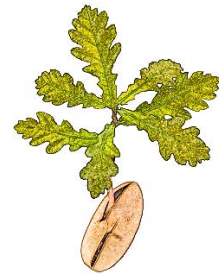


The Sprouting Oak



The Newsletter of the Clan Watson Society
clanwatson.org

No. 2 – Feb 2023

Welcome to this second edition of the newsletter of the Clan Watson Society.

It's been an exciting year for the society, largely driven by significant growth in the number of members but also by the continuing progress in our research and some key engagements.

Towards the end of 2022, and following a third successive year of steep growth in our numbers, a short-term growth strategy was put in place, a summary of which you can read in these pages. To support this, we will be ramping up our engagement, both with other clans and with the wider world, and we are excited to appoint our first Clan Watson Ambassador who will be helping to raise some awareness at various Highland games in the USA this year!



With The Buchanan

series, the aim of which will be to publish a series of beginner's guides covering different aspects of

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One major event that took place last year was the inauguration of the first Chief of Clan Buchanan in over 300 years. As the Buchanans consider the Watsons to be a sept¹ of their clan, I was very proud to represent our name at the event. The inauguration weekend was an excellent opportunity for me to have some good discussions with The Buchanan and the management committee of their clan association with regards to future collaboration, and it also provided a good insight into the workings of an established clan.

I took the opportunity whilst in Scotland to visit the burial place of several generations of the Watson chiefly line at the Corstorphine Parish Church on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

This edition of the newsletter sees the launch of what I hope will be two new series of articles. The first is *Meet the Clan*, in which I'm intending to introduce a member of our diverse community in every issue. The second is the *Introduction to...*

¹ A sept is a clan, family or kin group that has aligned itself to a more dominant clan

historical research, genealogy and any other topics that come to mind! If you'd like to feature in the *Meet the Clan* series or have an idea for a topic that could be covered in the *Introduction to...* series, please [contact us!](#)

I'm delighted to announce that 2023 will see the first virtual meeting of the society. A Clan Watson convention is in the early stages of planning, and all members of our community across the globe will be invited to attend. We are currently working on some material and timings will be announced shortly, so watch this space!

I do hope that you find this newsletter useful and of interest. If you would like to contribute material for a future edition or to recommend improvements, please do drop us a line – this issue has taken far longer to produce than planned, and the more material that is available the sooner we'll be able to publish our third! Fortunately, you don't have to wait for the next issue to engage with your namesakes – head on over to the [Facebook group](#), sign up, say hello and start getting involved!

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the very best for 2023 and I very much hope that you are as excited as I am to join me as we start a transformative journey for the Clan Watson Society!

May we flourish beyond expectations!



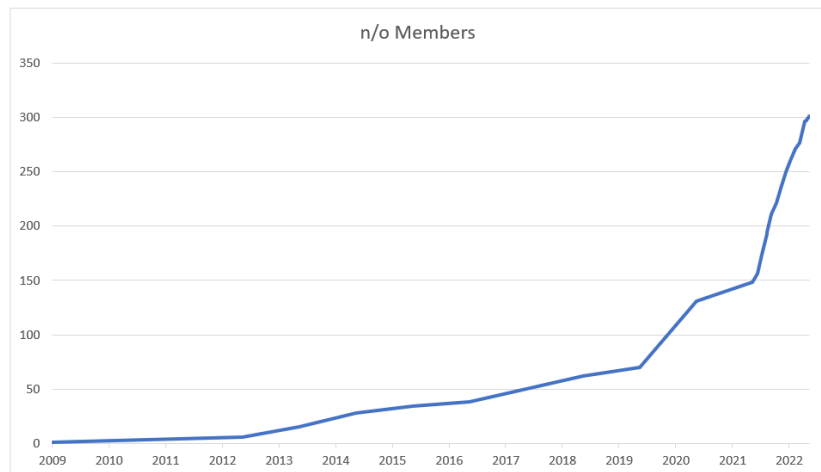
Shane Watson
President
The Clan Watson Society



Our New Strategy

In the last edition of *The Sprouting Oak*, we presented our overall mission as a society: *To create a clan society that is the familial home for Watsons the world over.* This mission is underpinned by our three strategic pillars – Community, Sustainability and Research – and our values of Kinship, Integrity and Tradition are the foundation of everything we do. You can read more about it [here](#).

Towards the end of 2022, the members of the [Facebook group](#) were asked for their views on the future of the Clan Watson Society. The chart to the right provides some insight into why this discussion was launched. As you can see, since the Facebook group was launched in 2009 it has been slowly attracting members;



however, over the last two to three years there has been steep increase in the number of people signing up, and correspondingly in the activity levels on the group (which is great to see!). Whether this is due to the Outlander effect, is driven by changes in peoples' behaviours due to the pandemic or whether the group just achieved a critical mass is not known, but there is a clear trend in the data. The curve will obviously become an S-curve at some point rather than continue on exponentially for ever but, regardless, it does appear that we can expect to see our numbers continue to grow over the short to medium term.

With this expected growth in mind, it is viewed as critical that the society evolves into a more structured entity that will facilitate a scalable increase in numbers whilst delivering on our mission.

It was great to see a lot of people participating in the discussion on the Facebook group, and it proved very fruitful. There was a clear majority in favour of re-establishing the Watsons as a clan in the long term and some very useful feedback on how the membership view the short- to mid-term picture.

It was agreed that the society should continue as it is for now, with work continuing to build the website, a few of us researching various aspects of Watson history, and the Facebook group and website slowly accumulating members. In parallel, we will work with the Buchanans to develop the Watsons as a sept of their clan, which will enable us to use their resources to reach more Watsons that we can on our own as well as giving their organisation a more complete offering on at least one of their septs. Discussions have also commenced with the Forbses with respect to some form of collaboration.

