

Other Tidbits of Ritch Family History

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/tombs/dwarfiestane/>

The 5,000-year-old monument known as the Dwarfie Stane lies in a steep sided valley between Quoys and Rackwick on the island of [Hoy](#).

A huge block of hollowed-out red sandstone measuring about 8.5 metres (28 feet) long, the Dwarfie Stane is thought to be Britain's only example of a rock-cut tomb. It should be stressed, however, that not all archaeologists share this opinion.

It is thought the chamber was carved out sometime between the [Neolithic](#) and the Early [Bronze Age](#). Basing their dates on similar tombs found in the Mediterranean, archaeologists have settled on a date of around 3,000 BC.



Although it has been suggested that the rock fell, or was cut, from the rocky outcrop on the rock face above - known as the Dwarfie Hammars - this appears unlikely. The sheer height of the cliff face would surely have broken the rock in its descent.

The presence of another similar rock slab - the Partick Stane - about 200 yards along the valley would indicate that both stones were dropped by retreating glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age.



What makes the Dwarfie Stane remarkable is the fact that the massive stone was hollowed out using nothing but stone, or antler, tools, muscle power and patience.

An opening, three feet square, is cut into the middle of the stone's west face and leads into the inner chamber.

This chamber contains two rock-cut spaces resembling bed-places, both of which are too short for anyone of a normal stature. These were undoubtedly responsible for the origin of the dwarf folklore that surrounds the site.

The chamber's resemblance to a hermit's cell led to the stone being identified in the past as being the residence of a monk or hermit. At the time, proponents of this idea claimed that their theory was strengthened by the fact that visitors to the stone were in the habit of leaving offerings.



Lying outside the entrance is a large sandstone block (see picture right), which was originally used to seal the opening. We know that the tomb was still sealed in the 16th century.

At some point, it appears that someone attempted to break into the stone via the roof. This left a hole that remained until it was filled with concrete. There is no record of any archaeological excavation being carried out on the Stane, nor do we know what, if anything, was found inside.

A giant's residence?



According to an ancient Orcadian fable, the Dwarfie Stane was said to be the handiwork of a giant and his wife.

A third giant, who wanted to make himself the master of Hoy, imprisoned the gargantuan couple inside the stone. But his evil plans were thwarted, when the imprisoned giant gnawed his way out through the roof of the chamber.

This piece of folklore neatly explains the hole in the roof mentioned above.

Cave in the cliffs

In his memoirs, *Hoy, the Dark Enchanted Island*, Rackwick resident, John Bremner, documented the discovery of a cave high up in the cliff terrace behind the Dwarfie Stane.

During his exploration of the cave, Bremner came across an “egg-shaped” object that has been likened to some of the [relics](#) found in [Skara Brae](#).

Could it be that the cave itself, although not necessarily the dwelling place of the workers, was somehow involved in the rituals surrounding the stone?

"The area round about the Stane is very bleak and rugged, the soil being boggy, and always wet, even in the driest weather, providing no shelter of any kind.

Also, the remoteness of the Stane from the nearest human abode - even at that distant time - lends to the belief that the prehistoric craftsman must have had his abode in close proximity to the scene of his labours, as to travel from either Hoy or Rackwick in bad weather, would, I think, be asking too much, even from our ancestors.

"The answer lay in the cliff terraces, and when home on holiday in the old place, I put my theory to the test; and I am glad to say that I succeeded in proving that such was the case. In these cliff 'terraces' there are a number of natural caves, and in the only one I entered - for lack of time - I found the floor was strewn with many layers of decayed heather; how many I had no means of discovering, nor had I any idea of at what depth the real bottom of the cave lay - for I naturally concluded that there had to be a stone flooring at some depth.

"Among the debris on the 'carpet' of long decayed heather and grass, I found a beautiful egg-shaped stone, of hard-grained sandstone, and quite heavy for its size - six inches long, with a circumference of five and a half. It was polished, and was, to my idea, a 'symbol' stone - to the ancients the egg was the symbol of fertility."

John Bremner. Hoy the Dark Enchanted Isle

Although I have no doubt Bremner's cave exists, I have been unable to find it. I have searched the area fruitlessly. However, the one thing my searches of the area lead me to believe is that it is unlikely workmen scaled the sheer faces every morning and night.

It seems much more likely that they came from the region of the prehistoric settlement on the Whaness Burn, approximately one mile directly to the north of the Stane.

The Scandinavian mythology surrounding dwarfs, or *dvergar*, was undoubtedly attached to the Dwarfie Stane. Iceland and Norway both have their own *Dvergasteinn* - dwarf stones.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, visitors to Hoy's Dwarfie Stane used to leave offerings by the stone.

In and around the stone is graffiti from more recent years. In particular some carved in 1850 by the former British spy, Major W. Mounsey. Mounsey spent some time camped by the Stone and during this time carved his name backwards in Latin and also in Persian calligraphy wrote:

"I have sat two nights and so learnt patience."

In his novel *The Pirate*, Sir Walter Scott described:

"this extraordinary dwelling which Trollid, a dwarf famous in the northern saga, is said to have framed for his favourite residence."

Above the Dwarfie Stane, on the face of Ward Hill, it was once said that there was a "wonderful carbuncle":

"In the months of May, June and July, about midday the rays of the sun caught something that shines and sparkles admirably and which is often seen a great way off. It hath shone more brightly than it does now; though many have climbed up the hill and attempted to search for it, yet they could find nothing."

The existence of this magical gem has been explained as being a mere trick of the light - perhaps the sunlight reflecting from some water cascading down the face of a smooth rock on the hillside.

Nevertheless, a tale grew around the myth of the enchanted carbuncle - a tale that incorporated elements of the [Orkneyinga Saga](#) and a malicious dwarf known as Snorro.

http://www.ivanlea.net/sub_pages/ritch.htm

Origins of the RITCH Name

In the book by Bremner, "Hoy- The Dark Enchanted Isle" the RITCH's are stated to be descendants from RITCHIE brothers who escaped from the wreck, at Deerness in 1679, of the prison ship, "The Crown" which was transporting Covenanters to America. (The Covenanter's memorial in Deerness is dedicated to the loss of those who were not as lucky as our RITCH ancestors). One brother settled in the east and one settled in the west of Orkney, hence the branch differences of the RITCH family in Orkney. Read more about the shipwreck of [The Crown](#).

Follow this link to a map of England which zooms in to Scotland, the Orkney's and then [Deerness](#)

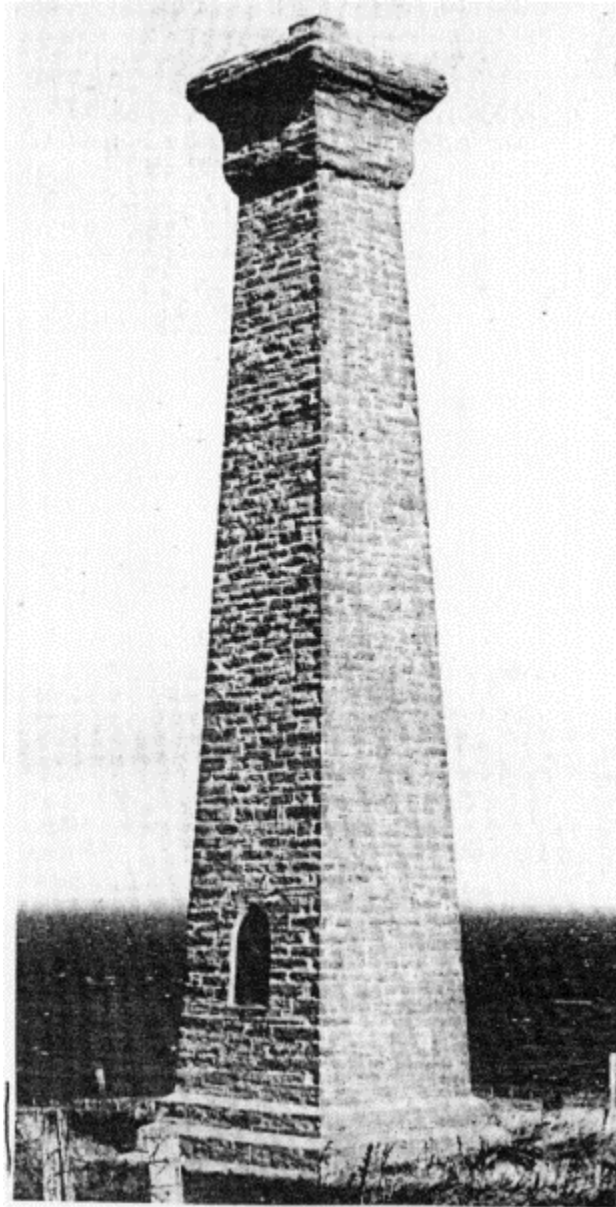
Covenanters who Perished at Sea

"The Crown"

Read more about the [Battle of Bothwell Bridge](#) which led to the events on The Crown

It was a wild and stormy night off the north coast of Deerness. A blizzard was blowing and the white horses riding the crests of the waves were buffeting the sides of the heaving ship, flinging the 257 prisoners too and fro across the cramped hold of their wretched gaol, the merchant ship 'Crown'.

Ever since the troops of Charles II had defeated their rabble army five months previously, the Covenanters had known the meaning of true hardship. However, they had survived the months of confinement without shelter at Greyfriars Churchyard in Edinburgh finding that they would escape death only to be transported to the new colonies in America where they would be sold as slaves.



The Covenanter's Monument at Deerness

Now they were more in fear for their lives than they had ever been before, as it seemed at any moment the groaning vessel might be smashed onto the Scarvataing rocks protruding through the foamy sea only a few hundred yards away.

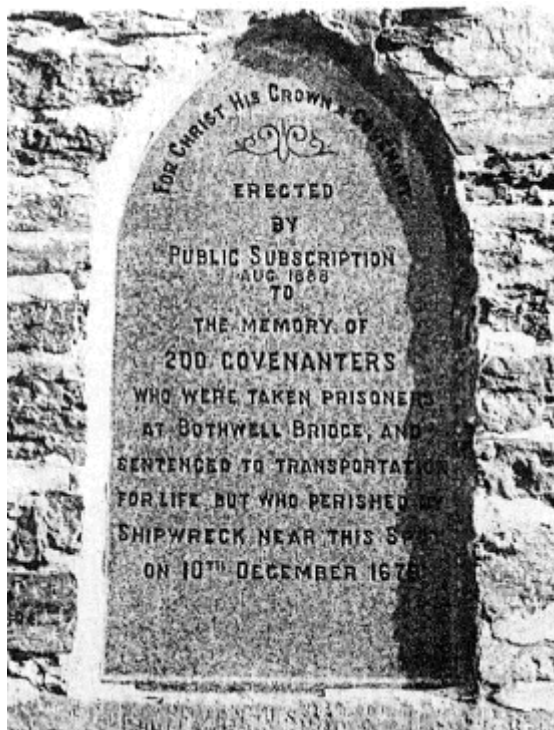
The prisoners begged the captain to let them ashore, where they would gladly stay in any prison of his choice, no matter how miserable, just to get them off the ship until calmer weather. The captain, who had already neglected to take local advice and shelter farther down the coast, similarly spurned the prisoners desperate request. Instead of freeing them from the confines of the ship he locked and chained the hatches, showing them they shared the fate of the ship.

