

SCOTTISH CLAN CONNECTION

Newsletter

CEANGAL CHLANN NA H-ALBA

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Clan Fraser Mourns the Loss of Their Beloved Chief

Flora Marjory Fraser, 21st Lady Saltoun and Chief of Clan Fraser, passed away on September 3, 2024, at the age of 93 at her home in Inverey House, Ballater, Aberdeenshire. Born on October 18, 1930, in Edinburgh, she was the younger child of the 20th Lord Saltoun and Dorothy Geraldine Welby. After her older brother, Alexander Simon Fraser, was killed in action during WWII, Flora became the heir presumptive and succeeded her father as Lady Saltoun in 1979. In 1984, she was officially recognized as the Chief of Clan Fraser by the Lord Lyon. Flora married Alexander Ramsay of Mar in 1956, linking her to the British Royal Family through his mother, Lady Patricia Ramsay, a

granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Lady Saltoun was the only female hereditary peer elected to the House of Lords, serving until her retirement in 2014. A devoted clan leader, she co-hosted the 1997 Fraser Clan Gathering.



Conservation has begun on Clan MacNeil's Kisimul Castle

Conservation work has begun on Kisimul Castle, the historic stronghold of the Macneil clan, situated on a rocky islet off Castlebay in Barra, part of Scotland's Western Isles. Built in the 15th century, this iconic fortress served as a symbol of Gaelic power and has been a prominent landmark for centuries.

The castle was closed to the public at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and has remained inaccessible due to safety concerns over parts of the structure. Historic Environment Scotland (HES), the organization responsible for its management since 2000, has initiated restoration efforts to address these issues. The conservation work focuses on repairing damage caused by moisture and salt to concrete and steel reinforcements added during a major 20th-century restoration. The castle's coastal location and the impacts of climate change have exacerbated these structural problems. To facilitate the repairs, a helicopter has been used to transport equipment and materials to the remote site. Jamie McPherson, HES's head of the north region, emphasized the importance of the castle to the local community and expressed the

organization's commitment to reopening it. "We're pleased to begin these works, which will allow us to facilitate further work and help achieve the longer-term goal of reopening the castle to the local community and visitors," he said.

Kisimul Castle, whose Gaelic name Caisteal Chiosmuil means "castle of the rock of the small bay," holds significant cultural and historical value. The Macneil chiefs, who claim descent from the legendary 5th-century Irish warlord Niall of the Nine Hostages, used it as a power base. The castle's rich history includes tales of piracy and resistance against foreign armies.



Amazing Find at Dundonald Castle

An extraordinary discovery has recently captivated historians and archaeology enthusiasts alike: a 500-year-old gold ring unearthed at Dundonald Castle in South Ayrshire, Scotland. Found atop a molehill within the castle grounds, this remarkable piece of Renaissance jewelry offers a tangible connection to Scotland's rich medieval past and has sparked intriguing theories about its original owner. The ring is a stunning example of late 15th to early 16th-century craftsmanship. It features a polished oval amethyst set in a finely crafted gold band adorned with intricate foliate designs—a vine on one side and a stem with seven spiky leaves on the other. The use of amethyst, believed to hold protective qualities, and the elaborate design suggest it was a valuable personal item, likely owned by someone of significant status.

Given the ring's quality and the historical importance of Dundonald Castle, several theories have emerged regarding its original owner. One possibility is that it belonged to a member of the Stewart clan, particularly the royal Stewarts who had strong ties to the castle. Dundonald Castle was built by King Robert II, the first monarch of the Stewart dynasty, in 1371. As a royal residence, it was frequented by members of the royal family and nobility. The ring could have been worn by a descendant of Robert II, perhaps even by James IV or James V, both of whom were known to visit the castle.

Another theory points to the Wallace clan, who owned the castle in the early 16th century. The Wallaces of Craigie were a prominent family in Ayrshire, and it's conceivable that the ring belonged to one of their members. Given the Wallaces' status and influence, they would have had access to such luxurious items. The ring might have been a family heirloom or a commissioned piece reflecting their wealth and position. The Montgomery clan is another potential connection. The Montgomeries were significant landowners in Ayrshire and had alliances through marriage with both the Stewarts and the Wallaces. If a Montgomery noble visited Dundonald Castle, it's possible the ring was lost during their stay. Their prominence in the region makes them a plausible link in the chain of ownership.



