



## The MacCallum Curse and the Family Dispersion

### "The Colgin Story"

Donald Ian MacCallum, from Great Britain, has passed on a MacCallum family account that was told by his father, and his father's father before him. He had some doubts that a story passed on by word of mouth could be accurate, but he has since learned that oral traditions are regarded as accurate in a society that makes its own entertainment by telling stories. He also learned that the same stories would be told repeatedly, and in the hearing of people who had heard them many times before, that it ensures that mistakes are promptly corrected.

Donald and his sister heard this story from a very early age from their father. His father thought the events could have happened around the reign of James the V, or the reign of his daughter Mary Queen of Scots - latter 1400's to early 1500's. His father felt certain that it had been passed down through every generation since it happened. This is the story related by Donald's father, that Donald's father had heard from his father..... This is **The Colgin Story**

"There once was a Chief of the Clan MacCallum, who lived at Colgin in Lerags Glen and he had prospered. He had twelve sons, and each son had his own manservant, so that when the Whole family were assembled together, there were very many of them. One day they went to the local church, St. Brides, and because there were so many of them, they filled the church, and those who came later had to stand in the doorway. When Lady MacDougal of Lorn arrived with her household, she was indignant that she could not get in, and demanded of those who stood at the door: "Why can I not get in?" They replied, "It is MacCallum of Colgin, him and all his sons and their manservant's; there are so many of them that there is not room for us." Lady MacDougal replied, "In that case, I curse MacCallum of Colgin, him and all his sons! For so long as they remain at Colgin they shall die one by one until there are no more of them left."

And so it happened; the sons died, one by one, until there were only three remaining, and the old man became desperate, thinking that his family would soon be extinct. He consulted the Seannachie, who advised him that the only way for his sons to escape the curse would be for them to leave Colgin. Each son should load his possessions into two panniers and place them on a pack-horse, on a harness made of hazel withes, and they should leave Colgin; not stopping in their travels until the harness should break and the panniers fall to the ground. The oldest of the three sons did not want to risk losing his inheritance and to ensure he would inherit Colgin on the death of his father, circled the perimeter of the farm until the harness broke and the panniers fell. There he settled, but apparently had not escaped the curse, because he died without issue. The second son, went north and in Glen Etive his panniers fell to the ground, but he (or his descendants) did not like Glen Etive, and continued to migrate east until he (or they) arrived in Glen Lyon, and settled there. The third son went south, and his panniers fell at Ford, which is at the south-end of Loch Awe, near Kilmartin. Later when the chieftainship fell vacant, the third son, or his descendant, being in the district, succeeded whereas the second son, or his descendant, was too far away, and by this time had lost contact with the rest of the Clan."

To this day the chieftainship resides on the Poltalloch lands near Kilmartin in the castle Duntrune. Donald's ancestors were from Glen Lyon. He has since visited Colgin (today called Cologin). There is only one wall standing of the original MacCallum house, and the church of Kilbride near by, where Lady MacDougal pronounced her curse, is in ruins. Donald related, "I have stood in the doorway of the ruined church just where Lady MacDougal stood when she cursed us and it was a moving experience."