

District INVERNESS

Gaelic Name

Inbhir Nis

Tartan Designer Unknown

Date Pre 1717

The name INVERNESS comes from the Gaelic "Inbhir" meaning "river mouth" and from the old Celtic word "Nesta" meaning "roaring one" which the River Ness does all too frequently and has washed away many bridges over the years. Its waters are drawn from the famous Loch Ness which is 30 miles long itself and with only two short breaks lines up with Loch Oich and Loch Lochy at which point it has reached Fort William and Loch Linnhe with the open sea beyond. These have all been formed by a natural rift and they are known collectively as The Great Glen which virtually severs the north and west from the rest of Scotland. The Great Glen has been a natural passageway through a mountainous region since the coming of man and was the way Columba journeyed when bringing Christianity to the heathen Picts in the 6th century. Back in the 19th century what little land there was between the lochs was excavated and with the help of a few lock gates at Fort Augustus it is now possible to sail from The North Sea through the heart of the Highlands to the Atlantic Ocean. The city of Inverness lies at the mouth of the River Ness where the waters of The Beauty Firth join those of The Moray Firth. At this point the narrows are barely half a mile wide and it was the ideal spot for controlling shipping as well as land traffic. Almost everything passed through the district whether it be by bridge over the river, to take the long route round by land, or the short route by ferry. Because of its unique situation it became known as The Capital of the Highlands and is still referred to as such today. It became a Royal Burgh in the reign of David I (1084-1153). Its castle was partly destroyed by Robert I but rebuilt in the 15th century and remained a Royal stronghold in the hands of the Macintosh Chiefs who were later replaced as keepers by the Gordon Earls of Huntly. In 1562 Queen Mary sought admittance but she was turned away by Alexander Gordon. He was later removed from office and hanged for his insolence to the Queen. The Jacobites camped in the area in 1746 before making their ill fated night march with the intention of surprising the Government Troops at Culloden. The Jacobites were overwhelmed and all but wiped out in no more than 35 minutes and those who did survive fled for their lives because the order of the day from the Government Commander was "Seek and Destroy." There is little wonder that he is known to this day as Butcher Cumberland. When the Jacobite remnants fled north and west they were followed by the Redcoats accompanied by road-builders and this opened up the Highlands as never before and what had been remote strongholds of Clan Chiefs became more accessible and this was the beginning of the end of the Clan System as it had been known for some 800 years. Inverness-shire (before the reorganization of Local Government in 1975) was the largest of all the old counties and stretched from Inverness to Fort William and Strath Spey in the Grampian Mountains out west as far as it was possible to go. This included many Islands i.e. Rum, Eigg, Muck, Skye and all the outer Hebrides except the northern tip of Lewis. Covering such a vast area, many Clans were included e.g. MacNeil, MacLeod, MacKinnon, Maclean, Fraser, MacIntosh, Cameron, MacPherson, Campbell, Gordon, and MacDonald & Clanranald to name only the largest. The first record of Inverness as a surname is "John de Inuernys" who held land there in the year 1361.

TARTAN

There are several patterns with the appendage INVERNESS but the earliest is taken from a painting in Fishmongers' Hall in London of Augustus, Duke of Sussex, who was the Earl of Inverness. This painting is dated 1773 so the tartan was obviously established prior to that. It is appropriate to anyone with a name associated with the District of Inverness.

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