

District DUNBAR

Tartan Designer Wilsons of Bannockburn

Date: c. 1860

Dunbar is one of the few ports on Scotland's southeast coast. Though small, it has been of great strategic value from earliest times since invading armies, which traveled up the coastal roads, were supplied by sea. Twice Dunbar saw the defeat of defending Scottish armies; by the English in 1296 and also in 1650 when Cromwell defeated troops loyal to Charles II under General Leslie. Today Dunbar is a modern fishing and industrial town as well as a seasonal resort twenty-seven miles east of Edinburgh. Its church of red sandstone is a familiar landmark to those traveling by rail on the east-coast main line from London to Edinburgh.

The very simple Dunbar district tartan is quite distinct from the red and green sett of the Dunbar family, who owned lands to the west. It was first reported by MacGregor Hastie in 1934, who noted a specimen on loan to Kinloch Anderson Ltd. in Edinburgh. It was regarded there as being one of the setts produced by Wilsons of Bannockburn. In a report addressed to the Scottish Tartans Society in 1970, D.C. Stewart challenged the association of this sett both with the name Dunbar and with that of Wilsons. Research conducted by 1982 by Gerry Newnham, a member of the Council of the Scottish Tartans Society, however, indicated that the tartan had its origin in the nineteenth-century Wilsons Pattern Book (Ref. B59 62/J). He noted in the archives of the Smiths Institute at Stirling a non-reversing Dunbar tartan. The similarity between the two can be seen when a half sett of this non-reversing tartan is compared with a full sett of the present Dunbar district tartan.

Taken from "District Tartans of Scotland", by Gordon Teall & Philip Smith, Shephard-Walwyn (Publishers) Ltd.

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