>At 10 p.m. the inevitable happened. The straining anchor chain snapped conclusively, allowing the ship to be carried unprotestingly on to the treacherous saw-tooth rocks, sending the majority of the screaming prisoners to watery graves.

This tale is no work of fiction, though it would be at home in any "Boy's Own" annual. It is merely a recreation, using the facts, of what the wreck of the 'Crown' must have been like when the tragedy happened over 300 years ago on December 10, 1679.

Though the Orkney coastline has been responsible for many shipwrecks in its time, this one is relevant today as recently the pillar built to commemorate the disaster celebrated its centenary, the Covenanters Memorial having been inaugurated on August 22nd. 1888.

The Covenanting movement was a Scottish one. It was formed in the early seventeenth century to oppose the attempts of Charles I to force the beaurocratically dominated ways of the Episcopalian Church of England upon the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and drew its name from a national petition begun in 1638 which carried the signatures of all who pledged resistance to the change. Covenanters were relentlessly persecuted and everything came to a head in 1679 when an armed coup resulted in a minor victory at the Battle of Drumclog.



Inscription on Covenanters' Monument at Deerness

to where a small army of about 6000 was assembling at Lanarkshire with whatever weapons they could find. The King ordered the threat to be eradicated immediately and a large government force was dispatched, resulting in the adversaries confronting each other on opposing banks of the River Clyde.

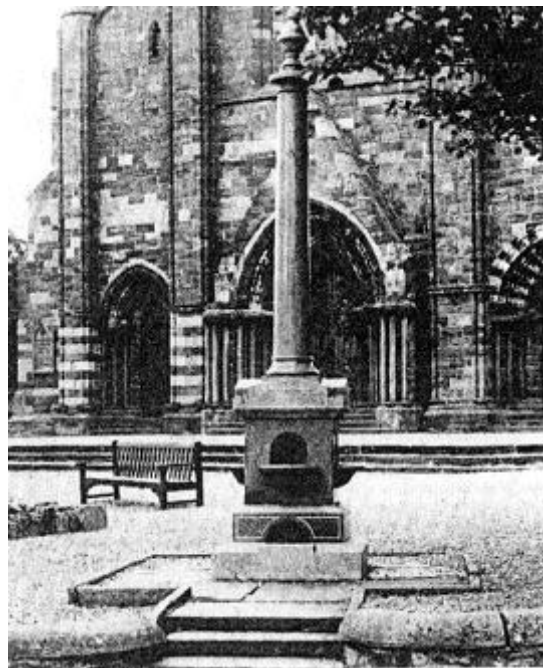
Unfortunately, Robert Hamilton, the man they had chosen to lead their crusade, was not even at the battle, being content to let God lead them into the foray. While he was busily organising gallows from which to hang the prisoners he was sure victory would bring, his "army" was being routed by the superior numbers and discipline of the 15,000 government troops as they eventually crossed the Bothwell Bridge virtually unopposed.

Thus those on the ship were amongst the 1,200 captured on June 22nd, and in the following months either watched their compatriots sentenced to death or swear an oath of allegiance to the King. There should have been two ships to take them to the colonies but bad weather delayed one and rumours of a planned attempt to forcibly release the prisoners led to a hasty dispatch for the 'Crown'. One survivor tells of how there was barely enough room for 100 men, let alone 257 in the compartment, and that the men had to stand continually to let the sick and dying lie down.

There is speculation that the captain of the 'Crown' cared little about the fate of the men as he was a "papist" and had insured his ship for a greater value than it was worth. Whatever, the entire crew escaped alive by cutting down the mast and using it as a bridge to shore, although reports say that when prisoners attempted a similar crossing they were beaten back and forced into the water. At most only 50 of them survived by floating ashore on pieces of wood, the remaining bodies being washed up over a three mile stretch of coast in the following days. Those who did survive were recaptured and ended their days as slaves in Jamaica and New Jersey.

Exactly why the memorial was left until 200 years after the tragedy is unclear, though the key may be provided by John Tudor's book 'The Orkneys and Shetland', published in 1883, which says, "If a plain grey granite cross should be considered too superstitious an emblem for pious God-fearing Scotland in the 19th century, a simple monolith of the same material could be open to no objection."

This comment may have instigated the public appeal fund, for which donations came largely from south, that paid for the forty-feet-high monument to be built by three masons in the remarkably short space of only a few weeks. With the money left over, a smaller marble obelisk was placed in front of the Cathedral at the top end of the kirk green in 1891, where it still stands today in the shade of an old sycamore tree.



The Covenanters' Monument in front of St. Magnus Cathedral

At the inauguration ceremony a bottle containing, amongst other things, copies of the local papers and a Bible was entered into a special hollow, then sealed with a granite slab bearing the following inscription:

"For Christ, His Crown and Covenant. Erected by public subscription to the memory of 200 Covenanters who were taken prisoners at Bothwell Bridge and sentenced to transportation for life, but who perished by shipwreck near this spot, December 10th, 1679".

The monument, which stands on an elevated piece of ground 300 yards from the position of the wreck, can easily be reached even in its remote position. The route to it is well signposted once the turn off before the Deerness shop is reached. Given its excellent condition, it seems certain that it will be there for many centuries to come.

Read more about the [Battle of Bothwell Bridge](#) which led to the events on The Crown

(Source: *The Orcadian*, Thursday, October 6, 1988)

There is a traditional story handed down, that one of the survivors of the wreck of the "Crown" at the Mull Head of Deerness in the parish of Deerness on the eastern district of the mainland Island of Orkney Islands was named MacGregor. He later went to the Island of Sanday, Orkney Islands and changed his name to "Dearness". The Dearness Families of Townsville all came from the island of Sanday, Orkney Islands.

(Source: William Donald Dearness)

http://www.ivanlea.net/sub_pages/bothwellbridge.htm

The Battle of Bothwell Bridge

Here are some details of the Battle of Bothwell Bridge and its aftermath, abridged from Alexander Smellie's "Men of the Covenant" published nearly a hundred years ago. This engagement between Government and Covenanting forces took place in the aftermath of the murder of Archbishop Sharp on Magus Moor in Fife on 3rd May 1679. Following a show of strength by the Covenanters (including two of the Fife assassins) in the streets of Rutherglen on 29th May, Government forces under John Graham of Claverhouse pursued them to their Sunday worship near Loudoun Hill, west of Strathaven, only to be unexpectedly defeated at Drumclog. The Covenanters had advanced singing the seventy-sixth psalm.

After the Sabbath-day on which they sent Claverhouse flying at Drumclog, the Covenanters knew that they must hold together, because their enemies would muster soon to punish them. They grew rapidly in numbers. Within three weeks the two hundred and fifty had multiplied into a legion of between five and six thousand. Probably the ultimate issues of the campaign were never in doubt; the soldiers of the Kirk could not vanquish the overwhelming forces which the King was able to send against them. But, for months, they might have maintained a guerilla war, and, in the end, have extorted from their persecutors terms which were not unfavourable. They were themselves to blame that the result was mournfully different. Their foes on this occasion were not Charles Stuart, and the Duke of Lauderdale, and General Dalzell, and John Graham; they were the men of their own household. The little band of fighters had pursued their adversaries till they were within sight of the gates of Glasgow, and then called a halt. They were worn with the battle and the chase, and the King had a considerable garrison in the town. So they withdrew for the meantime; and yet they came back soon: Glasgow was a prize worth making an effort to win. Lord Ross hurriedly threw up barricades and stationed his musketeers. It was still early on the morning of Monday when the Covenanters appeared. But their assault was badly managed and futile. From behind the barricades the guns of the Royal troops flashed out flame and death. At least seven were killed, and their comrades were compelled to beat a retreat. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday were spent by the Whigs in marching to and fro. But in this interval the men who had repulsed them were ordered by the inconclusive Earl of Linlithgow, who had arrived with his army, to leave their quarters within the gates and join his regiments outside. The Covenanters were quickly appraised of this. They marched again to Glasgow, and stationed themselves in and around the place: it was in their hands now. This was on Friday the 6th of June. Ever since their success on the Sabbath, they had been gathering new recruits. From Ayrshire, from Renfrew, from Lanark, from Stirling in the north and Galloway in the south, companions hastened to join them. Already they were so formidable that the rebellion began to trouble the authorities not only in Holyrood but in Whitehall. But they kept Sir Robert Hamilton in the chief command, a young man whose thirtieth birthday was still in front of him and whose fondness for dissent in its most intransigent varieties had turned him into a "crackbrained enthusiast". He could not brook the presence of anyone who failed to see each of the many facets of truth from the same angle as himself. An exclusiveness so rigid did infinite harm to others, and wrecked the army of the Covenant. His was the Hard Church which believes in a Hard Master, which thinks that it is not the endurance, but the infliction of hardness that makes a true soldier of Christ, which walks about like a theological detective, without any care or compassion for the sins of the defaulters it arrests.

Every new band of helpers, as it arrived, was compelled to declare itself for the party of rigour or for that of comprehension; there was no permission to see the truth on both sides. The army determined, at one stage, to draw up a manifesto - a "Declaration". But over this the leaders quarrelled: Hamilton and his intimates demanding a definite repudiation of the Indulgence; the others answering that "neither were we a Parliament nor a General Assembly" to judge such matters, and that, "if we meddled with them, it would hinder many to come who would be as willing as we, and would make friends to become enemies." Hot words were spoken. More than once the moderate men were on the eve of leaving; it needed John Welsh's eloquence and the near approach of the common enemy to prevent them from departing in heartache and despair.