The ultimate aim is to continue to grow the number of members in the society to the point that we can start to arrange some of our own representation at events and to consider the appointment of a clan commander, assuming no hereditary chief is discovered.



To be ready for a larger society, it will be necessary to start to prepare to put some structures and policies in place to ensure everything runs smoothly once we reach a certain size.

In order to achieve these aims, a short-term growth strategy has been devised, which is comprised of the following three pillars: Continue to Build; Collaborate; Prepare for The Future.

Continue to Build

Under this pillar, we as a society will continue with our current activities, slowly building up our numbers through organic growth, continuing to collaborate on research, promoting discussion through the Facebook group and developing the content of the website.

Collaborate

Work with the Buchanans and the Forbesees to develop their offerings for the septs, taking advantage of their extended reach to engage with more Watsons to the mutual benefit of all our societies.

The ambition level is to ensure that their websites have a landing area for interested Watsons (and, ultimately, each of their other septs) that contains factual information in line with our research and provides enough info for people to get a decent understanding of Watson history and how it ties in with that of the “parent” clan. The bulk of our material will remain on the Clan Watson website and people will be directed there for more information or to ask detailed questions, partly to avoid diluting the offering related to the parent society and partly so that we retain control over the fruits of our labour.

We will also look into providing Watson representatives to support their clan tents at Highland events should people be available and the host tents have enough space (see this issue’s *Meet the Clan* article to meet our first Clan Watson Ambassador!).

Prepare for the Future

As our numbers grow, management of the society will require a more formalised structure. This pillar is about determining what structure is required as the group grows and formalising it, the roles within it and the key processes necessary to ensure it functions. Whatever structure is put in place will need to be able to evolve as our numbers, reach and range of activities grows. Over the longer term, it will also be necessary to investigate different funding structures to enable the society to become truly sustainable.

How You Can Help

As part of formalising the society, we will look to put in place a structure that allows us to run the society and maintain governance over its activities and funding as it grows in size and expands into different regions. We will also be looking to increase awareness of our mission and of who we are.

If you are either interested in helping to establish a regional chapter or in becoming a Clan Watson Ambassador, please don’t hesitate to [contact us](#) to discuss further!



Meet the Clan

Michael Watson: Clan Ambassador (USA)

In this first of a new series of regular articles, we meet Michael Watson, our first Clan Ambassador.

Michael currently lives in Wapakoneta, Ohio in the United States, where he works as an HVAC technician and plumber. His hobbies include playing paintball with his boys and reading comic books, and in his spare time he competes in Scottish Highland games across the eastern USA.

Competing can be a full-time hobby if you want to really excel at the sport, but even with his family and work commitments Michael managed an impressive array of top-5 finishes and a couple of 1st places in 2022 in the Men's B category. His ambition for the 2023 season is to bring his numbers up closer to the Men's A athletes so that on the rare occasions he has to compete with them he's not too embarrassed!

In addition to competing in several Highland games events in 2023, Michael will be making himself available to engage with anyone who has an interest in learning more about the Clan Watson Society, Watson history in general or who has an interest in researching their own family history.



Michael in Action, Proudly Sporting his Watson Tartan

Once Michael's competitive fixtures are finalised for the year, we will communicate these on the Facebook group, website and monthly email update, so if you are planning on attending a clan event at which he's competing, or if he's competing near you, please go along to cheer him on! I'm sure the support of some fellow Watsons will lift his spirits and give him a competitive edge!

We'd love to hear from others who are planning on attending events this year and are interested in getting more involved in the Clan Watson Society and in helping us to reach out to new members of our extended family, especially if you will have a competitor's (or other) tent. You can put in as little or as much effort as you like; we will provide you with a crib sheet, handouts, business cards and an exclusive Clan Watson Ambassador tee shirt and all you need to do is talk to people!

Our aim for the *Meet the Clan* page is to feature a different member of our community in each issue, so if you'd like to appear in a future edition or if you are interested in becoming a Clan Watson Ambassador, please [contact us!](#)



The Buchanan Inauguration

In October, I was very privileged to represent the Watsons at the [inauguration](#) of the first chief of the Clan Buchanan in over 300 years. The event was 3 years in the planning and the organising committee put in a tremendous amount of research to try to recreate inauguration ceremonies from centuries gone by, whilst conscious that the ceremony also marked a new beginning for the Buchanans as they take the clan into the future.

The event spanned an entire long weekend with myriad activities taking place, from a golf day to a lunch at the old seat of the Buchanans to a service at the Buchanans' private chapel, a ceilidh and, of course, the inauguration ceremony itself.

As luck would have it, I'd booked the same bed and breakfast as the Kevin "Buck" Buchanan, the Vice President of the Clan Buchanan Society International (CBSI). This provided the perfect springboard for me to have some very meaningful discussions on how our society could work with



Kevin "Buck" Buchanan, Shane Watson, Lady Buchanan, Michael "Buck" Buchanan

CBSI to the mutual benefit of both organisations. It also gave me immediate access to the senior leadership of CBSI and to the family of The Buchanan, which provided plenty of opportunities to continue the discussions over the course of the weekend, and a private tour of the Buchanan manor house, which I obviously took full advantage of!

The inauguration itself was very nicely done, being a good of blend pomp and ceremony mixed with more than a sprinkling of humour. The presence of the Lord Lyon, his Albany Herald

Extraordinary and several other clan chiefs added to the occasion and really drove home that we were witnessing a very rare event. I'm told that many of the other chiefs in Scotland have taken note of the rigorous preparation and the format of the ceremony, so it may not be the last of its kind that we see!

The weekend was beautifully rounded off with an impromptu dinner at the manor house – the primary aim of which was to finish off the mountain of leftover food from the formal dinner that followed the inauguration, but which also gave a good opportunity to cement new friendships and to say some goodbyes.



