

Understanding MacTavish and Thomson Heraldry
Or - Breaking the Rule of Arms.
By Patrick L. Thompson, Seannachie to MacTavish of Dunardry
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“最难的是找到一只黑猫在黑暗房间里，尤其是如果没有猫”。

“The hardest thing of all is to find a black cat in a dark room, especially if there is no cat.” – Confucius.

Confucius: Chinese teacher, editor, politician, and philosopher, 551 – 479 BC.

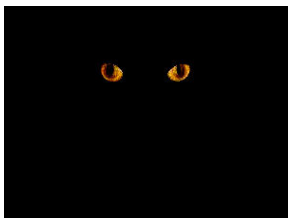
The Latin phrase, *Historia est Magistra Vitae*, conveys that the study of past history *should* serve as a lesson to the future. The word ‘**history**’ commonly expresses events that have already taken place, and are documented as facts. Many people wish to ignore that this is a natural truth. Truth is the unabashed description of compiled facts on a subject, particularly when events in time have been recorded and produce no other outcome. Truth differs from theory and hypothesis, wherein these latter produce only partially known events, and supposition replaces facts for understanding the topic. Until the complete facts are known, supposition takes the place of full understanding. Therefore, when knowledge is imparted to provide full understanding there is no room for non-truth. Supposition, theory and hypothesis must make an exist.

When publishing any topic for review, the author(s) must provide for all information that is known to be the truth, particularly when facts are available to make a determination. When facts are tangible, able to be touched and read, the final analysis can take but one path; not two, and not several. When dealing with known events, omitting the observance of set rules, and long held traditional foundations of processes, omission yields bad history. When true history is observable, touchable, and readable it presents things which may have been overlooked to form a hypothesis or theory about a topic. History is present in records, documents and accounts.

As historical information is available to heraldists and genealogists alike, what reason would there be to create theories or hypotheses about armorials and family pedigree, and thereby discard known relationships? ***The obvious answer is: There is no reasonable motive to do so.*** However, when facts are discarded and ignored, anyone will realize that here is clearly an agenda behind it, and motive to do so. A divergent outcome to history can only come about where new information has been discovered, sometimes with comparison of records, and/or where certain rules, discoveries, or procedures do not support the once accepted. To be clear, discarding truth does not place any expression in the realm of new discovery.

There is nothing new when it comes to dismissing history and pedigree, or for that matter, knowledge on other topics. Somewhere, someone, in the past, or sadly at present, dismisses facts as being irrelevant, ignoring the truth entirely, posturing their concocted views to fill the void of their very own self-imposed whims. This has happened before and will surely happen in the future as well. If fact, such is occurring at this very time revolving around the names MacTavish and Thom(p)son.

When history is discarded all manner of things are possible, including the formulation of fictions, pseudo-history, half-truths. The historical stature of Clan MacTavish is *misrepresented* in many INTERNET, or other, venues, some expressed in anciently penned *Highland Traditions*, which are nothing but the myths of Argyllshire. Without question, MacTavishes are of Gaelic origin and culture and much older than the myths portray. This article is meant to explore one of those inconsistencies and half-truths being presented modernly about the MacTavishes, addressing a hypothesis that MacTavishes are in some way related to the Scottish Lowland and Midland Thompson armigers, expounding some very strange reasoning based solely on armorial similarity. This armorial hypothesis does not provide what is known and recorded about the MacTavishes in traditional or even historical accounts, which when examined would dispel any such nonsense. A half-truth



does not make a fact, nor does the bending or manipulation of historical facts make statements truthful. As Confucius’ philosophy imparts at the head of this article, there might be no cat to be found, and thus finding the “cat” becomes an impossible feat. Once the dark room has been illuminated, it becomes clear, there was no “cat” to be found.

Thus, completely illuminating the room reveals – there simply is *nothing at all in the room as it has been described*. Looking at the entire room is necessary to determine, what, if anything, is there.

The authors of any subject access certain information to accomplish the goals of their writings, but can and often do omit the background of the documentary sources they profess, or may simply eliminate the entire truth expounded in those historical writings. When this occurs, the events can be bent to the writer's own whims. When facts get in the way of what any writer is attempting to express, facts disappear. When facts vanish, the outcome is an incorrect view of actual events; and non-truth emerges. To provide accuracy, particularly regarding a subset of people, understanding is required. It may take several years to accomplish

research on any specific topic dealing with family bonds, particularly where MacTavish and Thom(p)son families are concerned, as this documentation is so wide spread, and is very often difficult to follow.

There are armorial bearings (coats of arms) that are without question, recorded at the Court of the Lord Lyon in the *Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland*, that are simply blazoned incorrectly, even considering the liberty of Lord Lyon’s power to grant armorial differences. This admonition may sound to some like I have an axe to grind with certain Lords Lyon, but really it is only one past Lord Lyon which causes me grief. It is not only with heraldists were the problem originates, but with the chroniclers of genealogies, and so often these chroniclers were the old seannachies, the recorders of deeds and genealogies, members of the households of their lairds or clan chiefs. These old seannachies owed these leaders for their livelihood, and hence often wrote grand-eloquent scrolls of erroneous pedigrees to please their over-lords; thus giving us some extreme traditional tales of who was (supposedly) descendant of whom. Some of these Scottish pedigrees even go so far as to show a direct link to the very first man, the Biblical Adam, for which no absolute proof could possibly be established. Truthful genealogies also present the unmistakable affirmation that two familial groups are not related, even if heraldry may give the perception that some connection *may* exist.

In some cases, old pedigrees, and even traditional tales, have been used as a basis for granting armorials. A different approach, used in a very few instances is to take note of existing armorials, and because of similarity of charges, present the allusion that some kind of connection exists between two distinct familial groups. When the insinuation of a connection is brought forth, specifically where there is no basis in pedigree, origin, or historical facts, such a connection is *shear fabrication*. **Why would anyone fabricate a modern myth?**

As such, this situation causes a circular motion of vicious, and totally erroneous claims, used by a few to further their aims. Consider the science and art of Scottish heraldry itself, The Law of Arms and the Rules of Heraldry in Scotland. Scottish Heraldry is the most regulated in the world, and (normally) strict in recording familial relationships within a family. The principle or main symbol(s) of blazon (written word) and emblazon (the artwork), is depicted the same within a Family or Clan, but appears with some mark of cadency for subsequent armorials - symbols that make an armorial achievement slightly different from the original for each armiger. This principle charge is used within a family and appears on each armiger's shield, cadet, or offshoot, although modified with some difference or placement to indicate that a particular armorial belongs to a distinct person within that familial group. Hence, if an armorial displayed a principle charge that is *different* from all others of that distinct family-name group, it would be incorrectly blazoned. Very often persons with the same or similar surnames, but having no family/genetic connection whatever, are granted similar arms based solely on the surname.

