

The following article was published by Peter Macleod in the NSW news last year. It is extensive and this is the second and final instalment.

ISLE OF BERNERAY AND MACLEODS

The Isle of Berneray is in the Sound of Harris, and regarded as part of the isle of Harris. However, now it is connected by a causeway to North Uist.

Historically, the island is held by the MacLeods of Berneray under MacLeod of MacLeod.

FIRST MACLEOD OF BERNERAY This was Norman 1614 - 1705, the third son of the great MacLeod Chief, Sir Rory Mor. The Armoury on Berneray, now deserted, was the Mansion House of Rory Mor, and here Norman was born. Chief Rory was an entertaining host, and the Mansion became known as "MacLeod's wonted Hall", and "the Hall of the wine cups".

A post script for Norman's life was recorded in a marble slab above the door, a latin inscription meaning "Here was born the illustrious Norman MacLeod of Bereray, distinguished knight".

In accordance with highland tradition of the time, Norman lived away in his early years with a foster family, and 1631-32 he and his brother went to Glasgow University. When leaving that place he was granted 'life-rent' of Berneray, plus small islands and some districts on Harris, by his father Sir Rory.

Norman's appearance lives in the poetry of the famed Mary MacLeod. His countenance was "full fair and shapely", curling locks "as yellow as harpstrings", clear eyes "as blue as blaeberry", and cheeks "as red as the berry of the dogrose". He had books and took an interest in poetry, history and antiquities. He was a generous patron of bards, story tellers, harpers and pipers and an excellent judge of their skills.

Norman was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of MacLeod Regiments in 1650, to fight the dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell and the Parliamentarians.

With his elder brother, Roderick MacLeod of Talisker he fought the battle of Worcester 3 Sept. 1651. The MacLeods were practically wiped out, Roderick escaped, but Norman was sent to the Tower of London. His name was confused with the Welsh name 'Lloyd' and as such was charged with high treason and its consequences. A technicality in the inditement made his captors realise he was a Scot. He petitioned for freedom and was offered the "Test", a swearing of acceptance of the rule of Cromwell and the Rump Parliament of England. He refused, however he did manage to escape and fled to the highlands.

Then he undertook missions to Europe in the cause of restoring the Stuarts. One mission from Charles II to Denmark's King Frederick III brought a pledge of 10,000 soldiers, officers, and equipment, but then England reinstated the monarchy.

In 1660 Norman and Roderick went to London and were knighted for their services. The King promised him the estates of MacLeod of Assynt (who had acknowledged the rule of Cromwell), but Scottish courts intervened for Assynt. Then he was offered the estates of Hector Roy MacLean, who forfeited them to Duke of Argyle in financial bankruptcy supporting the Royalists. Norman refused to take advantage, and handed the estates back to Hector MacLean.

Norman died in March 1705 aged 91, and is buried in St. Clement's Church, Rodal, Isle of Harris.

After the death of Sir Norman, the estate was managed by his second wife, Catherine, eldest daughter of Sir James MacDonald, 2nd Baronet of Sleat, Isle of Skye.

It followed that William MacLeod, Norman's 3rd son took on the estate and continued on Berneray until 1730 when he refused the rent increases by Norman MacLeod of MacLeod 22nd Chief, and settled at Luskintyre, Isle of Harris.

THE OLD TROJAN OF BERNERAY, Donald MacLeod. 1692 -1781. He was trained under his father John MacLeod 2nd of Berneray (although he never held the estate, just the title) who was Factor and Tutor on the Chiefs' estates; for Norman XX, John XXI, Norman XXII (the *Red Man*, or *Wicked Man*).

Donald took over as Tacksman on Berneray in 1730 after his uncle William. He like most of his family, was a supporter of the house of Stuart. He was a leader of 100 men at Sheriffmuir in 1715.

In 1741 He visited St. Kilda on behalf of Norman MacLeod to ascertain the conditions of Lady Grange who was captive there for years. She had threatened to expose her adulterous husband Lord Grange Erskine in 'treasonable affairs' as a Jacobite supporter, and it also served to silence her vituperative alcoholic outbursts. Donald may have whisked her away to Harris, because a rescue attempt from the east was launched, but arrived too late.

Boswell & Johnson mention this episode in their memoirs of the Hebrides. Dr Johnson said, "if M'Leod would let it be known that he had such a place for naughty ladies, he might make it a very profitable island".

When Prince Charles Edward Stuart landed in 1745, Norman XXII of MacLeod ordered Donald to Dunvegan with 20 men because The Chief had sided with the Hanoverian Government of England against Charlie. The Highland Chiefs were politically divided in this cause. Donald did as commanded but addressed his Chief " I place at your disposal 20 men of your tribe under my command, and in any other quarrel would not fail to be at their head, but at the present juncture, I must go where a more imperious duty calls me."

Donald set out to join Prince Charlie who was retreating from a successful campaign in England. At the battle of Falkirk he vanquished a Dragoon in hand to hand combat. He came under heavy fire at Culloden, but survived the carnage. Through close escapes he managed to join the Prince's party headed for Invergarry. Donald eventually found a commodious cave on South Harris. He averted capture for a year, aided by a lad of 10 (- John Martin who died aged 112. His death and testament was noted in the Inverness Courier in March 1846)

While Donald was in hiding, Berneray was being assaulted and plundered by Capt. John Ferguson (Black John) of the frigate "Furnace".

General Campbell, for the Government, fruitlessly searching for the Jacobite Donald on St. Kilda and Pabbay intervened against an embittered Black John in his assaults.; "if he, -John, offered any more insolence to Campbell's orders or more violence to either person or property without his permission, he would nail his ear to the man-of-war's mast". Thereafter General Campbell fully paid Lady Berneray for all damage caused by Black John and his marines and sailors and commiserated with her about the unfortunate position her husband was in.

Due to Campbell's influence, Donald MacLeod of Berneray was pardoned in 1747, but was left in financial difficulties after the Stuart cause. As a good administrator he righted his affairs and debts in a few years. He was buried at St. Clement's Church, Rodel, Harris. The tombstone inscription, in part says:-

"To the memory of Donald MacLeod of Bernera, son of John - Tutor of MacLeod, who in vigour of body and mind and firm adherence to the principles of his ancestors, resembled the men of former times. "

Donald had 3 Marriages. His first in 1709 (aged 17) was to Anne, only daughter of Roderick IX of MacLeod (& Isabel). Donald and Anne had 20 children.

His second wife Janet, grand-daughter of Donald Gorm MacDonald of Sleat. They lived together for 19 years without issue, until her death.

The third marriage in 1767 was with Margaret (17) daughter of Rev. Donald MacLeod, 3rd of Greshomish and minister of Duirnish. The Old Trojan was 75, and he and Margaret had 9 children. He died aged 90, and Margaret outlived him by 43 years.

NORMAN VI of Berneray, Eldest son of the Old Trojan. He was born in 1715, and in 1739 was involved in a scheme to kidnap folk from Skye & Harris and sell them as slaves in America. The plot failed when the ship sank off Ireland, and the passengers were saved. Norman took over the Tack of Berneray after the death of his father. He started the processing of kelp on a large scale, imported stock to improve the herds' breeding, and improved the farming system. He was kind and considerate to his tenants and remembered with affection. He died in 1803.

ALEXANDER VII of Berneray, nephew to Norman VI, spent much of his life in India. He returned to find the Kelp industry booming. Isabella MacLeod held the Tack after Norman VI, and because she would not raise the rents, Alexander had her evicted, the property divided among crofters, raised the rents, changed his name to Hume and moved to England.