And all the while, their doom drew closer to them. From London a large force had been despatched; and, when this was added to the Scottish contingents, the Royalists numbered about fifteen thousand horse and foot. The young Duke of Monmouth, Charles's son and, meantime at least, Charles's favourite, had the principal command. He was popular for his good looks, his courtesy, his Protestantism, although his Protestantism was neither very intelligent nor very ardent. He was disposed, too, to lenient courses; it was an encouraging omen for the Covenanters that he received the first place and that Dalzell had to be content with standing

second. Many of them were inclined to negotiate with Monmouth; and, though the extremists resisted the proposal, the moderate men managed to carry the point. Another Sabbath had come round, the third since Drumclog. Soon after daybreak, two envoys went to interview the Duke -David Hume and a Galloway landlord named Murdoch. He gave them a not unkindly welcome, and listened while they read the Declaration of some days before. Then he answered that their petition ought to have been worded in humbler terms, but that, if they were willing to lay down their arms, he had no intention to deal harshly. They returned to their comrades to report how they had fared. But the proviso about disarming was a fatal obstacle. Sir Robert Hamilton laughed loudly when he heard it. "Yes, and hang next !" he said. Manifestly the strife must be fought out to the end.

Yet there was another pause before the artillery began to play. Hume and his friend had something more to ask, and Major Maine went over from the King's lines to ascertain what it was. Had not Monmouth brought with him, they inquired, " terms of accommodation from England " ? and would he acquaint them with their purport ? But these were questions to which the General was not prepared to give any reply. The parleyings were over, and the time for decisive action had arrived.

The combatants confronted each other on opposite banks of the Clyde. Between them was the old and steep and narrow Bridge of Bothwell, not more than twelve feet wide, and guarded in the centre with a gatehouse. The King's army was much the larger. It was well officered. The Duke of Monmouth led the cavalry, the Earl of Linlithgow the infantry. Claverhouse rode at the head of his dragoons, and the Earls of Home and Airlie were in command of their respective troops; Lord Mar held a command of foot. Dalzell's commission, much to his annoyance, was late in arriving from London; and he did not get to the scene of the action until everything was over.

The advantages of position were with the Presbyterians. If they could only have abandoned their controversies, and gone to work singing the Drumclog Psalm, a new victory might have been theirs. But at Bothwell they were without unity, without buoyancy, without competent generalship. Let us listen to James Ure: " We were not concerned with an enemy, as if there had not been one within a thousand miles of us. There were none went through the army, to see if we wanted powder and ball. I do really think there were few or none that had both powder and ball, to shoot twice." The Covenanters had predestined themselves to failure and shame.

There were some who did their best. Ure was one, and Henry Hall was another; but the honours of the lamentable day are with David Hackston of Rathillet. For hours, with three hundred men of Galloway to aid him, the genuine and great-hearted soldier held the bridge. After awhile, the three hundred, wearied with their vigil and struggle, begged, not to be withdrawn, but to have reinforcements from the larger mass behind them; but no reinforcements were sent. Then they asked for ammunition, and were told that the ammunition was at an end. At last Hamilton gave them the order to fall back on the main body. They obeyed " with sore hearts," as Hackston writes; for they felt that the order was the last folly of this black and bitter Sabbath, and that now their fate was sealed. The barrier which hitherto had hindered its advance having been removed, the Royal artillery slowly and steadily crossed the Clyde; and soon, from the same bank as that on which they stood themselves, the Duke's cannon poured death into the lines of the Whigs. Even yet the Royalist triumph might have been postponed. But a panic seized the Covenanters. Numbers of them fled recklessly and at random. Only Rathillet and his companions held their ground, until they too, seeing that all was over, retired from the moor in sullen silence. The rout was complete. By ten o'clock in the morning, every hope was extinguished; and from the King's side a messenger took horse for Edinburgh, bearing news of the victory.

No fewer than four hundred perished in the death-chase; some accounts, indeed, would double that number. Twelve hundred were taken prisoners; and very many of these would have been massacred in cold blood, if Monmouth had not interposed. Bound two and two, they were dragged eastward to Edinburgh. No one on the wearisome road dared to extend to them a hand of succour. When the capital was reached, the mob greeted them with the taunt, "Where's your God? where's your God?" Two of the ministers, adherents of Welsh rather than of Robert Hamilton, were executed at the Mercat Cross. Five Covenanters were hanged on Magus Moor, though not one of them had a personal share in the death of the Archbishop. As the Edinburgh gaols could not hold the crowd of other prisoners, a part of Greyfriars churchyard was transmuted into a place of confinement; and into it they were penned like sheep.

Sentinels guarded them day and night. They were exposed to sun and rain, wind and weather; for there was no covering above their heads - none at least until, with the approach of winter, some wooden huts were erected, "mightily boasted as a great favour". Their bed was the bare ground. They were poorly fed, and it was next to impossible for friends to convey any comfort to them. In this plight they lived "a life half dead, a living death, and buried", until the dreary weeks of November. A few hundreds had been freed on their pledge to desist in the future from armed resistance; here and there one, more fortunate than his comrades, had gained the goodwill of his gaolers; some had contrived to escape across the churchyard walls; some were dead. Only two hundred and fifty-seven remained out of the twelve hundred.

Early one November morning, they were marched by a party of soldiers from the Greyfriars to a vessel, the Crown, lying in Leith Roads; the Privy Council had decreed that they should be banished to the West Indies, and sold for slaves. On board the ship their pains came to a climax. They were crowded under deck in a space not sufficient to hold one hundred people. Those with some health were forced to continue standing, that the sick and dying might lie down on the hard boards. Hour after hour, in the poisonous air, many fainted away. "All the troubles we met since Bothwell," one of them, James Corson, wrote to his wife, "were not to be compared to one day in our present circumstances. Our uneasiness is beyond words. Yet the consolations of God overbalance all; and I hope we are near our port, and heaven is open for us."

Off the coast of Orkney, in a night of tempest, the captain ran his vessel close inshore and cast anchor, locking and chaining the hatches over the prisoners in the hold. In the darkness, at ten o'clock, the ship was dashed against the rocks, and was broken in two. The sailors made a bridge of the mast and escaped to the rough beach; nearly sixty of the Covenanters were able, in one way or in another, to follow their example. But the other two hundred were drowned, only a few of their bodies being washed to the land, to be buried at a place called Scarvating, where one may see the graves today.

Read more about the wreck of The Crown and the Deerness memorial to the Covenanters [here](#)

The book, published originally by Andrew Melrose, and more recently reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust, has an illustration of the monument at Deerness, Orkney, to the Covenanters drowned in the Crown. Alexander Smellie (1857-1923) was a minister in the Original Secession Church.

<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/dtog/gunn2.html>

Gunn

The clan, a martial and hardy, though not a numerous race, originally belonging to Caithness, but in the sixteenth century they settled in Sutherland. Mr Smibert thinks they are perhaps among the very purest remnants of the Gael to be found about Sutherlandshire and the adjoining parts. "It is probable", he says, "that they belong to the same stock which produced the great body of the Sutherland population. But tradition gives the chieftains at least a Norse origin. They are said to have been descended from Gun, or Gunn, or Guin, second son of Olaus, or Olav, the Black, one of the Norwegian kings of Man and the Isles, who died 18th June 1237. One tradition gives them a settlement in Caithness more than a century earlier, deducing their descent their descent from Gun, the second of three sons of Olaf, described as a man of great bravery, who, in 1100, dwelt in the Orcadian isle of Graemsay. The above mentioned Gun or Guin is said to have received from his grandfather on the mother's side, Farquhar, Earl of Ross, the possessions in Caithness which long formed the patrimony of his descendants: the earliest stronghold of the chief in that country being Halbury castle, or

Easter Clythe, situated on a precipitous rock, overhanging the sea. From a subsequent chief who held the office of coroner, it was called Crouner Gun's Castle. It may be mentioned here that the name Gun is the same as the Welsh Gyynn, and the Manx Gawne. It was originally Gun, but is now spelled Gunn.

The clan Gunn continued to extend their possessions in Caithness till about the middle of the fifteenth century, when, in consequence of their deadly feuds with the Keiths, and other neighbouring clans, they found it necessary to remove into Sutherland, where they settled on the lands of Kildonan, under the protection of the Earls of Sutherland, from whom they had obtained them. Mixed up as they were with the clan feuds of Caithness and Sutherland, and at war with the Mackays as well as the Keiths, the history of the clan up to this time is full of incidents which have more the character of romance than reality. In one place Sir Robert Gordon, alluding to "the inveterat deidlie feud betuein the clan Gun and the Slaightean-Aberigh", - a branch of the Mackays, - he says: "The long, the many, the horrible encounters which happened between these two trybed, with the bloodshed and infinit spoils committed in every part of the diocy of Catteynes by them and their associats, are of so disordered and troublesome menorie", that he declines to give details.

Previous to their removal into Sutherland, George Gun, commonly

called the Chruner, or Coroner, and by the Highlanders, Fear N'm Braisteach-more, from the great brooch which he wore as the badge of his office of coroner, was killed by the Keiths of Caithness.

The Crowner's eldest son, James, succeeded as chief, and he it was who, with his family and the greater portion of his clan, removed into Sutherland. The principal dwelling-house of the chiefs was, thereafter, Killernan, in the parish of Kildonan, until the house was accidentally destroyed by fire about 1690. From this chief, the patronymic of Mac-Sheumais, or MacKeamish, (that is, the son of James), which then became the Gaelic sept-name of the chiefs, is derived. From one of the sons of the Crowner, named William, are descended the Wilsons of Caithness, (as from a subsequent chief of the same name, the Williamsons), and from another, Henry, the Hendersons. Another son, Robert, who was killed with his father, was the progenitor of the Gun Robsons; and another son, John, also slain by the Keiths, of the Gun MacEans, or Macians, that is Johnsons, of Caithness. The Gallies are also of this clan, a party of whom settling in Ross-shire being designated as coming from Gall'aobh, the stranger's side.

William Gunn, the eighth MacKeamish, an officer in the army, was killed in India, without leaving issue, when the chiefship devolved on Hector, great-grandson of George, second son of Alexander, the fifth MacKeamish, to whom he was served nearest male heir, on the

31st May 1803, and George Gunn Esq. of Thives, country of Sutherland, his only son, became, on his death, chief of the clan Gunn, and the tenth MacKearish.

Another Account of the Clan

BADGE: Craobh Aitean (juniperis communis) juniper.

PIBROCH: Failte nan Guinneach.

