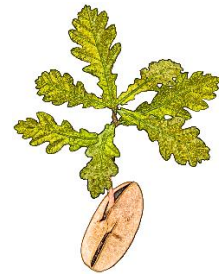


# The Sprouting Oak



The Newsletter of the Clan Watson Society  
[clanwatson.org](http://clanwatson.org)

No. 3 – Apr 2024

**W**elcome to the third edition of the newsletter of the Clan Watson Society!

In last year's issue we introduced our new growth strategy, driven by us hitting the 300-member mark and recognising that we needed to prepare our society for future in which it has significantly more members all over the world. We fleshed out what the structure of the society could look like in July's online clan convention and have been continuing to work on it behind the scenes as we approach our 500<sup>th</sup> member. We also introduced our first Clan Watson Ambassador, Michael Watson, and I'm please to say that he was rapidly joined by more as we returned to the USA events scene for the first time in a couple of decades. You can read all about the return of Clan Watson on page 3.



Another new initiative last year was the launch of the Clan Watson Supporters, giving our members the opportunity to get involved in our research. For a small donation, our Supporters get first access to the results of our research and are consulted on the direction that our it

takes as we continue our search for living heirs of the last Watson chief using the professional researcher that their generosity has enabled us to engage. See page 5 for an overview of the progress that we have made over the past year!

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Staying on the topic of research, our *Introduction to...* series continues with a beginner's guide on how to research your own family history. We will look to continue this series going forward, so if there is a topic that you'd like a basic introduction to, or if you are an expert in a particular area and would like to contribute your own article, please [let us know!](#)

For those of you that enjoyed the introduction to heraldry in the last issue, we expand upon that this time around to look more specifically at Watson heraldry and the hints it gives us at links between historic Watson families.

Our articles on Watson history continue, and in this edition we look at New Saughton, the country estate that was home to the last

generations of the chiefly family. We also discuss the Watsons of Rockingham, one of the most prominent of the English Watson families.

We close out the newsletter with an overview of our planned trip to Edinburgh later in the year, which will be a fact-finding mission as we look to put together an itinerary for a future clan gathering. We'd welcome the chance to meet with other Watsons, so if anybody is in Edinburgh or would like to join us for a long weekend, take a look at page 29 to find out how you can get involved!

In closing, I'd like to thank each and every one of our members for making our community such a fun and vibrant place. It's only through your continued engagement that we can flourish, so please keep the posts and the discussions on our Facebook group going, keep asking me questions, do go along to events to meet us, and do think about whether you'd like to get more involved! We will be expanding our programme of events in the US this year and it is time for us to start thinking about regional chapters as we now have good numbers of people in many locations across the globe. We are at a point now where my attention is divided between all the activities that we have ongoing, so to continue to grow at the same pace we will need volunteers to take up some of the (most-enjoyable) workload!

As always, I welcome your feedback on and contributions to this newsletter. Hopefully, the next one will be out on time, and the more material I have, the more chance there is of that happening! 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! Don't forget to check out our other social channels – links are below!

Long may we flourish!



Shane Watson  
President  
The Clan Watson Society





## Clan Watson Returns!

At the time that we issued the last edition of *The Sprouting Oak* in February 2023, we were busy preparing for the return of Clan Watson to the US events scene for the first time in many, many years – and what a return it was! Our fledgling band of volunteers did a brilliant job last year, attending nine events in 6 different states! Huge thanks to Michael & Sarah Watson, Barry Watson & Linn Beels, Todd & Linda Watson, Glendan Watts and James E Nedrow for manning stands, competing in games, attending events and engaging with people everywhere they went!

We have even more events planned for 2024 and continue to welcome new volunteers, such as Anthony Watson who set up a stand at the recent St. Andrew's Society of Pittsburgh Annual Tartan Day!

If you're planning on or are interested in attending an event near you and you'd like to represent the clan, let us know and we can make some plans! We're not limiting our ambitions to the US and would love to hear from people in our other regions. As we continue to increase the number of events we attend, we will need events coordinators in our various locations, so if this is a role that you'd be interested in, please [drop us a line!](#)



Sarah & Michael Watson with a Couple of Family Members



Todd Watson & Barry Watson



Anthony Watson

Keep an eye on our [Clan Watson Near You](#) pages to find out which events we will be attending this year – and do come along to say hello!

As our membership continues to grow, we can see from our [member map](#) that we are forming definite clusters in some areas, so it is time to start thinking about regional chapters. If you are interested in joining a local member group, [let us know](#) and we will put you in touch with like-minded members near you. If you are interested in volunteering to coordinate a local group, even better!



# Meet the Clan

## Scott Watson

As we continue our series of articles about members of our diverse community we meet Scott Watson, a man of many talents and one of our more active members.

Scott lives on the island of Greater Cumbrae, a beautiful spot just off the west coast of the Scottish mainland, where he works as the Community Development Officer for the island's [Carbon Neutral Islands Project](#).

Scott has many strings to his bow, having previously served in the armed forces, as a retained firefighter and as a data analyst. He's also an accomplished artist and musician, regularly publishing new content on his YouTube channel and gigging in local venues.

In the little spare time that he does have, he enjoys being beaten at lawn green bowling by his father and researching Watson history, publishing some of his work on his *Inesperata Floruit* Substack feed.

Scott was one of the first members of our Facebook group and has been active throughout. He is also one of our [Clan Watson Supporters](#), our community of research donors who are helping to fund and progress our search for living descendants of the last chief of the Watson name.



*Strumming Away in a Magnificent Tee Shirt*



*With His Father at the Lawn Green Bowling Club*

It's hard to measure Scott's contribution to our fledging society, especially in its very earliest days. He's acted as a sounding board as I've progressed various initiatives, has contributed massively to our research, and his Substack feed is a source of inspiration as I look to capture some of the huge quantity of material that we have amassed into digestible online content.

Those of you wanting to learn more about some of Scott's various activities can find him at the following locations:

- Scott Watson Drawings [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
- Scott Watson Music [YouTube channel](#)
- Inesperata Floruit [Substack Feed](#)

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 please [contact us!](#)



## Research Update

In 2023, we launched a new initiative to raise funds in order to hire a professional genealogist to help us with our research into the chiefly family of the Watsons.

Scott Watson, Kev Reilly and I had between us spent several years researching Watson history, but we'd reached a point where regular access to the historical records held in Edinburgh was required. We also needed somebody who knew where to access what to make sure that we left no stone unturned and that we conducted our research as efficiently as possible.

In February 2023 we put out a call for funding and The Clan Watson Supporters group was born. In parallel, we started researching and contacting genealogists to find the ideal researcher for our needs.



*Charles Watson, 9th of Saughton, with Family, including  
His Son, James Watson, 10th of Saughton*

I was genuinely impressed by the response to the call for funds, and we quickly amassed a sizeable pot that has enabled us to spend the past year taking huge strides with our research. I have to admit to being a little moved as well, as the fact that so many people were willing to commit their own money to the task validated that what the three of us have devoted significant time to over the years did actually mean something. We were also able to engage the ideal researcher in Pauline McQuade, whose ancestors were from the same area as the Watsons of Saughton and who still lives locally.

At the launch of this initiative, we still had many unanswered questions, especially around the possible lines of descent from the last chief, James Watson, 10<sup>th</sup> of Saughton, and his father Charles. We have spent the past year systematically investigating each open line and eliminating most of them as not having the potential to have given rise to living heirs. Family history research does open one's eyes to the harsh realities of life in previous centuries, and the nobility were not fully spared the traumas of high rates of child mortality and reduced life expectancy, as is evident in the case of the Watsons of Saughton.

Over the course of the past year, amongst a whole host of discoveries, we have:

- Confirmed that Helen Watson is the only one of James Watson of Saughton's children to have descendants alive to this day
- Confirmed our earlier research that suggested that the current Earl of Morton is the heir to the title Chief of the [Watson] Name in Scotland
- Discovered that James had an illegitimate son!
- Found two possible lines of decent to the present day from two of Charles's siblings

We've also learnt a huge amount about the kind of life that the Watsons of Saughton led, down to the details of what they ate at certain meals, what ailments they suffered from and the remedies they were given, and who their various mistresses were! We have also made contact with the Earl of



Morton who has been gracious enough to send us pictures from his own personal collection of some of his Watson of Saughton ancestors.

Many of the documents that we have found along the way are now available for download in the library section of our website, which is accessible to full members.