Examples of good heraldry are the emblazons of Clan MacPherson armigers. The principle or main charge on the shields of Clan MacPherson Armigers¹ is the Lymphad, an ancient type of sailing ship. While the tinctures or metal (color) of the Lymphad may be different to show cadency (with other minor charges) it is this one charge or emblem that signifies a MacPherson. There is simply no mistaking it, once people are *knowledgeable* of how to distinguish MacPherson emblazons. Why would anyone then attempt to link two non-related families simply by comparing heraldic similarities?

Since Scottish Heraldry is tightly controlled system, there are some recorded arms that seem to have gone against the Rules of Heraldry in Scotland.



There does exist poor Scottish heraldry, be those numbers ever so small. There are instances of armorial bearings having been granted that have no basis within the Law of Arms, the Rules of Heraldry, or genealogical progression. Some armorials are quite clearly not based upon the known extended lineage of the bearer of those arms. Oh yes, a few armorials have been granted which are clearly erroneous.

One example of bad heraldry is the arms of Burns.² The Burns arms were never matriculated in the Lyon register until the 19th century, and had an erroneous lineage attached, being mistakenly connected to the Campbells, and thus the use of the Campbells "gyronny of eight or and sable", present in the original Burns grant, and also still present in the MacTavish grants.

Based in research, presented in, *History of Clan MacTavish*³, The MacTavishes (et al), in all probability have no true, or direct, link to the Campbells, yet the gyronny is ever present in MacTavish heraldry, eluding to a mistaken genetic connection.



¹ <https://www.clan-macpherson.org/scripts/viewmemdata.pl?record=panelh03>

1804 until 1866, succeeding his father in that office, and affirmed the matriculation of the original Burns armorial grant, which was later corrected.

But Hay-Drummond is not one of the Lords Lyon that summons my indignation. That is reserved for John Campbell Hooke of Bangeston, who later changed his name to John Hooke-Campbell of Bangeston, serving as Lord Lyon from 1754–1795, and (supposedly) approved the matriculation of MacTavish arms in 1797, as well as a few Thomson arms. It has been said of Hooke-Campbell that his appointment was purely political, and that he did not understand cadency, that is, showing the place of descent within one common and related family.

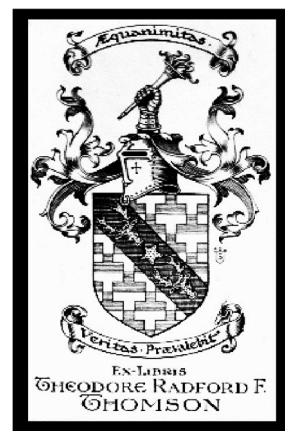
The History of Nairnshire, p. 382,⁴ say of Hooke-Campbell. "At (Alexander) Brodie's death, the office of Lord Lyon was gifted to John Campbell, second son of the Laird of Calder, and Alexander Campbell his brother, who became conjunct Lords Lyon with survivancy to the longest liver. Alexander became a Lieut.-Colonel in the Army, and left the duties to be performed by his brother John, who assumed the name of Hooke in addition to that of Campbell—John Campbell Hooke becoming a well-known personage in political circles."

Lyon Hooke-Campbell actually left most of the decision making up to his deputy, Robert Boswell, Esq., for it is Boswell's name that appears on so many armorial matriculations in the armorial register. Who it is that is actually to blame for MacTavish arms appearing with the Campbell gyronny is not entirely clear, but as Lyon was indeed a Campbell, we can surmise that Hooke-Campbell or Boswell added the gyronny to please, Argyll, the Chief of Clan Campbell, as based on a mythical tradition.

Also, *Notes and Queries*, p. 97, S.VI. 135., July 11. '58,⁵ expresses a hearty dismay, and says of the Office of Lord Lyon that it was often a political appointment, with the actual duties left to a deputy (thus rendering several Lyons as basically incompetent; being unaware of the rules and antiquaries that existed in Scots heraldry).

There are lots of Thom(p)sons to be found, and the name is one of the most common surnames in Scotland, England and Wales, as well as North America, Australia, and New Zealand. Thom(p)son and variations is a popular surname in the Scottish Borders, Lothians, Perth, Argyll, Aberdeen and elsewhere in Scotland. Even in Shetlands and other places like Argyll and Perth, the name appeared as Thomson and Thomason, Thomaason, Taweson, and some of these names are borne by MacTavishes who had Anglicized their surname, but all meaning 'Son of Thomas'.

The surname Thom(p)son and its other common forms are simple patronymics, carried over from a founder's or father's personal name. Later such names became standardized surnames. Thom(p)son, Thomasson, Taweson, etc., literally mean 'son of Thom' in English, or for that matter in any Scandinavian country where similar names exist. Because of this there is no single originating family named Thomson responsible for all the Scottish Thom(p)sons (and variations, or other nation/origin Thomsons, et al) found today. Hence there is no original location on a map to pinpoint where all the Thom(p)sons started off, because there is no one place of origin. Therefore, not all Thom(p)sons are genetically related, and no link, or familial connection exists between all of them. If you have this surname it's going to take research to discover which Thom(p)son, Thomasson, etc., group you came from, and also the location of your origin. Genealogical research might yield a family origin, or region of origin, and paired with Y-DNA (male) testing, that family pedigree may yield other relatives, that in turn might yield your place of origin.



The Law of Arms in Scotland gives the same heraldic charge to a name group, even if those persons are not related. This is the case with Thomsons. The main charge granted to most Thomsons is a "Stag's head cabossed" (facing front with no neck showing). The *Thomsons of Corstophine* (there are several of this family group with arms) are an exception with two stag's head on a bend (a diagonal across the shield with a mullet separating the heads, shown at left). One other exception is a Scottish Thompson, with typical non-Stags head, English arms, with which we are not concerned.

² See: [http://www.cobbler.plus.com/wbc/newsletter/0010/1000 the myth and the gentle science.htm](http://www.cobbler.plus.com/wbc/newsletter/0010/1000%20the%20myth%20and%20the%20gentle%20science.htm).

Samuel K. Gaw (Past President of The Burns Federation), *The Myth and Gentle Science*, World Burns Club, Robert Burns World Federation. The arms are copyrighted by the club and cannot be displayed here.

³ Thompson, Seannachie to MacTavish of Dunardry, *History of Clan MacTavish*, Otterbay Books, USA copyright 2012. (Included is the examination of the myth of MacTavish descent from Campbell.)

⁴ <https://archive.org/details/historyofnairnsh00bainuoft>

⁵ https://archive.org/details/notesqueries06unse_

Thomson of Corstorphine arms are: Potent Argent and Azure on a bend Sable a mullet between two stags' heads cabossed Or.⁶ Theodore R.F. Thomson's arms, from a bookplate, are displayed above.

