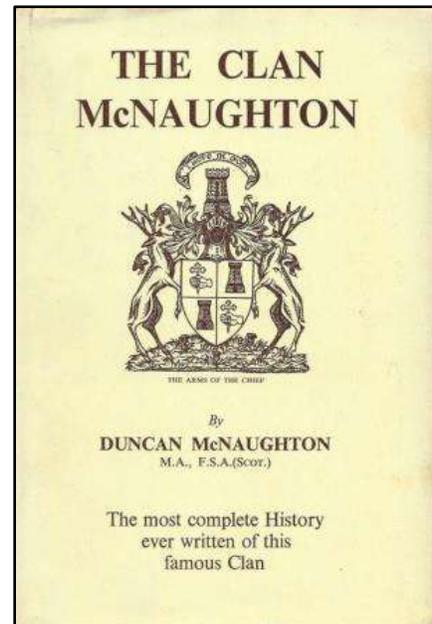


# ARE YOU WITH CLAN MACNACHTAN?

By Ken McNaughton

Belonging to a clan is an excellent way of celebrating Scottish heritage, but how can you tell which clan you belong to? The Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide (CMAW) draws on six authorities [1-6].

The clan system is closely bound up with Scottish heraldry [7]. The best definition of a clan provided by a heraldic authority is contained in Nisbet's "System of Heraldry" [8] published in 1722—*social group consisting of an aggregate of distinct erected families actually descended, or accepting themselves as descendants of a common ancestor, and which has been received by the Sovereign through its Supreme Officer of Honor, the Lord Lyon, as an honorable community whereof all of the members on establishing right to, or receiving fresh grants of, personal hereditary nobility will be awarded arms as determinate or indeterminate cadets both as may be of the chief family of the clan.*



A clan is therefore a community that is both distinguished by heraldry and recognized by the Sovereign. At the head of this honorable community is the chief. He is the only person entitled to display the undifferentiated shield of Arms, i.e., without any marks of dependency upon any other noble house. Chiefship is a title of honor and dignity within the nobility of Scotland. Any claimant to such a title must establish, to the satisfaction of the Lord Lyon representing the Sovereign, that he or she is entitled to the undifferentiated arms of the community over which they seek to preside. It is the determining of chiefship that is among the Lyon Court's central work. Many of the cases that have come before the Lyon Court in the last fifty years have related to the chiefships of clans. There are now about 140 clans that have chiefs recognized by the Lord Lyon. A clan or family that has a recognized chief or head confers noble status on the clan or family, which gives it a legally recognized status and a corporate identity. A family or name group that has no recognized chief has no official position under the law of Scotland.

Every person who has the same surname as the chief is deemed to be a member of the clan. Equally a person who offers allegiance to the chief is recognized as a member of the clan unless the chief decides that he (or she) will not accept that person's allegiance. There is no official list of recognized septs. This is a matter for each chief to determine. But where a particular sept has traditionally been associated with a particular clan it would not be appropriate for that name to be treated by another clan chief as one of its septs.

DUNCAN MCNAUGHTON

Duncan McNaughton devotes a chapter of his book [1] to "Family Names Associated with the Clan McNaughton [pp. 63-66].



Weirs are not, however, McNaughtons; it will depend on whether their ancestors originated in these areas. There were also McNairs in central Perthshire who might have had some McNaughton connections. The **McCeols**, [**McKeols**] or **McColls** of Lochgilphead and Kilmory are also said to be McNaughtons.

Still in Kintyre, another family name that must be considered is **McVicar** and its derivative **McQuaker**. The McNaughtons were not the only Highland clan associated with Vicars but the Kintyre McVicars and, more especially, the Kenmore family may claim an association, though, while the Kenmore McVicars' descent is clear, the Fortingall McVicars might well be McGregors descended from the family of the Dean of Lismore.