None of this would have been possible without our Clan Watson Supporters, who are listed at the end of this article. As we close out our first year of research, we can be proud of everything that we have achieved, both in the progress that we have made and the collaborative way in which we maximised the impact of the funds that we raised. We will need to raise more funds to complete our second year of research, so if anybody else is interest in joining us, please visit our [donations page](#) to find out more!

Massive thanks to our Clan Watson Supporters, not just for funding our research but for being so actively involved in the surrounding discussions and decision making: Anthony Watson, Barry Watson, Steve Watson, David Watson, Glendon Watts, Heather Sholter, James Watson, John Neth III, Justin Watson, Katrina Rumley, Matthew Watson, Michael Watson, Monette Chilson, Peter Warren, Robert Wedding, Scott Watson, Todd Watson and William J. Watson.

Special thanks have to go to Monette, who spent several days of a holiday in Scotland in early 2023 stuck in the records office in Edinburgh digging out papers from the collection of the Earl of Morton!



*Picture of Helen Watson from the Private  
Collection of the Earl of Morton*



# Watson Places: New Saughton

The Watsons of Saughton moved from the area that gave them their title, i.e. Saughton, to the Cammo Estate in 1741. They quickly renamed it New Saughton and, although they retained ownership of their previous manor Saughton House, they changed its name to Old Saughton and never lived there again. In this article, we will pay a visit to New Saughton to learn a little about its history and some of the people that lived there over the years.

## Where is Cammo?

The Cammo estate is roughly six miles to the west of Edinburgh city centre. The first mention of Cammo is in 1296 when it was recorded in a charter as Cambo or Cambok. The name is derived from the Brythonic language and means a crooked place, referring to land in the bend of a river or stream. Those of you familiar with a smattering of Gaelic can probably see how the beginning of the name found its way into this later language from Brythonic in names such as *Cambuslang* (long bend on a river), *Cameron* (crooked nose – from *cam sròn*) or *Campbell* (crooked mouth – from *cam beul*).



Kammock, as Depicted in Cornelius Blaeu's 1654 Atlas of Scotland (Map from National Library of Scotland)

Cammo was first recorded on a map in the 1600s by Timothy Pont during his survey of Scotland, although his maps of the Lothians were never published in their original form. It did, however, appear as *Kammock* on some Dutch prints of 1646 and 1654. Its first appearance on a Scottish map is on one published in 1682 by John Adair, on which it is referred to as *Cammuck*.



Cammuck, as Depicted in John Adair's 1682 Map (Map from National Library of Scotland)

At the time that these maps were published, Cammo Estate was mostly open, wild countryside, although it did have an outer border. We can see that a manor house was present, although it was clearly not as grand as that at Lenie (Leny), which is depicted with an extra tower and surrounded by trees on the 1682 map.

## History of Cammo (pre-Watson)

A 1345 charter tells us that at that time, Cammo was owned by the Abbey of Inchcolm. In 1409, the Bishop of Dunkeld granted the land to John de Nudre (aka. Niddery). The lands passed onto John's son, William de Nudre, and then Richard Niddery, who is assumed to be William's son. Richard died without a male heir, and his extensive property was divided among his four daughters. One of his daughters, Elizabeth Niddery, married William Mowbray in 1450 and the Mowbrays are subsequently recorded as the owners of the estate, where they lived for nearly 200 years. In 1637, the Mowbrays



sold the Cammo estate to the Edinburgh merchant William Wilkie. The Wilkies also ran out of male heirs after a couple of generations, and in 1679 Rachel Wilkie married John Menzies of Coulterallers and left the estate to John when she died in 1688.

In 1693, John Menzies expanded his land holdings in the parish of Cramond and had the existing manor house at Cammo rebuilt. His reimagined Cammo House was built with twenty rooms, which included a smoking room, a billiards room and 14 bedrooms, so even in its early form it must have been an impressive abode. Even today, the surviving entrance doorway carries Menzies initials and the date of 1693 in its stonework.



A 1794 Sketch of Cammo House

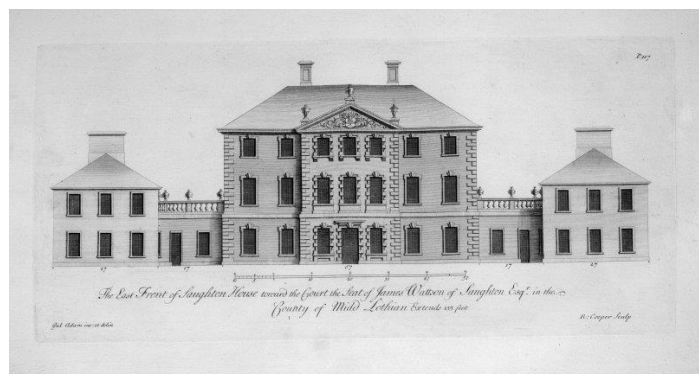
In 1710, the estate was bought by Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, who turned his attention to the land surrounding the manor house. Landscape gardening was all the rage at the time, and Sir John was one of its most advanced theorists. He laid out the surrounding parkland by adding pathways, field boundaries and formal gardens. He created an orchard and brought fruit trees

from London, and lined the south avenue from the house with lime trees from England. At the end of this avenue, he built a great gate and the “Portugal Garden”; it may be that the main feature of this garden was Portuguese laurels. In 1714, Menzies added a summer house, and in 1719 he planted hedges.

By 1723, the estate was owned by a Hog of Ladykirk, although he rapidly got into financial difficulties and, in March 1741, he sold Cammo to James Watson, 8<sup>th</sup> of Saughton.

### ***Cammo Estate Becomes New Saughton (the Watson Era)***

When James Watson bought Cammo in 1741, he renamed it New Saughton. James did not do a whole lot to the estate as he was far too busy enjoying himself on Edinburgh’s social scene. As A. S. Cowper puts it in her *Historic Corstorphine* book, “women and horses were expensive but may have been for James more immediately satisfying than architectural elegance”.



The East Front Elevation of New Saughton House Shortly After Its Purchase by James Watson, 8<sup>th</sup> of Saughton

When James’s son Charles inherited the estate in 1778, he had a backlog of maintenance jobs to catch up on. Between 1787 and 1791, he made some additions to the main house, enhancing the entrance by building “2 circular walls of stairs and walls under the steps”, and a terrace with cellars and passages underneath it. When the local historian John Philip Wood visited New Saughton during the writing of his 1794 book *The Antient and Modern State of the Parish of Cramond*, he reported that “New Saughton is a commodious mansion, commanding a remarkably fine view of the windings of the Amon, among steep and woody banks, as also the Firth of Forth. Extensive tracts of valuable and well grown timber adorn this estate, particularly on the side of the river; and the grounds about the house are laid out in a very ornamental style by the present





proprietor, a gentlemen not more respectable for his extensive possessions and splendid connections, than for the unaffected kindness and hospitality to his friends". By the time Charles had finished expanding the house, it had over 50 rooms and required a small army that included household



*Cammo Water Tower (Photo by Jonathan Oldenbuck)*

servants, maids, cooks, stable boys, coachmen and gardeners to run it.

Charles's son James, 10<sup>th</sup> of Saughton, made considerable changes to the house. In 1811 he added the stables that can still be seen to this day and, although they lost their roof long ago, a date stone is still in place carrying his initials. In 1814, he had a new wing added to the house, and in 1816 he had 80 yards of causeway laid near the stables. That same year, he also had the 17<sup>th</sup>-Century gables at the front of the house replaced by a crenelated parapet in the style of a castle.

Between 1817 and 1821, James was in correspondence with James Dundas of Dundas Castle with regards to updating the water supply to New Saughton. The resultant water tower, complete with battlemented parapet, is still visible to this day.

The last Watson of Saughton who lived and managed the estate was Helen Watson, James's daughter, although when she married Lord Aberdour of the Douglases of Morton in 1844 she left New Saughton to live with her new husband.

### ***Cammo Estate After the Watsons***

After Helen's death in 1850, the house at New Saughton was let out to a succession of tenants, although the Morton family continued to use the estate to house various animals, including horses, a pet sheep, a donkey, dogs, ferrets and peacocks!

The Morton family sold New Saughton to Alexander Campbell in 1873, at which point the estate reverted to its original name of Cammo. After Alexander's death, his trustees sold the estate to Margaret Maitland Tennent, the daughter of a wealthy tycoon who made his fortune in Australian sheep farming. A. S. Cowper tells us that Miss Tennent was educated and intelligent and, despite the Victorian attitude to university education for women, she attended classes at Edinburgh University between 1874 and 1881. She pioneered university admission and education for women by forming the Edinburgh Ladies Educational Association with the aim of furnishing "to ladies, after leaving school, advanced instruction in the Physical and Natural Sciences, Mental Philosophy, Literature and Languages". Bravo, we say!