There exists in the *Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland* (hereafter- the Register) one very peculiar grant of Thomson arms, those of John Thomson of Caltonhill (19 April 1775, p. 434). Where the principle charge is not a Stag's head, but a Buck's head. Caltonhill's descent is known, he being a stem of the Thomsons of Fauchfield. Thomson of Fauchfield bears a Stag's Head. What precipitated this error in heraldry is a mystery. Not only are Caltonhill's arms matriculated in a most egregious manner, but, his son's arms display (you may have guessed) a Stag's head. This is truly an intolerable situation according to the Rules, but what is even more amazing about Caltonhill's arms is that the armorial of his son, Primerose Thomson (the Register, 2 June 1772, pp. 433, 434), was matriculated before his (Thomson of Caltonhill) own. The main charge of related persons should not be blazoned with an obviously different charge, but here is a blaring example.

How can the main charge of a shield be different and still represent a member of the same family-name group, particularly when both father and son have significantly different principle charges? The Charge should remain the same with some differencing to denote familial placement. In Thomson of Caltonhill's manifestation, the charge blazoned is a different animal, which contradicts his known descent from the Thomsons of Fauchfield. A blazon literally becomes synonymous with the identity of the armiger granted that armorial, and the arms *should* depict the position and relationship of a person within the same family pedigree.

"Scotland's Lyon Office is a court of law in daily session, one of only two in Europe with executive power. In granting and matriculating arms, the Lord Lyon ensures that no one coat-of-arms is like any other, for in Scotland every coat-of-arms must be different. Each coat-of-arms is very individual property: there is no such thing in Scotland as a "family coat-of-arms". Several people of the same name showing the same coat-of-arms would not only cause confusion, but their actions would devalue the system, and dodge identity."⁷

"Arms

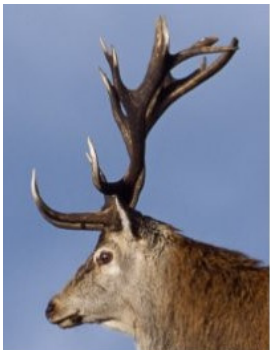
The primary heraldic device is the coat of arms, or arms. Arms are individual. THERE ARE NO FAMILY ARMS IN SCOTLAND. Some European countries have developed heraldic systems where anyone with a given surname can wear the same arms. This is unusual, however, and is not the case in most countries, including Scotland. Arms are granted to an individual and may only be bore by that individual and then passed on to his or her heir upon the armiger's death. This fact has been upheld in Scotland by the Acts of the Scottish Parliament of 1592 and 1672.

Cadency

While an armiger (one who bears arms) is still living, his descendants and relatives may display those arms by differencing them with cadency marks to identify them as the first son of the armiger, second daughter, and so on.... We will not go too much into cadency here, but it is enough to know what the term means."⁸

Cadency in Scotland, exists so that every legal user of a coat of arms may only use arms recorded (or "matriculated") in the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings, but with a personal variation, appropriate to that person's position in their family, as approved by the Lord Lyon. This means that in Scotland no two persons can ever simultaneously bear the same arms, even by accident. Father and son, father and daughter, head of family, and cousins, should bear distinctly similar arms, the main charge(s) being nearly identical, but with some difference(s) to represent each person in his unique place within that related and extended family.

Stags, or Red Deer (*Cervus Elaphus*), and Bucks, or Fallow Deer (*Dama Dama*), are indeed two distinct *sub-species* of deer in the animal kingdom, they are certainly not the same animal. It also does not matter how an emblazon (the artwork) is depicted, which may show one deer species resembling another, since the blazon (written description) is the paramount consideration in the recordation of Scottish arms. The blazon always takes precedence; it is the formal description used by heraldic painters to produce the armorial artwork.



Stag/Red Deer

Left: "Stag" Male Red Deer, *Cervus Elaphus*

Right: "Buck" Male Fallow deer, *Dama Dama*

Note the distinctly different antlers.



Buck/Fallow Deer

⁶<https://heraldryonline.wordpress.com/tag/thomson-of-corstorphine>

⁷ Gordon Casely, Herald Strategy Ltd., *Scot's Heraldry*, <http://www.tartansauthority.com/resources/heraldry/>

⁸ Newsome, *Scottish Heraldry*, © 1999, <https://albanach.org/scottish-heraldry-6d435dd1e987>

We might obtain a slightly different perspective of both deer sub-species when viewed face-to-face, as shown following.



Left: "Stag" Male Red Deer, Cervus Elaphus

Right: "Buck" Male Fallow deer, Dama Dama

From a frontal view the antlers appear somewhat similar, though not the same.

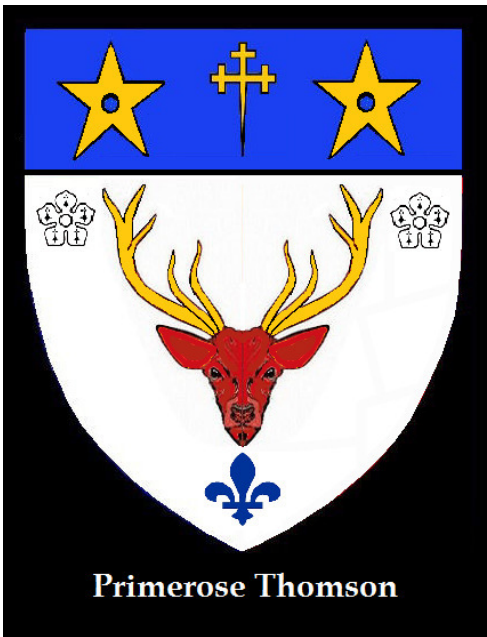
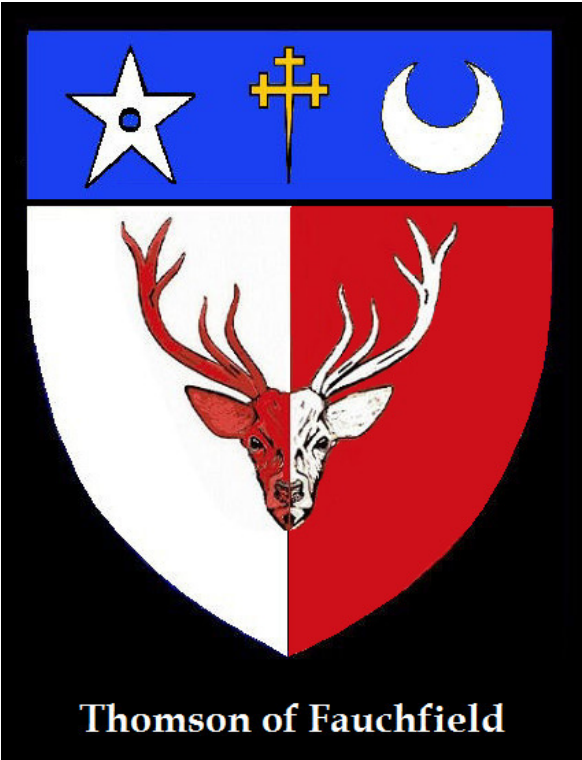


However, in heraldry, the blazon (written word) is the formal written description of the arms, and even if a deer is depicted in the artwork as resembling another sub-species, the blazon is considered official. Artwork does not excuse the distinct irregularities between Thomsons of Fauchfield, of Caltonhill, and the Primerose Thomson armorials. Primerose Thomson's arms more resemble Thomson of Fauchfield than does his father's. Caltonhill's arms do not display a family relationship or descent in proper heraldic terms whereby the difference should be a Stag Head in some form as the principle charge, and Primerose Thomson's arms ignore proper heraldry, without the slightest hint that Charles Thomson of Caltonhill was his father. Therefore, the Rules of Heraldry for this family group were ignored when the arms were granted; as they are all related, according to the genealogies present in the Public Register of all Arms and Bearings in Scotland.

