

Newsletter

CEANGAL CHLANN NA H-ALBA

Vol. 20

BROUGHT TO YOU BY BAGTOWNCLANS.COM

John Thor Ewing Named Ewing Clan Chief by Lord Lyon

Clan Ewing, with deep roots in Dumbartonshire, Stirlingshire, and the Cowal peninsula in Argyll, celebrates a major milestone: the appointment of John Thor Ewing as its new Chief after nearly 250 years without one. Historically descended from Clan Ewen of Otter, the Ewings allied closely with Clan Campbell, notably supporting them during the 1685 Argyll Rebellion.

Efforts to revive the clan began in 2014, with Ewing serving as commander, a temporary role. His formal appointment as chief marks a historic moment in reconnecting Ewings worldwide to their heritage.

A formal inauguration is planned for 2025 in Scotland, where a new Coat of Arms will be unveiled. Updates will be shared by the Ewing Family Association, which continues to preserve the clan's legacy and unite its global community.



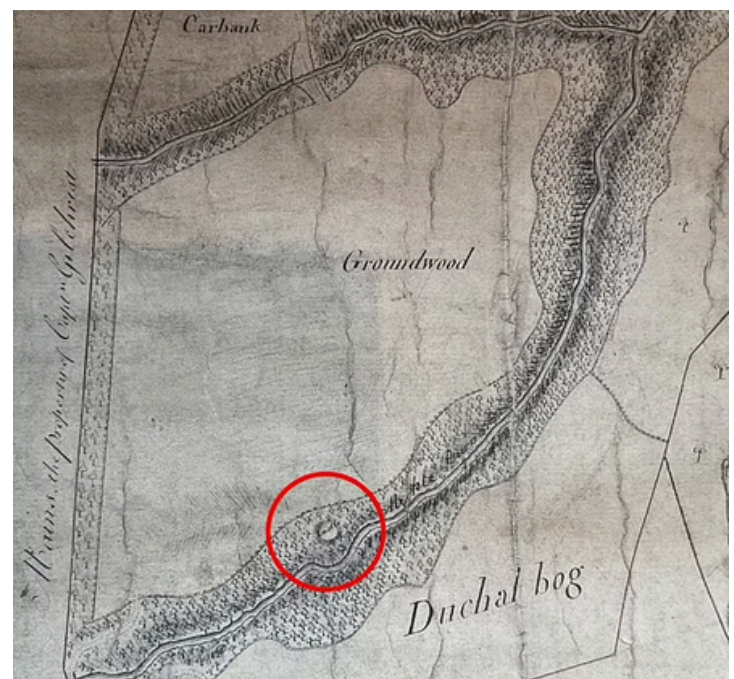
450-Year Mystery Solved: Eddlewood Castle Discovered in Scotland

In an exciting breakthrough, volunteer archaeologists from the Clutha Archaeology Group have uncovered the long-lost Eddlewood Castle, a site believed to be linked to Mary Queen of Scots. Nestled within Chatelherault Country Park in South Lanarkshire, the castle was reportedly destroyed in 1568 following the pivotal Battle of Langside. This battle marked the queen's ultimate downfall, as forces loyal to her were defeated by troops supporting her infant son, James VI.

The team's findings include pottery sherds, a cobbled surface, and remnants of a medieval drain, with the artifacts dated to the 14th or 15th century. Historical sources guided the excavation, including an estate plan from 1776 and a detailed 1889 report that described the castle's location as "a mound of rubbish and the fragment of a wall" along the Meikle Burn stream. These clues led to three test excavations, revealing a glimpse of the castle's fortified past.

Ailsa Smith, co-founder of the Clutha Archaeology Group, shared the team's plans for a 2025 excavation to uncover more artifacts and structural remnants. Local

stories of cut stone blocks found near a housing estate fence hint at the existence of an outer wall, providing even more intrigue. This discovery is part of Scotland's Archaeology Strategy, a ten-year initiative launched in 2015 to highlight the nation's rich archaeological heritage. As interest grows, projects like this demonstrate how Scotland's history continues to inspire and engage communities today.