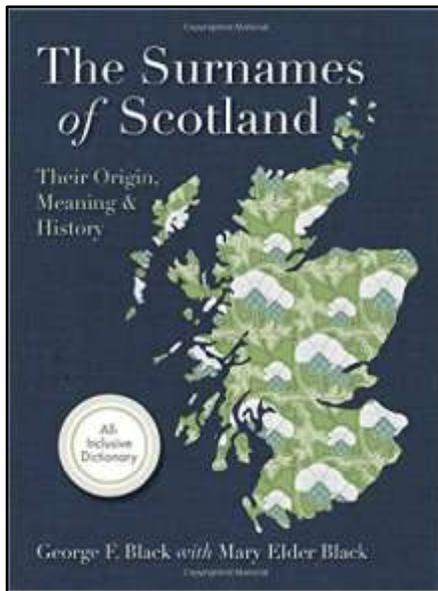


Figure 3. Dr. Philip D. Smith, author of "Tartan for Me!"

The largest sept is of course the **McNaughts** . . . and their ranks have been swollen by McNaughtons who dropped the last syllable of their name at some time or other. Nevertheless, the McNaughts of the Borders were a separate entity, with arms different from those of the McNaughtons. A branch of this Border family are the **McMaths** who, in the seventeenth century at least, still regarded themselves as McNaughts and used the same arms. Other forms of this name have proved problematical. The **McKnights**, **McNutts** and **McNitts** are found mainly in Ireland and, though the first form is common in Galloway, many of these must be connected with the Irish Clan O'Nechtan. The late V. V. McNitt believed, however, that many McNaughts crossed over to Ireland either as mercenaries or at the time of the Plantations of Ulster in 1613. Other variations are **Naughty** and **McNeid**.

A very common name in Scotland and England is **Henry** or **Hendry**, the Scottish equivalent being **McHenry** or **McHendry**, but only a limited number of them can claim McNaughton ancestry. These are the Argyllshire McHenries etc. with derivatives **McKendrich**, **McKenrick** etc. who traditionally claim descent from Henry Mor, son of Nectan, who settled at Callart, Kinlochleven, [in the year] 1011 . . .

Turning to Strathtay, there are four names originating in the area that have definite historical associations with the McNaughtons. The McVicars have already been mentioned, but another less-known group, perhaps now died out, are the Strathtay **MacAys** or **Mackays**. The name is derived from Aedh or Ay, the McNaughton whose seat was at Garth in the fourteenth century. Further east the name was anglicized as **Ayson** and **Easson** and occurs in the followers of the Wolf of Badenoch, the unruly son of Robert II in the fourteenth century. A Fergus MacAidh in 1358 may have given his name to the **MacFerguses** or even the **Fergusons** in Strathtay . . .



The **McIntaylor** McNaughtons were to be found in the parish of Kenmore, though the Rev. Mr. Gillies, in his book “In Famed Breadalbane” thought they had all gone from the district.

Further north in Glenlyon, some mystery surrounds the name **Porter**. According to some writers there was an infusion of McNaughtons from Argyll, rejoicing under the designation of Clan Porter. This may have occurred in the fourteenth or early fifteenth century, but if it did the question of their origin has never been satisfactorily explained. Various interpretations of the name have been offered, varying from “ferryman” to “captain of a galley.” The Castle of the Two Oars [*Dunderave*] immediately springs to mind, but, if the name was in use at the beginning of the fourteenth century when

the castle was situated in Glen Shira, where was the ferry? Perhaps the captain of the galley and his followers did indeed come over one of the passes to populate upper Glenlyon. However, again, the thousands of descendants of everyday Porters are not McNaughtons. No such surname has been noted in Fortingall parish from 1745 onwards.

Finally, a newcomer to the list is the name **McCracken**, and its Irish cousin **McGratten**. Both are McNaughton in origin, the name being derived from the Gaelic for McNaughton, Macreachtan.