From the Public Register of all Arms and Bearings in Scotland, in order of Matriculation (spelling preserved):

Thomson(e) of Fauchfield arms: *Mr. William Thomsons of Fauchfield Bears Parted per pale Argent & Gules a stags head cabossed & attyred with ten tynes counterchanged on a chief Azure a cross crosslet fitchee Or between a spurr-revel and a crescent as the first. Above the shield a helmet befitting his degree mantled gules doubled argent. The motto in an Escroll Deus Providebit - 1672 - the Register, page 430th, number 9 (blue supplied for emphasis.)*

Lineage as presented in the following pedigrees should expose the correct heraldic principle charge for a genetically related, common family. The charge would be that in the Arms of Thomson of Fauchfield, which is a stags head cabossed.

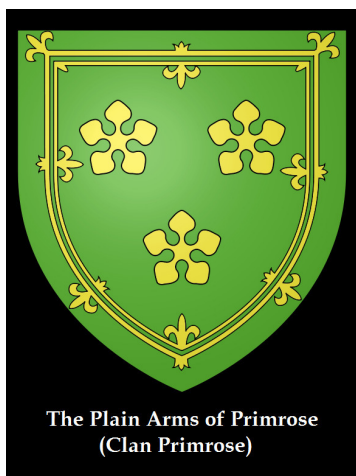


Primerose Thomson arms: *Primerose Thomson of London*

Esquire and Aid de Camp to Major General Sir Ayre Coole Knight of the most ancient and honourable order of the Bath and Commander in Chief of all the British Forces in the East Indies, son of Charles Thomson of Caltonhill Esquire in the County of Edinburgh and Elizabeth daughter of William Hamilton of Lotham Esquire in the County of Stirling a Captain in the Royal Regiment of Foot descended from the Family of the Duke of Hamilton who married Mary daughter of Hugh Montgomery of Coelsfield Esquire in the County of Air descended from the Family of the Earl of Eglinton, and Jean sister of James first

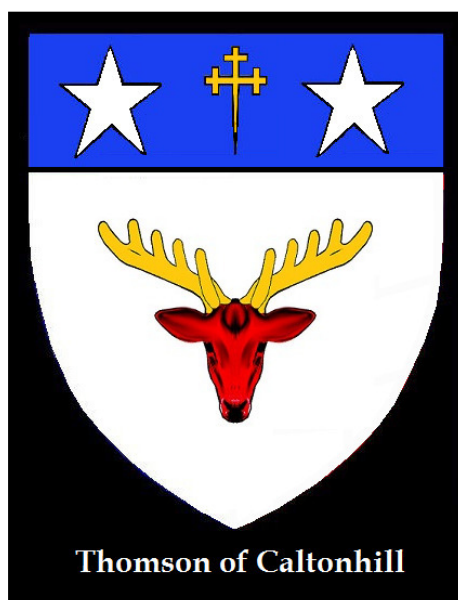
Note that Primerose Thomson arms, display a stags head cabossed, as does Thomson of Fauchfield, and according to the genealogies appended within the matriculations, this is correct heraldry. However, in time between these two grants of arms, is Thomson of Caltonhill, who displays

a bucks head cabossed, which is incorrect heraldry according to pedigrees. Caltonhill arms do not show descent from Fauchfield.



Viscount Primrose which Charles Thomson was the only son and heir of William Thomson Esquire of Edinburgh descended from the ancient Family of Thomson of Fauchfield in the County of Aberdeen BEARS Argent a stags head cabossed Gules attired Or; between two Cinquefoils Ermine, and a flower de lys in Base Azure on a chief of the last a cross crosslet fitched between two spur revels of the third CREST A lyon passant guardent Gules charged on the breast with a cross crosslet fitched Or. MOTTO Fortis et Fidus Matriculated 2nd June 1772 Ro. Boswell Lyon Dep.(uty) -1772 - the Register, pages 433d & 434th, number 29. (blue supplied for emphasis.)

Primrose Arms comparison. Primerose Thomson was granted *two Cinquefoils Ermine*, similar to the three primroses of Rosebury/Primerose. Reading the lineage supplied in Primerose Thomson's matriculation at Lyon Court, it would appear that the father (Thomson of Caltonhill) might bear the two Cinquefoils, as he is the closer of kin, by marriage, to Viscount Primrose.

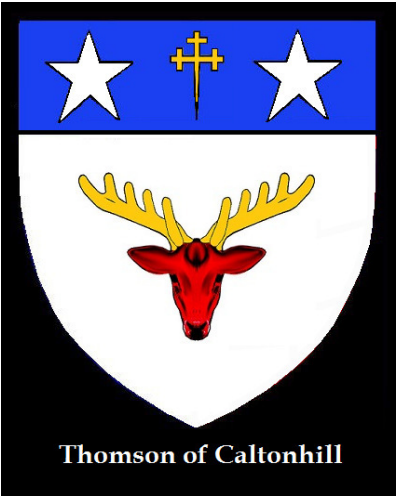


The peculiar Arms of Thomson of Caltonhill: *Charles Thomson of Caltonhill Esquire in the County of which Charles married Elizabeth daughter of William Hamilton of Lotham Esquire in the County of Stirling a Captain in the Royal Regiment of Foot and Mary daughter of Hugh Montgomery of Coelsfield Esquire in the County of Air descended from the family of the Earl of Eglinton and Jean sister of James first Viscount Primerose which Last William was son of Captain John Hamilton and Catherine daughter of James Aberuchill Esquire which John was son of John Hamilton of Muirhouse Esquire a Cadet of the Family of the Duke of Hamilton and Anne only daughter of James Elphinston of Innerdivot which Charles is only son and heir of William Thomson Esquire of Edinburgh descended from the ancient Family of Thomson of Fauchfield in the County of Aberdeen and Catherine daughter of Alexander Urie Esquire of Leith BEARS Argent a bucks head cabossed Gules attired Or on a chief Azure a cross crosslet*