*A Rare Photograph of Cammo House, Taken from the Southwest in 1887*

Miss Tennent married David Bennet Clark in 1887 but in her marriage contract it was stipulated that he would not be able to interfere with the money that his wife would inherit. To say that their marriage was challenged would be something of an understatement, with Bennet Clark apparently being something of a shady character; at one point, he even hatched a plot



with his brothers to seize his wife and take possession of her estate on the grounds of mental incapability. The plan failed, and it seems that the couple managed to at least patch things up for the sake of appearances, even if they weren't particularly delighted with each other's company, although she did change her name from Clark-Tennent back to Maitland-Tennent.

Cammo estate was very much a part of the Edwardian establishment, and the lady of the house regularly entertained friends. In 1908, when the terms of a lease for letting part of the grounds to Cammo Golf Club were drawn up, Mrs. Maitland-Tennent insisted that when she had a house party, her guests were to be allowed to play any day of the week.

In 1907, Margaret finally began divorce proceedings, although her husband actually won the divorce



*One of the Stately Rooms of Cammo House Shortly Before the House was Destroyed, Showing the Impact of Decades of Neglect*

on the grounds of desertion. She lived in Japan with her two sons in 1914-1918 during the First World War, after which the eldest, Robert, moved to the United States. Margaret and her younger son, Percival, moved back to Cammo, where they lived as recluses. Barbed wire and dogs ensured the privacy of the estate, but the house was left to decay along with its contents. Shopping expeditions were done in a Rolls Royce, blacked out by curtains and driven by Percival. Margaret died in 1955 and was buried beneath the lawn at Cammo. Percival planted the ground around her grave site with daffodils. Percival died in 1975, and the house and grounds were left to the National Trust for Scotland. They noted that the house had suffered significantly from years of neglect, although they did find a sellable painting that was sold for £6000. They also found the by-now very dilapidated Rolls Royce mouldering away in a tangled shrubbery!

Unfortunately, in 1977 vandals burnt the house down, depriving us all of the opportunity to visit the manor house as it was. The house was largely demolished in order to make it safe and now all that remains is the ruins of this once great country mansion. The Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society (EAFS) began a programme of investigation at Cammo Estate in 2017 and conducts digs on site every Monday. They are progressively reclaiming the ruins from the decades of natural growth, and you can read their updates in their [newsletters](#).

If you are ever in the area, we'd strongly recommend a visit; the grounds are open to the public year-round and a small visitor centre is open on Sundays from 2 – 4pm. A local organisation, The Friends of Cammo, have some [self-guided tours](#) available for free on their website, so make sure that you download copies before you visit!

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*Members of EAFS on a Dig in Front of the Ruins of Cammo House*



# The Watsons of Rockingham

This issue, as we continue our series of articles looking at prominent clusters of Watsons throughout history, we will focus on the Watsons of Rockingham, who have been living in their 11<sup>th</sup> Century castle for nearly 500 years – although it has had a few makeovers in that time!

## Where is Rockingham?

Rockingham is a small village just to the northwest of Corby, in the East Midlands county of Northamptonshire in England. There is evidence of human occupation in the area for at least the last 40,000 years, with the area likely to have been continuously occupied since at least the Iron Age. The Romans established a sizeable settlement here and mined the area quite extensively for iron ore.

The Domesday book, a kind of stocktake of their new kingdom that was written by the Normans after their invasion of England, states that Rockingham was held by the Saxon lord Bovi in 1066. It would appear that Bovi was dispossessed of his lands shortly after the Normans arrived, as William the Conqueror constructed a motte and baileys for strategic control of the main river crossing of the River Welland. This early castle was completed in around 1071 and appears to have consisted of a central motte with a bailey on each side. The north bailey was the main one and still survives to this day, together with a 10-foot-high curved bank that indicates the position of the motte.

Although the land around Rockingham was relatively unproductive, its expansive forest was teeming with deer and wild boar (as well as wolves and bandits!). The Norman kings had a passion for hunting and the castle became a base for administration and hunting and was used as a royal retreat during the Norman and Plantagenet periods.

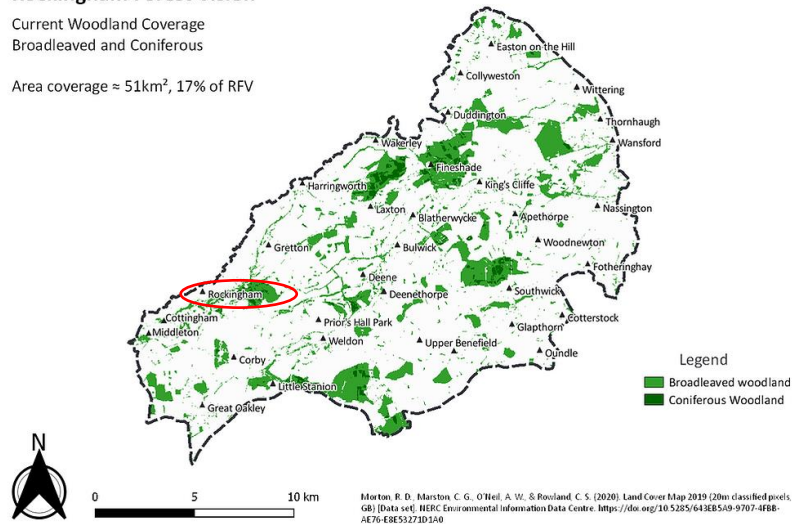
Although much of the region is farmland in the modern day, the area still has some large patches of the original forest standing.

## The Castle Expands

In 1270, King Henry III strengthened the castle with the addition of a twin gatehouse, and between 1276 and 1291 his son, King Edward I, spent vast sums of money modernising the castle, adding windows and fireplaces to the Great Hall, building a bedroom into the eaves for Queen Eleanor and replacing the castle’s original square towers with the round ones that survive to this day. Despite this extravagance, the castle fell out of favour as a royal residence in 1375, when King Edward III made his last visit, and by the late 15<sup>th</sup> century it had fallen into disrepair.

### Rockingham Forest Vision

Current Woodland Coverage  
Broadleaved and Coniferous  
Area coverage ≈ 51km<sup>2</sup>, 17% of RFV



The Modern-Day Remnants of Rockingham Forest (Rockingham Circled in Red)



In 1541, King Henry VIII visited Rockingham with Queen Catherine Howard, a year before her head and body parted company (a recurring issue for Henry's wives), and was shocked by how dilapidated the castle had become. In 1544, he leased Rockingham Castle to Sir Edward Watson, and so began the long association between the castle and the Watson family.

### ***What of the Watsons?***

Sir Edward Watson's immediate ancestors were landowners from Lyddington, a small settlement 5 miles to the north of Rockingham Castle. Between 1544 and 1584, the Watsons set about converting their medieval castle into a Tudor residence. The castle was expanded, with the Great Hall divided into two rooms and bedrooms added, a new gallery wing, and the kitchen and servants quarters completed.

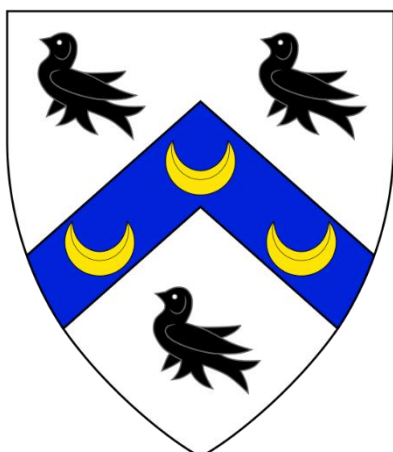


*The 13th-Century Round Towers of Rockingham Castle,  
Added by King Edward I*

Lewis Watson, Edward's grandson, was the first Watson owner of the castle, having bought it from King James 1 in 1619. Lewis was not only a landowner but was also a politician, and from 1621 to 1624 he sat in the House of Commons as Member of Parliament for Lincoln. He received a peerage and become known as Sir Lewis Watson. He completed the gallery wing of the castle that was started by his grandfather, only to see it demolished in the English Civil Wars of 1642 to 1651. Early in the Civil War, royalist troops were garrisoned in the castle; however, in the 1643 it was captured by Lord Henry Grey, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Stamford and Lewis Watson was evicted. The castle was returned to Sir Lewis after war but had been badly damaged. For his support of the Royalist cause, Sir Lewis was created 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Rockingham in 1645.