It's also worth considering the broader context of the time. The late 15th and early 16th centuries were periods of political maneuvering and alliances among Scottish clans. The ring could have been a diplomatic gift exchanged between clans or a token of allegiance. Such an item would symbolize trust and solidarity, making its loss a matter of some consequence.

The serendipitous nature of the ring's discovery adds to its allure. Unearthed by a member of the Friends of Dundonald Castle, the ring had lain hidden for centuries, waiting to reveal its secrets. Its emergence not only enriches the historical narrative of Dundonald Castle but also underscores the enduring legacy of Scotland's clans and their intertwined histories.

This remarkable find has now joined the collections of the National Museums of Scotland, where it will be preserved and studied. It offers scholars a rare opportunity to delve deeper into the material culture of Scotland's Renaissance period. The craftsmanship of the ring provides insights into the artistic influences of the time, reflecting both local traditions and broader European trends.

Moreover, the ring serves as a tangible link to the lives of those who shaped Scotland's history. Whether it adorned the finger of a Stewart monarch, a Wallace noble, or a Montgomery ally, it embodies the personal stories behind historical events.

Clan Irvine

vs.

Clan Keith

Famous Clan Battle

The feud between the Keith and Irvine clans originated in 1346 after the death of Sir John Keith at the Battle of Durham. John was the sole heir to the estates of his father, Sir Robert Keith, Marischal of Scotland. When Sir Robert also died in 1346, the estates passed to his brother, Sir Edward Keith. Tensions arose when one of John's daughters married into the Irvine family, and the Irvines attempted to claim the Strachan estates. This dispute escalated into a violent feud, with one incident involving the Keiths burning an Irvine child in hot wart. In retaliation, the Irvines attacked and destroyed Hallforest Castle, a Keith stronghold.

The feud culminated in the Battle of Drumoak in 1402, where the Keiths launched a raid on Irvine territory. The Irvines intercepted them near the River Dee, where

they killed many Keith clansmen, with others drowning while trying to escape. A Keith leader was struck down on a rock in the river, later known as "Keith's Stone." The Irvines were victorious, and the river channel where many Keiths drowned became known as "Keith's Pot."

To resolve the feud, a marriage was arranged between Elizabeth Keith and Alexander de

Irvin. The Irvines, eager for peace, made a pact that if Alexander were killed, his brother Robert would marry Elizabeth. After



Alexander's death at the Battle of Harlaw in 1411, Robert fulfilled the pact, married Elizabeth, and the Strachan estates were awarded to the couple, thus ending the long-standing feud between the two clans. The marriage not only ended the violent clashes but also united the two powerful clans through shared land and lineage.

Historic Clan Castles of Scotland



Ardchonnell Castle

Loch Awe, Scotland

Ardchonnell Castle, set on an island in Loch Awe, was a formidable fortress thanks to its thick walls, remote location, and strategic vantage point. Nearly impossible to access without careful planning, it served not only as a defensive stronghold but also played a key role in one of Scotland's tragic stories of captivity. In the late 15th century, Domhnall Dubh, the young heir to the Lordship of the Isles, was imprisoned here by the Earl of Argyll after his



father's rebellion. The Campbells, loyal to their cause, kept Donald captive to protect their power. After escaping as an adult, Donald raised an army in 1503 but was defeated and spent the next 40 years imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle. He briefly reclaimed his title in 1545 but soon fled to Ireland, where he died in exile.

By the 15th century, the Campbells had shifted to larger estates, leaving Ardchonnell behind, though it continued to be used as a prison. Over time, it fell into ruin, as new homes were built on the mainland. By the 19th century, the castle was overgrown with ivy, its internal structures barely recognizable. Today, it stands as a scheduled monument, protected for its historical significance.

Visitors to Loch Awe can still see the ruins of Ardchonnell Castle and imagine the once-bustling life within its walls. The castle's legacy lives on as a symbol of clan power, politics, and Highland history.

John of Moidart

"The Wallace of the Celtic Tribes"

In the rugged landscape of 16th-century Scotland, where mountainous terrains and deep valleys shaped both culture and politics, John of Moidart emerged as a defiant figure. Known as the "Wallace of the Celtic tribes," John's rebellion against the powerful Earl of Argyll in 1544 embodied the clash between the Highland clans and the encroaching feudal system. Born into the influential Clan MacDonald of Moidart, John's leadership during the bloody Battle of Blairleine marked a pivotal moment in the Highlander's fight to preserve their ancient clan traditions.