Peter MacDonald, Tartan Historian, Using My Clan Watson Tartan in a Demo



With Lucy Buchanan of Leny



A Visit to Corstorphine Church

Whilst in Scotland for the Buchanan inauguration, I took the opportunity to arrange a private visit to Corstorphine Old Parish Church, the burial place of the Watsons of Saughton for several generations.

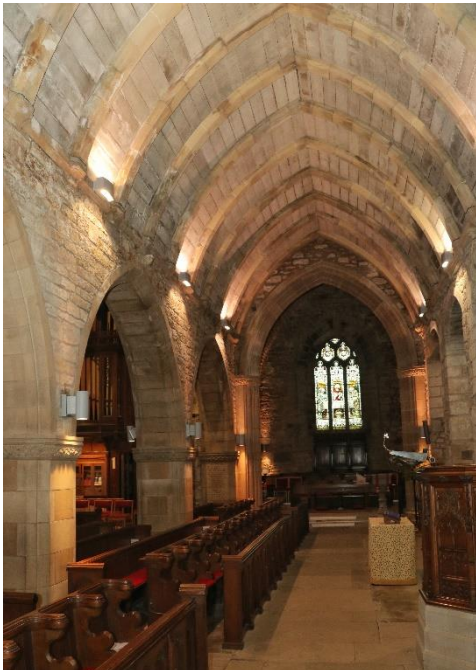
The church owes its existence to the Forrester family, who were at one time the owners of the lands of Corstorphine parish. Sir Adam Forrester was a successful merchant in the 14th century, was twice provost of Edinburgh and, in 1347, bought the lands of



Corstorphine Parish Church

Corstorphine from William More of Abercorn. He obtained permission from the abbot of Holyrood to build a chapel next to the then-existing church of St. Mary. The chapel was completed shortly before his death in 1405 and he was buried within it, although the location of his burial place has now been lost. It was expanded and remodelled several times over the following centuries, with one of the expansions possibly using stones from the remnants of St. Mary, and with the last major renovations taking place in 1905.

As covered in the previous issue of *The Sprouting Oak*, the Watsons first appear in the area in the early 16th century. In 1524, a John Watson had a tack² of land from the Abbot of Holyrood and in 1537 Richard Watson acquired the lands of Saughton from the abbey and became the first Watson of Saughton.



The South Aisle, Under Which Lie the Watsons of Saughton

The Watsons were on good terms with the Forresters and, early in their rise to a position as influential landlords they secured a burial place within the church. The family burial place is in the south aisle of the church, and the first Watson that we know of to be buried there is James Watson, 3rd of Saughton, who died in 1620. Two large ring stones were placed over the burial place, presumably for ease of access to the crypt, and one of them survives to this day. It was relocated during the extensive renovations in 1905 and is now set into the wall in the southern transept. The ring stone is of key importance to those of us that research the Watsons, as it is engraved with James's death date (1 May 1620) and carries both his arms and those of his wife, Anna Douglas. Quite when the stone

² An agreement whereby a tenant farmer leases a parcel of land from a landowner

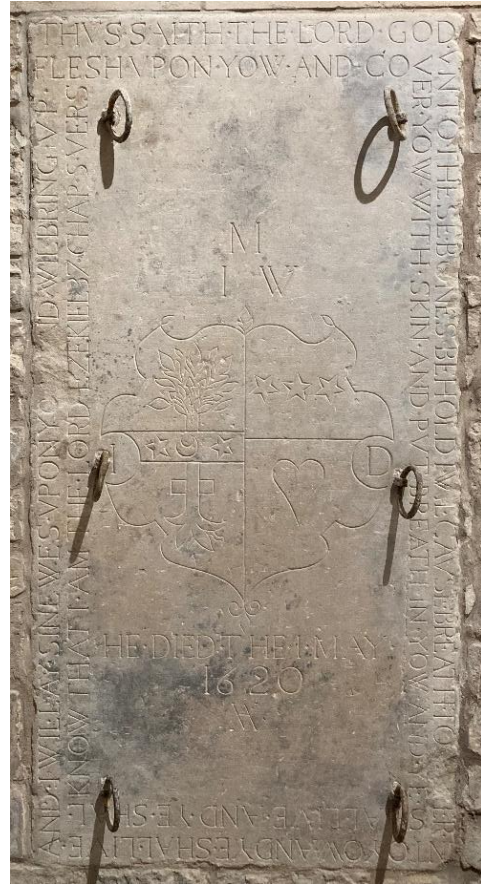


was actually carved we do not know, but we do know that the Watsons continued to be buried in the family burial place in church until the close of the 18th century despite interment in churches being banned post-Reformation, a clear sign of their local influence.

I very much enjoyed my visit to the church and appreciated the time for some quiet reflection. Although the day started off wet, the clouds were making way for the sun when I arrived, so I was able to not only spend some time studying the interior of the church in some detail but also managed to take a tour of the surrounding burial grounds. Names of note were those of a handful of Buchanans, a good number of Douglasses, Hopes and Ramsays, a lone Hamilton and a whole area devoted to shrines to the Stenhouse family, descendants of the Stenhopes who were associated with the Watsons of Saughton at least as far back as the beginning of the 16th century. The parish has an [excellent website](#) for the church on which you can see a full index of the names of the persons buried there together with photographs of most of the grave markers.

I can well recommend paying the church a visit if you are in Edinburgh for any reason. It's a lovely little church in a beautiful setting, but it's also an opportunity to visit the final resting place of arguably the highest-profile Watson family to those of us that are researching Watson history.

I contacted the church secretary through the [church's website](#) and she was extremely helpful in not only allowing me access to the church but also in helping me to plan my visit. She was also very interested to hear from me about the Watsons of Saughton and even offered me a guest speaker spot on their next guided tour!