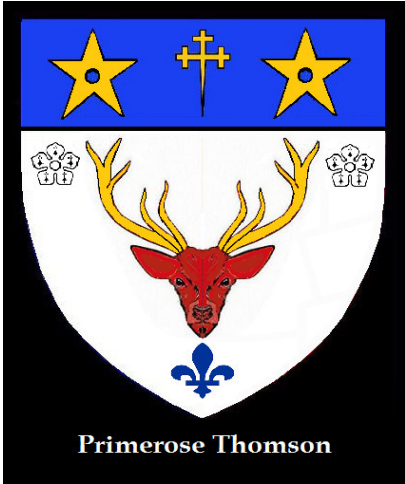
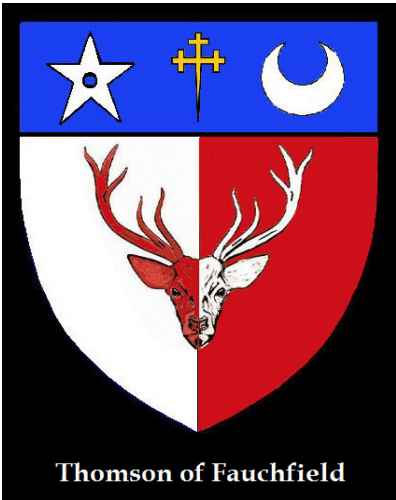
fitched of the third between two mullets of the field CREST A lyon passant guardent Gules charged on the breast with a cross crosslet fitched Or. MOTTO Fortis et Fidus Matriculated 19th April 1775 Ro. Boswell, Lyon Dep.(uty) - 1775 - the Register, page 434th, number 30. (blue supplied for emphasis.)

Conclusions on genealogy, dates and blazons:

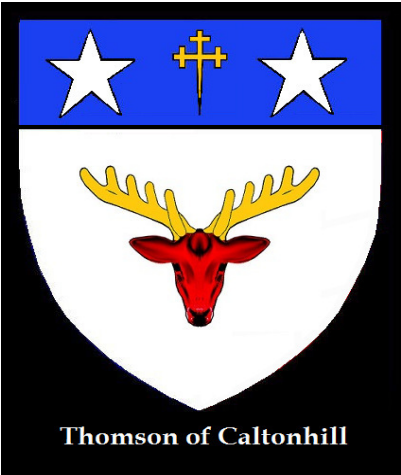
1. Primerose Thomson is the son of Charles Thomson of Caltonhill, but the son is matriculated 3 years before his father. The son bears a stags head in arms.
2. Charles Thomson of Caltonhill is officially recorded as descending of the ancient family of Thomson of Fauchfield, but he bears a Bucks head in Arms.
3. Thomson of Fauchfield bears a stags head, antlers attired with 10 tynes (points) as principle charge, yet Thomson of Caltonhill being a direct descendent of Fauchfield, was granted a bucks head. Thus the Principle charge granted to Caltonhill (bucks head) does not evoke descent from the designated main family of Fauchfield (stags head).
4. These entries in the Public Register are not accompanied by emblazons, so it cannot be surmised how the heraldic painter may have depicted the arms of the three Thomsons noted.
5. As blazon (written word) takes precedence over emblazon, Caltonhill's arms are both blazoned and emblazoned incorrectly to show true descent from Fauchfield.



It is heraldically impossible for
<< THIS
to descend from
THIS >>



And further...
It is heraldically impossible for
<< THIS
to descend from
THIS >>



Additionally, a son's arms are normally shown with only a mark(s) of cadency, a method of distinguishing descent, and even though Primerose Thomson's arms were matriculated three years before his father's (Charles Thomson of Caltonhill), father's and son's arms do not show descent by cadency in heraldic terms.

Also of note are the lesser charges on the blue chiefs of Caltonhill and his son, Primerose Thomson. Gold (Or) in heraldry is the superior metal to Argent (Silver). The son's charges in the blue chief are all **Or** and appear superior to his father's. This too is an error of blazon, a father being superior to his son.



The more likely blazon for Thomson of Caltonhill arms might have been the reverse of Thomson of Fauchfield, as shown at left:

Some few people have suggested, and quite erroneously, that since Thomson of Caltonhill's armorial bears a buck head, and his date of Matriculation (1775), and before MacTavish of Dunardry (1793), that **somehow** there exists a relationship between the Lowland and Midland Thomsons to the Highland MacTavishes. Thomson of Caltonhill is the only Thomson armorial recorded at the Court of the Lord Lyon bearing a bucks head charge; his arms do not follow cadency rules within a family. This presents a huge conundrum for the heraldic community.

The suggested relationship, made by some Thomsons goes even farther; insinuating that MacTavish is in some mysterious manner a cadet of Thomson, based on the bucks head charge displayed on both Thomson of Caltonhill and MacTavish arms. This hypothetical cadetship of MacTavish is further formed around (what is referred to as) **"the greater Thomson name", whatever that means(?)**. Since Thomsons are of varied origins, many of them Teutonic, of Scandanavian descent, or even French, and MacTavish is of ancient Northern Irish Gaelic origin, the suggested relationship is, quite simply, ludicrous. Literally, there is no foundation for MacTavish being a cadet of any Scottish Lowland, Midland, or Border Thomson family lineage. No historical records exist that would even suggest such a relationship. None-the-less, people are attempting to change historical facts to suit their own goals, whatever those goals may be. Researching MacTavish history bears the truth.

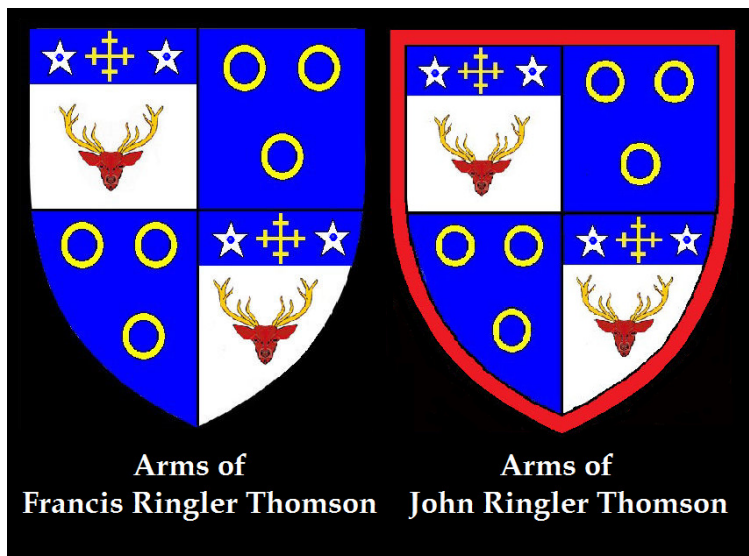


Above: **1793 Arms of Lachlan MacTavish of Dunardry** are: *Quarterly, 1st and 4th a Gyronny of eight Sable and Or; 2nd and 3rd, Argent, a*

