The photograph in this page shows the statue of King Robert at Stirling Castle. **Malcolm Lobban.**

