

CLAN LAMONT

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A name of great antiquity in south Argyll, where at one time the chiefs were described as 'Mac Laomain Mor Chomhail Uile' - 'The Great MacLamont of All Cowal.' Although some believe the name to be Norman or French, the family almost certainly originated in Ulster. Logmaor, meaning, in old Norse, 'Lawman' or 'Law Giver,' became in Gaelic 'Ladhman,' and it is from a son of the great O'Neill princes of Tyrone that the chiefs are said to descend. The Lamonts were also on time called Macerchar, from Fearchar, the grandfather of the first Ladhman.

The first certain record of the chiefs is found in charters of the early thirteenth century. Laumanus, son of Malcolm, granted to the monks of Paisley lands at Kilmun, together with the church of Kilfinan. These grants were confirmed in 1270 and again in 1295 by Malcolm, the son of Laumanus. In 1456 John Lamond is recorded as the baillie of Cowal. In 1466, probably the same John, now described as Lamond of the Ilk, disputed with the monks of Paisley certain rights relating to the lands which had been ceded to them by his ancestor two hundred years before. Later that century the direct line of the chiefs is believed to have failed, and the representation of the family passed to the Lamonts of Inverryne, later styled 'Lamont of Lamont.' They established their chief seats at the strong Castles of Toward and Ascog, which they held until their destruction by the Campbells in the seventeenth century. Sir Iain Moncreiffe of that Ilk, the celebrated twentieth-century herald and historian, asserts that Sir John Lyon, who became Thane of Glamis in 1372, was a son of the chiefly house of Lamont. He points out that the Lamont arms bear a silver lion on a blue shield, while the Lyons' bear a blue lion on a silver shield. Such a simple reversal of the colour scheme of a coat of arms was a recognized manner of differencing used by cadets.

An incident involving the chief of the Lamonts at the beginning of the seventeenth century is widely quoted by clan historians as a classic example of the Highland laws of hospitality. Lamont is said to have been hunting with some Macgregors when a dispute broke out. Macgregor, the Younger of Glenstrae, was stabbed by Lamont, who then fled, hotly pursued by the chief's son's men. Lamont is said to have reached Glenstrae, the home of the Macgregor chief whose son he had just killed. Lamont, claiming he was pursued by enemies, asked for shelter and protection, which Macgregor willingly gave. When his angry clansmen appeared and related the events of the night, the chief refused to allow his guest to be harmed in any way. He had given his word of protection and not even his great personal grief could overcome his sense of honour and obligation.

Sir James Lamont of Lamont, chief of the clan in 1643, was a well respected and popular leader who was deeply interested in the welfare of his people. He declared for the royalist cause, which brought his clan into direct confrontation with the powerful Campbell neighbours. The Campbells had steadily encroached upon the Lamonts' ancient Lordship of Cowal, yet Lamont was initially hesitant to move against the Campbells. After Montrose's great victory at

Inverlochy in 1645, however, the Lamonts laid waste the Campbell lands at Kilmum. In 1646 a powerful Campbell army invaded the Lamont territory and besieged the Castles of Toward and Ascog. Sir James Lamont surrendered the castles, having reached apparently honourable terms with the Campbells. The fortresses were to be handed over but the lives of the Lamonts were to be spared. However, not every chief adhered to his word with the sense of honour of Macgregor of Glenstrae; on the surrender of the castles, Sir James was thrown in a dungeon at Dunstaffnage, where he was held in terrible conditions for five years. Over two hundred clansmen, women and children were massacred, and the castles were reduced to ruins. The Lamont massacre was one of the charges brought against the Marquess of Argyll at his trial in 1661 following the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy. The Lamont chief presented a petition to Parliament in person, in which it was narrated that the Campbells acted with inhuman barbarism; one charge that they did 'cause hang upon ane tree near the number of thirty six persons most of them being special gentlemen of the name of Lamont and vassals to Sir James'. Argyll was already doomed for his treason, but the Lamont charges were in many ways more damaging to his reputation as a Highland chief. The Lamonts did not receive compensation, and their star remained eclipsed by their Campbell oppressors, whose power continued to grow unabated. The chiefs took up residence at Ard Lamont, where the last chief to live in Cowal was born in 1854. In 1893 the last of the clan lands were sold and the present chief lives in Australia.

ARMS

Azure, a lion rampant Argent, armed and langued Gules.

CREST

A dexter hand couped at the wrist Proper.

MOTTO

No parcas nec spernas (Neither spare nor dispose)

SUPPORTERS

(On a compartment embellished with crab-apple saplings fruited Proper)

Two savages wreathed about the middle with crab-apple fruited, each holding in his exterior hand a club resting on the shoulder Proper.

STANDARD

The Arms in the hoist and of two tracts Azure and Argent, upon which is depicted the Crest in the first compartment and the Badge in the second compartment, along with the Slogan 'Ardlamont' in letters Argent upon a transverse band Gules.

PINSEL

Azure, bearing upon a Wreath of the Liveries the aforesaid Crest within a strap of leather Proper, buckled and embellished Or, inscribed with the Motto "Ne parcas nec spernas" in letters Azure, all within a circlet also Or bearing the title "Lamont of that Ilk" in letters also Azure and ensigned of a chapeau Azure furred Ermine, and in an Escrol Argent, surmounting a sprig of crabapple fruited Proper this Slogan "Ardlamont"; in letters Gules.

BADGE

A sprig of crab-apple slipped Proper.