ROUND the coasts of the extreme north of Scotland, and notably on the eastern and northern shores, the place-names have an interesting tale to tell. These "wicks" and "oes" and "dales" speak of the settlements of Norse and Danish rovers in days now remote. For some five centuries, down to the time of the battle of Largs, in 1263, that part of the country, along with the Orkneys, the Shetlands, and the Hebrides, was, in fact, Norwegian territory, and to the present hour the inhabitants, at any rate of the coast districts, have probably more Norwegian than Scottish blood in their veins, This is not least true in the case of the Clan Gunn, whose possessions lay in the Kildonan district, about the upper waters of the River Helmsdale, where Ben Grainmore towers two thousand feet against the sky, and the mountain glens come down to the fertile strath of the Helmsdale itself. The soil is fertile, the little mountain lochs abound with trout and char, and red deer, grouse, ptarmigan, and blackcock have always been plentiful on the moors, while grains of gold are even yet to be found in the sand and gravel of the streams.

It was a country to attract the wild Norse rover, and round the Pictish towers or castles, of which the ruins still remain, many a desperate onslaught must have taken place between the older Pictish inhabitants and the Viking adventurers before these latter secured possession of the region.

Clan Gunn, which had its home here in later centuries, took its name and claimed descent from Guinn, second son of Olaf the Black, King of Man and the Isles, who died in 1237. The Gaelic *Guinneach* signifies fierce, keen, sharp, and is probably an accurate description of the outstanding characteristics of the clan. From later chiefs of the race are descended septs known in modern times by the names of Jamieson, Johnson, Williamson, Anderson, Robson, and others, while the Gallies take their name from a party of the clan which settled in Ross-shire, and was known as the Gall-*'aobh*, or men from the stranger's side.

The territory of the clan lay on the border between the country of the Earls of Sutherland and the Earls of Caithness, while to the west of it lay Strathnaver, the territory of the Mackays, otherwise Lord Reay's country. With all these neighbours the Gunns from time to time had feuds and friendships, and some of the episodes which occurred between them were among the most romantic and desperate in the history of the north. Alike as friends and as foes the Gunns appear always to have been held in the highest estimation. It is obvious that, at a very early date, they had acquired the character of being "bonnie fechtors."

Perhaps the most outstanding event in the history of the clan was the battle of Alt-no-gaun, fought in the year 1478. The chief of that time, George Gunn, was then the greatest man in the north, there being then no Earl of Sutherland to overshadow him. Moreover, he held the dignity of Crowner, or coroner, then a high officer of justice. In virtue of this office the chief wore as a badge a large silver brooch, from which he was known as Fear a Bhuaisteach mor. In his time a member of the family of Keith, afterwards Earls Marischal, married the heiress of the Cheynes of Acrigil, and thus obtained a footing on the borders of the Gunn country. The Gunns looked with little pleasure upon the appearance of the followers of such a powerful family in their neighbourhood, and accordingly disagreements and a serious feud sprang up between them. With a view to an understanding a meeting was held in the chapel of St. Tam, but this aggravated rather than diminished the differences between the parties, and, matters having come to a head, an arrangement was made to fight out the quarrel at an appointed place. Each chief was to appear with his relations, a party of not more than twelve horse, and the battle was to be fought to the death.

The place chosen was a remote part of Strathmore, but when the Crowner and his eleven champions reached the spot they found that the Keiths were double their number, having treacherously mounted two men on each horse. This action, however, merely enraged the Gunns, who hurled themselves into the combat with added fury and desperation. Both sides fought till they could fight no more, and

when the battle was over the Crowner and seven of his clan lay dead, while the Keiths were barely able to carry their slain and wounded from the field. Of the Gunns the five who survived were all sons of the Chief, and all wounded. As night fell they sat down by the bank of a stream, where Torquil, the one most slightly wounded, washed and dressed the injuries of the other four. As they talked over the disaster of the day the youngest of them, Little Henry, burning to revenge defeat and the treachery of the Keiths, and to recover his father's sword, brooch, and armour, induced two of his brothers—the only two still able to fight—to go with him in pursuit of the victorious party. They came up with the latter at the castle of Dairaid. By this time it was night, and through the narrow window Henry Gunn and his brothers looked in and saw the Keiths drinking ale and relating to their hosts, the Sutherlands, the incidents of the day's encounter. Little Henry watched his chance, and as the Chief of the Keiths raised the tankard to his lips he bent his bow and sent an arrow through his heart, at the same time calling out "Beannachd na Guinnich do 'n Chai"—the Gunn's compliment to Keith! The company inside dashed for the door, and as they came out several were killed by the Gunns, who were waiting for them. It was no equal match, however, and the Gunns presently retired under cover of the darkness, and making for the spot where they had left their brother, all five retreated in safety to their own country.

A hundred years later the Chief of the Clan, Alastair Gunn, was again a man of much note and power in the north. He had married a

daughter of the Earl of Sutherland, and felt himself entitled to hold his head high among the best in Scotland. This, alas! led to his undoing. One day, about the year 1562, marching, with his "tail" of followers behind him, along the High Street of Aberdeen, he happened to encounter no less a person than Queen Mary's half-brother, the Earl of Moray, also with his followers. Owing to the condition of the thoroughfares at that time it was not less a point of honour than a matter of convenience to keep the crown of the causeway. This the Earl, by reason of his rank, of course considered himself entitled to, but the haughty Chief of the Gunns showed no disposition to yield the point. In the upshot the Earl by means of one Andrew Munro, entrapped Gunn at the Delvines, near Nairn, whence he was carried to Inverness, where Moray had him executed "under pretence of justice."

Twenty-three years later, in 1585, the clan found itself involved against its neighbours on each side, the Earls of Sutherland and Caithness, heads of the most powerful houses then in the north. It looked as if the Gunns were to be the earthen pipkin crushed between two iron pots, yet they seemed no whit dismayed, and managed to hold their own in valiant fashion. The two earls planned to come upon the Gunns from both sides at once, and, "thereby so to compass them that no place of retreat might be left unto them." The Gunns took up their position in an advantageous spot on the side of Ben Grian. There their enemies, seeing them much fewer in number than themselves, made the fatal mistake of thinking lightly of them.

Instead of waiting for the Sutherlands to come up and attack simultaneously, the Sinclairs rushed impulsively forward. The Gunns waited till their enemies, breathless with the steep ascent, were close upon them. Then they poured a flight of arrows into them at close quarters, and, rushing down the slope, cut down the commander of the Sinclairs with 120 of his men. The rest they pursued till darkness fell. The Gunns were followed, however, by the Earl of Sutherland's force, which pursued them as far west as the shores of Lochbroom. There the Gunns were brought to an encounter, when they were defeated, their captain, George Gunn, being wounded and taken prisoner, and thirty-two of the clan being slain.

Later in the same reign, in 1616, John, Chief of the Gunns, suffered for the part he was compelled to play as an ally of the Earl of Caithness. The earl, being desirous of visiting his displeasure upon a certain William Innes, brought pressure upon the Chief of the Gunns to burn the corn stacks of Innes's tenants. This, John Gunn long refused to do, offering instead to "do his best to slay William Innes." The earl, however, continued to insist; in the end the corn stacks were burned, thereby no doubt inflicting severe hardship upon the people of the district; and as a result the Chief of the Gunns was rigorously prosecuted and imprisoned in Edinburgh.

A generation later a notable member of the clan was Crowner or Colonel Gunn, a native of Caithness, who, like so many other hardy Scots of that time made a place and a name for himself in the wars abroad. He appears in Scottish history when the Marquess of

Montrose, then on the Covenanting side, was besieging the Tower of Gight in Aberdeenshire. Word reached the Marquess that a King's force had landed at Aberdeen, and raising the siege he retreated precipitately to Edinburgh. The force actually landed, however, was a small one, and the most important of its officers was Crowner Gunn. On the failure of the cause of Charles I. the Crowner returned to Germany, where according to the historian of the house of Sutherland he became a major-general in the imperial army, and a baron of the empire, marrying "a rich and noble lady beside the imperial city of Ulm, upon the Danube".

The early seat of the Chiefs of the Clan was the old castle of Hallburg, the name of which sufficiently indicates its Danish or Norwegian origin. In its time this stronghold was considered impregnable. In later days the Chiefs of the Gunns had their seat at the castle of Kilearnan till it was destroyed by fire in 1690.

Strangely enough, after the long warlike history of the clan, the chief means of its dispersion was the introduction of the peaceful sheep. In the twenty years between 1811 and 1831 sheep-raising as a new industry displaced the old breeding of black cattle in the Highlands of Scotland. To make way for it in this district the notorious Sutherland clearances took place. In the former year the population of Kildonan parish, which measures some 250 square miles, numbered 1,574. To make way for sheep-farming most of that population was removed to the neighbouring parish of Loth, and in the glens where hundreds of families of the name of Gunn had for

centuries had their happy though humble and too often abjectly poor homes, nothing was to be heard but the bleat of the sheep, the call of the grouse, and the crow of the blackcock. In 1851 the parish of Loth was united to that of Kildonan, and by this means the number of the population was more than restored. Meanwhile, however, many of the old clan of the Gunns had gone out to the world, never to return to the scenes of the doughty deeds of their ancestors.

At the present day the Chiefship of the clan is believed to rest with the family of Gunn of Rhives, which is descended from the second son of MacSheumais, the fifth Chief.

Among the members of the clan who have attained name and fame may be enumerated Barnabas Gunn, musical composer, who died organist of Chelsea Hospital in 1753; John Gunn, author of an Historical Enquiry respecting the Performance of the Harp in the Highlands, and other musical works, who flourished at the end of the eighteenth century; William Gunn, Episcopal clergyman in England and antiquarian writer, who, early in the nineteenth century, published extracts from the Vatican MSS., an account of the Vatican tapestries, and a tenth-century MS. of the *Historia Britonum*; Daniel Gunn (1774-1848), the congregational minister, celebrated for his unemotional preaching and his schools at Christchurch, Hampshire; and Robert Campbell Gunn, the naturalist (1808-1881), who, when superintendent of convict prisons in Tasmania, sent home many interesting specimens of previously unknown plants and animals.

Septs of the Clan Gunn: Gallie, Gunnson, Georgeson, Henderson,

Johnson, Jamieson, Keene, Kean, MacCorkill, MacComas, MacIan, MacKames, MacKeamish, MacKean, MacOmish, MacRob, MacWilliam, Manson, Nelson, Robison, Robson, Sandison, Swanson, Williamson, Wilson.

Another account of the clan...

