

# The Battle of the Shirts *Blàr nan Lèintean*

Pronounced: Blarr nan layeenten



*"It is reported that at this field thair was none of the surname of the Frasers left levand that was cum to mannis age."*  
 John Lesley (Bishop of Ross and 16th Century Scottish historian)

**Did you know...?**  
 It was said that the day of the battle was so hot that both sides removed their plaids and fought in their shirts - giving the battle its name. A less colourful explanation is that the battlesite was already called Blar-na-Leana, the field of the swampy meadow.

**Near here the Battle of the Shirts was fought in July 1544.**

The battle was over who would become chief of the powerful MacDonalds of Clan Ranald Clann Ràghnail. There were two contenders - Ranald Gallda ("The Stranger") and his nephew, John of Moidart Ian Mùideatach. Ranald, whose mother was a Fraser, was supported by the chief of the Lovat Frasers. John's supporters included the Camerons and the MacDonalds of Glengarry Gleanna Garadh and Keppoch A' Cheapach.

In an attempt to avoid serious conflict, the two sides came together for a meeting. The exact outcome of the meeting is unclear, but John agreed to head west with his men. Shortly thereafter, Ranald and Lord Lovat were returning north to the Fraser homelands near Inverness, when John's army trapped them beside Loch Lochy.

Most of Ranald's forces, hundreds of men including Lord Lovat, his eldest son and Ranald himself, were killed. The losses on John's side were equally bad. Loch Lochy is said to have run red with blood for days afterwards. John became clan chief ceann-cinnidh until his death in 1574.