The succession of ownership now gets a little complicated, so pay attention!

Sir Lewis's son Edward inherited his title, becoming the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Rockingham. Edward's son, also called Lewis, served as Lord Lieutenant of Kent and was created Earl Rockingham and also inherited



*The Arms of The Watson Earls of  
Rockingham*

the title of Viscount Sondes from his mother Lady Catherine Sondes, daughter of George Sondes, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Feversham. Lewis outlived his son, yet another Edward, and so his title was inherited firstly by his grandson Lewis Watson, who became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Rockingham, and then by Lewis's brother Thomas Watson, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Rockingham. Unfortunately, this particular line stopped with this generation, and the Earlship took a sideways leap to Lewis Monson, the son of John Monson, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Monson of Button, and Lady Margaret Watson, eldest sister of Lewis and Thomas's father. John and Margaret's eldest son John inherited the Baron Monson of Burton title, and their second son Lewis inherited the estates of Rockingham on the condition that he should adopt the name and arms of Watson. Lewis was later created 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Sondes of Lees Court. The Barons Sondes adopted Lees Court as their family seat, and Rockingham Castle remained unaltered during the tenure of the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Barons. Lees Court eventually passed to George John Watson, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Sondes, and his brother The Rev. Henry Watson inherited Rockingham Castle, followed by another brother, Richard Watson in 1836.



Richard Watson set about modernising the castle, adding the flag tower – now referred to as “Salvin’s Tower”. Richard and his wife Lavinia were good friend of Charles Dickens, who visited the castle of five occasions. Dickens fell in love with Rockingham (indeed, he wrote to Lavinia in 1851, saying, “I always think of Rockingham, after coming away, as if I belonged to it and had left a bit of my heart behind”), and it inspired many of his novels.

The castle passed to Richard’s son George Lewis Watson and then, on George’s death in 1899, to George’s son The Rev. Wentworth Watson. On Wentworth Watson’s death in 1925, the estate passed to his great nephew Sir Michael Culme-Seymour. Sir Michael and his wife Lady Mary Faith Montagu, daughter of the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich, lived in the castle until 1967, although the castle was rented out to an American millionaire, Victor Emmanuel, for five years, who funded the installation of central heating and bathrooms.



*Charles Dickens, No Doubt  
Daydreaming About Rockingham*

In 1971, Rockingham Castle was inherited by Commander Sir Michael Saunders Watson. During his



*Commander Michael Saunders Watson*

childhood, Michael lived at the castle during the Second World War along with numerous siblings, cousins and family friends. Once the war was over, he pursued a career in the Royal Navy, a vocation that took him all over the world. Upon inheriting the castle in 1971, he retired from the navy and moved to Rockingham with his wife Georgina and his three children. The couple immediately devoted themselves to turning the castle into a successful visitor attraction and expanding the existing

farming operation. Passionate about heritage, Sir Michael was a founding member of the Historic Houses Association and served as their president from 1982 to 1988 and became chair of the National Curriculum History Working Group in 1988. In 1990, he became chairman of the British Library, was also a trustee of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Kew Gardens and became involved with a wide variety of local organisations in Northamptonshire.

Sir Michael handed the castle and estate to his eldest son James in 1999 and died in 2022 aged 88. Rockingham Castle is still the family home for James, his wife Elizabeth, and their three children Eleanor, Beatrice and Henry.



*The Modern-Day Watsons of Rockingham*



## An Introduction to... **Family History Research**

In this issue, we continue our series of introductory guides to various aspects of historical research with a look at the basics of researching your family history. We know that many of you first come across the Clan Watson Society as you start researching your Watson ancestry and that starting out can be bewildering, so we hope that those of you that are new to researching your family trees will find something of use! This article is a brief summary of a more comprehensive how-to guide that will shortly be available on our website to our full members.

If you have a subject relating to family, Scottish or UK history or the history of the diaspora 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 Family History Research?**

Before we launch into the “how-to” part of the article, it's worth taking a quick look at what researching your family tree involves. If you are a member of any family history forums – there are plenty on Facebook, for starters – you will no doubt have seen a constant stream of people claiming descent from Mary, Queen of Scots, Robert the Bruce or 11<sup>th</sup> Century Norman nobility and thought to yourself, “How did they get back that far?”.



*Robert the Bruce: Probably Not the Ancestor of 95% of People Who Claim So on the Internet (Sorry)*

Such assertions are often accompanied by statements about the days of rigorous research on Ancestry.com or FamilySearch.org that “prove” the claim of royal descent.

While family history sites such as these are useful tools for our research, establishing your true genealogy is, unfortunately, not as easy as clicking on a hint and importing several generations of descendants into your fledgling tree from someone else's. True family history research is a never-ending (literally!) exercise in trawling through as many sources as you can find: government records, parish records, census returns, historical books and papers, research papers...the list goes on.

With this article, we will outline the steps that you need to take to kick off your own research. Spoiler alert: There are no shortcuts!

### **Step 1: Start Close to Home**

Much of family history research involves finding leads and then digging out the source data to either validate or discount them. “How do I start?”, you may be asking yourself, “and where do I get my first lead?”. Fortunately, many of us have a ready source of information literally on our doorstep – our own family!

This leads us to our very first step in family history research – get as much information as you can out of living kin, especially the older generations. They are normally more than happy to talk about the



old times, and you'll find that once the discussions start, memories get jogged, people and places you've never heard of get mentioned, hidden family photos and heirlooms come out, all generally accompanied by a rush of enthusiasm!

In order to guide these conversations, here is a list of suggested talking points to cover:

- Names, and not just of direct ancestors. Get names of siblings, spouses, memorable in-laws, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Once you start looking up source material, you'll find some of these peripheral names turn up as witnesses to official events or neighbours on census returns and they can make the difference between confirming a lead and leaving it with a big question mark hanging over it.
- Dates for everything! Not just births, marriages and deaths, but dates that people visited certain places or moved house, town or job, or milestone events that they were involved in (wars, factory openings, demonstrations, etc.).
- Ages. Find out how old people were when they got married or when they died.
- Places. Where did your ancestors live? Where are they buried? If they emigrated, where did they leave from and arrive?
- Jobs. Knowing what your ancestors did for a living is a good way of narrowing down census returns.
- Photographs. Ask relatives to dig out family photo albums. These will often jog memories. Ask for names and places, and take pictures or scans of as many as you can, together with notes of who is in them.
- Family stories. Most families have some stories handed down verbally from one generation to the next. Although these tend to evolve over the generations, you should still make a note of them as they can throw up interesting leads or validate other information.
- Records. What information is available in written format? Many families will keep copies of official government records for a generation or two (birth/marriage/death certificates, school diplomas, military records, etc.), and some families will have a family bible in which details of several generations of the family are recorded.



*Discussing Family History - Get the Youngsters Involved!*

As you have these discussions, write as many notes as you can (or record them if permissible) and take copies or photos of as many documents as you are able to. These discussions are your most useful starting point for family history research, and a lovely way to interact with older members of the family!

Assuming you are now armed with a bundle of new information, it's time to move onto the next steps in the process: capturing what you've learnt and organising your study.

### ***Step 2: Organise Your Study***

It's important to start organising your study from Day 1 rather than wait until you have amassed a huge quantity of information, as it will only get more difficult the more data you accumulate!



There are three main types of storage system for your data:

- Folders for physical paper copies of information
- A personal storage system for soft copies of information (either a harddrive in your house or a cloud-based storage system)
- Third-party websites that enable you to build a family tree and, in some cases, upload supporting information – we will cover this option under Step 4 of this guide

### Physical Records

Although most records are available online nowadays, your family will no doubt have paper records lying around in the form of birth/marriage/death certificates and newspaper cuttings, amongst others. I would strongly recommend filing them in an organised manner, both to keep them in good condition and for ease of retrieval. For certificates, I like to use a ringbinder with alphabetical dividers, and I organise my filing firstly by surname and then alphabetically by first name. I keep my filed paperwork in clear plastic wallets, as this keeps it in good condition and means that you can access all the information without needing to extract the documents.



Paper copies are all well and good, but they are not so good for sharing; for this, we need to digitise them.