John's resistance wasn't just about power—it symbolized the broader struggle between two systems. Highland clanship, built on kinship and communal land ownership, contrasted sharply with the feudal model, where land became a commodity owned by lords in exchange for service to the crown. As Argyll and other feudal powers sought to impose control, John of Moidart rose to



defend the autonomy of the clans, rallying his people to fight for their way of life. The Battle of Blairleine was a brutal but strategic victory for John. Despite being outnumbered, his deep knowledge of the Highland terrain and the strong bonds of loyalty within his clan allowed him to hold off the better-equipped forces of Argyll. Though the battle did not stop the spread of feudalism, John's stand remains a powerful symbol of Highland resistance. His legacy, much like that of William Wallace, speaks to the enduring spirit of the Highland clans, fiercely protective of their land, traditions, and independence.

Scottish Clan Myths and Legends



The Chilling Tale of Campbell of Inverawe

Duncan Campbell of Inverawe's story is a haunting mix of loyalty, honor, and supernatural warning that endures in Scottish Highland folklore. Campbell, a nobleman and member of the Black Watch regiment, is tasked with enforcing peace in the lawless Highlands. One night, he encounters a bloodied man who confesses to murder and begs for protection. Bound by the Highland code of hospitality, Campbell shelters him, despite the man's guilt. That night, Campbell is visited by the ghost of the murdered man, who issues a chilling warning: "Blood must flow for blood. Shield not the murderer!"

Despite these repeated ghostly warnings, Campbell continues to protect the man, unable to break his oath. The ghost's final message, "We meet again at Ticonderoga," leaves Campbell perplexed, as the name is unknown to him. Years later, in 1758, while serving with the Black Watch in North



America during the French and Indian War, Campbell's regiment is sent to capture Fort Ticonderoga. Upon arrival, he realizes that the ghost's prophecy is about to come true. During the battle, Campbell is mortally wounded, fulfilling the ghost's ominous warning. His tragic death, bound by an oath he could not forsake, stands as a powerful testament to the Highlander's deep sense of duty, honor, and the mysterious forces of the supernatural. This enduring legend has become one of Scotland's most chilling and famous ghost stories.

The Battle of Inverlochy, 1431

The Battle of Inverlochy, fought in 1431, stands as a key event in medieval Scottish history. It occurred during a period of rising tensions between the Highland clans and the Scottish monarchy. The conflict began after Alexander of Islay, Lord of the Isles and Earl of Ross, was imprisoned by King James I, who sought to curtail the power of the semi-independent Highland chiefs. Upon securing his release, Alexander quickly gathered a force of loyal Highlanders to oppose the king's forces. His cousin, Donald Balloch, took command of the forces, leading them into battle near present-day Fort William, a region central to Highland culture.

The battle ended in a decisive victory for Alexander's forces, with over 1,000 royalist troops slain, including the Earl of Caithness. The victory was a dramatic show of strength by the Highlanders, a reminder of their military prowess and ability to resist royal authority. Donald Balloch, emboldened by the victory, led a campaign of retribution against Clan Cameron and Clan Chattan, both of which had aligned with King James I during the rebellion.

However, the rebellion was short-lived. King



James soon led a counter-campaign into the Highlands, suppressing the uprising and defeating the rebel forces. Despite this setback, the Battle of Inverlochy remains notable as one of the few significant victories for the Lord of the Isles, a title that had once carried substantial power but was in decline. The battle underscored the complex relationship between the monarchy and the Highland clans, which would persist for centuries.

The event also lives on in Scottish culture through traditional music and stories. The pibroch "The End of the Great Bridge," composed during the battle, and the Piobaireachd Domhnall Dubh, named after Clan Cameron's chief Donald Dubh, both commemorate this momentous clash.

Scottish Clan Artifacts



Jacobite Glassware

Jacobite glassware holds a special place in Scottish history, embodying the romance and intrigue of the Stuart dynasty's quest to reclaim the British throne. These Georgian wine glasses were intricately engraved to honor Bonnie Prince Charlie—the Young Pretender—and his father James Francis Edward Stuart—the Old Pretender. Their supporters used these glasses to express loyalty through hidden symbols, like the white rose representing James II, and buds symbolizing his heirs. Latin phrases such as "Fiat" (Let it come to pass) and "Redeat" (May he return) further conveyed their clandestine hopes.

However, the allure of these artifacts led to widespread forgeries, especially in the late 19th century. Artisans like Franz Tieze in Dublin created replicas that were often sold

as originals, deceiving many collectors. To navigate this complex field, resources like Geoffrey Seddon's "Jacobites and Their Drinking Glasses" offer invaluable guidance on authenticity.

