

SCOTTISH CLAN CONNECTION

Newsletter

CEANGAL CHLANN NA H-ALBA

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Lord Lyon Grants Historic Honor to Irving of Bonshaw

The arms of Chief of the Name and Arms of Irving of Bonshaw have been matriculated for Rupert Christopher Irving of Bonshaw by the Lord Lyon King of Arms. Rupert, son of Commander Robert Alec Snow Irving of Bonshaw, inherits this legacy following his father's passing February 17, 2021. In March 2021, the Lord Lyon confirmed Rupert's succession to the role of Chief of the Name & Arms of Irving of Bonshaw, recognizing him as direct descendant of William Irving of Bonshaw, first honored in the 1670s. The arms, rendered by heraldic artist Yvonne Holton, reflect centuries of clan heritage while celebrating the future of this enduring lineage. This highlights the legacy of Clan Irving. Long may they thrive!! For more information, visit <https://clanirving.com/the-chief>



A New Chapter for Clan Grant's Historic Land

For centuries, the Highlands have been home to the storied Clan Grant, whose name is woven into Scotland's rich tapestry. At the foot of the Cairngorm Mountains, near Abernethy, lies the Dorback Estate—a once-prized holding of Clan Grant that has recently undergone a significant transition. Spanning 15,000 acres of striking moorland, forest, and mountainous terrain within the Cairngorms National Park, Dorback has been acquired by Oxygen Conservation, a company specializing in carbon credits for firms seeking to offset greenhouse gas emissions. Though the estate left Clan Grant's ownership many years ago, its legacy as part of the clan's historic lands remains. The dramatic contours of the Braes of Abernethy and the fringes of the ancient Caledonian Forest once offered sustenance and shelter to the Grants, who were known for their resilience and deep connection to the land. The clan's presence resonates in local lore, echoing through the timeless glens and woodlands that still bear traces of their stewardship.

Following a sale in 2000, Dorback was partly operated as a deer and grouse shooting estate. However, Oxygen Conservation, now the "new custodians," has pledged a moratorium on game shooting and plans to

conduct ecological surveys over the next 12 to 18 months. Their strategy involves restoring peat bogs, planting trees, and enhancing biodiversity, echoing the clan's own deep-rooted respect for the Highlands. By generating carbon credits, they aim to create a model of sustainable land management that could deliver far-reaching environmental and social benefits. Although Clan Grant's direct ownership has passed into history, the estate's new chapter retains a sense of continuity. Oxygen Conservation's mission to protect and regenerate this landscape resonates with traditional Highland values: a reverence for nature, a commitment to local communities.



Clan Munro vs. Clan MacKenzie

Famous Clan Feud

In 1501, William Munro of Foulis was knighted by James IV and tasked with Highland affairs. As part of his duties, he led a force of 900 men, including Munros, Dingwalls, and MacCullochs, to attack Clan Mackenzie. Their chief, Hector Roy Mackenzie, was viewed as a threat to the government. The Munros raided Mackenzie lands, destroying property and seizing cattle. In retaliation, Hector gathered 180 men and planned an ambush at Knockfarrel, knowing he was outnumbered. As the weary Munros returned, they were caught by surprise. The Mackenzies attacked with two-handed swords and battle axes, causing the Munros to panic and scatter. William Munro tried to rally his men, but confusion led to a complete rout. Legend says the Mackenzies cut off so many heads that they filled a well at the base of the

hill, later named "Tober ni Kean" or "Fountain of Heads." The local sheriff, Alexander Vass, was among the slain, and the Dingwalls and MacCullochs were nearly wiped out. The Munros suffered devastating losses. William Munro did not live to avenge his clan —while on royal business, he was sent to Lochaber and killed by the Camerons of Lochiel.

Surrounded in battle, he refused to surrender and was slain by the Cameron chief's sword. The feud between the Munros and



Mackenzies ended soon after his death when William's son, Hector Munro, 13th Baron of Foulis, married Kenneth Mackenzie's daughter, sealing peace between the clans through marriage and reconciliation.

Historic Clan Castles of Scotland



Castle Stalker

Loch Laich, Scotland

Rising dramatically from a tidal islet in Loch Laich, Castle Stalker (Caisteal an Stalcaire) is one of Scotland's best-preserved medieval tower houses. Located near Port Appin, it is visible from the A828 road, offering a breathtaking view between Oban and Glen Coe.



The name "Stalker" comes from the Gaelic Stalcaire, meaning hunter or falconer, reflecting its storied past.

Originally a MacDougall stronghold in the early 1300s, Castle Stalker took its current form in the 1440s under the Stewarts of Appin. King James IV was a frequent visitor, but a drunken bet in 1620 led to the Campbells gaining control. The castle changed hands between the two clans before being abandoned in 1840. It remained a ruin until 1908, when Charles Stewart of Achara began conservation work. In 1965, Lt. Col. D.R. Stewart Allward undertook a full restoration, reviving this historical gem. Today, Castle Stalker is privately owned but open for guided tours in summer. Classified as an inhabited island, it has had no permanent residents since at least 2001. A true Highland treasure, its striking silhouette against the waters of Loch Linnhe makes it an unmissable sight for history lovers and travelers alike!

Francis Hay

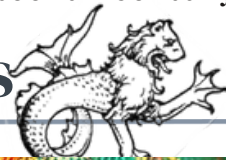
Francis Hay, the 9th Earl of Erroll, was baptized on April 30, 1564, and died on July 16, 1631, in Slains, Aberdeen. As a member of the Scottish nobility and a leading figure in the militant Roman Catholic party, he became involved in treasonous conspiracies to restore Catholicism across Scotland and England. From a young age, he embraced the Roman Catholic faith and inherited his title in 1585. Between 1588 and 1597, Erroll and his allies plotted with Spanish support, hoping to reestablish Catholic rule in Britain. Twice, in 1589 and 1594, they mounted armed rebellions; yet both insurrections disintegrated when King James VI took personal command of the royal forces.