*The Ring Stone that Originally Covered the
Watson Burial Place*



Our New Clan Crest

In the last issue we looked at some of the crests that have adorned the arms of various Watsons over the past couple of centuries



Although all of them are based on the theme of a sprouting oak, the most glaring difference is in the showing (or not) of hands and their position. A quick search of the internet will throw up several variations on the theme, many of them showing the hands grasping the sprouting branches as in the 1871 depiction above; indeed, the clan crest that we have been using to date is one of these.

With this in mind, Scott Watson set about creating a new crest especially for the Clan Watson Society based on the arms of James Watson of Saughton, the last Clan Chief. The crest from James's 1818 arms is shown above, and in both the depiction and the description by the Lord Lyon is it clear that the hands that issue from clouds are grasping the trunk.

After a few iterations, Scott produced the crest shown below in three different colour variants.



You will note that when the new crest is presented in electronic documents and on the internet it will carry a clanwatson.org watermark; the hope is that once it inevitably makes it into search results and starts doing the rounds, most people won't bother to edit out the watermark and it will drive traffic our way. When we develop promotional handouts and merchandise, the watermark will be removed.

Head over to Scott's Substack feed to read a more detailed [article](#) on the Watson coats of arms and our new clan crest.



The Watsons of Aithernie

This issue, as we continue our series of articles looking at prominent clusters of Watson throughout history, we will focus on the Watsons of Aithernie, a short-lived but nonetheless interesting dynasty.

Where is Aithernie?

The estate of Aithernie was situated on the northern border of the parish of Scoonie in Fife. Although Scoonie exists to this day, the only remnant of the estate of Aithernie still standing is a small section of the ruins of Aithernie Castle. Aithernie Castle was a stone tower house, built in the early 17th Century, most probably by William Rigg, an Edinburgh merchant. The castle was not far from Methil, which was a major port, originally commissioned in 1661 and Scotland's largest coal port by the 1930s. As Methil is just across the Firth of Forth from Leith (Edinburgh's main port), it would have provided an alternative location for a merchant such as William Rigg to dispatch and receive cargoes.

During the reign of David I of Scotland (1124 – 1153), the lands of Aithernie belonged to "Stephanus de Aiderney de codem", although the 1821 discovery of a prehistoric graveyard on the grounds is testament to much earlier habitation. The name Aithernie itself might be derived from the name of Saint Ethernan, although at the moment this seems to be more conjecture than fact; it could, however, explain one alternative spelling of "Eithernie".



The Ruins of Aithernie Castle

In 1160, the lands of Montrave and Aithernie were granted to the nuns of North Berwick by Duncan, Earl of Fife. The nunnery of North Berwick retained power over the lands of Aithernie until 1588. The Reformation brought an end to the Church's ownership, however, and on 20th March 1588 James VI granted a charter secularising the property. With the consent of the prioress, Margaret Howe, the property was transferred to Sir Alexander Howe of North Berwick. We suspect that Sir Alexander would have been a reasonably close relative of the prioress, so it's unlikely that she needed much persuasion to hand over the lands to him! Sir Alexander died without having children in 1608, after which Aithernie came into the possession of the Riggs, a family of wealthy merchants. The last of the Riggs of Aithernie, Thomas, died in the 17th century (the exact date is unknown) and in 1670 the lands of Aithernie were sold to a James Watson of Downfield, who became the first Watson of Aithernie.

What of the Watsons?

James Watson of Downfield came from a line of Provosts of St. Andrews. His grandfather, James, Provost of St. Andrews, died at Lambieytham in 1657, leaving two sons – Alexander Watson of Denbrae and David Watson. Alexander was at the consecration feast of Bishop Burnet of Aberdeen in 1663 and was baillie of St. Andrews in 1666. He died without having children.

David Watson died in 1674. James Watson of Downfield, the son of David Watson and Eupham Lepar (whose father John was also a Provost of St. Andrews), was born on 3 April 1645 and was served heir



to his grandfather in 1664 and to his father and his uncle Alexander in 1674. He bought the estate of Aithernie in 1670. James Watson of Aithernie is described as “a successful merchant and Provost of St. Andrews” in the *Red Book of Scotland, Volume 9*, continuing the theme of Watsons in the merchant industry around the Firth of Forth. By 1649, James was in possession of “the middle-part of the lands of Kilmany...which he had appraised from Mr. Arthur Forbes of Kilmany, and also acquired those of Pitcruvie, Auchindoun, Bresmyre, Balmain, with the lands of tower, in the parish of Largo, from John, Earl of Crawford and Lindsay”. It is interesting to note the Watson-Forbes link here, which is one that we will investigate further in the future.

As was the case with the Watsons of Saughton, the Watsons of Aithernie also tended to marry into prominent local families. James firstly married Jean Scott, the daughter of Sir William Scott of Ardross, and then Mary Martin, daughter of James Martin, Minister of Ballingry. He had several children by both, including his heir Alexander Watson of Aithernie by Jean. Alexander married Margaret Lindsay, second daughter of David Lindsay of Edzell, and therein lay his undoing and the beginning of the end of the Watsons of Aithernie.

Margaret and her brother David were renowned as extravagant spenders. David spent the Edzell family fortune and was forced to part with all his estates in 1714, leaving the family castle to fall to ruin. Alexander Lindsay, 25th Earl of Crawford, in his 1840 book *Lives of the Lindsays*, recounts the story of how Margaret visited the Edzell estate after it was sold off and had become rundown: “a lady one day arrived at Edzell in her own coach, and drove to the castle. She was tall and beautiful, and dressed in deep mourning. When she came near the ancient burying-place she alighted, and went into the chapel, for it was then open; the doors had been driven down, the stone figures and carved work were all broken, and bones lay scattered about. The poor lady went in, and sat down among it and wept sore at the ruin of the house, and the fall of her family; for no one doubted of her being one of them, though no one knew who she was or where she came from. After a while, she came out, and was driven in the coach up to the castle; she went through as much of it as she could, for the stairs had fallen down, and the roofs had fallen in, and in one room, in particular, she stayed a long while weeping sadly. She said the place was very dear to her, though she had now no right to it, and she carried some of the earth away with her. This was Margaret of Edzell, the Lady of Aithernie”.