### Digitising at Home

The easiest way to store electronic documents is by using the file manager programme on your home computer. The first thing to do is to decide on your directory structure. Assuming you are studying your own family history, you may wish to file by surname as per the physical records, with one subdirectory per surname. Some people like to fully capitalise the names of direct ancestors in this kind of structure so that they stand out.

For a one-name study, such as the one that we are running on the Watsons, it may be more beneficial to group records per location rather than name, as you may end up with many thousands of individuals with the same surname.

It's also worth thinking about backups so that you don't lose everything in the event of an issue with your primary repository. If you work from your harddrive, make a habit of backing up your files to an external harddrive and/or to a cloud storage service. Network-attached storage drives and cloud servers will usually let you share directories with others, which is great for collaborative working.

### **Step 3: Validate Your Findings**

Once you have collected and organised as much information as you can from family members, you need to validate it. The various pieces of information will be of varying degrees of reliability, and your first job is to determine which data is rely-upon and which data needs further validation.

It is generally accepted that official records, such as birth/marriage/death certificates, census returns, military records, passenger lists, etc. are pretty reliable, especially as you get closer to the modern day. There are a few caveats:





- It was not unheard of for people to lie about their age; young men would add a year or two to their age to qualify for military service, and one female ancestor of mine magically lost a few years between her birth and her marriage!
- It wasn't unusual for people to go by a nickname, so you sometimes find a different name stated on marriage and death certificates than on the corresponding birth certificate. Look out for Henry changing to Harry, Isabelle changing to Bella and Elizabeth changing to Betsie or Betty, to give you just a few examples.

Newspapers are reasonably reliable, especially in the announcement sections, as announcements are usually submitted by the family (or undertaker) at the time of a significant event.



Newspaper Announcements Page from 1800

Photos can be useful, especially photos that show an extended family. They are, of course, only of any use if you can identify the people in them, and this is where discussing them with the oldest surviving members of the family is invaluable!

The final category we will cover here are the family stories related to you by other family members. Get as much of this information written down as you can; however, it should all be treated as “to be verified”, as memories change with time and dates, places and names get forgotten or recalled incorrectly, and the further back in time you go, the more chance there is of an error or two creeping in.

The next step – and probably the one you've been desperate to get started on – is building your family tree. I'd recommend that you actually do this and the data validation

at the same time, partly because it can be easier to handle the data if you add it to your tree as you go, but also because seeing the tree appear as you work through the data is very rewarding and helps to keep you motivated!

#### Step 4: Build Your Tree

The first decision you need to make is whether you want to build your family tree online, offline or both. There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach.

The online family history sites will all let you build a family tree for free. There are two kinds of site – those that let others change your data (e.g. FamilySearch and Wikitree) and those that don't (e.g. Ancestry and MyHeritage).

The offline family tree builders are installed on your computer and typically offer a full data management solution (excuse the IT speak). As well as enabling you to build a family tree, they allow you to organise your source data and offer various visualisation tools. Some of them, Family Tree Maker (FTM) being the obvious example, also connect to websites (FTM connects to Ancestry, so will provide hints from the website and let you synchronise your data between the software and the website).

In terms of cost, the commercial websites offer a variety of packages of varying cost versus functionality. The FamilySearch website is free to use, but generally only offers access to transcriptions



of records rather than the original copies, so you have no way of verifying that the transcriptions are correct. Wikitree is another free site, but it is aimed more at competent researchers and requires you to amass hours on the site and to pass online tests to be able to add or modify records.

The commercial software packages typically cost around the price of a year's membership of the commercial sites, although there is obviously a range, and some are free.

One option that we won't cover in this article is to build your family tree on your own website, as this is a more specialist area. For those that are keen on this approach, the go-to software package is The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding (TNG).

A list of suggested websites and software packages is provided at the end of this article. The good news is that whichever option you choose, they all use a

common file format (called GEDcom) to import and export data, so it's fairly straightforward to build your tree on one website or in one software package and then to import it elsewhere.

If you are in a hurry to start building your tree, or don't really want to wade through tonnes of information before deciding on which tool to use, we'd recommend that you open a free account on Ancestry as it has a huge number of users and records and will quickly start to give you hints.

Whichever route you choose, we'd recommend only building your tree in one place when you start off. Once you have uploaded as much information as you have to hand and can find easily, you can then export your tree as a GEDcom file and upload it to other websites. This will potentially give you different hints and connections on other sites, but it comes at the expense of having multiple trees to maintain and multiple subscriptions to pay if you want to use the full functionality of other sites.

Now that you are ready to start validating your data and building your tree, let's talk about the process.

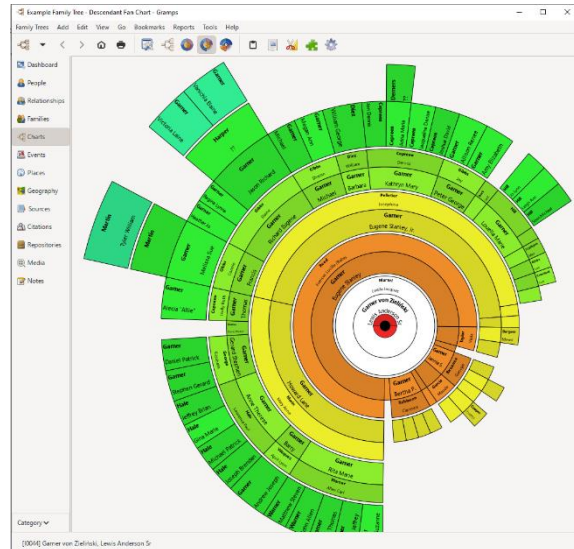
### **Step 5: The Process**

When building your tree, we'd strongly recommend that you start with the person that you know the best: You!

You should set yourself to be the "home" person in your tree; that is, the person to whom the tree will revert by default. Hopefully you are reasonably confident in your date and place of birth and have a copy of your birth certificate safely filed away in your new filing system.

The first step in starting your tree is to add yourself as a new person, entering all the relevant information. Make sure to mark this profile as private, as this will prevent any other users from accessing your data. I'd recommend also setting at least your parents and any living relatives as private and consider doing the same with your grandparents, even if they are deceased.

You should very quickly be able to add your parents and your siblings, and your spouse if you have one. With every piece of information (birth date and place, marriage date and place, etc.), make a note of the source records. Most repositories from where you source records will have some kind of indexing system, so make sure you include the index details for each record.



*Descendant Fan Chart from the Gramps Application*



Now it is just a case of methodically working through your tree, adding any new people and information that you have. Be sure to note where information is not validated or has been estimated. For each unvalidated piece of information, try to find records that support it.

Assuming you are building your tree online, it won't be very long before you are offered hints from the website you are using. There are two kinds of hints: hints at records that might support your data, and hints at "matches" with the family trees of other users. To access the records behind the hints or to contact the owners of matching family trees will usually require you to subscribe to the website, although you can sometimes view information on a matching tree without a subscription.



*Two People Clearly in the Process of Methodically Validating their Family Tree with Primary Records*

Don't be in too much of a hurry to accept suggested records or hints at matching people; records can be mistranscribed and often don't match your data, and there is nothing to stop other users from adding entirely fictitious people or links in their trees. Remember those people we mentioned earlier that constantly pop up claiming descent from royalty? Most of them do so off the back of adding other people's trees to their own. It only needs one incorrect tree to be adopted by other users and before long it multiplies across many user accounts, gaining credibility as it does so, especially if it tells people what they want to hear about their ancestry.

The trick with all hints, whether suggested record matches or matching people, is to treat them as useful leads but to make sure you validate them thoroughly before you add them into your tree as confirmed.

Working on your family tree is a painstaking exercise if approached with the necessary amount of rigour, but it is very rewarding to uncover new relatives and can become highly addictive (sorry)!. Hopefully this brief guide has given those of you who are new to genealogy enough tips to get you started. There are, of course, many more dimensions to family history research that we can't go into in an introductory article but we can look to cover them in future issues, so if you have any areas you'd like us to expand on, please let us know!

In our next issue, we will give an introduction to DNA testing, a very useful tool for genealogists but one that does need to be treated with a little caution.