Discoveries Paint Vivid Picture of Glencoe Massacre Survivors

Archaeologists from the University of Glasgow have made groundbreaking discoveries at the site of the Glencoe Massacre, shedding new light on one of Scotland's most infamous historical events. Over 330 years ago, on February 13, 1692, members of Clan MacDonald of Glencoe were brutally slaughtered by government soldiers under the guise of hospitality. Recent excavations at Achnacon, the heart of the massacre, have revealed artefacts that offer an unprecedented glimpse into the lives of the people who called the glen home—and the horrific events that shattered their community.

One of the most striking finds is a bent plaid pin discovered near the remains of MacDonald of Achnacon's turf-walled house. Historical accounts describe how MacDonald of Achnacon, a high-ranking clan member and cousin to the clan chief, narrowly escaped execution. Dragged outside to be shot, he threw his plaid cloak over his attackers and fled into the winter darkness. While it cannot be confirmed that the pin belonged to him, its location outside the house lends weight to the dramatic tale of his survival.

The excavation has unearthed a range of artefacts that paint a vivid picture of daily life in 17th-century Glencoe. Items such as decorated knife handles, loom weights, fragments of tobacco pipes, and pottery from Germany and France reveal a community that was both industrious and connected to wider trade networks. These finds help humanize the story of the massacre, illustrating the vibrant lives and livelihoods lost in the tragedy.

Among the most poignant discoveries is a hoard of 17th-century coins found hidden beneath a hearthstone in the clan chief's home. Likely buried in a desperate attempt to safeguard valuables as the attack began, the coins include pieces from Scotland, France, and beyond. Some bear marks of Jacobite allegiance, providing a glimpse into the political affiliations of the clan. The coins not only highlight the connections of the MacDonald clan but also underscore the panic that gripped the community in the final moments before the massacre.



Fragments of musket balls discovered near the ruins are thought to be remnants of the chaos, possibly fired during MacDonald of Achnacon's escape or at other fleeing victims. The physical evidence adds a new dimension to historical accounts, grounding them in the tangible remnants of that fateful night.

The site itself, with its turf-walled structures and remnants of rig cultivation, tells a story of a people deeply connected to their land. Archaeologists believe this connection magnifies the trauma of the massacre, as the community not only lost loved ones but was also violently severed from its homeland. The findings offer a glimpse into a world where survival depended on the land—a relationship abruptly ended by betrayal and bloodshed. The archaeological team views their work as more than an academic pursuit. By uncovering these artefacts and sharing their stories, they hope to honor the memory of the Glencoe victims and provide a fuller understanding of the events that took place. The findings have also reignited public interest in the massacre, with plans for a documentary exploring these discoveries set to premiere soon.

The Glencoe Massacre remains a symbol of betrayal and tragedy in Scottish history, but these recent discoveries bring the past to life in a way that feels immediate and deeply human. The unearthed artefacts, from a bent plaid pin to hastily hidden coins, serve as a powerful reminder of the lives lived—and lost—in one of Scotland's most picturesque yet sorrowful landscapes. As excavations continue, archaeologists hope to uncover even more about the lives of the people of Glencoe and the events that forever changed their world.

Clan MacIver

vs.

Clan Gunn

Famous Clan Battle

In 1575, Kenneth Beuy MacIver and Farquhar MacIver led their clan from Argyll to Caithness in northern Scotland. The Earl of Caithness, George Sinclair, recognized their skill in warfare and enlisted them in a blood feud against Clan Sutherland. The MacIvers became natural enemies of the Gunns, a fierce clan allied with the Sutherlands.

In 1589, the MacIvers raided Stratnaver, a Gunn stronghold, stealing cattle from Clan Gunn. Donald Gunn, son of the Gunn chief, led his clan to victory at Ache-Moin-Merkell, recovering the cattle. Seeking revenge, the MacIvers and Sinclairs struck back in 1590, killing several Gunn clansmen in a nighttime raid. Donald Gunn narrowly escaped but suffered injuries. Later, a battle at Craggy Hill resulted in heavy losses for the Gunns.

