

- **Origins of the family name McWilliam in**
- **Scotland**

Up until the 10th century, the ruling families of Scotland considered themselves as king and were continually at war between themselves. In the north east of Scotland, allegiance was either to the King of Norway or the King of England. However, in the west and central highlands, there was no significant allegiance that dominated. From this group, arose one "Malcolm of Canmore" also known as "Greathead" who defeated MacBeth in 1054 and became the leader of a dominant family in the early 11th century. He was crowned "Malcolm the first", King of Scotland, and it is from his descendant "Malcolm III", who had two marriages, that subsequently led to bitter rivalry between these two lines of his family for claim over the Scottish crown.

Malcolm III's first marriage to "Ingibjorg" widow of "Thorfinn" (died 1064) produced the lineage of "Duncan II" (eldest son of Malcolm) to "William FitzDuncan" (equivalent to the French, William "son of" Duncan), to "Duncan Ban MacWilliam" (known as "Donald" - who was slain in battle of Mam Garvia, in Moray in 1187), to his sons, "Dovenald Ban" (slain in Moray in 1215) and "Guthred" (who was beheaded in Kincardine in 1211).

Malcolm III's second marriage was to Queen Margaret which led to the line of "David I" (ninth and youngest son), to "Henry, earl of Ross", to "King William the Lion" (1165-1214, second son of Henry, earl of Ross). There was continual struggling between the two sides of the family which was temporarily resolved when "King William the Lion" granted the first marriage descendants the "Earldom of Ross" in return for them renouncing their claims to the Scottish crown.

It was the descendants from "Malcolm III's" first marriage who held power in the north which passed down to a "Donald MacWilliam" and when King William the Lion (from the second marriage side of the family) was captured by the English in 1174, this Donald MacWilliam reasserted power and captured the Earldom of Ross in 1181. William the Lion was subsequently released by the English and in 1187 led an army north to re-establish his authority which resulted in the slaying of Donald on the moor of Mam Garvia, somewhere west of Inverness, and his severed head was brought to William the Lion. Donald left a son, Guthred MacWilliam (who had been exiled in Northern Ireland) to carry on the revolt. William the Lion's army was strengthened by "King John of England" and Guthred was captured and beheaded at Kincardine Castle in 1211 and his body hung upside down as a warning to the rebels. A final rebellion occurred around 1229 against the Scottish crown led by "Gilleasbuig MacWilliam" against "Alexander II" of Scotland, who in order to remove all "Gilleasbuig MacWilliam's" heirs, ordered the murder of Gilleasbuig's infant daughter by having her brains dashed out against the cross in the town of Forfar.

The source of this information is the book "Lost Kingdoms" by John L Roberts (Edinburgh University Press) and "A Passage Through Time" by John McQuilliams (McQuilliams Research 2002, a private publication). Other references establish the McWilliam family name associated with rebellion up to the 1300's with references to a John McWilliam, known as "Brownbeard", believed to be associated with the Northern Ireland

McWilliams in Ulster.

Throughout mediaeval and later history, the McWilliams have been associated with the Highland clans of Scotland, particularly the MacLeods, McGregors, Mcfarlanes, McDonalds and the Gunns. The areas in which they were prevalent is the northern and central highlands of Moray and Ross. It was from these areas that they were driven by both the Scottish and English Kings, to the western parts of Scotland such as Caithness and the southwestern parts such as Wigtownshire which is in close proximity to Antrim in Northern Ireland.