

# Belmaduthy in the Black Isle

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These research notes were compiled by Don Gordon from sources quoted throughout.

[www.alexanderandjessiegordon.net](http://www.alexanderandjessiegordon.net)

## General

- Look in Wikipedia and Google Maps for general information about Belmaduthy. The following notes are of specific pertinence to our ancestry.

## Relevance

- In 1794, at the time of his marriage, Alex Gordon, was living at Belmaduthy – possibly for some time before the wedding and for the first few years of married life.
- In 1795, John Gordon's birth record has his father, Alex, as servant to Lieut Coln McKenzie at Belmaduthy.
- In 1823, at the birth of John's daughter-in-law, Jessie Matheson, whose father was a sergeant in the 78<sup>th</sup> Foot, was given a middle name of MacKinzie. This indicates that there might have been close inter-connections between the three families - McKinzie, Gordon and Matheson. However, there were many McKenzies in the 78<sup>th</sup>, and there is nothing to indicate that Sgt Alexander Matheson had any personal connections with McKenzie of Balmaduthy in particular. Also, Lieut Col McKenzie was with the 1<sup>st</sup> Ross-shire Local Militia and we would need to check whether this is the same as the 78<sup>th</sup> Foot which was known as the Ross-Shire Buffs.

## Location & description

- Belmaduthy was a large estate at the centre of the Black Isle, near the village of Munloch, and 10 kms (as the crow flies) north of Inverness.
- There was probably a substantial house on the estate by the end of the 1700s, when Alex was married and John was born, but the building in the photo might have been built a few decades later - in the early 1900s according to AmBaile. So, the building our Gordons were familiar with, might not be the one pictured.
- Colin Mackenzie was the proprietor (owner) of Belmaduthy, Knockbain, Muirends, Munloch, Wester Kessock, and Drumderfit.
- *"The various and extensive properties of Colin Mackenzie, Esq of Kilcoy, will soon, in consequence of the judicious outlay of capital, present a very beautiful and highly cultivated appearance, and will, in a great degree, reward the proprietor himself, although the full benefit of them can be expected to be reaped only by his family."* (The 1845 Statistical Account by Allan McKenzie for Roderick McKenzie p60)
- *"Mackenzie of Kilcoy, has purchased since last report [1795?], part of the estate of Belmaduthy, where he has built a princely domicile, with a fine square of every other suitable accommodation."* (The 1845 Statistical Account by xxxx p61)
- *"Belmaduthy House is depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. There was a substantial walled garden at NH 64725 55911, and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS map a Pheasantry is labelled near the garden at NH 64621 55868. The house was let out in the 1920s, and burnt down in 1935. Only cellars and odd floor tiles survive, the cellars more recently used as isolation pens. A local story relates that the furniture was removed before the fire, including a grand piano which ended up in the Culbokie pub. The gates reputedly ended up in Avoch Coronation Park (though there is also a tradition that they came from Rosehaugh), and some of the stone in the garden of Dungrianach, Munloch and at Avoch. A stone-built tunnel survives from the house to the burn, approximately 60 metres long. It is not clear why it was built or what it might have been used for, though there are rumors of smuggling and tax evasion. It is also not known whether it is earlier than the house."* ('Remembering Knockbain Parish' in [www.archhighland.org.uk](http://www.archhighland.org.uk) – item 39 on page 24 - reference: NGR = NH 65106 567229)





This photograph shows Belmaduthy House near Munloch in the Black Isle. Built in the early 19th century, it stood in what was once the united parish of Kilmuir Wester and Suddy, later referred to as Knockbain, and was for a time the seat of the Mackenzies of Kilcoy, a branch of the Mackenzies of Gairloch. The Mackenzies made considerable agricultural improvements to their estate and created extensive plantations of fir, larch and oak. Belmaduthy House itself was noted for the fine old hardwood trees growing around it. The house is no longer standing.