Unfortunately, Margaret didn't pay heed to the misfortune of her brother and soon frittered away her husband's wealth, and the lands of Aithernie were eventually sold to his son-in-law, Doctor James Smythe, in 1735. Alexander and Margaret appear to have had around 17 children(!), although due to their profligate spending their heir, David Watson, Younger of Aithernie, was left with very little, including the estate from which he would have inherited his title!



An Introduction to... Heraldry

In this first of what we hope will be a series of introductory guides to various aspects of historical research and family history, we will look at some of the basic principles of heraldry with the help of our heraldry specialist, Kev Reilly. The next edition of *The Sprouting Oak* will carry an article in which we take a look at the various Watson coats of arms that have been matriculated by the Court of The Lord Lyon over the centuries.

If you have a subject relating to family, Scottish or UK history that you'd like to feature in a future guide, or if you'd like to contribute an article relating to your own specialist topic, please [let us know!](#)

What is Heraldry?

The word “heraldry” relates to coats of arms and covers a wide range of topics from their design, display and study through to their regulation. Coats of arms date back to medieval Europe and started out as designs displayed on shields to establish identity in battle. Coats of arms evolved to denote different families and, as hereditary symbols, were handed down to heirs and adopted by other family members in various forms, some of which we will discuss in this article.

People who are entitled to bear heraldic arms are known as “armigers” and are said to be “armigerous”.



1818 Coat of Arms of James Watson of Saughton

The use of arms is regulated in the UK. In England and Wales, their use is governed by the laws of arms, which are upheld by the Court of Chivalry that has its origins in medieval times. In Scotland, the use of arms is governed by the Court of the Lord Lyon, with the Public Register of All Armorial Bearings in Scotland created in 1672 during the reign of Charles II. Both courts can and do prosecute people who misuse arms, so be warned!

The study of heraldic arms is an important aspect of historical research, as nearly all heads of prominent families – lairds, barons, clan chiefs, etc. – had arms matriculated with the court, and the associated records can provide useful insights into not just the arms bearer but also their ancestry.

Elements of a Coat of Arms

In order to study coats of arms, it is almost necessary to learn a new language. When heraldry began in England in the later part of the 12th century, the knights and their families who were the early adopters spoke Norman French, and this language is still used to this day to describe coats of arms. Take this description of the coat of arms of David Watson of Saughton that was matriculated in 1673 as an example:



“Mr David Watson of Saughton...Bears argent one Oak-tree growing out of a mount base proper, surmounted of a fess azure. Above the shield one helmet befitting his degree mantled gules doubled argent, Next is placed on one torse for his crest two hands mooting up the trunk of one Oak sprouting out branches.”

Such descriptions are intended to enable the reader to recreate the described coat of arms without seeing a picture of them; however, this is only possible if you can speak the secret language of heraldry!

The first term that we see in the description of David Watson’s arms is “argent”. This is still the French word for silver – although it can also mean “white” in heraldry – and relates to the background colour of the shield. Other colours that we encounter in heraldry include those listed below:

- Argent = Silver (or White)
- Azur(e) = Blue
- Gules = Red
- Or = Gold
- Purpure = Purple
- Sable = Black
- Vert = Green

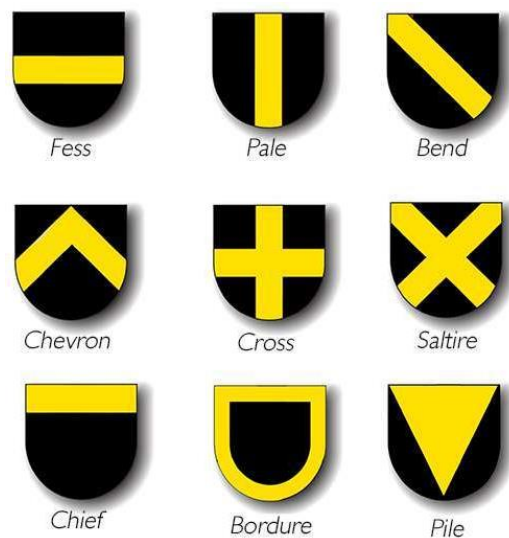


Colours in Heraldry (Source: [English Heritage](#))

Next, we see that on David’s silver shield one oak tree is growing out of a “mount base proper”. This refers to a mount (mound, or small hillock) at the base (bottom) of the shield. “Proper” is an indication that the mound is depicted as a “real” mound rather than a stylised or cartoonish version. The implication is therefore that the mound is green (as in real life), although sometimes you will see such a device described as a “mount vert”, i.e. a green mound.

The next description states that the oak tree is “surmounted of a fess azure”. A fess is a simple shape known as a heraldic ordinary, or which there are several main types:

- Bend = a diagonal stripe
- Bordure = a border around the outside edge of the shield
- Chevron = a chevron across the shield with the point in the middle pointing upwards
- Chief = a bar across the top edge of the shield
- Cross = a cross, with the two branches going up/down and left/right
- Fess = a horizontal bar across the middle of the shield
- Pale = a vertical bar down the middle of the shield
- Pile = a downward-pointing triangle
- Saltire = a diagonal cross, the same as found on the Scottish flag



Heraldic Ordinaries (Source: [English Heritage](#))

With “surmounted” meaning “on top of”, we can now see that the oak tree on David’s shield has a blue horizontal bar across the middle of it.