Understanding the symbolism etched into Jacobite glassware connects us to a pivotal era in Scottish heritage. Each piece is a testament to the resilience and passion of those who longed for the Stuart restoration. Here's to "the King over the water" and the enduring legacy captured in these exquisite glasses.



Highland Games and Festivals

October 2024

Scotland County Highland Games

October 4

North Carolina Rural Heritage Center

United States

Aztec Highland Games

October 4

500 S. Light Plant Rd., Aztec, NM

United States

Scottish Athletics Masters World Championships

October 4

2497 FL-16, Green Cove Springs, FL

United States

Scottish Athletics Masters World Championships

October 4

2497 FL-16, Green Cove Springs, FL

United States

TylerScotFest

October 5

17002 US Hwy 69 S., Tyler, TX

United States

Rocket City Scottish Festival & Highland Games

October 5

783 Coleman Road, New Market, Alabama

United States

Harpers Ferry Highland Games

October 5

235 Sam Michael's Lane., Harpers Ferry, WV

United States

Oklahoma Highland Gathering

October 11

2001 N HARPER RD, Choctaw, OK

United States

CelticFest Mississippi Highland Games

October 11

1112 NORTH SHORE PARKWAY, Brandon, MS

United States

Seaside Highland Games

October 12

10 W. HARBOR BLVD, Ventura, CA

United States

Indianapolis Scottish Highland Games and Festival

October 12

7300 E Troy Ave, Indianapolis, IN

United States

Highland Festival & Games of Scotland

October 13

Route 169 / Fair Grounds Road, Brooklyn, CT

United States

Arkansas Scottish Festival

October 18

2300 Highland Road, Batesville, AR

United States

Stone Mountain Highland Games

October 18

1000 Robert E. Lee Blvd, Stone Mountain, GA

United States

Moab Celtic Festival

October 18

1250 E Center St, Moab, UT

United States

Springfield Area Highland Games

October 19

1316 W. Birch, New Berlin, IL

United States

Salado Scottish Gathering & Highland Games

November 8

1575 Salado School Rd, Salado TX

United States

Highlands and Islands Highland Games

November 9

15321 County Farm Rd, Gulfport, MS

United States

Hororata Highland Games

November 9

Hororata

New Zealand

Highlands and Islands Highland Games

November 9

15321 County Farm Rd, Gulfport, MS

United States

November 2024

Tuscon Celtic Festival

November 1

14502 N. First Ave, Tucson, AZ

United States

Charleston Scottish Games and Highland Gathering

November 2

1061 Everglades Ave, North Charleston SC

United States

Austin Celtic Festival

November 2

10621 Pioneer Farms Dr., Austin TX

United States

WEBSITE:

BAGTOWNCLANS.COM

CONTACT:

BAGTOWNCLANS@GMAIL.COM

Featured Clan Crest



CREST: Dexter, on a cap of maintenance Proper, a lion's head erased Argent

MOTTO: A Home • A Home • A Home

Clan Home, descendants of the Saxon princes through Cospatrick, Earl of Dunbar, became influential in Scotland from the 13th century. Their power grew through strategic land grants, marriages, and loyalty to the crown, with Sir Alexander Home fighting at the Battle of Homildon and his grandson becoming Lord Home in 1473. Despite setbacks like executions for treason, the family restored its titles and played key roles in defending Scottish lands against the English. During Mary, Queen of Scots' reign, the Homes shifted allegiances, but Alexander, the sixth Lord Home, remained loyal to James VI and was made Earl of Home in 1605. The family continued its involvement in major conflicts, and notable figures like Henry Home, Lord Kames, and philosopher David Hume emerged from their ranks.



We are excited to introduce "A Clan A Day," a new podcast hosted by Colin MacDonald that delves into the history of a different Scottish clan each day. Through engaging stories of legendary battles, key figures, and enduring traditions, Colin brings Scotland's rich heritage to life. Whether you're of Scottish descent, a history enthusiast, or just love a good tale, this podcast offers something for everyone. Subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Substack, or YouTube Podcasts to join us in exploring the fascinating stories of Scotland's clans.

About Us

Our Scottish clan newsletter is a publication dedicated to exploring the rich history and culture of the Scottish clans. As a community of proud Scots, we are passionate about preserving and sharing our heritage with the world. We are committed to celebrating the unique character and identity of each Scottish clan, highlighting their achievements, and exploring their place in Scottish history. Whether you are a member of a clan, a descendant, or simply a lover of Scottish culture, our newsletter has something for you



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