



## The Saltyre

March 2022

### Message From The President

Hello,

This year has started off on almost as interesting a note as the last couple. Our Burns supper was not the only one around the U.S. that was cancelled because of COVID concerns. We do have a date of February 4, 2023, for the next Burns supper.

Many Highland games are off the calendar this year because of delays caused by COVID and because in many cases it takes more than six months to put a games event together.



Piping at Crescent City a few years ago

Near the end of the newsletter, I have included a schedule of the California games that are currently planning to go ahead.

The Society is currently planning to go ahead with its annual Dining In event. The D.I. has several functions including being the conclusion of our annual election season. Several positions on the Board are up for reelection. The open positions are President, Secretary, and two Directors of the Board. Please contact Ed Moore if you'd like to take a bigger part in "driving the ship". [captaincrazy\\_98@yahoo.com](mailto:captaincrazy_98@yahoo.com)

Don't forget the Society when you're shopping online. You can do this by signing up at **smile.amazon.com**. Pick Sacramento St Andrews Society as your charity of choice. One half of one percent of your purchase will be donated to the Society.

All the best,

Bruce Locken



## **The Humble Scottish Thistle**

Contributed by Ed Moore III

The thistle and its representations have been intimately intertwined with the image and perception of Scotland for many centuries. It has been immortalised in both verse and song, is used in the official emblem of most of Scotland's police forces and is even made to form part of the name of some of Scotland's football (soccer) teams, thus being incorporated in what is by far Scotland's most popular spectator sport. It is surprising in many ways, given



its standing in Scotland, that no one really knows the true origins of the thistle's great relevance to Scottish heritage and that although conjecture abounds aplenty, established facts are very thin on the ground.

Tales of the thistle and its relevance in Scotland are on occasion made to date as far back as the ninth century. The earliest popular account of the thistle and Scotland, however, relates to the thirteenth century and the reign of King Alexander III. At this time, parts of Western Scotland were still under the control of the Norwegians, those Viking invaders who had attacked and conquered much of Northern Britain in the preceding centuries. Legend has it that King Alexander wanted the Western Isles and territories back, to reunite Scotland, and that the Norwegians were not willing to comply.

In the year 1263, storms at sea are said to have forced an invading party of Norsemen to land on the Ayrshire coast at Largs, where Scottish warrior clansmen were camped. The Norwegians allegedly removed their shoes to aid a stealthy approach for ambush. When one of their number stepped on the jagged thistle, his cries of pain awakened the Scots, the



battle resulting in a Scottish victory. The thistle is reported to have thereafter been adopted by Alexander as the official emblem of Scotland.

The first more substantiated use of the thistle as an emblem of Scotland was when King James III had it featured on a coin produced in or around 1470. Later still, in the mid sixteenth century, King James V decided that he wished to establish his own royal order to convey upon visiting dignitaries, similar to those at the time bestowed as the Orders of the Garter in England and St Michael in France. He chose the name as the Order of the Thistle and bestowed it upon himself and his twelve most favoured knights, the numbers representing Jesus and the twelve apostles.

The absolute truth of the thistle and Scotland will almost certainly never be known, but it is consideration of the physical properties of the thistle itself which may hold the most plausible of all answers. The thistle is not the most imposing looking of plants, but its jagged spikes hold a very unwelcome surprise for aggressors and represent a very effective counter attack. It may well simply be, therefore, that this commonality with the small land of Scotland and those who have attacked it down through the ages is the key and the answer to the entire symbolic association between Scotland and the humble thistle.

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## **March in Scottish History**

### **1 March 1546**

George Wishart burned at the stake for heresy on the orders of Cardinal David Beaton.

### **3 March 1847**

Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, born in Edinburgh to Alexander Melville Bell and Eliza Grace Symonds.

### **5 March 1324**

King David II, son of King Robert the Bruce (reigned 1306-1329) and Elizabeth de Burgh of Ulster, born at Dunfermline in Fife.

### **6 March 1725**

Henry Benedict Maria Clement Stuart, the last legitimate male Stuart heir to the British throne, born in Rome, Italy. He was the second son of James Edward Stuart,





the self styled King James III and VIII, though also known as 'The Old Pretender.

**7 March 1676**

Robert 'Rob Roy' MacGregor, third son of Donald Glas MacGregor, a Clan Chieftain, and his wife, Margaret Campbell, baptized as a Presbyterian at Buchanan, then known as Inchcailleash, near Loch Katrine..

**9 March 1566**

Murder of David Riccio (Rizzio), favorite courtier and suspected lover of Mary, Queen of Scots, by men led by Lord Ruthven and the Earl of Morton.

**9 March 1649**

James Hamilton, 3rd Marquis and First Duke of Hamilton, executed. He was a Scottish Royalist born in England, appointed a Privy Councilor in 1628, and sent to Scotland by King Charles II in 1633.