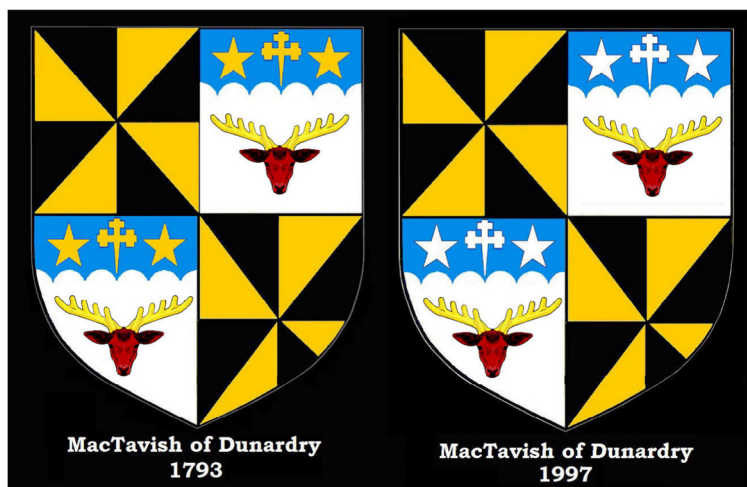
buck's head cabossed Gules attired Or on a chief engrailed Azure a cross crosslet fitchée between two mullets Or. Above the shield a helmet befitting his degree mantled gules doubled argent. Crest a boar's head erased Or langued Gules. Motto: NON OBLITUS. the Register, April 1793, page 563, number 242.

The heraldic painter of Lachlan MacTavish of Dunardry's armorial, above left, appears to have attempted the rendering of the bucks (Dama Dama) head antlers as palmated (flattened or moose-like) as is sub-species correct, however they do appear somewhat like stag antlers. Additionally the minor charges in the Azure (Blue) Chief engrailed are all Or (Gold), and the helm's visor is rimmed with gold (dark with age).

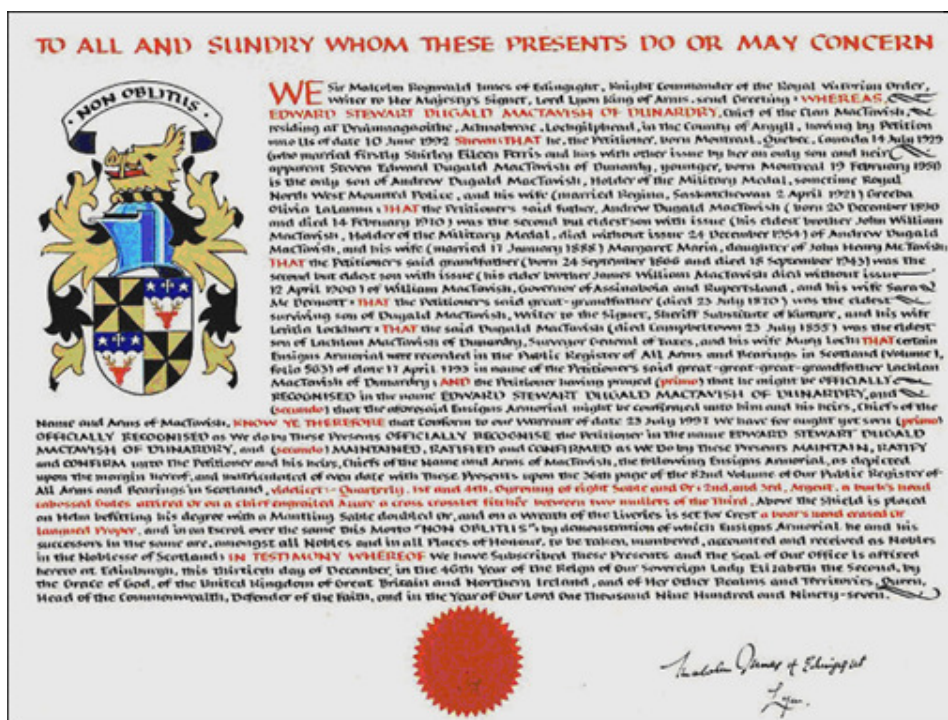
The minor charges of MacTavish arms in the chief engrailed in 1793 are, *on a chief engrailed Azure a cross crosslet fitchée between two mullets Or* (gold), but with the affirmation of E.S. Dugald MacTavish of Dunardry as Chief of the Clan MacTavish in 1997, the minor charges in the chief engrailed become Argent (silver). Why this occurs is unknown.



Arms of Francis Ringler Thomson John Ringler Thomson



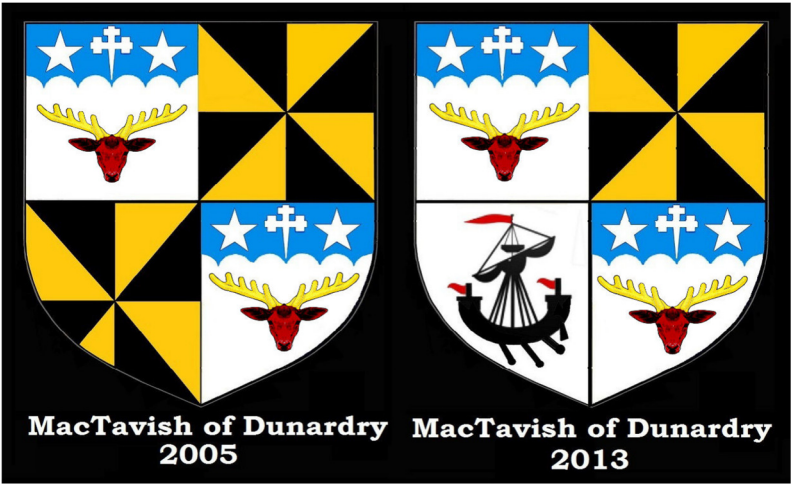
Velum Image: Matriculation of Arms of E.S. Dugald MacTavish of Dunardry, 13 December 1997, velum image below. The Grant of arms became unassailable after 10 years. The minor charges in chief are all Argent (Silver).