### **Resources**

#### Family Tree Software Packages

- [Family Tree Maker](#) (owned by Ancestry.com)
- [Gramps](#) (free family tree software and community)

#### Family Tree Websites

- [Ancestry.com](#) / [Ancestry.co.uk](#) (US/UK sites – note that they are different portals to the same site, not separate sites)
- [Family Search](#) (free to use and to view transcriptions of records)
- [Geneanet](#) (good for family trees on the European mainland – now owned by Ancestry)



- [Wikitree](#) (free to use, restrictions apply when adding or modifying records)
- [Geni](#) (owned by MyHeritage)
- [My Heritage](#)
- [Family Echo](#) (free-to-use family tree builder)
- [The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding](#) (for those who wish to build their own website – requires a webhosting service)

### Records

- [Scotland's People](#) (the go-to resource for Scottish records)
- [Scotland's Places](#) (official government site containing place-related records)
- [UK General Register Office](#) (UK government site for ordering birth, marriage and death certificates for England and Wales)
- [The UK National Archives](#) (official archive and publisher for UK government records for England and Wales)
- [The US National Archives](#) (official archive and publisher for US government records)
- [Genealogy and family history page](#) of the Canadian government
- [Australian birth, death and marriage records](#) from the Australian government
- [New Zealand Births, Deaths & Marriages Online](#)
- [FreeBMD](#) (search nearly all post-1837 England and Wales birth, marriage and death indices for free)
- [FreeCen](#) (search for transcriptions of UK census returns for free)
- [National Library of Scotland maps portal](#) (modern-day and historic maps of Scotland, counties and towns, coastal and Admiralty charts, military maps, aerial photos, and more)
- [Find a Grave](#) (search for graves and photographs in indexed graveyards for free – you can also request photographs)
- [Find My Past newspaper archive](#) (huge repository of digitised British and Irish newspapers back to the 1700s)
- [Naval-History.net](#) (useful site for anything relating to US or UK navy)

### Other Useful Websites

- [The Internet Archive](#) (free access to thousands of old texts)
- [GENUKI](#) (great site with a huge number of linked resources covering UK and Ireland)
- [Find My Past guide to Scottish naming patterns](#)
- [Dictionary of the Scots Language](#) (useful for understanding some terms in old Scottish documents)
- [Nottingham University guidance on reading old writing](#)
- [The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791 – 1845](#)



## Watson Heraldry

In the last issue of *The Sprouting Oak*, our *Introduction to...* article went over the basics of heraldry. We will build on that in this article by looking specifically at heraldry relating to the Watsons.

When we look at the coat of arms of our last chief, James Watson, 10<sup>th</sup> of Saughton, we see that the oak tree features heavily. Family legend, as recited to the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century historian John P. Wood, has it that “when an early unnamed King was in flight from Danish invaders a gallant Watson defended the pass through which the King escaped. He uprooted the trunk of an old oak tree and blocked the advance of the Danes. This Watson was rewarded with arms depicting the oak growing out of the mountain and a crest showing hands holding up the tree trunk”<sup>1</sup>. This Watson was reputed to be the ancestor of the Watsons of Cranston and the Watsons of Saughton.

We have to be careful not to assume that all Watsons whose arms incorporate an oak tree are from the family of the chief; it is normal practice for the Lord Lyon to assume that all people of the same name who petition him for arms are of the same family, and hence their base arms generally look quite similar. We can, however, use our knowledge of the principles of heraldry to look for relationships between the various Watson arms.

If you recall, the *undifferenced* arms are those held by the head of a family. All those related to the family head who wish to matriculate arms need to amend those arms by incorporating small variations, leading to *differenced* arms. In modern Scottish heraldry, this differencing follows the principles of the Stodart system, although this has only been in place since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>



1818 Arms of James Watson, 10th of Saughton,  
Chief of the Name in Scotland

Century. We can, however, look at Watson arms from before this date to look for signs of them being differenced from the chief’s arms. To do this we will compare only the shield, as this portion of the arms is unique to each armiger.

Scottish arms are controlled by the Court of the Lord Lyon. In 1672, an act was passed requiring all Scottish armigers to register their arms with the Court. Prior to this there were no centralised records of the arms of Scottish armigers and, although there were some generally understood principles governing the design and allocation of arms, there was no formal regulation over who displayed what in their personal arms. It would, no doubt, have been considered extremely poor form to knowingly copy somebody else’s arms and claim them as your own, however.

The only two sets of Watson arms in Scotland that we have found that predate the 1672 act are those of James Watson, 3<sup>rd</sup> of Saughton, who died in 1620, and Andrew Watson of Aberdeen.

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<sup>1</sup> Cowper, A. S. (2003) *Historic Corstorphine and Round About, Volume 3: Lords and Lairds*. Edinburgh: Corstorphine Trust



James’s arms are carved on the surviving ring stone from the Watson burial place in Corstorphine Old Parish Church, whereas Andrew’s are carved on a wooden chair that he apparently had commissioned in 1661.

Their respective arms can be seen below:



*Arms of James Watson of Saughton (c. 1620)  
(Actual and Drafted)*



*Arms of Andrew Watson of Aberdeen (1661)  
(Actual and Drafted)*

It is immediately evident that the two sets of arms are absolutely identical. James died in 1620 at 61 to 62 years of age and, although it has not been determined when his arms were carved into the ring stone, it is clear that this is the version of his arms that he was using at the time of his death. Andrew’s arms are carved into the back of a wooden chair in 1661, which we assume was commissioned around the time that he was admitted into the Aberdeen Guild of Burgesses. Assuming this was fairly early in his career, it’s fair to assume that there was a gap of two to three generations between James and Andrew.

Given that there was no central register of all arms in Scotland at this time, Andrew must have been aware of who James was and what his arms looked like, and the fact that he used identical arms suggests that they were related, although it is not definitive proof.

Let us now look a little more closely at the arms themselves, and compare them to the 1818 arms of James Watson, Chief of the Name in Scotland. As mentioned earlier, as Chief of the Name and head of the Watson family, James’s arms are undifferenced and have a plain fess azure with no adornments. The fess on the arms of both Andrew and the earlier James is adorned with two stars and a crescent, suggesting that they have been differenced from a superior set of arms. Given that this earlier James was the head of the Watsons of Saughton, whoever owned the undifferenced arms would have been the head of a superior branch of the family, and it is not unreasonable to assume that they could have been a considered Chief of the Name at the time. If the family legend of the Watsons of Saughton stating that they descended from the Watsons of Cranston Riddell is true, it could have been these Cranston Watsons that were the earlier chiefly family.



*Chair Commissioned for Andrew Watson of Aberdeen in 1661, Showing His Arms and the Symbols of His Trade as a Flesher (Butcher)*

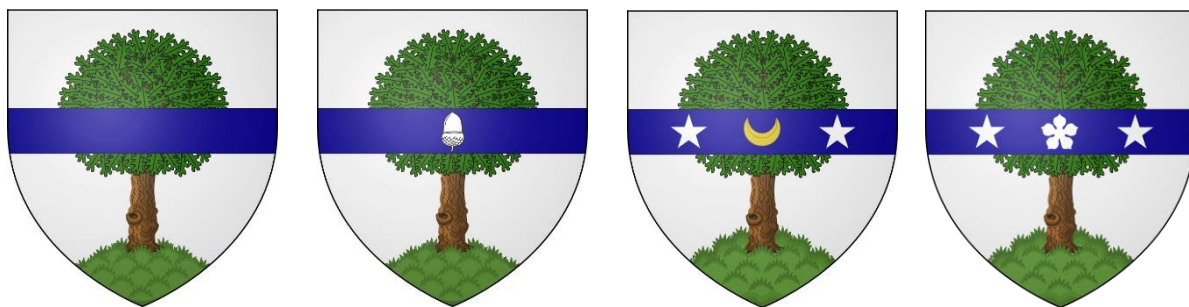
We also see that the oak tree on the 1818 arms is growing from a mount base proper (a lifelike mound) whereas that on the 1620 arms is shown as eradicated (uprooted). The uprooted oak could simply be in recognition of the other family legend regarding the uprooted oak tree that saved a King, or it could



be to denote that the ancestors of the earlier James had uprooted their family from the supposed ancestral lands in Cranston and moved to Saughton.

After the Court of the Lord Lyon issued the 1672 instruction for all armigers to register their arms, we understandably see a flurry records in the court's registers. The first Watsons to matriculate their arms with the Court were David Watson, 5<sup>th</sup> of Saughton and his second brother John, Alexander Watson, a Bailie of Dundee, and the same Andrew Watson whose arms we discussed above, who all registered their arms in 1673; in fact, their record entries all occur sequentially on the same page of the 1673 court ledger.

We can reconstruct their arms from the detailed descriptions given in the court records, and they are presented below.