The first half of “above the shield one helmet befitting his degree” is fairly self-explanatory, but it is worth a few words on the phrase as a whole. All arms have a helmet or cap above the shield, but these have varied in style throughout the ages. The aristocracy have controlled images to differentiate between, for example, a baron and a baronet, but the Lord Lyon does not control images for the lower levels of armigers. A baillie, for example may have worn a cap with a feather or a star to indicate their position, which may have appeared on his coat of arms, and a Lord Provost may have had regalia including a cap and chains of office. As the designs of helmets and caps designs for the lower levels of armiger are outwith the scope of the Lord Lyon, they are often described as “befitting his degree”.

The second part of the phrase describing the helmet mentions “mantled gules doubled argent”. All arms have mantles, a form of drapery that visually ties the helmet into the shield. These were originally worn by knights from their helmets to stave off the elements, and had a secondary function of decreasing the effects of sword blows against the helmet when in battle (which is why mantles are often depicted as tattered or cut to shreds on coats of arms). Sometimes, the mantling has two sides, one side of colour and one of metal, and is then described as “doubled”. In David’s case, the mantle is doubled and in the colours of gules (red) and argent (silver or white).

The final part of the description of the arms begins with “Next is placed on one torse for his crest”. A torse is a twisted band, usually in the same colours as the mantle and typically with six twists. The torse forms the base for the crest, which appears above the helmet and in this case is described as “two hands mooting up the trunk of one Oak sprouting out branches”. This refers to the two hands grasping the trunk of an oak tree that we see in the clan crest of the Watsons, although it is interesting to note that the hands do not yet issue from clouds in these early Watson arms.

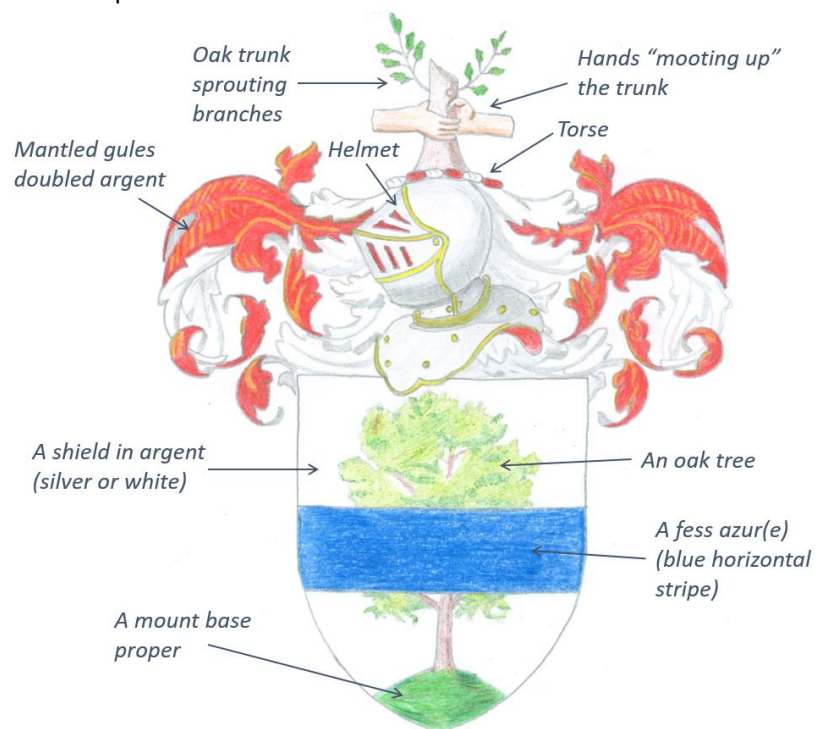
Finally, we are told that the arms also depict a scroll containing the motto “insperata floruit”, or “flourished unexpectedly”, which remains the clan motto to this day.

And there you have it! The original description of:

“Mr David Watson of Saughton...Bears argent one Oak-tree growing out of a mount base proper, surmounted of a fess azur. Above the shield one helmet befitting his degree mantled gules doubled argent, Next is placed on one torse for his crest two hands mooting up the trunk of one Oak sprouting out branches”

translates to:

“Mr David Watson of Saughton...bears on a silver shield one oak tree growing out of a lifelike green mound, with a blue horizontal stripe



Arms of David Watson of Saughton with Key Elements Labelled



across the middle. Above the shield is a helmet befitting his station with doubled mantling in red and silver. On top of the helmet is a twisted band (in red and silver), topped by an oak tree, the trunk of which is being grasped by two hands”.

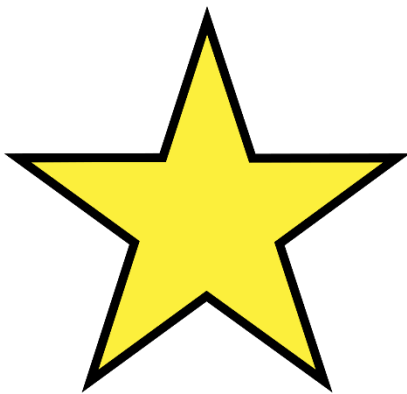
Other items that we may see when studying heraldry include heraldic charges and animals.