The name Gunn is thought to be Norse in origin, the clan claiming descent from Gunni, grandson of Sweyn Asleifsson, "the Ultimate Viking" and second son of Olave the Black, Norse King of Man and the Isles who died in 1237. Noted for their war-like and ferocious character, they were sworn enemies of the Keiths and in 1426 at Harpsdale, south of Thurso, a particularly bloody but indecisive battle took place, after which the Gunns settled mainly in Sutherland. George Gunn held the office of Coroner of Caithness, known as "Crownor Gunn", he was one of the greatest men in the country at that time and lived in magnificent style in his castle at Clyth. He was killed through treachery in 1464 while trying to arrange a reconciliation with Clan Keith. His death was later avenged by his grandson who killed Keith of Ackergill, his son and twelve followers at Drummoy. Feuds continued between the Gunns and the Mackays and the Earls of Caithness and Sutherland. In 1585 the Earls attacked the Gunns who although fewer in number held their ground and slew 140 of their enemies. Only darkness prevented greater slaughter. However, the Gunns were later defeated at Lochbroom by the Earl of Sutherland. At the time of the Highland

clearances in Sutherland, many of the Gunn clan were forced to emigrate to New Zealand and Canada.

<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/stoz/sinclai2.html>

Clan Sinclair

The name Sinclair is of Norman origin from "Saint-Clair-sur-Elle" and was established in Scotland in 1162 when Henry de St Clair of Roslin was granted lands in Lothian. His descendant Sir William became guardian to the heir of Alexander III and gained the Barony of Rosslyn in 1280. His son, Sir Henry fought with Bruce at Bannockburn and was one of the Scottish barons who signed the letter to the Pope asserting Scottish independence. His son, Henry married Isobel, co-heiress of the Earldom of Orkney and Caithness and thus transported the Sinclairs to the far north of Scotland. Their son, Henry Sinclair of Roslin became Earl of Orkney in 1379, obtained from King Haco VI of Norway. In 1455 William, 3rd Sinclair Earl of Orkney was granted the Earldom of Caithness. He also founded the celebrated Rosslyn Chapel in 1446. In 1470 the Earl of Orkney and Caithness was compelled to resign Orkney to James III in exchange for the Castle of Ravenscraig in Fife. The King was jealous of the semi-royal chief of the Earldom of Orkney which had been inherited by the Sinclairs from the Norse Sea-Kings. The Earls of Caithness were engaged in a long succession of feuds with the Sutherlands, the

Gunns and the Murrays, often giving rise to violent deaths. The 2nd Earl, William died at Flodden and the 3rd Earl in a Sinclair Civil War in the Orkneys. The direct line came to an end with George, 6th Earl who through debt granted the title and estates to Sir John Campbell of Glenorchy. In 1676, after Sir John assumed the title, George Sinclair of Keiss disputed the claim and seized the Caithness estates, only to be defeated in 1680 by the Campbells near Wick. Although the claim was lost by the sword, the Privy Council rendered his claim in 1681 and he became the 7th Earl of Caithness. At the time of the '45 the northern Sinclairs were ready to join Prince Charles Edward however after Culloden they disbanded quietly. The Earldom has since passed through many Sinclair families and up until 1986 a Sinclair Earl of Caithness owned the long-ruined stronghold, Castle Girnigo, and the Sinclairs of Ulbster still hold vast estates in Caithness. Septs and dependants of the Sinclairs include Caird, Clouston, Clyne, Linklater and Mason.

Another Account of the Clan

BADGE: Conasg (Ulex Europaeus) furze or whin.

PIBROCH: Spaidsearachd Mhic nan Ceàrda.

EVERY Scottish schoolboy is familiar with the story of the heroic fight with the Moors on a field of Spain in which the Good Lord James of Douglas met his death. In that fight, it will be remembered, Douglas noted that a Scottish knight, Sir William St. Clair, had charged too far, and had been surrounded, by the enemy. "Yonder worthy knight will be slain," he exclaimed, "unless he have

instant help," and he galloped to the rescue. Then, himself surrounded by the enemy, and seeing no hope for escape, he took from his neck the casket containing Bruce's heart, and threw it forward among the enemy.

Pass first in fight," he cried, "as thou were wont to do; Douglas will follow thee or die! " and pressing forward to the place where it had fallen, was himself slain. The William St. Clair who thus comes into historical note, and who, with his brother John, was slain on that Andalusian battlefield, was the ancestor in direct male line of the Sinclairs, Earls of Caithness, of the present day.

Like so many of the great Highland families, the St. Clairs were not originally of Celtic stock. Their progenitor is said to have been William, son of the Comte de St. Clair, a relative of William the Conqueror, who "came over" with that personage in 1066. He or a descendant seems to have been one of the Norman knights brought into Scotland to support the new dynasty and feudal system of Malcolm Canmore and his sons. In the twelfth century there were two families of the name, the St. Clairs of Roslyn and the St. Clairs of Herdmonstoun respectively, though no relationship was traced between them. Sir William de St. Clair of Roslyn, who flourished in the latter half of the thirteenth century, was a guardian of the young Scottish king, Alexander III., and one of the envoys sent to negotiate the French marriage for that prince. He was sheriff of Dumfries and justiciar of Galloway, and, as a partizan of Baliol, was captured by the English at Dunbar in 1294, escaping from

Gloucester Castle nine years later. His son, Sir Henry, was also captured at Dunbar, but exchanged in 1299. He was sheriff of Lanark in 1305, fought for Bruce at Bannockburn, and received a pension in 1328. It was his brother William, Bishop of Dunkeld, who repulsed the English at Donibristle in 1317 and crowned Edward Baliol in 1332.

Sir William St. Clair who fell in Spain in 1329 was the elder son of Sir Henry St. Clair of Roslyn. His son, another Sir William, who succeeded to the Roslyn heritage, added immensely to the fortunes of his family by marrying Isabella, daughter and co-heir of Malise, Earl of Strathearn, Caithness, and Orkney. In consequence his son Henry became Earl or Prince of Orkney at the hand of Hakon VI. in 1379. He conquered the Faroe Islands in 1391, wrested Shetland from Malise Sperra, and with Antonio Zeno, crossed the Atlantic, and explored Greenland. His son, another Henry Sinclair, second Earl of Orkney, was twice captured by the English, at Homildon Hill in 1402 and with the young James I. on his voyage to France in 1406. He married Isabella, daughter and heiress of Sir William Douglas of Nithsdale, and the Princess Egidia, daughter of Robert II.; and his son, William, third Earl of Orkney, was one of the most powerful nobles in the country in the time of James II.

The Earl was one of the hostages for the ransom of James I. in 1421, and in 1436, as High Admiral of Scotland, conveyed James's daughter to her marriage with the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XI. of France. At his investiture with the earldom of Orkney in 1434 he acknowledged

the Norwegian jurisdiction over the islands, and in 1446 he was summoned to Norway as a vassal. In this same year he began the foundation of the famous Collegiate Church, now known as Roslyn Chapel, on the Esk near Edinburgh, which is perhaps at the present hour the richest fragment of architecture in Scotland, and in the vaults of which lie in their leaden coffins so many generations of "the lordly line of high St. Clair." Sir Walter Scott has recorded in a well-known poem the tradition that on the death of the chief of that great race Roslyn Chapel is seen as if it were flaming to heaven. At his great stronghold of Roslyn Castle at hand the Earl of Orkney lived in almost regal splendour. In 1448, when the English, instigated by Richard, Duke of York, broke across the Borders and burned Dumfries and Dunbar, the Earl assisted in their repulse and overthrow. In the following year he was summoned to Parliament as Lord Sinclair. From 1454 to 1456 he was Chancellor of Scotland under James V., whose side he took actively against the Earl of Douglas, though Douglas's mother, Lady Beatrice Sinclair, was his own aunt, and who, in 1455, on his relinquishing his claim to Nithsdale, made him Earl of Caithness. This honour was no doubt partly due to the fact that, through his great-grandmother, the wife of Malise of Strathearn, he inherited the blood of the more ancient Earls of Caithness, the first recorded of whom is said to be a certain Dungald who flourished in 875. A few years later certain actions of Earl William and his son may be said to have brought about the marriage of James III. and the transference of Orkney and Shetland

to the Scottish crown. During some disagreement with Tulloch, Bishop of Orkney, St. Clair's son seized and imprisoned that prelate.

Forthwith Christiern, King of Denmark, to whom Orkney then belonged, wrote to the young Scottish king demanding not only the liberation of his bishop, but also the arrears of the old "Annual of Norway" which Alexander III. of Scotland had agreed to pay for possession of the Hebrides. The matter was settled by the marriage of James III. to Christiern's daughter, Margaret, the annual of Norway being forgiven as part of the princess's dowry, and the Orkney and Shetland islands pledged to James for payment of the rest. St. Clair was then, in 1471, induced to relinquish to the king his Norwegian earldom of Orkney, receiving as compensation the rich lands of Dysart, with the stronghold of Ravenscraig, which James II. had built for his queen on the coast of Fife.

The earl was twice married. By his first wife, Elizabeth, daughter of the fourth Earl of Douglas, he had a son and daughter. Katherine, the daughter, married Alexander, Duke of Albany, son of James II., and was divorced, while William the son was left by his father only the estate of Newburgh in Aberdeenshire and the title of Lord Sinclair, by which title the earl had been called to Parliament in 1449. In 1676 this title of Baron St. Clair passed through a female heir, Katherine, Mistress of Sinclair, to her son Henry St. Clair, representative of the family of Sinclair of Herdmonstoun. Through his daughter Grisel and two successive female heirs the estates passed to the family of Anstruther Thomson of Charleton, while the

title of Lord Sinclair was inherited by the descendants of his uncle Matthew. The present Lords Sinclair are therefore of the family of Herdmonstoun, and are not descended from the original holder of the title, the great William, Earl of Orkney and Caithness and Chancellor of Scotland, of the days of James II. and III.

Earl William's second wife was a daughter of Alexander Sutherland of Dunbeath, and by her, besides other children, he had two sons. To one of these, William, he left the earldom of Caithness, and to the other, Sir Oliver, he left Roslyn and the Fife estates. It is from the former that the Earls of Caithness of the present day are directly descended.

William, the second Earl, was one of the twelve great nobles of that rank who fell with James IV. on Flodden field. So many of the Caithness men were killed on that occasion that since then the Sinclairs have had the strongest aversion to clothe themselves in green or to cross the Ord Hill on a Monday; for it was in green and on a Monday that they marched over the Ord Hill to that disastrous battle. So great was the disaster to the north that scarcely a family of note in the Sinclair country but lost the representative of its name.