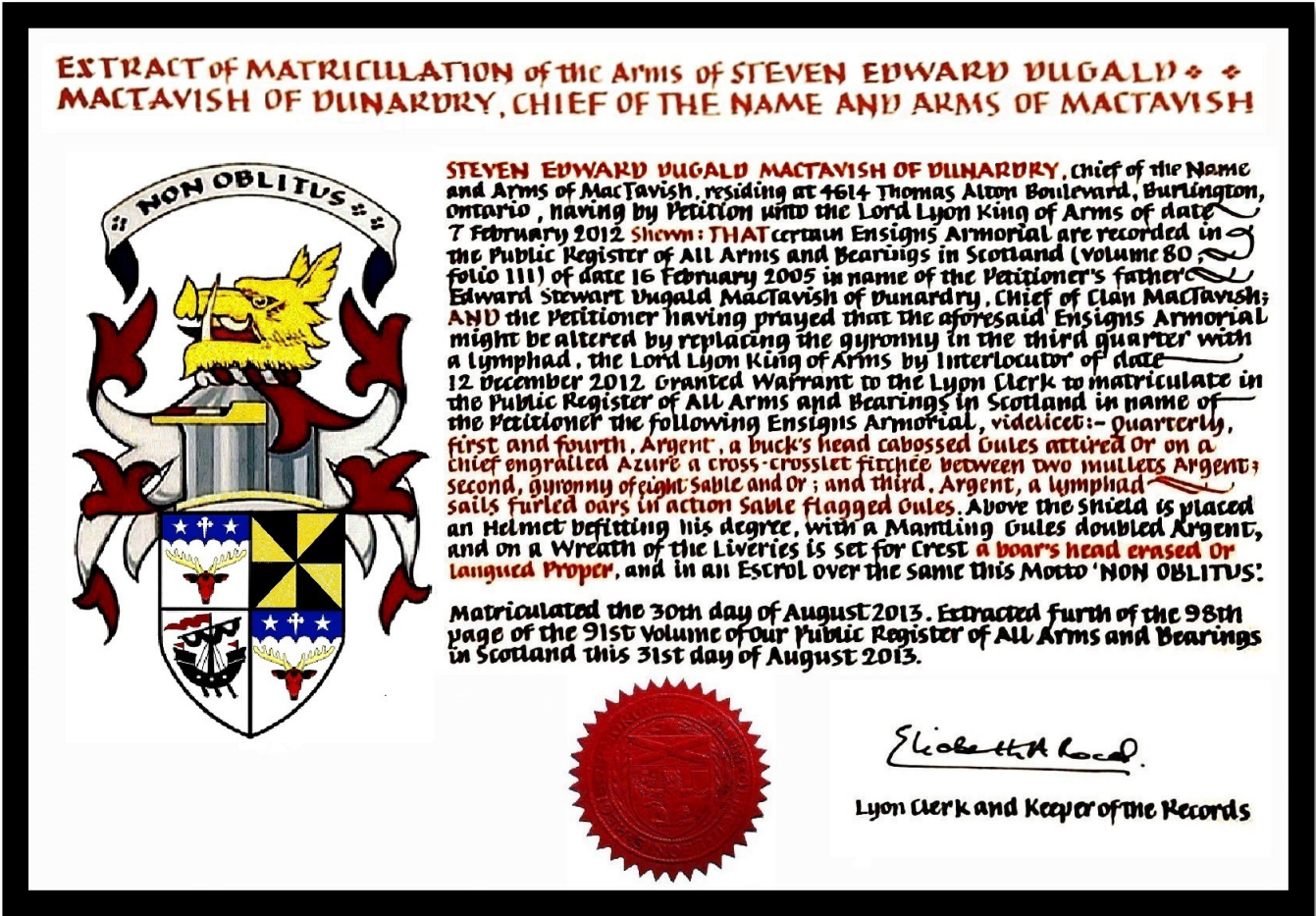
Velum Image: Extract of Matriculation of E. S. Dugald MacTavish of Dunardry,
16 February 2005, arms quarters reversed.



Additional research provided that MacTavish of Dunorsan/Dunroston, Knapdale, a brother of Dunardry, borne gyronnies quartered with lymphads, allowing emendation the Arms of MacTavish of Dunardry to include the West Highland Lymphad in 2013

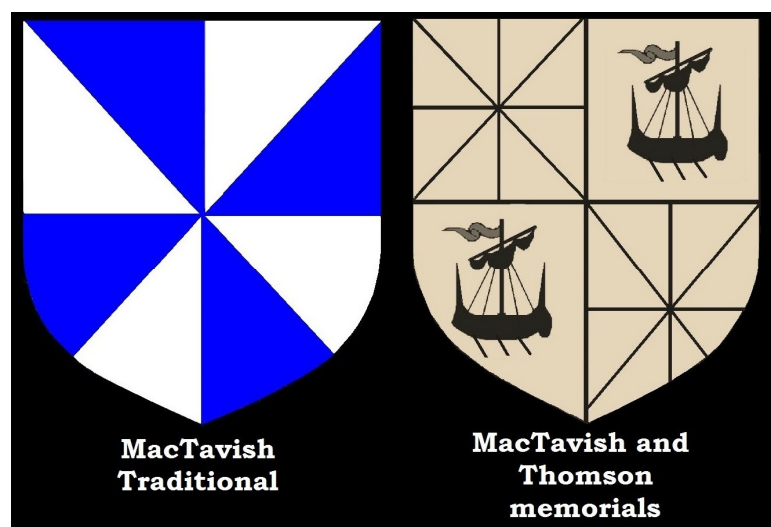


Velum Image: Extract of Matriculation for Steven Edward Dugald MacTavish of Dunardry,
31st August 2013. The West Highland Lymphad (sailing ship) placed in the 3rd quarter in 2013.



Above: The current matriculated Arms of Chief Steven MacTavish of Dunardry.

If blazoning and emblazoning strictly follow the Scottish Rules of Heraldry and cadency, then a stag head cabossed is not, nor can it be mistaken for, *or replaced by*, a bucks head cabossed. The ultimate question then arises: *Why does Thomson of Caltonhill's armorial bear a bucks head?* His pedigree certainly dispels its use.

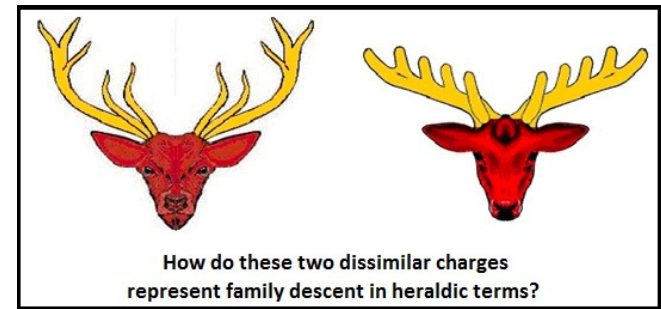


As mentioned by the 10 Duke of Argyll (*The Clan Tavish, booklet*), the Arms of MacTavish displayed a *gyronny of eight argent and azure* [silver and blue], which was never matriculated at Lyon Court, nor is there a true example of these arms emblazoned, found anywhere. Yet the arms displayed on the gravestone memorial of Hugh MacTavish of Dunorsan, brother to Dunardry, at Kilmichael Inverlussay cemetery, Knapdale, recorded in, *Ecclesiastical Monuments*, RCAHMS, vol 7, #72, pp. 151,152. as: quartered Gyronnies and Galleys, similar to those borne by the Duke of Argyll. The stone memorial monument is not the traditional armorial referred to by the 10 Duke of Argyll, Niall

Diarmid Campbell, and it shows no marks of cadency, to insinuate subordination to the Duke of ARGYLL, Chief of Clan Campbell. The gyronny ought to be reversed from Campbell in tincture and metal, or as the traditional gyronny.

