

## The Present State of Clan Baird

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### BACKGROUND OVERVIEW

The Scottish Gaelic word “clann” means children or family. The term was used not only for ones’ blood relatives but also included families working and residing on the chief’s lands, groups of local individuals that swore their allegiance and were under the protection of the head of a clan. Those kin, friends, servants, or assisters who may have had different surnames were considered Septs of that particular clan. The “father” or leader of the clan is still referred to as chief. Chiefship of a clan is most commonly passed down from father to first male child or in an ancient tradition known as Tanistry whereby an heir was chosen from a group of individuals with hereditary claims. The chief used to be considered a “noble” however that is in dispute in modern times.

The origins of Heraldry in Scotland stem from ancient Roman law and there are records disputing the rights of individuals to create and own armorial bearings as far back as the fourteenth century. As they pertain to medieval Scotsmen and clansmen, some coats were brought into Scotland from other countries, some were bestowed by the sovereign to a nobleman, and in other cases, a chief or nobleman might have designed his own coat of arms.

As armorial bearings became increasingly regulated by the King, they were required to be licensed, the license issued is called Letters Patent. The document contained a description of the coat, called the Blazon, and a painting of the coat was sometimes included. A coat is owned by a single person and upon his death, the patent usually authorizes its’ inheritance by an eldest living son.

Most aristocrats or chiefs had these heraldic devises. It was and is part of his heritable estate and is the seal of his “noble corporation.” Originally used for military purposes, the distinctive design was worn on an actual coat over a suit of armor and on a shield and enabled a knight to be recognized. A flag or banner of his Arms would have been carried before his men in battle or when he traveled. It may have appeared above the main entrance of his estate when he was in residence.

In 1672, Scotland’s King mandated that all arms be registered in order to be legally used. Most aristocrats complied. The record created as a result of the mandate is what Scotland’s Lyon Court now uses to determine whose arms are oldest, or to settle disputes. The first coat registered by a surname is referred to as the “undifferenced” arms. In cases where a clan is without a chief, or “armigerous,” and has not had a chief recognized since 1672, the Court of the Lord Lyon reviews the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings, determines the first recordation of the surname, and reports that coat to be the one from which a chief can be found.

Should this armigerous clan wish to have a chief, a genealogical search must be conducted to find, if possible, the single living person who is most directly descended from the last person who owned the undifferenced arms. At each step of the genealogical tree, or the primogeniture

succession, proof must be provided of each individual's birth, marriage, and death so that the Court is satisfied beyond doubt that the identified person is the one eligible to bear the undifferenced arms.

#### CLAN BAIRD'S CURRENT PREDICAMENT

This is the task that must be undertaken in order for Clan Baird to restore a chief.

The Office of the Lord Lyon, King of Arms in Scotland holds judicial and ministerial powers over Arms and Heraldry. This office suggests the principal Baird family, whose Arms are believed to be the Undifferenced Arms of the Name of Baird, were held by the Baird's of Auchmedden in Aberdeenshire. Sir James Baird of Auchmedden, 1620-1691, had properly registered those Arms in accordance with the Act of 1672. Those Arms would have successively matriculated down to his great-grandson William Baird of Auchmedden, 1701-1775.

William Baird of Auchmedden was locally regarded as Chief but the Lyon Court does not recognize him as having that title, nor does it recognize the existence of any Baird owning the title of Chief. William supported the Jacobite uprising of 1745 by heavily borrowing against his lands and, as a result, was forced to sell off the properties to cover his debts. Only one son survived William's death but it is generally believed the son died without issue. Despite the absence of the Lyon Court's recognition, a memorial plaque at the Aberdour Old Kirk refers to William Baird as Chief.

Sir James Baird of Auchmedden (1620-1691) had two cousins who received baronetcies. These branches of the Auchmedden family became the Bairds of Newbyth and Saughtonhall. They acquired their own properly registered "differenced" armorial bearings, as have eleven other Baird's between 1672 and 1908, as reported by [Scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://Scotlandspeople.gov.uk). Some patriarchs of the Newbyth and Saughtonhall families have, and are, occasionally referred to as chief yet this is a mark of respect rather than the legal title of the head of a recognized fully formed clan.

Where does that leave our family name in terms of clansmanship? In the words of the Secretary to the Lyon Office in Edinburgh, Scotland, "The current position is that as no-one has made up title to the principal Arms for Baird of Auchmedden since 1672 I cannot say what has happened to the family. The Lord Lyon has not recognised anyone as being Chief of the Name of Baird."

No one has matriculated the undifferenced Arms of Auchmedden since William Baird 7<sup>th</sup> of Auchmedden died in 1775/7. We must perform the research to find the most direct living descendant. Rather a monumental task after 239 years, the elapsed time since the 1775/7 death of William Baird of Auchmedden.

There is a small group of Bairds who believe Sir James Andrew Gardiner Baird to be a likely inheritor. Although he has not claimed his title, he is presumably the 11<sup>th</sup> Baronet, Saughtonhall. Baird Heritage has determined that he is in the successory chart however there are many unknown or incomplete links prior to his position in the descendency. These "gaps" must be filled-in before we can identify the rightful heir.

This leaves us a fatherless band of a once illustrious family, collectively named Baird. We are categorized as an Armigerous family, or “without a leader.” We are ineligible for membership in the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs or inclusion in the Gathering of Clans in Scotland. Our voice is unheard in Council arbitrations or historic contribution. We have no physical center for clan business nor a head of household. We are incomplete.

We are living in a time when the word “family” has become somewhat ambiguous. History and our connection to it seems less important to young people. Yet, Baird Heritage asks Bairds to prove us wrong. Our Scottish ancestors lived and died to uphold and honor their heritage. Might we at least support a rejuvenated hope to establish the Name of Baird as a restored and complete Scottish Clan?

Please contact Baird Heritage at [info@bairdheritage.com](mailto:info@bairdheritage.com) if you have information or documents that might assist in the search. Thank you.