John, the third Earl, was not less unfortunate. In 1529, ambitious of recovering for himself his grandfather's earldom of Orkney, and of establishing himself there as an independent prince, he raised a formidable force and set sail to possess himself of the island. The enterprise was short-lived, most of the natives of the islands

remained loyal to James V., and, led by James Sinclair, the governor, they put to sea, and in a naval battle defeated and slew the Earl with 500 of his followers, making prisoners of the rest. George, the fourth Earl, has a place in history chiefly by reason of the sorrows and indignities he had to suffer at the hands of his eldest son. That eldest son, John, Lord Berriedale, Master of Caithness, induced his father in 1543 to resign the earldom to him. He married Jean, daughter of Patrick, third Earl of Bothwell, and widow of John Stewart, prior of Coldingham, a natural son of James V., and he set out to aggrandise himself by most unnatural means. Among other exploits he imprisoned his father, and in 1573 strangled his younger brother, William Sinclair of Mey. Earl George himself was mixed up in the history of his time in a somewhat questionable way. In 1555 he was imprisoned and fined for neglecting to attend the courts of the Regent. As a Lord of Parliament in 1560 he opposed the ratification of the Confession of Faith, when that document was abruptly placed upon the statute book. He was made hereditary justiciar in Caithness in 1566, but that did not prevent him taking part in the plot for the murder of Darnley in the following year, nor again did this prevent him from presiding at the trial of the chief conspirator, the Earl of Bothwell. Among his other actions he signed the letter of the rebel lords to Queen Elizabeth in 1570, and was accused of being an instigator of crimes in the north. His son, the Master of Caithness, being dead five years before him, in 1577, he was succeeded by the Master's eldest son, George, as

fifth Earl. This personage, in the days of James VI. and Charles I., engaged in feuds, raids, and other similar enterprises which seemed almost out of date at that late period. It was he who in 1616 instigated John Gunn, chief of that clan, to burn the corn-stacks of some of his enemies, an exploit which secured Gunn a rigorous prosecution and imprisonment in Edinburgh; and it was he who in 1585 joined the Earl of Sutherland in making war upon the Gunns, in the course of which undertaking, at the battle of Bengrian, the Sinclairs, rushing prematurely to the attack, were overwhelmed by the arrow-flight and charge of the Gunns, and lost their commander with 120 of his men. The Earl's great feud, however, was that against the Earl of Sutherland himself. The feud began with the slaughter of George Gordon of Marle by some of the Caithness men in 1588. By way of retaliation the Earl of Sutherland sent into Caithness 200 men who ravaged the parishes of Latherone and Dunbeath; then, following them up, he himself overran the Sinclair country, and besieged the Earl of Caithness in Castle Sinclair. The stronghold proved impregnable, and when Sutherland retired after a long and unsuccessful siege, Caithness assembled his whole clan, marched into Sutherlandshire with fire and sword, defeated his enemies in a pitched battle, and carried off much spoil. Sutherland retaliated in turn, 300 of his men spoiling and wasting Caithness, killing over thirty of their enemies, and bringing back a great booty. The Sinclairs again made reprisals with their whole force. As they returned with their plunder they were attacked at Clyne by the

Sutherland men to the number of about 500, but maintained a desperate fight till nightfall, and then managed to make off. On reaching home, however, they found that the Mackays had raided their country from the other side, and, after spreading desolation and gathering spoil, had retired as suddenly as they had come. When these raids and counter-raids with the men of Sutherland were over, the Earl of Caithness found other openings for his turbulent enterprist. After committing an outrage on the servants of the Earl of Orkney, he earned credit to himself by putting down the rebellion of Orkney's son, and for this in 1615 received a pension. Having, however, committed certain outrages on Lord Forbes, he was obliged to resign his pension and the sheriffdom of Caithness in order to obtain pardon. For his various acts a commission of fire and sword was issued against him, and he was driven to seek refuge in Shetland. It was not long before he was allowed to return, but he did so only to meet his creditors, and at his death twenty years later he left his affairs still in a state of embarrassment.

The son and grandson of the fifth Earl having died before him, he was succeeded as sixth Earl by his great grandson, George. The career of this Earl and of his rival, the astute and unscrupulous Sir John Campbell, Bart., of Glenurchy, reads almost like the pages of a melodrama, and still forms the subject of many a tradition repeated among the people of Caithness. The Chief of the Sinclairs, helped, it is said, by the machinations of Glenurchy, found himself

more and more deeply involved in debt. There are stories of his raising money upon mortgage to help friends who were in turn in the power of Glenurchy, and of the mortgages and loans alike finding their way into Glenurchy's hands. Finally in 1672, the Earl, finding himself involved beyond recovery, was forced to make over to Glenurchy, as his principal creditor, a wadset, not only of his lands, but also of his honours. The wadset was to be redeemable within six years, but after that time the right to the lands was to become absolute and the title of Earl of Caithness was to pass to Glenurchy. Four years later the Earl of Caithness died, and two years later still Glenurchy married his widow, Mary, daughter of Archibald, the notorious Marquess of Argyle. At the same time, the period of the wadset having arrived, Glenurchy laid claim to the lands and title of the Earldom of Caithness. His claim was resisted by the heir male, George Sinclair of Keiss, son of the second son of the fifth Earl. King Charles II., deciding that the right belonged to Campbell, granted him a new charter, including both title and estates, but when Glenurchy tried to collect his rents he found the Sinclairs refuse to pay. In order to enforce his right Glenurchy, who was now Earl of Caithness, sent into the north a body of men under his kinsman, Robert Campbell of Glenlyon, afterwards notorious as captain of the force which carried out the Massacre of Glencoe. The Campbells marched northward till they were confronted by the forces of the Sinclairs on the further bank of a stream. For a time, it is said, they remained there, neither side venturing an attack;

but at last Campbell sent a convoy of French wines and spirits along a road on which he knew it must fall into the hands of the Sinclairs. That night there were sounds of merrymaking in the camp of the latter. When these sounds had died away, and Glenlyon judged his opponents to be unlikely to make effective resistance, he marched his men across the stream, and cut the Sinclairs to pieces. As he did this, the pipers of the Campbells played for the first time the pibroch, Bodach an Briogas, the Lad of the Breeches, in derision of the Sinclairs, who wore, not the kilt, but the trews. The tune has ever since been the gathering piece of the Campbells of Breadalbane.

But though Glenlyon had routed the Sinclairs, King Charles shortly afterwards became convinced that he had made an error, and in 1680 he caused Glenurchy to relinquish the earldom of Caithness, recompensing him at the same time by creating him Earl of Breadalbane and Holland. George Sinclair of Keiss who thus became seventh Earl, died unmarried in 1698, and the family honours devolved on John, grandson of Sir James Sinclair of Murchill, brother of the fifth Earl. Sir James had married Elizabeth, daughter of Robert, Earl of Strathearn and Orkney, a natural son of James V., so John, who succeeded as eighth Earl, was a great-great-grandson of the gay "guidman of Ballengeich."

At this period the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 took place. According to the estimate of President Forbes of Culloden, the Sinclairs could

then raise 1,000 men. Five hundred of them actually took arms, and were on their way to join Prince Charles when news of the defeat of the cause at Culloden reached them and caused them to disband.

On the death of Alexander, ninth Earl of Caithness, without a male heir, the earldom was claimed by a grandson of David Sinclair of Broynach, brother of the eighth Earl. The claimant's father was understood to have been illegitimate, but it was sought to be proved that he had been legitimated by a subsequent marriage of David of Broynach to his mother. Both in 1768 and 1786, however, the courts repelled this claim, and the earldom accordingly passed to William Sinclair of Ratter, representative of Sir John Sinclair of Greenland, third son of the Master of Caithness, fourth Earl. The son of this Earl was again the last of his line, and the earldom passed to Sir James Sinclair, Bait., of Mey, representative of George Sinclair of Mey, third son of the fourth 'Earl. This peer, who was the twelfth Earl of Caithness, was Lord Lieutenant of the county, and became Postmaster-General in 1810. Alexander, his second son, who succeeded him, was also Lord Lieutenant, and his son, James, the fourteenth Earl, after being for a time a representative peer, was created a peer of the United Kingdom as Baron Barrogill in 1866. This honour became extinct on the death of his only son, George, fifteenth Earl, in 1889. The Scottish honours then passed to James Augustus Sinclair, representative of Robert Sinclair of Durran, third son of Sir James Sinclair, first baronet of Mey, grandson of George Sinclair of Mey, third son of the fourth Earl;

and the present Earl of Caithness, who in 1914 succeeded his elder brother as eighteenth Earl, is his second son.

Probably none of the ancient peerages of Scotland has passed so often to collateral heirs as has the earldom of Caithness since the death of George, sixth holder of the title, in 1676. The present chief of the Sinclairs is still, however, representative by direct male descent of the mighty Lords of Roslyn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Of cadet houses of the name, the two most noted are those of Sinclair of Ulbster and Sinclair of Dunbeath. The former of these is descended from Patrick, elder legitimated son of William Sinclair of Mey, second son of the fourth Earl, who was strangled by his brother, the Master of Caithness, in 1573. Of this family John Sinclair of Ulbster became Hereditary Sheriff of Caithness at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and Sir John Sinclair, first baronet of Ulbster, whose mother was sister of the seventeenth Earl of Sutherland, remains famous as the greatest improver of Scottish agriculture, founder and President of the Board of Agriculture, and compiler of that indispensable work, the Statistical Account of Scotland. He raised from among the clansmen two Fencible regiments each 1,000 strong, and was the first to extend the services of these troops beyond Scotland. Sir John, who was a Privy Councillor and cashier of the Excise in Scotland, died in 1835, and the present baronet of Ulbster is his great-great-grandson.

The Sinclairs of Dunbeath, again, are descended from Alexander

Sinclair of Latheron, youngest son of George Sinclair of Mey, third son of the fourth Earl, who married Margaret, daughter of William, seventh Lord Forbes. The baronetcy dates from 1704, and the house has been notable for its distinguished services in the Army and in Parliament, one of its members being the Rt. Hon. John Sinclair, Lord Pentland, who was Secretary of State for Scotland in 1905, married a daughter of the Marquess of Aberdeen!, was raised to the peerage in 1909, and has been Governor of Madras since 1912. Among other notable personages of the name have been Oliver Sinclair, the notorious general of James V., who was defeated and captured by the English at Solway Moss in 1542, and released on condition of furthering the English interest. His brother, Henry Sinclair, Bishop of Ross, and President of the Court of Session, was a member of Queen Mary's Privy Council, had the distinction of being denounced by John Knox, and wrote additions to Boece's History of Scotland. Another distinguished brother was John Sinclair, Bishop of Brechin, who was believed to be the author of Sinclair's Practicks, was also denounced by John Knox, and officiated at the marriage of the Queen to Darnley in 1565. There was, again, the famous Master of Sinclair, son of the tenth Lord Sinclair. While serving with Marlborough in Flanders in 1708, he was sentenced to death for shooting Captain Shaw, and fled to Prussia till pardoned in 1712. During the rebellion of 1715 he distinguished himself by the capture, at Burntisland, near his own family estates, of a ship with Government munitions of war, destined for the Earl of Sutherland at

Dunrobin. He was attainted, but pardoned in 1726, and was the author of *Memoirs of the Rebellion*, printed in 1858. A notable author of the name was George Sinclair, who died in 1696. Professor of Philosophy at Glasgow, he was compelled to resign for non-compliance with Episcopacy, but was reappointed after the Revolution. He was associated with the inventor in the use of the diving-bell, was one of the first in Scotland to use the barometer, and superintended the laying of Edinburgh water-pipes in 1673.

