

History of The Clan Wallace

There are two theories about the origins of the Wallaces. The modern “Wallace” is derived from the Middle English “Waleis,” taken from the ancient “welisc,” meaning “foreigner.” The first theory postulates that the family traces its descent from the Strathclyde Britons, a mixture of Gaels, Picts, and Celts. The second theory holds that the family came to Britain from Brittany via Wales as part of the Norman conquests of England and Scotland in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Regardless, the accepted progenitor (founder) of Clan Wallace was Richard Wallace (Ricard Wallensis), who witnessed a charter at Paisley Abbey in 1163. A decade later, Richard received feudal lands from Walter FitzAlan, later the High Steward of Scotland, himself the progenitor of the Stewart Dynasty.

In the decades that followed, the Wallaces became part of an emerging Scottish gentry, acquiring lands at Riccarton, Craigie, Cairnhill, Cessnock, Kelly and Elderslie. This last, Elderslie, was the birthplace of Richard’s great-great grandson, Sir William Wallace, the Guardian. The charismatic Wallace and his band harried the occupation armies of England’s Edward I in the early 1290’s, and by 1296 had evoked such national spirit that Scotland’s disparate ethnic groups united and rose-up in opposition to the occupation. Requiring the support of the nobility, he allied himself to Sir Andrew Murray, and the two became the de facto rulers of Scotland, routing the English at Stirling Bridge in 1297. Murray died that autumn, after which many nobles refused to support Wallace, contributing to the Scottish rout at Falkirk in 1298. Even after resigning as Guardian, he waged a guerrilla war against the English oppression. Betrayed by a Scot, he was captured by English soldiers, transported to London, wrongly convicted of treason, and summarily executed. His death raised him to the status of martyr. Since then, Wallaces have looked back with pride, but they continue to leave their marks, culturally and politically, on Scotland and the world at large.

Wallaces have become Baronets of Nova Scotia, members of Parliament, ministers of the Crown, lieutenant governors, CEOs of major multinational corporations, historians, social reformers, and authors, and even vice-president of the United States. From many walks of life, Wallaces reside in all corners of the globe and share common bonds of kinship and heritage, both to one another and with others of Scottish descent.

Wallace Country

Clan Wallace has its traditional home in southwest Scotland, largely in Ayrshire and ranging north and east into Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire. Richard Wallace’s first grants near Ayr were located around Riccarton (Richard’s Town). Cadet branches emerged as the family’s estates increased. Today, the castles and manor houses are in ruins and its considerable holdings and estates have long since passed from family hands. At the end of the 18th century, the chiefly line passed from the Wallaces of Craigie to the Wallaces of Cairnhill. In 1888, Captain Hugh Robert Wallace of Busbie and Cloncaird established himself as Chief of the Clan and Name and the chiefly line has since remained in that family. The current and 36th Chief of Clan Wallace, Andrew Robert Wallace of that Ilk, resides in Edinburgh Scotland with his wife Beatrice. He has a brother James, and a sister Henrietta.

Chief Andrew Robert Wallace



The Wallace Tartan

The Red (Dress) Wallace Tartan is one of the most widely seen Setts (patterns) today, easily ranking among the top five in popularity and usage. It has been used by 3M since 1935, and by Microsoft. The naming of tartans and Setts for the great families and clans of Scotland began in the 1820's when Wilson's of Bannockburn, the foremost tartan manufacturer of the era, began to classify its most popular yard goods. Two decades later, today's omnipresent Wallace Tartan appeared in Sobieski Brother's "Vestiarium Scoticum" of 1842. Its sister tartan, the Green (Hunting) Wallace appeared in the 1870's. The popular Wallace Blue Tartan was recorded by the Scottish Register in 1966.



THE CLAN



WALLACE