**10 March 1748**

Noted Geologist John Playfair born at Benvie near Dundee. He was educated at St. Andrews, primarily in Mathematics, and graduated in 1765.

**17 March 1058**

Lulach, King of Scots, and sometimes referred to as 'the Fool,' stepson of MacBeth and son of Gruoch, killed in battle at Essie in Strathbogie by Malcolm Canmore, who would reign as Malcolm until 1093.

**17 March 1473**

King James IV, son of James III and Margaret of Denmark, who reigned 1488 to 1513 as one of Scotland's most energetic rulers, born probably at Stirling

**19 March 1702**

Death of William of Orange, who had reigned since 1689 as William III of England and II of Scotland, and was also ruler of the Netherlands, 1672-1702, with the title of Stadholder

**24 March 1603**

Death of Queen Elizabeth I of England and accession of King James VI of Scotland as James I of England.



### **25 March 1306**

Robert the Bruce, Earl of Carrick, crowned King of Scots at Scone, just six weeks after he had murdered rival, John 'the Red' Comyn, before the altar of the Greyfriar's Abbey in Dumfries.

### **30 March 1296**

King Edward I (Longshanks) of England ordered the sack of the port city of Berwick. After the city refused to surrender, the English stormed it and put all to the sword in a two day frenzy of pillage and death

### **31 March 1635**

Patrick Gordon, General and friend of Czar Peter the Great, born near Ellon in Aberdeenshire.

Courtesy of Electric Scotland



Skating Near Edinburgh 1870

Ice



Highland Laundry Service 1860's



Highland Attire 1904



GOLFERS 1849





## **Current Scottish Games Calendar For California**

Kern County Scottish Games, April 23, 24, <https://www.kernscot.org/highland-games.html>

Scottish Fest, Costa Mesa, May 28, 29, <https://www.scottishfest.com>

San Diego Highland Games, June 25, 26, <https://sdhighlandgames.org>

Monterey Scottish Games, July 16, 17, <https://www.montereycelticfest.com>

Redwood Highland Games, August 20, 21, No website, they have a Facebook page  
Location: 3750 Harris St, Eureka, CA 95503

Pleasanton Scottish Games, September 2,3,4; Solo piping piobaireachd competition on  
Friday September 2, <https://thescottishgames.com>

Seaside Highland Games, Ventura, October 7, 8, 9, <https://www.seasidehighlandgames.org>

Currently there are no schedules for Woodland, Ardenwood, Plymouth (Mother Lode)  
or the Dixon Highland games.





## Clan Armstrong

The Armstrong surname was first recorded in Ousby, Cumberland in 1223. The region was considered Scottish between 1135 and 1157, around the time the first Armstrong, or his father, was born.

Fortunately we live in an age when science, in the form of DNA research, allied to more rigorous studies of medieval documents, is enabling us to construct a more accurate picture of our roots. The Armstrong mainstream descent cluster has Y-DNA that shows a heavy central and north-east Scottish bias, suggesting Pictish, or pre-Pictish, origins. That information dovetailed neatly with a 'People of the British Isles' DNA survey which revealed that the DNA of northern Britain was scarcely affected by the arrival of Roman, Viking and Norman invaders.



For almost 300 years, from the late 13th century until the early 17th century, the English/Scottish Border region was in turmoil. England and Scotland were often at war during this period. The border families, including the Armstrongs, were living in the front line of this 'war zone'.

The Parishes of Canonbie and Kirkandrews passed back and forth between Scottish and English rule, forming a 7,400-acre area that came to be known as the 'Debatable Land.' The Armstrongs lived in and around the Debatable Land, in Liddesdale, Eskdale and Annandale.

The uncertain jurisdiction of the Debatable Land was the perfect place for lawbreakers on both sides of the border. People could not expect protection from the authorities. If cattle were stolen, or a kinsman was murdered, who could people turn to? Many people found strength and protection in their families and made their own rough justice.

In these extreme circumstances, some border families turned to "reiving" (ie: robbing & plundering) to ensure the survival of their families and communities. Many lowland clans and families along the border became Border Reivers: Armstrong, Graham, Nixon, Elliot, Scott, Charlton, Robson and Bell were some of these.





Their exploits were recalled in border ballads that told of romantic reiver folk heroes, good men at heart, fighting to a code of honour and avoiding unnecessary bloodshed. In 1802, Sir Walter Scott published a collection of Border Ballads and added his own 'spin' on this romantic myth. The reality was often different.

George MacDonald Fraser, in his book *The Steel Bonnets: The Story of the Anglo-Scottish Border Reivers* says this about the Armstrongs:

*"The Armstrongs were the most feared and dangerous riding clan on the whole frontier. ... In Johnnie Armstrong's day they could put 3,000 men in the saddle and probably did more damage by foray than any other two families combined, both in England and Scotland"*

The Armstrongs built Gilnockie Tower, on the banks of the River Esk, around 1520. This was one of several defensible stone towers in the border area.