Fearing political fallout but reluctant to alienate Catholic sympathizers, James VI avoided harsh punitive measures, though Erroll faced periods of exile and forced submissions to the Protestant Kirk. He briefly took refuge in Holland from 1595 to 1596. Despite repeated failures and the disapproval of the English Crown, Erroll's devotion to the Catholic cause



devotion to the Catholic cause remained unwavering. His participation in these plots continued to jeopardize his standing: from 1608 to 1611, he was imprisoned as an “obstinate papist.” Ultimately, the downfall of Spain's naval might and James VI's calculated retaliation doomed Erroll's efforts. Though his influence waned after 1597, he never abandoned his faith. With the destruction of Slains Castle—now a striking ruin on the Aberdeenshire coast—Francis Hay's once formidable fortress stood as a testament to the tumultuous intersection of faith, power, and politics in sixteenth-century Scotland.

Scottish Clan Myths and Legends



The Colour Ogham Theory

One of Scotland's most intriguing folklore tales is the so-called “Colour Ogham” theory, claiming tartan patterns once held a secret code. According to legend, each stripe and color in a Highlander's plaid conveyed cryptic messages known only to the initiated. Enthusiasts tied this idea to the ancient Ogham alphabet used in early Celtic areas, imagining its linear letters transformed into colored threads.

Yet modern scholarship debunks this romantic notion. The “Colour Ogham” concept arose in the 19th century—a period when Scotland's past was being idealized. After the 1745 Jacobite rising and the harsh Highland Clearances, many longed to reclaim Gaelic heritage, prompting the invention or embellishment of “lost” traditions. Tartan, which had been banned in certain contexts, reemerged as a symbol of clan pride and soon acquired myths of hidden significance. No credible evidence suggests Highlanders used tartan as any sort of coded language.



Ogham was a writing system of carved lines, not color-based stripes, and attempts to “decode” historical tartans have produced nothing but inconsistencies. While the myth persists in popular lore, it serves as a cautionary tale of how the allure of hidden histories can eclipse the factual record. Ultimately, tartan stands not for secret messages but for a proud heritage bound up with clan identity, resilience, and the enduring spirit of Scotland.

The Battle of Arbroath, January 24, 1445

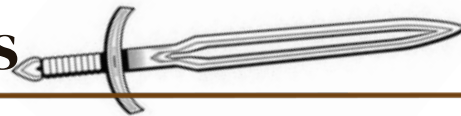
The Battle of Arbroath, fought on 24 January 1445 (or 1446), was a significant and violent conflict in Scotland over the position of Baillie of the Regality of Arbroath Abbey. The dispute began when the monks of the abbey appointed Alexander Lindsay, Master of Crawford, to the role. However, his conduct, described as “vile and cruel,” led the monks to regret their decision. They dismissed Lindsay and replaced him with Alexander Ogilvy, 2nd Baron of Inverquhar, who not only had a legitimate claim through election but also an inherited right to the position. Lindsay refused to accept his dismissal and, determined to reclaim his authority, gathered an army of over 1,000 men, mostly from Clan Lindsay, but also with support from the Hamiltons.

Ogilvy, knowing he had to defend his appointment, gathered his own force, including warriors from the Oliphant, Seton, Gordon, and Forbes clans. As tensions escalated, the Earl of Crawford, Lindsay’s father, attempted to mediate peace by riding between the two armies, but tragedy struck when he was mistakenly killed by one of Ogilvy’s men. With diplomacy no longer possible, the battle



commenced. Although Clan Lindsay ultimately won, their victory came at a great cost, including the loss of the Earl. Several key figures perished, including Ogilvy, Forbes of Pitsligo, Brucklay of Gartley, Gordon of Borrowfield, and Sir John Oliphant of Aberdalgie. In the aftermath, a new Baillie was appointed, but the battle left lasting scars, further intensifying long-standing clan rivalries and disrupting the regional balance of power in Scotland.

Scottish Clan Artifacts



The MacThomas Banner

The MacThomas Banner is the personal flag of the chief of Clan MacThomas, a Highland Scottish clan from Perthshire. It serves as a symbol of the chief’s authority and is only used in his presence. The banner is carried immediately behind him during processions or flown on a flagpole when he is present. Measuring 33 inches by 42 inches, it prominently displays the chief’s coat of arms as it appears on his shield, reinforcing his leadership and heritage.

The design features a demi-cat-a-mountain rampant guardant grasping a serpent, representing vigilance and resilience. The clan’s motto, “Deo juvante invidiam superabo” (“With God’s help, I will overcome envy”), reflects the strength and perseverance of its people. Unlike the clan standard, which showcases the crest, motto, of leadership, heritage, and clan identity,

and other heraldic elements, the banner is a direct representation of the chief himself. The use of the chief’s banner follows strict heraldic tradition, ensuring it is displayed only when he is present. The current chief, a Andrew Patrick MacThomas of Finegand, upholds these customs, maintaining the banner as a powerful emblem of leadership, heritage, and clan identity, connecting the present to centuries of MacThomas history.



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Featured Clan Crest



CREST: Issuant from an antique crown or, a hand brandishing a scimitar fessways all Proper

MOTTO: Fac et spera

TRANSLATION: Do and hope

The Matheson name likely stems from Gaelic, reflecting heroic, bear-like origins. Settling around Lochalsh amid Celtic and Norse influences, they fought in major conflicts. Though alliances shifted, they produced notables like Dougal MacRuadhri. Alexander Matheson reclaimed ancestral lands. Bertram's 1963 recognition confirmed their enduring legacy.



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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