

Spotlight on the Murray Clan

Find out more about Murray Clan with this clan spotlight.

The Murray's trace their heritage back to the 12th Century and take their name from the great province of Moray, once a local kingdom. It was during this time that the Flemish lords crossed the North Sea and established themselves in the Scottish realm. Among them was Freskin, son of Ollec. Either Freskin or his son William intermarried with the ancient royal house of Moray. The senior line of the Murray's took the surname of Sutherland and became Earls of Sutherland in 1235.

Thereafter the chiefs of the Murray's were the Lords of Petty in Moray, who also became Lords of Bothwell in Clydesdale before 1253. An heir of this line, Sir Andrew Murray was the brilliant young general who, along with William Wallace, led the Scots in 1297 in their first uprising against the English conquerors. He was mortally wounded while winning his famous victory at Stirling Bridge. His son, Sir Andrew Murray, 4th Lord of Bothwell, 3rd Regent of Scotland, married Christian Bruce, a sister of King Robert the Bruce. He was captured at Roxburgh early in 1333 and was a prisoner in England at the time of the battle of Halidon Hill. He obtained his freedom in time to march to the relief of his wife, who was bravely defending Kildrumny Castle. Sir Andrew commenced with unabated spirit to struggle in the cause of independence and died in 1338. The last Murray Lord of Bothwell died in 1360 of the plague.

The chiefship of the Murray's fell into doubt amongst the various scattered branches of the name—from Sutherland and Murray itself—through Perthshire and Stirlingshire to Annandale, and the Borders. By the sixteenth century, the Murray's of Tullibardine in Strathearn had assumed the leadership of the Murray's. Bands of Association formally

confirmed this in 1586 and 1589. Lairds from all over Scotland recognized the supremacy of the line of Sir John Murray.

Sir John became the 1st Earl of Tullibardine in 1606. Thus, the Tullibardine hegemony was firmly established between the Murray's.

The 2nd Earl of Tullibardine married Lady Dorothea Stewart, heiress of the Earls of Atholl in 1629 and Marquises from 1676. To their medieval peacock's head crest (motto: Praise—ready), they added the mermaid (motto: Tout Prêt—quite ready), as Lords of Balquidder; and in the 17th Century they took the demi-savage holding a sword and a key commemorating the capture of the last Lord of the Isles by the 1st Stewart Earl of Atholl in 1475; hence, the motto: Furth, Fortune, and Fill the Fetters—go forth against your enemies, have good fortune, and return with hostages and booty.

Prior to 1703 the Murray chiefs were the Earls of Atholl. They have been the Dukes of Atholl since then. For a time in the 18th Century the Murray Dukes of Atholl were also Sovereign Lords of the Isle of Man, with their own coinage and parliament: The House of Keys. The 1st Duke's younger son, Lord George Murray, was the courageous Jacobite general responsible for the highlander's astonishing successes throughout the 1745 uprising.

The Murray Clan plant badges are the juniper (aitionn), for Atholl and the butcher's broom (gaigbhealaidh), for Murray. The crest badges are the Peacock, Mermaid, and Demi-Savage.

Pipe music of the Murray Clan is the "Atholl Highlander."

There are a number of Murray tartans, but only four are generally available today: Murray of Atholl (ancient) Murray of Atholl (modern), Murray of Elibank, and Murray of Tullibardine.

Currently recognized septs or allied family names of the Murray Clan are: Balneaves, Dinsmore, Dunsmore, Fleming, Moray, Murrie,

Neaves, Piper, Pyper, Smail, Smale, Small, Smeal, and Spalding.

Chief of the Murray Clan is His Grace, Bruce G.R. Murray, 12th Duke of Atholl. Among the numerous subsidiary titles he holds are: Lord Murray of Tullibardine (1604); Earl of Atholl (1629); Earl of Tullibardine (1629 and 1676); Marquess of Atholl (created 1676); Viscount of Balquhiddy (1676); Lord Murray, Balvenie and Gask (1676); and Earl of Strathtay and Strathardle (1703). All of the titles belong in the peerage of Scotland. The present Duke of Atholl lives in South Africa.

There are active Murray Clan Societies in Great Britain, North America, Australia, and New Zealand.

Murray of Atholl crest:



Murray of Atholl (modern) tartan:



12th Duke of Atholl inspecting Atholl Highlanders:

