



Clan GUNN

ARMS

Argent, on a sea in base undy Azure, a three-misted ship Gules, flagged of Scotland (Azure, a saltire Argent) sails furred Proper, on a chief Gules, a buckle between two mullets pierced Or

CREST

A dexter cubit arm attired in the proper tartan of Clan Gunn, the hand Proper grasping a basket-hilted sword blade Gules, hilted Argent

MOTTO BADGE

Aut pax aut bellum (Either peace or war)

Within a chaplet of juniper an arm naked, the hand Proper grasping a basket hilted sword, blade Gules, hilted Argent

GUIDON

The Arms n the hoist, of this livery argent upon which is depicted the badge along with the motto 'Aut pax aut bellum' extended in the fly in letters Gules

PINSEL

Argent, bearing upon a Wreath of the Liveries Argent and Gules, the said Crest within a strap of leather Proper, buckled and embellished Or, inscribed with the motto, 'Aut pax aut bellum; in letters of the Field, all within a circlet, Or, fimbriated Vert, bearing the title 'Bunn of Banniskirk' in letters Gules, and in the fly an Escrol Gules, surmounting a sprig of juniper Proper, bearing the Slogan, 'Clyth' in letters of the Field

Gunni came to Caithness at the end of the twelfth century when his wife, Ragnhild, inherited estates there from her brother, Harald, Jarl of Orkney. His wife was descended from St Ragnvald, founder of the great cathedral of St Magnus at Kirkwall. Gunni, whose name itself meant 'war', was descended from Viking adventurers. His grandfather, Sweyn, had been killed in 1171 on a raid in Dublin. The first chief of Clan Gunn to appear definitively in records was George Gunn, who was coroner, or coroner, of Caithness in the fifteenth century. The proper Celtic patronymic of the Gunn chiefs was 'MacSheumais Chataich', but George Gunn was more widely known as 'Am Braisdeach Mor', the 'great brooch-wearer', do called for the insignia worn by him as coroner. He is said to have held court in his castle at Clyth in such splendor as to rival any Highland chief. The Gunns' traditional enemies were the Keiths who, from their castle at Ackergill, challenged the Gunn chiefs both for the political hegemony of the region and for the land itself. As with most feuds which were truly fought for wealth and power, a convenient personal insult was provided to justify the constant bloodshed as an affair of Honor. It was claimed that Dugald Keith coveted Helen, daughter of Gunn of Braemore. The girl stoutly resisted Keith's advances but he, on learning that the object of his desire was to be married to another man, promptly surrounded her father's house, slew many of the inhabitants and carried the hapless girl to Ackergill. She threw herself from the Castle Tower rather than submit to her kidnapper. The Gunns repeatedly raided Kieth territory but they suffered defeat in 1438 at the Battle of Tannach Moor and again in 1464 at Dirlot in Strathmore. Having suffered considerable loss of life, both families agreed to meet to settle their differences in what was probably intended to be a battle of champions. Each side were to bring twelve horse, but when the Keiths arrived they had two warriors on each horse and, as they outnumbered the Gunns, a slaughter ensued. The chief and four of his sons were killed and the great coroner's broach stolen. The chief's remaining son, James from whom the Gaelic patronymic probably derives, avenged his family in due course by killing Keith of Ackergill and his son at Drummoy. The Gunns were now fighting for their very existence. The Earls of Caithness and Sutherland entered into a pact to destroy Clan Gunn, probably sealed at Girnigoe castle around 1586. There were a number of indecisive encounters and heavy casualties were inflicted on both sides. The Gunns strengthened their connection with the Mackays when Gunn of Killearnan married Mary, sister of Lord Reay, the Mackay chief, and the next Gunn chief thereafter married Lord Reay's daughter. The son of this marriage, the sixth chief, was generally known as Donald Crottach, 'the hunchback'. It was in his time that the house at Killearnan was destroyed, apparently due to an accident with gunpowder. The lands of Killearnan themselves were lost through debt. About the same time the fortunes of one of the branches of the clan reached their pinnacle, although not on its native soil. The Gunns of Braemore were the descendents of Robert, a younger son of 'Am Braisdeach Mor', and were generally known as the Robson Gunns. Although he was a Catholic, Sir William Gunn, brother of the Robson chieftain, took service in the army of the Protestant king of Sweden and rose to command a battalion. He later fought for Charles I, who conferred a knighthood on him in 1639. He returned to the Continent, entering the service of the Holy Roman Empire, and married a German baroness. He became an imperial general

and was created a baron of the Holy Roman Empire in 1649. Debt also overcame the Gunns of Braemore, who were forced to sell their estates at the end of the eighteenth century. The Gunns of Killeanan obtained a new estate at Badenlock, where they sought to revive the splendor of their ancestors with pipers and all the other panoply of Highland chiefship. The Gunns did not rally to the standard of the exiled Stuarts, and in the Jacobite rising of 1745 they fought on the government side. The eighth chief served as a regular Highland officer and was killed in action in India. The chiefship passed to a cousin in whose line it remained until the nineteenth century, when the tenth Macsheumais Chataich died without an heir. The clan is presently led by a commander, Iain Gunn of Ganniskirk, a descendent of a seventeenth-century Caithness laird, who has been Lyon, King of Arms. Petitions have been presented recently to the Lord Lyon seeking to establish representation to the bloodline chiefs, and it is to be hoped that a successful claimant will be found.

Taken from "Scottish Clan & Family Encyclopedia", by Collins, HarperCollins Publishers 1994

Clan GUNN Septs

DUMBART	JAMESON	MAC MAG (G) NUS	ROBISON
EANR(U)IG	JAMIESON	MAC MAGUS	ROBSON
ENRICK	JAMISON	MAC MAIN(E)(S)	SANDISON
ENRIGHT	JOHNSON	MAC MANNOS	SWAN(N)
GALCHE	KEAN(E)	MAC MANUS	SWANNIE,-EY
GALDIE,-(E)Y	KEEN(E)(S)	MAC OMI SH	SWANSON
GALLIE,-(E)Y	MAC COMAS (H)	MAC QUILLIAM	SWEENIE,-Y
GALLY,-IE	MAC CORK (H) ILL	MAC ROB(B)	SWENSON
GANSON	MAC CORKELL	MAC WILLIAM(S)	WALLSON
GAULCHE	MAC CORKLE	MAC WILSON	WALSIN
GAUNSON	MAC CULLIE,-Y	MAGNUS	WILL(S)
GEORGESON	MAC ELGUNN	MAGNUSSON	WILLIAM(S)
GILGUNN	MAC IAN	MAIN(S)	WILLIAMSON
GONNE	MAC ILQUHAM	MAN(N)	WILSON
GRANSON	MAC JAMES	MAN(N) SON	WYL(L)IE,-EY
GUNN	MAC KAMES	MANE SON	WYL(L)IE,-EY
HAM(M)	MAC KEAMISH	NEILSON	
HENDERSON	MAC KEAN	NELSON	
INRIG	MAC KILGUNN	ROBINSON	

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