

2·1 Rob Roy and the Jacobites

Rob Roy MacGregor, the third son of Donald Glas MacGregor of Glengyle and Margaret Campbell, was born at Glengyle House, Loch Katrine, in 1671. He spent much of his life in the Trossachs, the area of lochs and rugged hills lying east of Loch Lomond. From Aberfoyle to Killin, the Way skirts the eastern edge of the Trossachs.

Rob Roy was a man of property and was involved in large-scale cattle droving and dealing. He and his brother Iain developed the Lennox Watch, a body that offered 'protection' to cattle owners in return for money. When protection money was not paid, cattle tended to 'disappear' mysteriously.

After his father was captured and imprisoned, Rob Roy effectively became the Chief of his clan, aged only 30. In those days the powerful Duke of Montrose was his patron. His luck changed and his business collapsed when his head drover left, taking the enormous sum of £1000, all the money intended for cattle purchase. In 1712 the Duke of Montrose (to whom he owed money) turned against him and had him bankrupted and outlawed. His wife and family were evicted and his house was burned down.

Rob Roy swore vengeance, and took to the hills in a long campaign of thieving cattle and occasional kidnaps of Montrose's servants. His frequent escapes, popularity with local people and generosity to the poor all gained him a reputation as a Scottish Robin Hood.

Many legends arose from Rob Roy's fighting strength, unusually long arms and fiery red hair ('Roy' comes from the Gaelic 'ruadh', meaning 'red'). His life was romanticised in the novels of Sir Walter Scott.

He mobilised Clan Gregor on the Jacobite side in 1715 (see below) but took no active part in the Battle of Sheriffmuir in November 1715. Nevertheless he was accused of treason because of his Jacobite activities.

Statue that stands in Stirling city centre, donated by Adam McGregor Dick of Kilmarnock, a direct descendant of Rob Roy's



The Duke of Montrose captured him at Balquhider in 1717, but he made a daring escape while fording the River Forth en route to Stirling Castle. He was recaptured by the Duke of Atholl in Dunkeld and imprisoned in Logierait, but he escaped again after only one night. Eventually, with support from the Duke of Argyll he received the King's pardon in 1725. He died in his bed at Inverlochlarig nine years later, and was buried in the graveyard of Balquhider where his wife and two of his sons were also later interred.

The grave's legend 'MacGregor despite them' is a defiant response to the government's attempt to destroy the clan by forbidding the use of the MacGregor surname. This prevented them from entering into legal contracts. This happened on several occasions, the last prohibition being lifted in 1775.



Rob Roy's grave, Balquhider

Chronology

- 1671 Rob Roy MacGregor was born at Glengyle House on Loch Katrine
- 1689 Battle of Killcrankie, where Rob Roy and his father fought on the successful Jacobite side; MacGregor surname proscribed by William of Orange
- 1693 Rob Roy married his cousin, Helen Mary MacGregor of Comer
- 1702 William of Orange died; Anne succeeded as Queen
- 1707 Union of Scottish and English Parliaments
- 1712 Rob Roy was made bankrupt by Duke of Montrose and declared an outlaw
- 1713 Montrose's men evict Rob Roy's family; they move to Auchinchisallen in Glen Dochart; Rob Roy was sheltered in Finlarig Castle, Killin
- 1714 Queen Anne dies: George I succeeds (according to Act of Settlement, 1701)
- 1715 First Jacobite uprising ends indecisively after the Battle of Sheriffmuir
- 1717 Rob Roy was captured at Balquhider, escaped while crossing the Forth, was recaptured in Dunkeld, imprisoned in Logierait but promptly escaped again
- 1720 Rob Roy moved to Inverlochlarig in Balquhider Glen
- 1725 Rob Roy submitted to King George I via General Wade
- 1730 Rob Roy converted to Catholicism at Drummond Castle
- 1734 Rob Roy died at Inverlochlarig and was buried at Balquhider