It should be noted again that not every Scottish Thomson is identified by a "deer head" symbol.

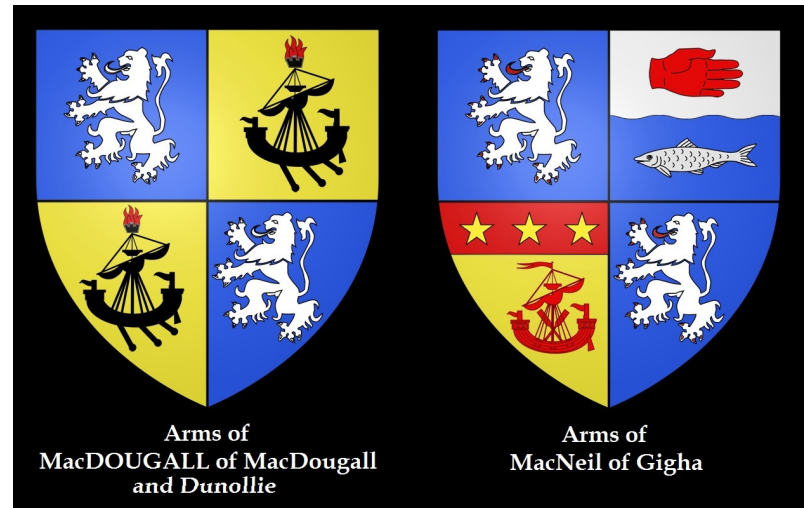
There is one other gravestone monument which warrants a look at MacTavish heraldry. This is the gravestone of Dougald Thomson, a tenant farmer in Strachur (Parish of Strachur and Strathlachlan, in Cowal) on Loch Fyne, Argyll. It is rendered identical to that of Hugh MacTavish of Dunorsan (previously). It does however bear the Campbell Motto, *Ne Obliviscaris*, which is not present on the Dunorsan/Dunrostan stone. Dougald Thomson and his wife, Margaret MacKinlay, had eleven children, the second of whom was John Thomson, who received his primary education in Strachur. He went on to become a well-respected mathematician and authored *A Manuscript of Twelve Algorithms from 1 to 120,000* which was presented by Thomson's sister, Catherine, then resident in Greenock, to the Royal Astronomic Society in 1873



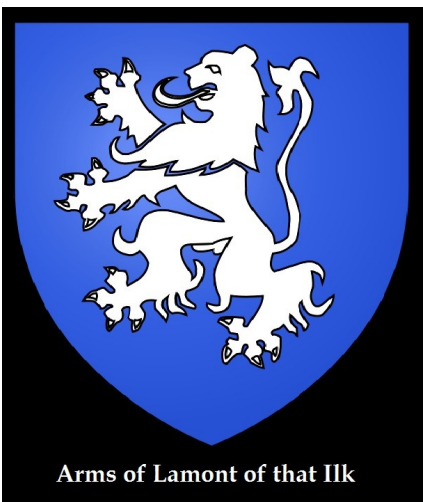
If heraldry depicts one sub-species of animal identical to another, an additional question must be asked: *When a blazon is written why would it present offending wording that is different from the principal charge within a genetically related family structure?* There appears to be no rule in Scottish heraldry that allows such a discrepancy, and if there is such a rule, it is certainly not clearly documented.

The interpretation of charges seems to rule out the possible change of a principle charge within a family structure being altered without extremely good cause. The armorial of Thomson of Caltonhill appears to be a case of bad heraldry, based on the genealogical information present in the *Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland*.⁹

Comparing MacTavish arms to Thomson arms is like comparing MacDougall of MacDougall arms to MacNeil of Gigha arms. MacDougall and MacNeil arms look very similar, and both depict a White Lion Rampant on a Blue



field, but each family/clan has a distinct origin. Would they also then be related to Lamont? Absolutely not; none of these three




share any close familial relationship.

⁹ The three Thomsons noted in pedigree are all related. Thomson of Caltonhill and Primerose Thomson are descended of Thomson of Fauchfield. There is no indication of any kind, found anywhere, that these particular Thomsons are related to anyone from Clan MacTavish, hence no comparison or relationship is possible.

The following letter from Lord Lyon, David Sellar¹⁰, dispels any hypnotically relationship (familial or heraldic) of MacTavish to the Lowland Thomsons, or MacThomas to the Lowland Thomsons. There simply is no relationship. Those few persons claiming that any such relationship exists are quite simply.....incorrect.

David Sellar, FSAScot, FRHistS
Lord Lyon King of Arms



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Fax: 0131-557 2148

Our Ref: DS/BG

20 May 2013

CONFIDENTIAL

Donley Tomey, Esq.,
454 Brad Avenue,
Washington,
PA 15301-1412,
United States of America

Dear Mr. Tomey,

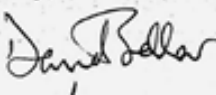
Thank you for your letter of May 7th.

The difficulty which you point to, as I imagine you are aware, arises from the fact that the surnames Thomson (as this surname is usually spelt in Scotland), MacTavish and, for that matter, MacThomas all mean “son of Thomas”, looking back to an eponym of that Christian name, the original “Thomas” in each case being different. The Arms associated with these three surnames are different. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that it would appear that in the course of time some MacTavishes and some MacThomases have anglicised their surname to Thomson or Thoms; they, of course, remain heraldically MacTavishes or MacThomases. The MacTavishes and the MacThomases are Highland clans, the MacTavishes being associated with the Campbells and coming from Argyll, and the MacThomases being members of the Clan Chattan in the north east of the country.

The position as regards the surname Thomson, when not an anglicised version of MacTavish or MacThomas, is more complicated. It is worth noting that seventeen of the name of Thomson recorded Arms between 1672, when the Public Register begins, and 1800, several of them with territorial designations; and that these Arms are recognisably similar, being based on “Argent a stag’s head Gules” or similar – but quite different from the Arms of MacTavish and MacThomas. Alexander Thomson, Bute Pursuivant, recorded Arms in 1724, and Henry Thomson was Lyon King of Arms at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Thomsons appears to have been more scattered than the MacTavishes and the MacThomases and were predominantly of Lowland or Border stock. They cannot be described as a Highland clan. However, there is an increasing tendency (see, for example, “The Highlander” magazine) to describe families and family organisations, both Highland and Lowland, as “clans”, and although this does represent a shift in nomenclature over the last thirty years or so, it cannot be said to be incorrect.

I trust that the above is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely,



There is no cat! The room is empty!

¹⁰ Used by permission of Mr. Donley Tomey, Lieutenant to Chief Steven MacTavish of Dunardry, and Mrs. Elizabeth Roads, Lyon Clerk and Keeper of the Records, and Snawdoun Herald, the Court of the Lord Lyon. Readers may contact the Court of the Lord Lyon to authenticate this letter.