Heraldic emblems are shapes or emblems added to the shield and include balls, crescents, crosses, diamonds, flowers, rings and stars. There are several ways in which stars can be referenced:

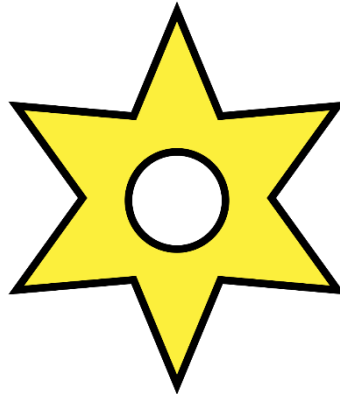
Star = a star with straight-sided rays (assumed to be five unless otherwise specified) that is not pierced (i.e. does not have a hole in the middle)

Mullet = not a silly hair cut, but a star with straight-sided rays that is pierced

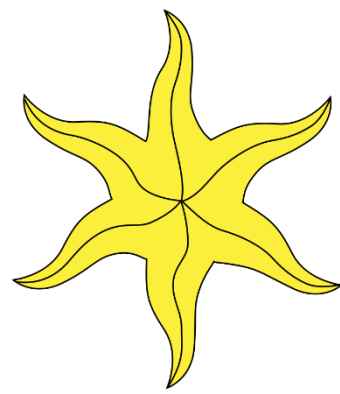
Estoile = A star with wavy rays (assumed to be six unless otherwise specified)



A Five-Pointed Star



A Six-Pointed Mullet



An Estoile

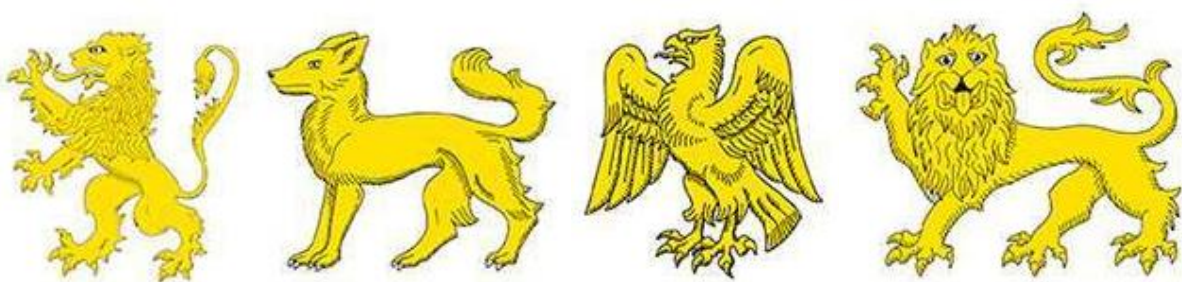
We often see animals on coats of arms, with common beasts being lions, griffins, dragons, unicorns and eagles. Different descriptors are used to describe the posture of an animal:

Displayed = (of a bird) with wings outstretched

Passant = walking

Rampant = rearing up

Statant = standing up



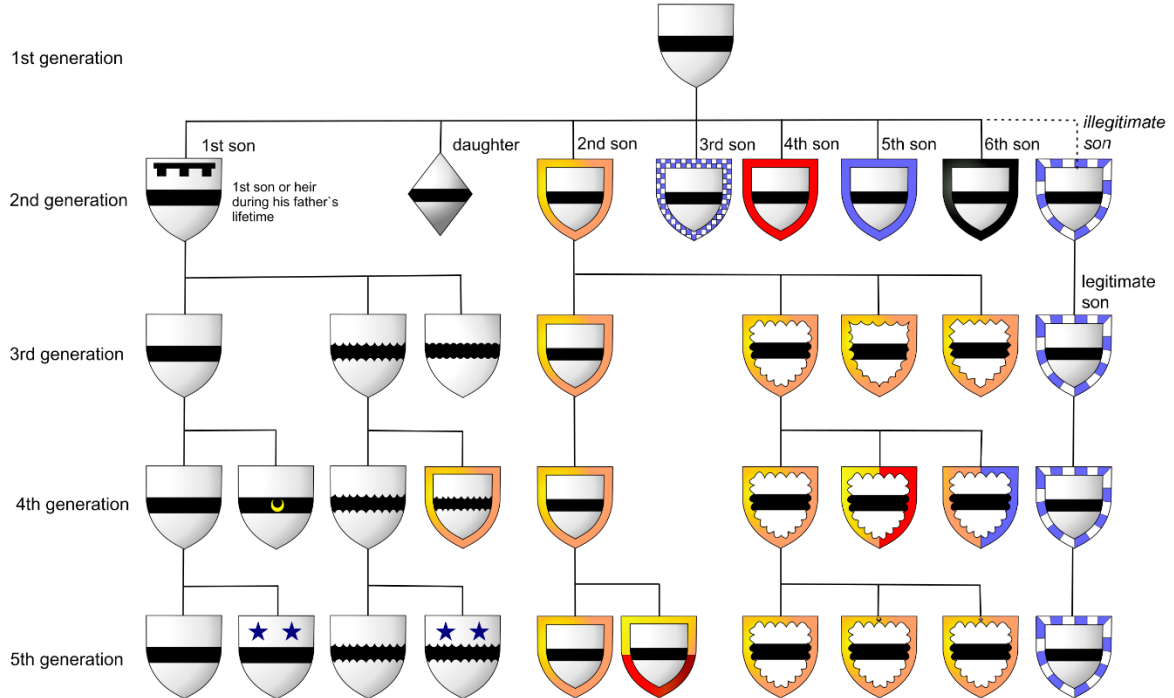
A Lion Rampant, a Dog Statant, an Eagle Displayed and a Lion Passant (Source: [English Heritage](#))

Differenced and Undifferenced Arms

In heraldic law, only the principle arms holder (usually the head of the family) has the right to bear a coat of arms in their original form. This set of arms is referred to as the “undifferenced” arms, to denote that they are the “pure” form. The undifferenced arms can be inherited as is by the heir. All other siblings and cadet branches of the family can use the same base arms, but they must



incorporate “congruent differences” to ensure that they are distinguishable from the undifferenced arms and hence cannot be confused with them. In modern Scottish heraldry, the Stodart system is used to standardise these differences, which uses a range of different borders and other devices to reflect the degree of separation of an armiger from the bearer of the undifferenced arms.