The feud intensified in 1594 when the Gunns, led by their champion Vic-Hendric, retaliated with a calculated assault on MacIver and Mackay lands at the Water of Thurso. Farquhar MacIver was killed in the battle. In response, Kenneth Beuy MacIver launched a revenge attack, killing seven Gunn clansmen, though the Gunn chief and Vic-Hendric escaped.

The feud ended in 1616 when Kenneth Beuy's son, John, clashed with their allies, the Sinclairs. Forced from their lands, the



MacIvers sought refuge with the Mackays and joined forces with the Sutherlands and Gunns, conducting raids against the Sinclairs. This marked a dramatic reversal in alliances, bringing an end to decades of strife.

Historic Clan Castles of Scotland



Caerlaverock Castle

Solway Firth, Scotland

Caerlaverock Castle, a striking triangular fortress near the Solway Firth, dates back to the 1270s when the Maxwell family replaced their earlier wooden castle with a stone structure. Surrounded by a wide moat and earthwork ramparts, its unique design made it



both a formidable stronghold and an architectural marvel. Positioned to control trade routes and defend against invasions, it played a vital role in Scotland's medieval history.

The castle witnessed dramatic events, including the 1300 siege led by Edward I of England during the Wars of Scottish Independence. Despite fierce resistance, the garrison eventually surrendered. Later, Sir Eustace Maxwell reclaimed it, aligning with Robert the Bruce and partially dismantling the structure to prevent English use. Throughout the centuries, Caerlaverock endured conflicts, including sieges during the Reformation and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. By the 17th century, the Maxwells added the elegant Renaissance-style Nithsdale Lodging, reflecting their wealth and influence.

Today, the castle's ruins, preserved by Historic Environment Scotland, attract visitors for its rich history, red sandstone walls, and connection to the surrounding Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve.

John Irving of Bonshaw

Colonel John Irving of Bonshaw is a prominent figure in the distinguished history of the Irvings of Bonshaw, an independent branch of Clan Irvine. Known for their valor and leadership, the family's legacy spans centuries of military service and loyalty to Scotland. Colonel Irving's role in the Abyssinian Campaign of 1867 remains a significant chapter in this storied heritage. Born into a family with deep-rooted traditions of service and resilience, John Irving carried forward the legacy of his ancestors, who had fought in battles such as Solway Moss and Dryfe Sands. By the mid-nineteenth century, his leadership skills positioned him as a key figure in the British-led expedition to Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia). This campaign, aimed at rescuing British hostages held by Emperor Tewodros II, was one of the most challenging military operations of its time.

The campaign required traversing treacherous terrain and overcoming logistical challenges, yet John Irving played



a vital role in ensuring its success. His strategic expertise contributed to the decisive victory at the Battle of Magdala, where the mission achieved its objectives and solidified British military reputation abroad. The operation not only rescued hostages but also demonstrated the capabilities of leaders like Colonel Irving.

Scottish Clan Myths and Legends



The Bastard of Sutherland

Highland lore from the early 16th century tells the chilling story of Alexander Sutherland, known as "the bastard." According to Sir Robert Gordon, witches foretold that Alexander would have the "highest head" among all the Sutherlands. Taking this prophecy as a sign of destined greatness, Alexander believed he was fated to rise to honor, perhaps even to claim the title of Earl of Sutherland.

In 1517, driven by ambition and bolstered by the witches' words, Alexander seized Dunrobin Castle, defying Earl Adam Gordon. This bold act sparked a fierce conflict, culminating in Alexander's capture after a battle near Ald Quhillin. His fate was grim—executed on the spot, his severed head was sent to Dunrobin and displayed on a spear atop the castle's tower.