The Armstrong Clan was such a powerful force in the borders that King James V of Scotland saw them as a threat to his own authority. The Ballad of Johnnie Armstrong tells the story of how, in 1529, James V asked Johnnie Armstrong of Gilnockie to join him at Court and promised his safety, then betrayed their trust. History records that Johnnie Armstrong was hanged at Carlenrig along with 36 of his men.

James V's broken promise did little to pacify the borders, and the reiving continued. That all changed when the Union of the Crowns saw James VI of Scotland accede the throne of England.





This brought an official end to the Anglo-Scottish Wars and from that moment onwards the days of the Border Reivers were numbered.

The new King of Great Britain set about the Pacification of the Borders, ordering all the fortified houses in those parts to be demolished, and for the locals to turn to agriculture and peace. Gilnockie Tower was one of the few that survived. Those who defied these orders suffered a swift & savage summary "justice", none more so than the Armstrong clan. Known thieves were rounded up and hundreds were executed without much in the way of a trial; charges were trumped up, or old charges were revived, and mass executions followed. Many were deported to Ireland, and their homelands were confiscated. It only took 7 years for reiving society to be dismantled, and the last Chief of Clan Armstrong - Archibald Armstrong of Mangerton - was hanged around 1610.

Over the next centuries the remains of the Armstrong Clan dispersed around the world. Some Armstrongs went to fight in the Netherlands. The Armstrong Chronicles claim that several Armstrongs from the area near Gilnockie Tower died in Virginia around 1623, about the time The Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock.

It is often difficult to find primary sources for records of these early years, but the Association's international researchers enjoy a challenge and we have found parish records of one group, thought to be siblings, who made it from England to Barbados before 1650: Stephen, Edward & Mary Armstrong. Edward went on to have a large family that scattered all over the world. The Association has several current members in the USA and Canada who are related to this line.

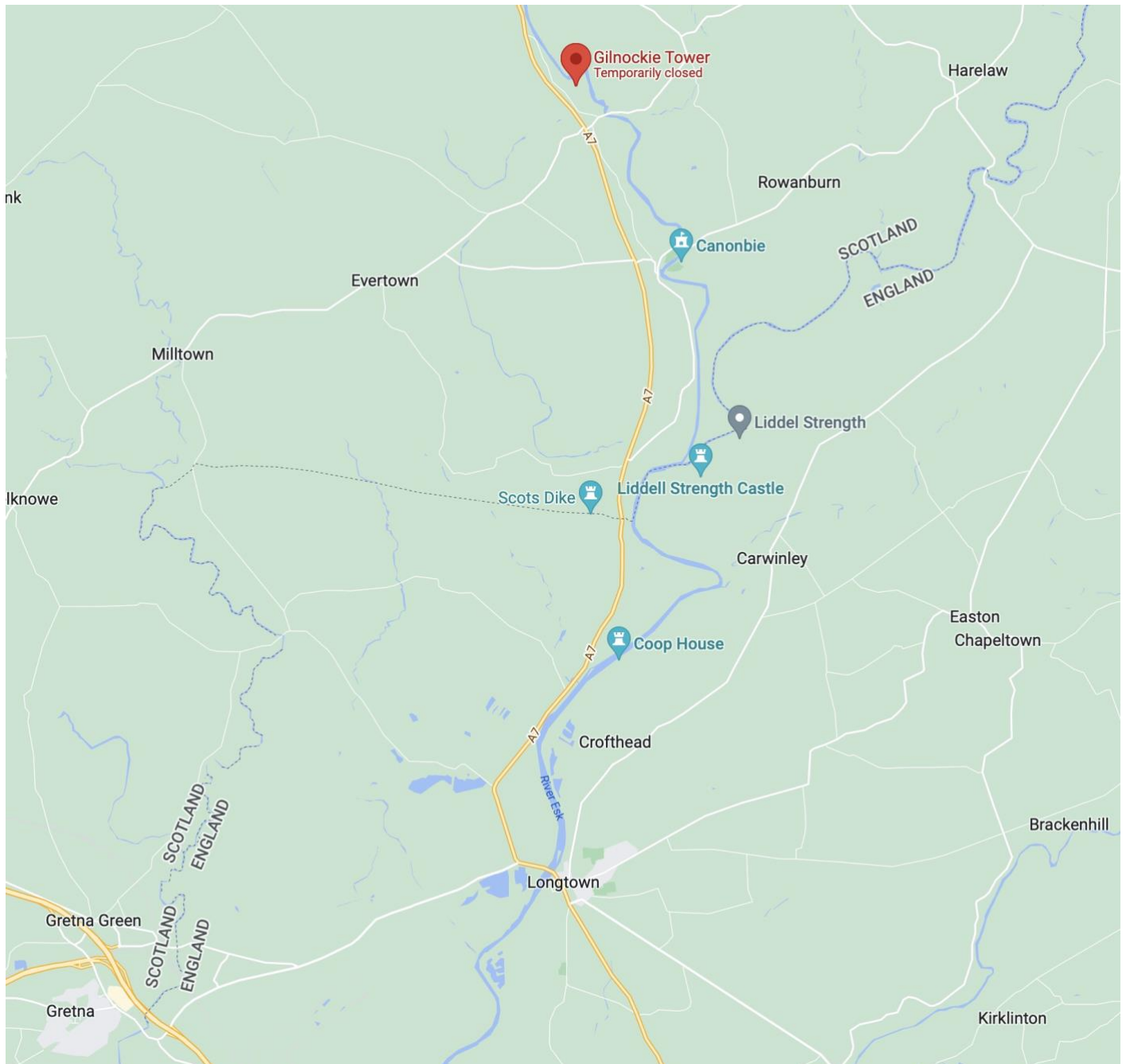
Many Armstrong families emigrated to Ireland, Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and every corner of the planet and went on to raise large families. Their stories are varied and interesting, but one man's story perfectly illustrates the pioneering bravery and strength of spirit that makes the Armstrong Clan special. He was descended from Armstrongs who had moved to Ireland. Almost 300 years ago, his 5th great-grandfather, John Armstrong, emigrated to Pennsylvania. This man was born in Wapakoneta, Ohio on 5 August 1930 and, 39 years later on 20 July 1969, he became the first man to walk on the moon; Neil Alden Armstrong.

