



## Clan WEMYSS

<b>ARMS</b>	Or, a lion rampant Gules
<b>CREST</b>	A swan Proper
<b>MOTTO</b>	Je Pense (I think)
<b>SUPPORTERS</b>	Two swans Proper

**T**his name is derived from the Gaelic ‘uaimh’, meaning ‘cave’, and is believed to be taken from the caves and cliffs of the Firth of Forth in that part of Fife where the family made its home. Wemyss in Fife has been the seat of the chiefs since the twelfth century. They are one of the few Lowland families directly descended from the Celtic nobility through the Macduff Earls of Fife.

In 1290, Sir Michael Wemyss and his brother, Sir David, were sent with Scott of Balwearie to Norway to bring back the infant Queen Margaret, the ‘Maid of Norway’. In 1296, Sir Michael swore fealty of Edward I of England, but he changed his allegiance to Roberta the Bruce, and Wemyss Castle was sacked by the English. In 1315 Wemyss witnessed the Act of Settlement of the Scottish Crown by Robert the Bruce at Ayr. His son, Sir David, was one of those who appended his seal to the famous Declaration of Arbroath in 1320. Sir David appeared again, as one of the guarantors for the release from English imprisonment of David II, and his son was one of the hostages for his ransom, as his descendent, Duncan, was later to be for the liberation of James I.

Sir David de Wemyss was killed at Flodden in 1513. His grandson, Sir John, fought under the Earl of Aran at the Battle of Pinkie in 1547. He was a great supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots, and it was at the newly enlarged Castle of Wemyss that she first met her future husband, Henry, Lord Darnley. In 1559 Sir John was made lieutenant of Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan, and led his men in the queen’s army at Langside in 1568. His great-grandson, John Wemyss, was born in 1586. He was second-born, but eldest surviving son of Sir John Wemyss of that ilk, by his second wife Mary Stewart. John was knighted in 1618 and created a Baronet of Nova Scotia in 1625, with a charter to the barony of New Wemyss in that province of Canada. Created a baron in 1628, he was later advanced to the title of Earl of Wemyss, the patent being presented to him personally by Charles I at Dunfermline. He was High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, a Privy Councillor and one of the Committee of the Estates. He died in 1649, and was succeeded by his only son, David, the second Earl. He died in 1679 after a lifetime nurturing the resources of his estate, particularly his salt and coal mine. Besides building on a large harbor at Methil, he greatly improved Wemyss Castle, where he entertained, in both 1650 and 1651, the newly crowned Charles II. Predeceased by his son, the title and estates fell to his daughter, Margaret, Countess of Wemyss, who married her cousin, Sir James Wemyss, later created Lord Burntisland. David, the third Earl succeeded his mother in 1705, when he took his seat in Parliament and was sworn a Privy Councillor and nominated one of the commissioners for the Treaty of Union with England. In 1707 he was constituted Vice Admiral of Scotland.

The fourth Earl, born in 1699, was described as ‘a man of merit universal benevolence and hospitality the delight both of small and great’. He married Janet, heiress of Colonel Francis Charteris of Amisfield. In the Jacobite rising of 1745, the fourth Earl’s eldest son, David, Lord Elcho, joined Prince Charles in Edinburgh. Appointed colonel of a troop of royal Horse Guards, he accompanied the prince into England, and was with him until his defeat at the Battle of Culloden. Elcho then escaped to France, and took part in the State entry of Prince Charles into Paris the following year. He was convicted of treason in his absence, and his estates were forfeited to the Crown. He continued to reside in France, and died childless in Paris in 1787. Consequent upon the attainder, the Jacobite earl was succeeded by his second son, Francis, who changed his name to Charteris, the family name of his maternal grandmother. It is from Francis that the present Earl of Wemyss and March, whose seat is the magnificent Adam mansion of Gosford, is descended.

The estates in Fife and the chiefship of the name of Wemyss devolved upon the Earl's third son, the Honorable James Wemyss. He was MP for Sutherland in 1757. His great-grandson married Millicent, the granddaughter of William IV, who, on the death of her husband in 1864, successfully took over the running of the estate for thirty years. Her son, Michael, married Lady Victoria Cavendish-Bentick, the last surviving god-daughter of Queen Victoria. The present chief, David Wemyss of Wemyss who married Lady Jean Bruce, daughter of the Earl of Elgin, still has his principal seat at Castle in Fife.

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

**Clan WEMYSS Septs**

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