In a macabre twist, the witches' prophecy came true, but not in the way Alexander had



imagined. His head, quite literally "the highest," became a stark symbol of irony and the perils of misinterpreting fate. This 16th-century tale remains a vivid reminder of the deep belief in prophecy and the supernatural in Scottish history, where ambition and destiny often collided in dramatic ways.

The Battle of Craignaught Hill, 1439

The Battle of Craignaught Hill, also known as the Battle of Boyd's Hill or Boyd's Slack, was a significant clan conflict fought in Scotland in 1439 between Clan Boyd of Kilmarnock and the Stewart family of Darnley. The feud between these two prominent families had been intensifying over time, primarily due to territorial disputes and power struggles common in the Scottish Lowlands during that period. The immediate catalyst for the battle was the killing of Alan Stewart by Thomas Boyd at Polmaise Thorn, an event that escalated tensions to open warfare.

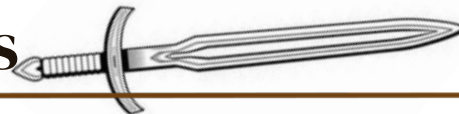
In retaliation for his brother's death, Alexander Stewart assembled a force divided into three detachments and launched an attack on the Boyds' stronghold, Dean Castle. Sir Robert Boyd and his men, aware of the impending assault, chose to leave the safety of the castle to confront the Stewarts on the battlefield. However, they underestimated the strength of the opposing forces and soon found themselves outnumbered and encircled on Craignaught Hill. Despite fighting valiantly, the Boyds suffered heavy losses, and the turning point came when



Thomas Boyd was killed. Demoralized by the loss of their leader, the remaining Boyd forces retreated.

The Stewarts, having avenged Alan's death, withdrew to Renfrewshire satisfied with their victory. The battle had profound and long-lasting implications for both clans. The Boyds faced a significant setback; the death of Thomas Boyd weakened their leadership and influence in the region, forcing them to consolidate their remaining power in Kilmarnock. Conversely, the Stewarts solidified their dominance, enhancing their territorial control and political standing. Importantly, the aftermath of the battle marked a turning point in the feud, as both clans recognized the toll of their hostilities. This realization eventually led to negotiations and a reconciliation, bringing an end to the violent disputes between them.

Scottish Clan Artifacts



Clan Cameron's Living Cairn

Outside the Clan Cameron Museum in Scotland stands a remarkable "living" cairn composed of stones contributed by clansfolk from around the world. This evolving monument symbolizes the unity, heritage, and enduring spirit of the Clan Cameron. Each stone added to the cairn carries personal significance, often representing family stories, legacies, or a deep connection to ancestral lands. Many of these stones were thoughtfully engraved prior to their donation, bearing inscriptions of names, dates, clan mottos, or emblems meaningful to the donors. This practice is especially common among the various branches of the Clan Cameron Association, whose members are dedicated to preserving their heritage and strengthening connections within the clan community.

The cairn continues to grow as more

clansfolk and visitors contribute stones, making it a dynamic and communal testament to the clan's rich history and traditions. It serves as a tangible representation of global kinship, inviting participation and encouraging each generation to honor their heritage by adding to the clan's living history. The cairn not only provides a place of reflection on the past but also stands as a beacon pointing toward the future, ensuring that the legacy of the Clan Cameron endures for generations to come.



WEBSITE:

BAGTOWNCLANS.COM

CONTACT:

BAGTOWNCLANS@GMAIL.COM

Featured Clan Crest



CREST: A savage head erased Proper

MOTTO: Vil God I Zal

TRANSLATION: In God I Trust

Clan Menzies traces its origins to Normandy, evolving through England and Scotland, where it gained prominence under Sir Robert de Meyneris, chamberlain to Alexander II in 1249. The clan's influence grew as Robert's son Alexander acquired lands and married Egidia, linking the family to Scottish nobility. Notably involved in key conflicts, such as aiding Robert the Bruce and opposing Charles I, Clan Menzies endured internal divisions and battles like Killiecrankie and the Jacobite uprisings.



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



Purchase on Amazon- UK or US