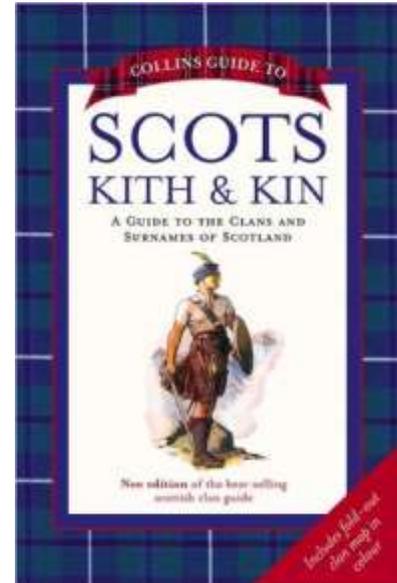
There may be other families associated with the McNaughtons whose origins have never been investigated. One such are the **MacNicols** of Glenshira who for more than a century held Elrig Mor, Elrig Beg and numerous other lands from the Dunderawe family, and who, on that account, have as good a claim to be called a sept of the McNaughtons as do the other families mentioned. The name also occurs in Strathtay.

In the [19<sup>TH</sup>] century there has been a movement to revive the clan spirit by forming clan associations that organize social gatherings, encourage research into clan history and even buy back portions of ancient clan lands to provide a center in which to exhibit historical records or relics and act as a nucleus for further encouragement of efforts of this nature. Some such attempt was made in the nineteenth century for the McNaughtons, but it apparently foundered on the correct spelling of the name. For those with some knowledge of the history of surnames, this was ridiculous. There never was, until modern times, any uniformity in the spelling of names, which varied according to the whim of writer or clerk. Within broad limits, those who spell the final syllable “-ton” tend to have stemmed from Perthshire, while those with “-tan” are more likely to have originated in Argyll.

The form “Mc” or “Mac,” with or without a capital “N,” depended on the individual preference of either the family or the session clerk who recorded the name.”

#### OTHER AUTHORITIES

Through an examination of this work by Duncan McNaughton and other Scottish authorities [2-6] the Clan Macnachten Association compiled a list of 243 surnames that may be associated with the clan, showing which authorities listed each name. Not everybody with these names will automatically be a member of the clan, but if your name is on this list, you may be associated. None of the names starting with “Mac-“ are shown starting “Mc-“. If we included the latter, the total would be 440.



I assembled an Excel list of these names [9] by cutting and pasting the list from an electronic copy of *The Red Banner* for 15 June 2007. There are six columns to the right of the names, one column for each of the six authorities. For each name, there is an “x” in the column for every authority that credited the name as part of the McNaughton Clan. The sheet acts as a density graph of authentication—the more x’s, the more the authorities agree. I have added a seventh column for [Electric Scotland](#) [10]. Electric Scotland claims to be the largest and most comprehensive site on the history and culture of Scotland and the Scots at home and abroad. Started in 1997, it includes a list of clan septs and dependents compiled by an ex Lord Lyon. The three clans with the most names are Clan Buchanan with 171 names, Clan MacDonald with 148 and Clan McNaughton with 139. I found two duplicate McNaughton names on the Electric Scotland list and ten that were not listed by any of the six CMAW referees. These ten names are the only ones shown on my list with upper and lower case letters.

The Standing Council of Scottish Clans (SCSC) was founded in 1952 and lists on its website the chief or representative of 119 Scottish clans, including the current chief of Clan McNaughton. *Wikipedia* lists seven chiefs who, by their own request have been removed as members of the SCSC—Carnegie, Fergusson, Haig, Lindsay Menzies, Murray and Ruthven.

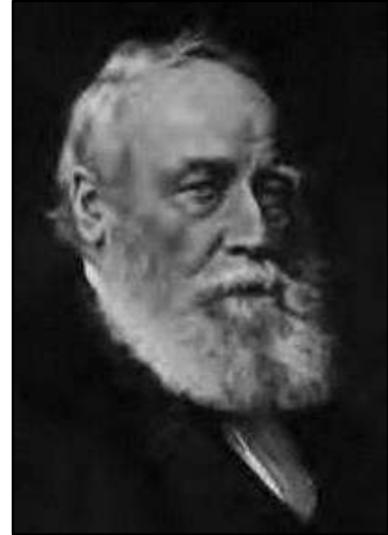
**Duncan McNaughton** is well respected in the clan because he published “the most complete history ever written of this famous clan” in 1977. I like his style because he is meticulous without being autocratic. I am grateful I was able to correspond with him briefly in 1978; he sent me some small corrections to paste in his book.