Septs of Clan Sinclair: Caird, Clyne.

This is the American contingent at an early evening lawn party and reception hosted by Viscount John Thurso in 2005 (fellow in kilt and red sweater second row left) at his estate of Thurso East. Malcolm Caithness, Chief of Clan Sinclair, is the gentleman third from right in second row. Isla St Clair, singer and musician, is far right on second row.

<http://www.clankeithusa.org/history-feuds-gunn.htm>

If we are to evaluate the evolution of the feud of the two clans, all we need to do is look at the geographic origins of the Keiths and Gunns to find what is a reasonable and very obvious explanation for their hostilities - as we say, a no-brainer.

Gunn Origins

The origin of the Gunns is linked to the Norse Vikings, though like the Keiths there is some controversy relative to their Scottish origins. There are at least three major theories though all seem to agree that the

root name for the clan comes from Gun, Gunnar or Gunni. Some latter scholars speculate that the name may have evolved from Middle English. Calder's work relates that Gunni was brother to Sweyn Asleifson, The Pirate of Freswick, whose family ruled the Earldoms of Orkney and Caithness during the 9th, 10th and 11th Centuries. The most popular theory is that Gunni (Guin) was the second son of Olav the Black, the Norwegian King of Man and The Isles, who died in 1237.

The History of Clan Gunn by Mark Rugg Gunn chronicles a compelling tale of Gunn descent from Gunni (whose name itself meant "war") and what appears to be the most plausible theory that the name-father to the Gunn Clan was actually Gunni, the son of Andres and grandson to Svein (Sweyn) Asliefarsson of Orkneyinga Saga fame.

Even with all this controversy it is convincing that Gunni did exist, that the Gunns were/are of Norse-Viking descent and the name-father of the clan was one Gunni who must have been a powerful man in Caithness.

We are assured that Sigard and his Norsedrivennative Catti (Catti - ness?) tribes inland (again fitting the Buchan legend of the Catti). The Norwegians under brother of Ronald, to whom Harold had granted Orkneys, had obtained possession of most of Caithness, Southerland and Ross, at least, the early 10th century.

If we embrace M. R. Gunn, Gunni came to Caithness in the 12th Century. The principal Gunn lands were acquired through Ragnhild, who inherited great estates in Caithness and Sutherland on the death of her brother, Harold Ungi, Jarl in Orkney and Earl of Caithness in 1198. Gunni's son Snaekoll is reputed to have built Castle Gunn at Bruan, on the east coast of Caithness south of Wick which became the center of much attention.

At this time Clan Gunn was near the height of their power and understandably had only a few neighbors. Though the Gunns appeared to possess most of Caithness, the province was already starting to pass from the influence of the Norse Earldom to that of the King of Scots.

So, by the time that Gunni arrived in Scotland, the Norwegian decline was being realized though the Gunns and their immediate progenitors, nearly enculturated, remained in power in the Scottish Earldom of Caithness as created by Malcolm II. The great irony here is that the religious conversion effected on the Norse converts did draw after it many political and social ramifications, and contributed mightily to ultimately mix and amalgamate the two peoples.

The modern lineage and Sept Families of Clan Gunn rise from George Gunn, the Crowner (Crouner/Coroner or Warden) of Caithness, born in the first decade of the 15th century. Nonetheless, it is clear that during the 14th and 15th centuries the Gunns saw their holdings substantially diminished (dispossessed is a better word) in the fertile parts of Caithness by the Sinclairs, Keiths, MacKays and others, who obtained grants of land by marriage and from the Scottish kings (See Keith Origins later in this article), anxious to increase their influence over the fringes of their kingdom.

As an example, Sir Reginald Cheyne, the last male heir to part of Caithness to the (Norse) family of Cheyne, died in 1350. was succeeded by his two daughters, who by marriage conveyed this land to the Sinclairs, and the Keiths, respectively. Sir John Keith of Ravenscraig, Marischal Edward's second son, married Mariotta Cheyne in 1360 and obtained Inverugie (Progenitor of the Inverugie Keiths), Ackergill Castle and the surrounding lands in Caithness, putting them in direct opposition to the Gunns (more later). To the Gunns this was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. Ackergill Tower on Sinclair Bay in Caithness, one of the oldest inhabited castles in Caithness, became the primary source of the feud.

Consequently, by the mid 15th century George Gunn, Chief of Clan Gunn and Crowner of Caithness, held his main lands at Ulbster and Clyth on the rocky coast of Caithness, and the majority of the Clan by then occupied the highland regions of Caithness in what are now the Parishes of Latheron, Halkirk and Reay.

The Gunns are historically referred to by an early chronicler in this period "Verie courageous, rather desperate than valiant; the Gunn family tree being thick with many lusty fighters, going into battle against

the Keiths, Sinclares and the Makays."It fell to George Gunn, the Crouner, who after many skirmishes and several major bloody battles with Clan Keith over rival land claims, to seek a reconciliation in 1478 (or before).

After the death of George, the Crouner, and his sons at Ackergill, the Clan split into three distinct families -- James or Seumas, the Crouner's eldest son who survived the battle, moved with his family to Kildonan in Sutherland, subsequently known as Gleann na Guineach or Gunn's Glen, where he obtained lands from the Earls of Sutherland; Robert, the second surviving son established his line in Braemore, in the southern heights of Caithness as the Robson Gunns, and John, the third surviving son settled in Cattaig or Bregual in Strathmore, in the higher reaches of the River Thurso above Westerdale.

The Hendersons and Williamsons and Wilsons of Caithness are said to be descended from Henry and William, two of the Crouners' younger sons. Other Gunn families established themselves at Crosskirk, near Forss, on the North coast of Caithness and in Reay, Strathy and Strath Halladale in the MacKay country. The various chieftains later leased their lands from the Chiefs of Clan Sutherland and Clan MacKay and in turn sublet these to their immediate families who subdivided them among their families. There was, however, a surprising amount of movement from one part of the country to another and so it cannot be assumed that all Gunns in one area were necessarily of the same branch of the family.

The Mac Sheumais (or McHamish) Gunns continued to live in Strath Kildonan, first at Killearman and later at Badenloch at the top of the Strath, until the old line died out in 1782.

The Clan Gunn is presently led by Commander, Iain Alexander Gunn of Banniskirk, a descendant of the 17th century Caithness Laird, who was appointed under a commission from the Lord Lyon, King of Arms.

Keith Origins

The origins of the Keiths are no less storied and certainly not without intrigue and controversy. Needless to say, there are several theories that include the legend of The Catti (Clan of the Cat - Ceitach - See P. Buchan - 1820) a warring tribe that originated in Germania and refused surrender to the Romans. However, when the Roman legions continued their advance north on the continent, the Catti realized that their eventual extermination would be the result of any encounter with the Romans and made their way to the Isles of Batavia (what is now Holland). There they remained for some decades, until the great Roman General Germanicus (15 BC-9 AD) approached the region in about 10 AD. Germanicus was known for his brutality and raising any settlement that showed signs of resistance.

Neighboring tribes knew that the Catti would elect to fight, and ultimately risk annihilation for all. These neighbors had resolved to lay down before Germanicus, and by necessity arranged a deal, whereby the Catti were persuaded to depart the area -- intending to resettle, perhaps further west and along Europe's coast or in Scandinavia. The tribe was provided with boats, and thus made their way to the North Sea. After some time at sail, the boats became separated in a terrible storm. Some eventually made landfall in the north of Scotland, and settled among the Picts of that region now known as Caithness. The other boats have only been accounted for in other myriad sets of legends.

In what we now know as Scotland, the Catti shared territory with the Picts. Perhaps owing the fact that Picts had no written language, their early history and the first few centuries of Catti residence in their midst is not a matter of reliable record. Lacking a written language, only scarce notations in writings by Roman conquerors of the island's southern parts, and by the people known as Scots (Dalriada), make up the only records one may consult in these matters. This theory of the Picts and the Catti cannot be readily proven (some say it's absurd) and continues to be the source of a great deal of controversy. For more detail please see the materials on Gillie Chattan Moir, the Prince of The Chatti at thekeithclan.com.

The other major theory of the origin of the name Keith springs from a warrior whom Malcolm II dubbed "Marbhachair Chamuis" or Camus Slayer after the warrior slew the Danish General Camus at the Battle of Barrie in 1010. "Marbhachair Chamuis" later held the lands of Keth in Lothian for Malcolm II. This grant of estates is believed by many to represent the origin of the modern name Keith. course, the Teutonic-

Celtic peoples that became the Keiths had to already be in place, thus serving the interests of the Scottish Kings. As far as theories go, which came first, the chicken or the egg?

So, The Keiths were also busy (essentially throughout much of Scotland) while the Gunns were gathering/defending their territories in Caithness. Witness: A Norman named Hervey married the heiress of Marbhachair and received charter for the lands of Keth from King David I in 1150. Hervey's son was made Marischal of the King of Scots in 1176.

Robert the Bruce bestowed Halfforest in Aberdeenshire to Robert de Keth in 1308. Here the Keiths built their castle. As an aside, but of special significance in this line, Sir Robert's nephew was the one to return the Bruce's heart to Melrose abbey after the Douglas's death at the hands of the Moors in Spain. The Bruce also made the office of Marischal hereditary to the Keiths in 1324 in recognition of Sir Robert de Keth, cavalry commander at the Battle of Bannockburn.

Sir William the Marischal added estates in Buchan, Kincardine and Lothian to the family by marrying the daughter of Sir Alexander Fraser, the High Chamberlain. As mentioned previously, Sir William's brother married the Cheyne heiress bringing the massive estate of Inverurie into the family. The chief's seat was later to be a castle on Inverurie lands.