Neil Armstrong had strong ties to his Clan roots. In March 1974, Neil Armstrong returned to the land of his ancestors. He was made a Freeman of Langholm, and climbed the stairs to the top of Gilnockie Tower which now has a small exhibition commemorating the Clan's most famous son.





Which brings the Armstrong story full circle. Centuries after Johnnie Armstrong of Gilnockie went reiving by the light of the moon to feed his family, Neil Armstrong, the man who walked on that moon, returned to the Borders to explore his roots and climb Gilnockie Tower.



Courtesy of Clan Armstrong Society



**Flowers of the Forest**

<b>Herman Chambers</b> .....	1930-2020	<b>Felix D. Othon</b>	1929-2007
<b>Clyde Le Roy Scott</b>	1938-2019	<b>William Arnold Butler</b>	1943-2006
<b>Malcolm MacClenaghan.</b>	1924-2019	<b>George Santrizos</b>	1914-2005
<b>Alex Doig</b>	1938-2019	<b>Daniel Stephens</b>	1911-2003
<b>Gordon Scott</b>	1946-2019	<b>David F. McGeary</b>	1940-2002
<b>Alasdair Harding.</b>	2018	<b>Leroy Coulter Pierson</b>	1913-1999
<b>Walter (Skip) W. Hastings</b>	1945-2018	<b>Rev. J.P. Edwards III</b>	1925-1997
<b>Calvert Lawton Crawford</b>	1933-2018	<b>Watson Burns</b>	1996
<b>William Leroy Wilson</b>	1929-2017	<b>James McCracken</b>	1920-1994
<b>Gary D. Stevenson</b>	1949-2017	<b>Alexander W. McTavish</b>	1906-1992
<b>David Mercer</b>	1935-2016	<b>Rev. Howard Perry</b>	1921-1989
<b>Charles Preston Thomson</b>	1940-2015	<b>Wallace Gibson Holt</b>	1919-1989
<b>Donald Calavan-MacRae</b>	1932-2013	<b>James C. C. Wallace.</b>	1926-1989
<b>Edison Alva McFarland II –</b>	1925-2012	<b>Angus Murray</b>	1984
<b>Moton Bryant Holt</b>	1929-2012	<b>Robert Jeffreys</b>	
<b>James C "Jim" Richey</b>	1931-2009	<b>Alec Cowan</b>	
<b>George W. Burns</b>	1925-2008	<b>Tom Ross</b>	
<b>George Eric Martin</b>	1921-2008	<b>Bob MacDonald</b>	
<b>BG Harry McIvor Nicolson</b>	1920-2008	<b>Larry Cameron</b>	
		<b>Shakey Johnson</b>	
		<b>Frank M. Clark</b>	
		<b>Richard Russo</b>	

The Society plants trees in Scotland on behalf of departed brothers of the Society. This is done as a remembrance and contributes to the replanting of the Great Caledonian Forest. Any time you wish you may donate via this link:

<https://treesforlife.org.uk/plant-trees/grove/5067/>



Charitable giving may help you minimize taxes while supporting the causes that are meaningful to you. Please consider making a donation to the Society when estate planning.