One of the noteworthy proprietors of Belmaduthy was Evan Mackenzie (1816-1883), a son of Sir Colin Mackenzie of Kilcoy. In 1840 Evan sailed for Australia with his brother Colin and in 1841 settled at Kilcoy, near Brisbane, where he bred 'Kilcoythen' sheep. He brought shepherds and farm labourers from Kilcoy, Scotland, out to help him.

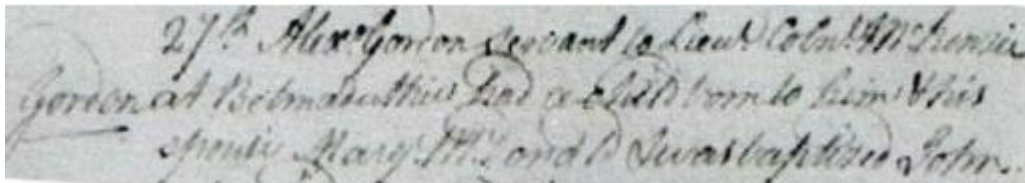
Back home, Evan's father was made a baronet in 1836 and when he died in 1845, Evan succeeded to the title and returned to Scotland to make his home at Belmaduthy House. He became a magistrate and deputy lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty, although he continued to travel widely. His only son died before him and the title became extinct.

This image may be available to purchase. For further information about purchasing and prices please email [Groom House Museum](mailto:Groom House Museum)

Source: AmBaile Highland History & Culture

## Comments

- John's OPR birth record of 1795 states that his father, Alex, was servant of Lieut Coln McKenzie.



- But who was this McKenzie? It must have been either Charles McKenzie, or his son, Colin. Let's look at these two possibilities.
- Colin:
  - He was a proprietor of Belmaduthy House and was the Lieutenant-Colonel and Commandant of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ross-shire Local Militia.
  - He was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1782.
  - "Knighted for his contribution to Whig reform, the highly respected Sir Colin Mackenzie was Vice Lieutenant and convenor of the county in addition to holding the rank of Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the Ross-shire militia."* (ref: Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, volume XIII, no. 12 November 1989, page 430, referring to The Times, 17 December 1883)
  - "Sir Colin was the eighth of Kilcoy, created a baronet on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1836, with remainder to his second and third son, Evan and Colin John. He was Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant 1<sup>st</sup> Ross-shire Local Militia, and Vice-Lieutenant and Convenor of the county, and claimed the Earldom of Buchan and Barony of Auchterhouse. He was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1782, and married on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1805."*
  - Conclusion: Although Colin was at Belmaduthy and was a Lieutenant Colonel, he could not have been the person referred to in John's OPR because Colin was only 13 years old when John was born,

so he would not have yet attained that rank. And it is unlikely that Alex would have been referred to as his servant. It must have been his father, Charles.

- Charles:
  - John's birth record has 'Lieut Coln McKenzie' and we are interpreting as Lieutenant Colonel McKenzie rather than Lieutenant Colin McKenzie.
  - We have not found any confirmation that Charles was at Balmaduthie and that he had that rank.
  - The only details we have about him is that Charles MacKenzie was the 7<sup>th</sup> of Kilcoy and married Jane Gordon, 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter of Patrick Grant of Glenmoriston in 1781. He died in 1813. "*Charles MacKenzie, seventh of Kilcoy, who in 1781 married Jane Gordon, third daughter of Patrick Grant of Glenmoriston with issue – an only son, by whom on his death in 1813 he was succeeded as Sir Colin MacKenzie.*" (History of the Mackenzies' by Alexander Mackenzie, 1894, page 589

## Visiting

- Nothing remains of the Belmaduthy mansion.

## Sources

- 'Remembering Knockbain Parish' in [www.archhighland.org.uk](http://www.archhighland.org.uk) – item 39 on page 24 - reference: NGR = NH 65106 567229)
- The 1845 Statistical Account by xxxx
- AmBaile Highland History & Culture
- 'History of the Mackenzies' by Alexander Mackenzie, 1894, page 589:
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