The Stodart System for Differencing Arms (Source: [Wikimedia](#))

Prior to the introduction of the Stodart system, differencing was still a requirement but was achieved by various means. These differences are used by armigers until they establish houses of their own and can then apply for undifferenced arms in their own right. Nonetheless, the practice of differencing arms can be useful when researching connections between different arms holders. This is especially useful in Scotland, as the Court of The Lord Lyon typically assumes that all applicants for arms of the same surname are part of the same family, and so the oak tree is likely to feature in the arms of any Watson applying for arms whether they are related or not.

End Notes

Many thanks to Kev Reilly, our expert on heraldry, who provided much of the material for this article. If you'd like to discuss further with Kev, you can contact him via the Facebook group, or you can add a post to the page if you'd like to start an open discussion. You can also contact us with any queries or comments, which are always welcome!

The following sites provide more useful information for those who are new to heraldry:

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/guide-to-heraldry>

<https://electricScotland.com/webclans/lordlyon6.htm>

<http://www.heraldry-scotland.co.uk/distinctive.html>

In the next issue of The Sprouting Oak, we will include an article in which we analyse coats of arms matriculated by various Watsons over the centuries.

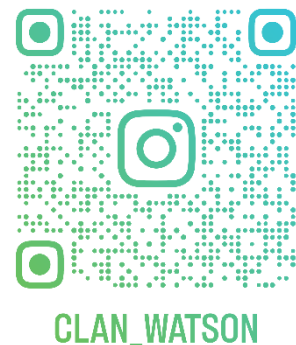


Spreading the Word

As we describe in the article on our short-term strategy, we are looking to raise awareness of the Clan Watson Society and what we do, with the ultimate aim of bringing more people on board so that we can start up some regional chapters, plan some events and appoint a Clan Commander. With this in mind, we have been increasing our presence on the worldwide web over the past few months. The two main Clan Watson Societies in North America – Clan Watson Society International (USA) and The Clan Watson Society of Canada – appear to have ceased operations some time ago, so we have now registered to replace them as the clan society representing both countries with the umbrella clan society groups in each. You can find the Watson entry on the Council of Scottish Clans & Associations (COSCA) website [here](#) and we've recently been posted in both [English](#) and [French](#) on the website of the Clans and Scottish Societies of Canada (CASSOC). We are also in the process of registering with the Scottish Australian Heritage Council (SAHC), who currently have no Clan Watson link on their website.

In order to support our expansion into these regions, placeholder pages are being developed in the background of our website that it is hoped will eventually provide details of the committees, activities and other stories from the regional chapters, but what we really need for this expansion to happen is volunteers on the ground! We need people in every region in which Watsons are present who have the vision and the drive to recreate regional chapters, which it is envisaged will operate on a semi-autonomous basis but with support from the parent organisation for web content, events, materials and branding. We also need more Clan Watson Ambassadors to be spreading the word, so if you are planning on attending clan gatherings and other events this year or have an active social media profile, do consider volunteering! [Contact us](#) if you wish to discuss further!

We have also been busy setting up social media accounts in addition to the Facebook group. Our new Instagram account [@clan_watson](#) was launched at the end of 2022 and is starting to pick up followers. The ambition is to put out material on a regular basis, some of which will mirror the major announcements in the newsletters and on the Facebook group, and some of which will be less formal, so do head over and follow us if you have an account! You can either look us up by our username, by clicking on the link above or by using the QR code on the right to go straight to us.



You can now also find us on LinkedIn where we have recently set up the [Clan Watson group](#). To be honest, we are not expecting this to be enormously busy, but it seemed a good idea to block the group name! Anyway, if you wish to connect professionally with others from the wider Watson family, feel free to join up!

Finally, we've created a Clan Watson Youtube channel. This is not currently live, but again we wanted to reserve the channel name and are hoping that as we continue to grow the society we will be able to start creating episodes on Watson history and events. Watch this space!



What's On, Watson?

The title of this section harks back to my school days, when my classmates went through a (thankfully brief) period of finding it hilarious to ask me “Shane, What’s On?”, before sharing their TV viewing plans for the weekend. Here, we present a few events that may be of interest.

First off, as stated in the introduction to this issue, we are delighted to announce that we are planning an online Clan Watson convention in 2023. The timing is yet to be finalised but we are aiming to hold it in the first half of the year. The convention will include a presentation outlining the thinking that is going on regarding preparing the society for a future in which it grows significantly, as you can read about in the article on our new strategy. There will be an opportunity to ask questions, but we’d also like to get at least one other presentation in that people may find interesting, so if there is a clear appetite for discussing the future of the society in more detail we will arrange a dedicated follow-up session. Timing will be announced as soon as we have done a little more preparation, so keep an eye on your emails and/or the Facebook group for updates!

We are aware that various clan societies are still in the process of confirming their 2023 calendars in terms of participating in clan gatherings and other similar events. As we will be looking for opportunities to support, we will wait until we have some dates firmed up and then try to line up some Clan Watson volunteers. Again, keep an eye out for updates and the calls for volunteers. If any Watsons are already intending to attend events and wish to be involved, please let us know!

The Hawick Reivers Festival hits its 20th anniversary this year. This was the first event in which this incarnation of The Clan Watson Society participated, albeit remotely, and it was a very worthwhile exercise, both in terms of engagement and in understanding what is required to support such an event.

Another milestone will be hit in April with the 25th anniversary of the New York City tartan day parade – if you’re in the vicinity and wish to represent the Watsons, please let us know!

24 – 26 March 2023



Hawick Reivers Festival – 20th Anniversary
<https://www.hawickreivers.com/>

15 April 2023



New York City Tartan Day Parade – 25th Anniversary
<https://nyctartanweek.org/>

If you are interested in any of the above events and wish to represent the clan or to meet up with other Watsons, [let us know](#) or put a post on the [Facebook group](#)! If you are aware of any other events that you think other members might be interested, [drop us a line](#) and we’ll add them to the next issue!