In 1938 the **Reverend William Alexander Gillies** published a history of a district of the Grampian Mountains in western Perthshire bordered by Lochaber and Atholl in the north and Strathearn and Menteith in the south. It begins with an account of the region in earliest times and proceeds through the coming of the Scots, the Celtic church, the coming of the Campbells, the establishment of the Campbells of Breadalbane and into the 20th century. It is of particular relevance for the Campbell, MacNab, Buchanan, Cameron, Dewar, Drummond, MacDonald, MacDougall, MacEwen, MacFarlane, MacGregor, MacIntyre, Mackay, Mackenzie, McNaughton and Menzies families, as well as many others.

**Figure 6. William F. Skene, author of "The Highlanders of Scotland."**

**Philip D. Smith, Jr.** is Professor Emeritus of Languages and Linguistics at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. He has a certificate in advanced studies in Gaelic from Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic College, on the Isle of Skye and has written more than sixty books. His popular "Tartan for Me!" is now in the eighth revised edition.

**Dr. George Fraser Black** (1865-1948), a lifelong librarian, emigrated from Scotland to the U.S. in 1896. He was on the staff of the New York Public Library and its predecessor, the Astor Library from 1896 to 1931. His scholarly publications included bibliographies, reference works and grammars. He was a frequent contributor to the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*.



"**Scots Kith & Kin**" was first published in 1953 and was revised in 1989 by the Harper Collins "Celtic staff." It contains 4,000 Scottish family names and their clan affiliations. [The House of Tartan](#) calls this "the most widely known source for Clan and District connections."

**William Forbes Skene** (1809-1892) was a Scottish historian and antiquary. He was educated at Edinburgh Academy in Edinburgh and at the University of St Andrews. His early interest in the history and antiquities of the Scottish Highlands bore its first fruit in 1837 when he published "The Highlanders of Scotland, their Origin, History and Antiquities." One of our Clan's most respected historians, Angus I. Macnaghten [11], was highly critical of the Skene Manuscript, supposedly discovered by William F. Skene. Of the six referees for the 243 McNaughton septs, Skene is used only 21 times, less than that any of the other five referees.

#### ARE YOU A MEMBER?

According to the SCSC, "Every person who has the same surname as the chief is deemed to be a member of the clan." Nisbet adds "or accepting themselves as descendants of a common ancestor." The SCSC goes on, "Equally a person who offers allegiance to the chief is recognized as a member of the clan unless the chief decides that he will not accept that person's allegiance." How many people down the ages offered allegiance to the chief? What were their names? We don't have continuous written records from the time of King Nechtan to the present. DNA can't help us, because not all the members of the Clan in olden times were closely related. If you have done your research, checked out all the possibilities, looked at our list of Septs and want to join the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide, we say "Welcome aboard!" Explore our website. Read our articles. Become a member. Contact our genealogist. And enjoy the ride. You are part of a rich and colorful heritage. You are part of our family.

#### NOTES

The two opening paragraphs of this essay are taken from Reference 7 with minor edits for an American audience; please refer to the original for any questions. The numbers of the first six references have been synchronized with the numbers of the references in the list of Septs on the

website of the Clan Macnachtan Association Worldwide. Some of those references have been expanded with the help of Amazon booklists, quoting the original publisher and date where possible. Later editions may be from a different publisher. For an excellent Frequently Asked Questions (with answers) about Scottish clans check Ref. 12. There are many ways to spell the name of our clan. In this essay I often use the spelling of my own name, a common choice.

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