So the two clans were on an imminent collision course, with the feud reported by many historians' sources as arising in 1415 (probably before), "over territorial disputes, i.e. the claim of Ackergill Tower and surrounding lands." The attempted compact at the Chapel of St. Tears can be assumed to have occurred prior to 1478, though there is no hard substantiating evidence.

As our review relates primarily to that area of northeast Scotland known as Caithness, we will limit our inquiry to that area, though the Keiths continued to amass lands and influence throughout all of Scotland. Their transformation from the Catti was complete as the Clan of the Great Earls Marischal of Scotland.

The Keith Clan is currently under the leadership of the Hon. Michael Keith, 13th Earl of Kintore, now chief of the Name of Keith in residence at the Keith Hall estates in Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

Bottom Line

The bottom line is that both the Norse Gunns and the Teutonic-Celtic Catti/Keiths were thrown by fate into close proximity and ultimate opposition in the same lands and subsequent conflict by their own sense of territorial imperatives and the ultimate goal to pursue their own agendas/cultures. Other players in this saga include the Sinclairs, Sutherlands and MacKays (sometimes) who more or less sided with the Keiths. The land claims only added fuel to the fire of an already smoldering cauldron of distrust, rivalry and hatred between the two clans. In a land characterized by lawlessness, the Keiths challenged the Gunns for both political superiority and the land itself. The Gunn's reputation for being aggressive and war-like seems quite understandable and can be directly attributed to their geographical situation - hemmed in by sometime (mostly) neighbors bent on occupying their lands.

The Gunn's perceived the Keiths as their traditional enemies, who from their castle at Ackergill, challenged the Gunn chiefs. As with most feuds which were truly fought for territory, wealth and power, a convenient personal and long-lasting insult was further provided to justify the constant bloodshed as an affair of honour when Dugald Keith, smitten by the fair Helen (Beauty of Braemore), daughter of Gunn of Braemore, in 1415 killed her fiancé Alexander Gunn the day before their marriage and then kidnapped her. Dugald took Helen to Ackergill Tower, where unlike another Helen (of Troy) she threw herself from the parapets of the Castle Tower rather than submit to her kidnapper. This incident is reputed to be the primary source of the blood feud between the Keiths and the Gunns, though it surely appears that there were many previous conflicts that would have warranted just such a designation. Surely from that point on there is little positive to report.

Caithness was the center of all the attention between the Keiths and the Gunns. Northern Caithness (Wick) demonstrates evidence of being one of the earliest settled areas in Scotland to include evidence of

early stone age cultures with the area later occupied by Celtic tribes in that same region. One could, if he chooses to use his imagination without fear of historical contradiction, picture it as the region settled by the Catti of Buchan, i.e. our 1st century Keith ancestors. Wick is mentioned in saga as early as 1140.

The town of Wick certainly appears to be at or near the center of the area in question. The name 'Wick' is reportedly derived from 'Vic' the Norse word meaning bay.

There ensued much successive strife where both clans suffered considerable losses, to include the Battle of Tannach Moor (Blar Tannie - a bloody conflict in 1426 where the Keiths and the Gunns lost many men) and again at Mammistanes and then at Dirlot (1464) in Strathmore where the less numerous Gunns inflicted heavy losses on the Keiths.

These sanguinary conflicts birthed many legends one of which ironically includes the symbol of the Raven, the Norse symbol of battle but also the personification of the Celtic goddess Morrigan who could transform herself into Badb Catha, the carrion-devouring Raven of Battle who represented death. It was she who perched on the shoulder of the famous Ulster hero Cuchulain as he was dying.

This most unusual legend stemming from this feuding time insinuates that the Raven was the ally of the Keiths! Gunn legend states that Keiths surprised the Gunns at their ancient seat at Halberry (Hallburg) Castle, and a bloody fray ensued. The Gunns say that a huge Keith was in advance of the attack. Upon his shoulder was perched the devil in the form of a Raven, who plucked the eyes of the Gunns from their heads.

If true, this must have been disconcerting to the Gunns to see one of their most sacred icons being embraced by their enemies and in collusion against them. Whether they were aware of the Celtic pantheon of gods or out of fear, hatred and perhaps respect (?) for the Keiths, perhaps the legend was born to explain viscerally, the prowess of the Keiths and the Gunn's frustration over the conflicts? That aside, in the spirit of finally settling their differences (so thought the Gunns) both families in the persons of George Keith and George Gunn agreed to meet in July of 1478 (some say earlier) at St. Tear's (Tayre) Chapel, near Ackergill Tower, the seat of Keith of Ackergill in what was intended to be a parlay and/or a battle of champions. Their motivation was that manpower losses in both families had been so great that farms were going untended and there were not enough men to harvest what crops remained.

Each side was to bring 12 horses, but when the Keiths arrived, they rode two warriors to each horse and in this unequal battle, a slaughter ensued. The Gunn Chief, George Gunn, The Crowner, and 2 of his sons were killed and Gunn's great badge of office (his brooch) was stolen and has not been recovered to this day.

One of The Crowner's remaining sons, Henry, followed the Keiths to Dirlot Castle (a Sutherland stronghold) and killed George Keith, "A Gunn's compliment to a Keith" with an arrow to the neck.

This act of revenge did little to placate the Gunns who had seen their holdings diminish and their removal from their ancestral lands. The treachery of the Keiths was not soon forgotten by the Gunns. Many years later William MacKames, son of James Gunn and grandson of the Crowner, intercepted George Keith of Ackergill (the dead Keith chief's son), Keith's son and ten retainers, in Sutherland at Drummoy while on their way from Inverness to Caithness. In revenge for the massacre at St Tear's, MacKames slaughtered the whole party. The carnage and the old animosities continued.

With the dispersal of the Gunns, the intrigue subsided somewhat. But, while the old resentments continued, ultimately the English and the very survival of Scotland seemed to extinguish the flames of hatred between the two families though politically the Gunns, for example, fought on the government side in 1745 whilst the Keiths, though long attainted since the '15, remained staunch Jacobites.

Lest we get too enamored of the great conflicts between the two families, we need remind ourselves of the old truism that, "When the Scots were not fighting their enemies, they were fighting each other". That appears to also include their ain folks!

It surely seems Keiths have often not gotten along too well with each other (let alone the Gunns and other clans). As reported by Henriette Hodge in the 1st Quarter Keith & Kin in 1996 as, "In 1592-93, a complaint was filed by George, 5th Earl Marischal to the Privy Council, that his brother Robert had taken his house of Ackergill with the intention of molesting the neighborhood, with the result that Keith (Robert) was pronounced a rebel. This, of course, would have been during the time that George was ousting Robert, by force, from the Abbey of the Deer." Henriette further noted that "In 1598 the Earl again laid a complaint before the Lords that John Keith in Subster and his sons, with other persons, 'came by night and ladderit the walls of his place at Ackergill, entered and spoiled the castle, wounded his servants, and now keeps the place.'" So much for Family harmony.

The subsequent development of the conscience of a "modern" society (and a lot of history in between) and the friendships strongly developed within and between the two clans, especially in the United States, helped build bridges and till fertile ground for peace between the two families, within and without!

Reconciliation - Finally!



12th Earl of Kintore (R) and Commander Gunn (L) in 1978

In 1978 The Rt. Hon. Sir James Ian Keith, 12th Earl of Kintore, Chief of Clan Keith and Iain Alexander Gunn of Banniskirk, the Commander of Clan Gunn, signed a Treaty of Friendship between the two clans at the site of St. Tears Chapel, bringing a formal end to the 500 year old feud. In attendance were men and women of good faith of both families who cemented the bonds of friendship between the families.

Ever since then there has been a spirit of great friendship and, indeed, a continuing close bond between our two Families. The Keiths and the Gunns live on in a spirit of harmony that sees friendship and widespread cooperation throughout the world. It surely would appear that the evolution of the American-Scots movement provided great impetus to this reconciliation though preliminary meetings between Kintore and Commander Gunn were even reputed to have been promulgated by The Crown, not unlike James III re. St. Tears.

Today, many Keiths proudly proclaim friendships with the Gunns, to especially include the late Donald Williamson of Clan Gunn who befriended George Newberry and this writer many years ago. Can we forget Bob and Jeanette Swanson of Clan Gunn who befriended many Keiths and were instrumental in the perpetuation of the Scots movement in the US? Yes, it was Bob in his infamous role as the Norse King Hagar of the Kingdom of Raknar that allowed us to laugh at ourselves, further cement our bonds of friendship and perpetuate our Scottish heritage.

If you have not yet heard the Ballad of the Keiths and the Gunns, authored by Sandy Marshall and sung by his beautiful bride Susan Palmer Marshall, then you have missed an important piece of Keith/Gunn history.

George Newberry, Sandy Marshall and Ned Buxton have all been honored as lifetime members of the Clan Gunn while Bob Swanson and other eminent members of Clan Gunn have likewise received their Keith pedigrees.



2003 - Celebrating 25 Years of Peace b/t Keiths & Gunns

Every day finds a new opportunity for the Keiths and the Gunns to celebrate their close friendship and cordial relations. Why we even have members who have legitimate genealogy to the Gunns, witness Michael Wilson of Tennessee - a Keith and a Gunn! Among many other such connections we can report include Historian Robert M. Gunn, a Keith on his Mother's side!

So, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Keith Clan, recognizing the cessation of hostilities and celebrating the great and continuing friendship between our two clans, please be upstanding and raise your glasses high, "Schlange Mohr, Aye to the Keiths and the Gunns, one day longer!"

Any piece on the Feud between the Keiths and the Gunns needs to be prefaced with sincere apologies to Larry Keith and Robert Gunn, both more eminently qualified to offer a perspective on any aspect of the relationship between our two great clans and JT Calder the great Caithness chronicler whose 1887 compilation is a basis for this simplistic (and very general) piece. In deference to their great scholarship & research on this subject, I have included passages from their respective offerings about our clans as well as those from other un-attributed internet sources. We thank them, and profusely so, for keeping our attention focused on Family and Scotland, one day longer. I can also assure Keith & Kin readers that my own personal biases are contained in this missal to include my preference on the theory on the origins of our clan and my statement on the spirit of cooperation and camaraderie that now exist between our two families as witnessed by my own personal experiences. My sincere and heartfelt thanks to George Newberry for his continued support and encouragement....

This writer/author would like to acknowledge and thank Historian Robert M. Gunn for his assistance, scholarship, and review of this article. We highly recommend your visit to his website at <http://members.aol.com/skyelander/> for further information on the Gunn Clan and Historian Gunn's works. Please do not hesitate to find your way to thekeithclan.com for further, more comprehensive information on The Keiths.

Aye!

Ned