*David Watson of Saughton*

*John Watson (Saughton)*

*Andrew Watson (Aberdeen)*

*Alexander Watson  
(Dundee)*

As we can see, David and John have exactly the same base arms, but John has differenced his from his brother's by adding an acorn to the fess azure. The unadorned fess of David's arms denotes that his are the senior arms as head of the family. John's choice of an acorn infers independence, perhaps suggesting that he is a successful merchant in his own right.

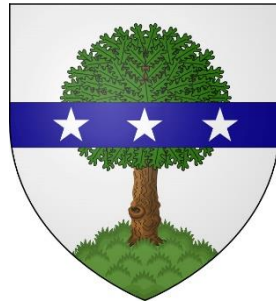
Switching to Andrew's arms, we see that they are the same as in 1661 with one key difference; the oak tree is now growing from a mount base proper rather being shown as eradicated. We can only guess at whether this is because he now felt planted in Aberdeen, was aligning his arms with the style of the other Watsons, or had another reason altogether.

When we look at the arms of Alexander and Andrew, we see that they are almost identical to each other except for the emblem in the centre of the fess azure. It is tempting to postulate that the two are related, possibly brothers. The crescent is often used to indicate a second son, and if this is the case it could be that Andrew's arms are distanced from an older brother's by use of the crescent, although we have to be a little careful in this assumption given that James Watson had no older brother that we are aware of and also incorporated the crescent into his arms.

It is interesting to note that the arms for David, John, Andrew and Alexander are matriculated one after the other in the 1673 ledger, and tempting to assume that they all visited the Court together in order to record their arms. This is certainly one possibility, but it is also possible that individual records were grouped by surname and transferred across to a common ledger at some point after the arms were matriculated. Whilst David and John's arms are described using identical terminology, suggesting that they did indeed make the visit together, the arms of Alexander and Andrew have slight differences in the way that similar features are recorded, suggesting that different scribes made the original records. Regardless, we are currently looking into exactly who Alexander and Andrew were. One thing we are sure of is that they were both merchants, as were many of the Watsons of Saughton.



One set of arms that could turn out to be critical to our understanding of Watson heraldry is that of George Watson Taylor, depicted below.



*George Watson Taylor*

These arms were matriculated in May 1815, 142 years after those of our first four Watsons, and five months before George matriculated arms showing his combined Watson and Taylor lineages. What is especially interesting about Watson Taylor's arms is that they show three stars on the fess azure. If we had found this set of arms registered in 1673, we would have been almost certain that they belonged to the older brother of Alexander and Andrew; this gives rise to the intriguing possibility that Watson Taylor is the descendant in the superior male line of this mystery older brother. Another question that we have to ask ourselves is whether the three stars were added to the fess by way of differentiating the arms from those of the head of the Watson family, i.e. was there an original holder of George Watson Taylor arms who was a younger sibling of an historic Watson chief?

Our next two sets of arms are the 1722 arms of Robert Watson of Muirhouse and the 1872 arms of James Watson of Broomknowe:



*Robert Watson of  
Muirhouse*



*James Watson of  
Broomknowe*

The Watsons of Saughton stated that the Watsons of Muirhouse were a cadet branch, although we have not yet proved this and it may not be true. As we can see, Robert differenced his arms from those of the primary Watson of Saughton arms with the addition of a griffin's head to the fess azure. We can also see that the roots of his oak tree are eradicated, rather than the oak growing out of a mound proper. Could this be a recognition of the family legend of the uprooted oak tree, could it be an indication of a falling out between the Watsons of Saughton and those of Muirhouse, could it be a reflection of this cadet branch uprooting itself from the main Saughton line and establishing itself as a standalone family, or could it just be that the Watson of Saughton arms were still shown as eradicated at the time the Muirhouse cadet branch was spawned if, indeed, they were related?

The arms of James Watson of Broomknowe are particularly intriguing, as they are identical to the Watson of Saughton arms apart from the incorporation of a robin's head. They were matriculated in 1872, 22 years after the last of the Watsons of Saughton – Helen, 13<sup>th</sup> of Saughton – had died. We don't know if James of Broomknowe was in some way trying to claim descent from the Watsons of





Saughton, whether he just used their arms for inspiration, or whether the Lord Lyon assigned him the arms, but it is another potential link to the Watsons of Saughton that we will be investigating in the future.

Our next pair of arms are those of Andrew Watson of Peterhead and Archibald Watson of Shielhill:



*Andrew Watson of  
Peterhead*



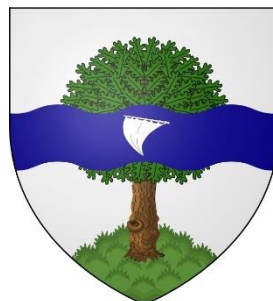
*Archibald Watson of  
Shielhill*

On first glance, both arms look similar to those of Alexander Watson of Dundee and Andrew Watson of Aberdeen. If we look more closely, we do see some telling differences. Andrew of Peterhead's oak tree is not growing out of a mound proper, and Archibald's fess azure is charged with mollets (six-point stars) rather than 5-pointed stars. We do, however, suspect that Andrew was related to Alexander of Dundee and Andrew of Aberdeen; again, investigations continue. Also, in much the same way we have posed the hypothetical question that the three 5-pointed stars could have been used to denote a relationship to the Watson chief, we should ask ourselves whether the 6-pointed mollets have been used for the same reason.

Our next arms are those of George Watson, the famous Edinburgh merchant, and Alexander Watson of Glentarkie:



*George Watson*

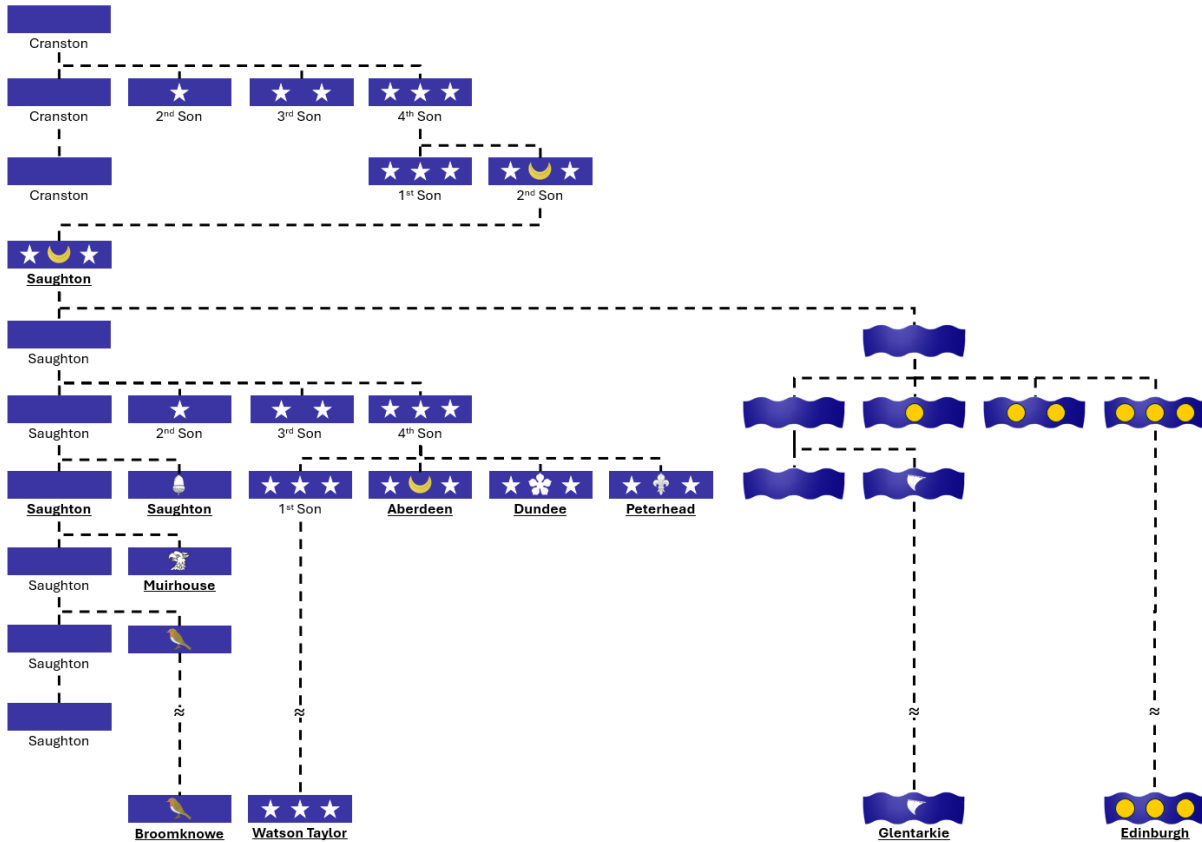


*Alexander Watson of  
Glentarkie*

We have found zero evidence that George Watson was related to the Watsons of Saughton, and we can see that his arms are quite different in that his oak tree is "acorned" and his fess azure is waved. We see that same waved fess azure on the arms of Alexander Watson of Glentarkie and, although his oak tree is depicted without acorns, we do suspect that they may have been related. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that the waved fess azure was a device introduced by an earlier generation to difference their arms from arms with a straight fess azure, e.g. those of the Watson chief, although this is pure speculation.



If we put together everything that we have discussed above, we can put together a hypothetical diagram to propose a pre-Stodart differencing system for heraldic arms:



Note that this diagram is pure supposition, apart from the known link between the Watson chief (unadorned fess) and John Watson (acorn) and the reported link to Robert Watson of Muirhouse (gryphon's head), and is merely used to suggest what a differencing system could have looked like prior to the standardised differencing introduced by the Stodart system. We can, however, postulate that:

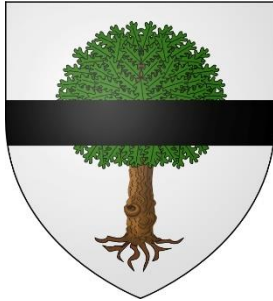
- The robin on the arms of James Watson of Broomknowe's arms was a differencing device to indicate a younger brother of a previous Watson of Saughton, in exactly the same way as was done for the arms of John Watson of Saughton and potentially for Robert Watson of Muirhouse
- The waved fess was a differencing device used for the same purpose by an ancient cadet branch of the Watsons
- The Watsons of Dundee, Aberdeen and Peterhead were younger brothers of an as-yet unidentified Watson who was descended from a brother of an historic Watson of Saughton
- George Watson Taylor, and potentially Archibald Watson of Shielhill, descend from this branch of the family
- Alexander Watson of Glentarkie and George Watson of Edinburgh are descended from the same extended family as suggested in the diagram

Note that all these scenarios are entirely hypothetical and may well turn out to be completely wrong; they do, however, allow us to prioritise our research as we look for evidence that either proves or disproves them. We will update our knowledge of the extended family tree of Watson armigers as and when we uncover new information.



**Other Watson Arms**

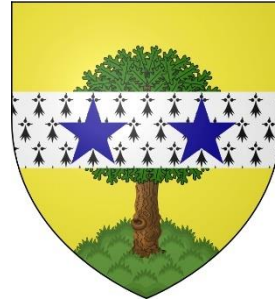
Arms of other Watsons that are registered with the Lord Lyon are presented below (in no particular order).



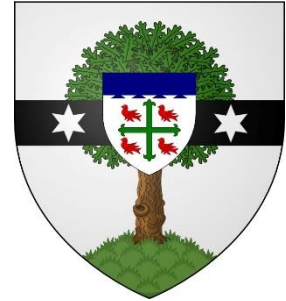
*David Watson of Croslatt*



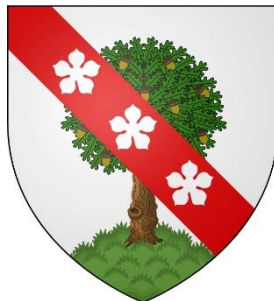
*John Watson of Neilsland*



*Lord William Watson,  
Baron Watson, Lord  
Advocate*



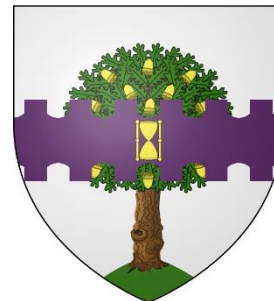
*James Watson of Langley  
House*



*William Livingston Watson,  
London*



*Watson of Braco Castle*



*Professor Alan Watson,  
Falkirk*

As we can see, other than all being based on the oak tree – which we know is the Lord Lyon’s default for anyone of the name of Watson who matriculates arms – none of these arms are similar to those that we’ve discussed previously. The only one of the above families that we are currently investigating is the Watsons of Croslatt (aka. Croslet or Craslat); this particular family of Watsons was prominent for several generations in Dunbartonshire in antiquity, and we see them mentioned in the index of the records of the Earl of Morton that are held in the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh (we are yet to retrieve the relevant records). The Watsons of Croslet use “a dexter hand erected proper” (a lifelike right hand raised with the palm facing the viewer) for the crest of their arms rather than the sprouting oak used by the Watsons of Saughton, which suggests that either they weren’t related to the Watsons of Saughton or that they had become so prominent that they identified as a standalone family.



*A Dexter Hand  
Erected Proper*

It is interesting to note that although some of the above Watsons used a crest incorporating a sprouting oak, John Watson of Neilsland and Lord William Watson used exactly the same sprouting oak supported by hands issuing from clouds. Their arms were matriculated in 1871 and 1880 respectively, quite some time after the last of the Watsons of Saughton had died, but under the Lord Lyon’s rules in force at the time (and still in force today), it was not permissible to use the same crest as another armiger. Whether both John and Lord William decided to ignore this as there was no-one left alive to contest their use of the sprouting oak or whether they claimed descent from the Watsons of Saughton is unknown at this point.



### **Wrap Up**

In summary, heraldry is a powerful tool for our research into the chiefly family, the Watsons of Saughton, as it gives us hints as to which Watsons are potentially related to them, and indications that other Watsons may be related to each other. This allows us to focus our research on these particular Watsons as we sift through Scotland's vast repositories of records looking for evidence of connections. Our hope is that as we continue to make progress, we can learn more about how the differences in arms pre-Stodart were used to indicate the various lineages and lateral relationships.

This article would not have been possible without the help of both Kev Reilly and Alexander Brodie of Brodie, 27<sup>th</sup> Chief of Clan Brodie, both of whom I've spent many hours in conversation with on the subject of heraldry. It was Kev's initial paper on Watson heraldry that inspired this particular writeup. Special thanks to Alexander for all the illustrations used in this article, which you can also find gracing the heraldry section on [our Wikipedia page](#), which Alexander wrote.



## 2024 Edinburgh Trip

Now that the [Clan Watson Near You](#) pages are live and regularly updated on our website, we will drop the *What's On, Watson?* feature from the newsletter. There is, however, one “event” that is currently being planned that won't be appearing on the website.

Many clan societies arrange a regular gathering at or near their ancestral home in Scotland, typically at an interval of two to five years, and we would like to think about having at least an inaugural gathering at some point in the future. Done well, these gatherings require an enormous amount of organisation, and that starts with planning an itinerary!

Those of you that are full members have access to our *Watson Places* Google map and will have seen the large number of places of interest that we have flagged around the Edinburgh area. Before we schedule a formal gathering, we need to pay a fact-finding visit to as many of these places as we can to establish whether they are worth bringing a group of people to or not. A formal gathering will take the form of a long weekend, and it simply won't be possible to fit in everything into that time frame, so we need to make sure that an itinerary is put together that fits key locations of interest into a manageable schedule.

A small number of us are planning a reconnaissance trip to Edinburgh at the end of October in order to finalise an itinerary for a future gathering. We are planning to be there for the last week of October and will spend the beginning of



*The Samhuinn Fire Festival*

the week visiting sites that have cropped up in our research but probably won't make good attractions for a group visit. We will cluster the more interesting places together into an itinerary for a long weekend from Thursday 31 October to Sunday 3 November.

Places we'll look to visit during the long weekend include:

- Corstorphine Old Parish Church – the burial place of many of the [Watsons of Saughton](#)
- Cammo House & Visitor Centre – the home of the last few generations of the Watsons of Saughton
- Greyfriars Kirkyard – world famous kirkyard in Edinburgh, site of many a ghost story and burial place of a couple of notable Watsons
- National Museum of Scotland – to see the [Watson Mazer!](#)
- Edinburgh Castle and the Royal Mile

We will also be attending the [Samhuinn Fire Festival](#) and will look to organise a small social gathering on at least one other evening.

If anyone is interested in joining us, please let us know via the [website](#) or the [Facebook group](#) and we'll keep you updated as we progress with the arrangements. Do bear in mind that this is a fact-finding mission – although we are aiming to condense the good stuff into the long weekend, there is always the risk that one or two of the sites might not live up to expectations!