

## URQUHART

Source: *The Scottish Highlands, Highland Clans and Highland Regiments, Volume II (of 2)* by Sir John Scott Keltie

Urquhart, or Urchard, is the name of a minor clan (Urachdun), originally settled in Cromarty (badge, the wallflower), a branch of the clan Forbes. Nisbet says,—“A brother of Ochonchar, who slew the bear, and was predecessor of the Lords Forbes, having in keeping the castle of Urquhart, took his surname from the place.” This castle stood on the south side of Loch Ness, and was in ancient times a place of great strength and importance, as is apparent from its extensive and magnificent ruins. In that fabulous work, “The true pedigree and lineal descent of the most ancient and honourable family of Urquhart, since the creation of the world, by Sir Thomas Urquhart, Knight of Cromartie,” the origin of the family and name is ascribed to Ourqhartus, that is, “fortunate and well-beloved,” the familiar name of Esormon, of whom the eccentric author describes himself as the 128th descendant. He traces his pedigree, in a direct line, even up to Adam and Eve, and somewhat inconsistently makes the word Urquhart have the same meaning as Adam, namely, red earth.

The family of Urquhart is one of great antiquity. In Hailes’ Annals, it is mentioned that Edward I. of England, during the time of the competition for the Scottish crown, ordered a list of the sheriffs in Scotland to be made out. Among them appears the name of William Urquhart of Cromartie, heritable sheriff of the county. He married a daughter of Hugh, Earl of Ross, and his son Adam obtained charters of various lands. A descendant of his, Thomas Urquhart of Cromartie, who lived in the 16th century, is said to have been father of 11 daughters and 25 sons. Seven of the latter fell at the battle of Pinkie in 1547, and from another descended the Urquharts of Newhall, Monteagle, Kinbeachie, and Braelangwell.

The eldest son, Alexander Urquhart of Cromartie, had a charter from James V. of the lands of Inch Rory and others, in the shires of Ross and Inverness, dated March 7, 1532. He had two sons. The younger son, John Urquhart, born in 1547, became tutor to his grand-nephew, Sir Thomas Urquhart, and was well known afterwards by the designation of the “Tutor of Cromartie.” He died November 8, 1631, aged 84.

Sir Thomas, the family genealogist, is [297] chiefly known as the translator of Rabelais. He appears to have at one period travelled much on the continent. He afterwards became a cavalier officer, and was knighted by Charles I. at Whitehall. After that monarch’s decapitation, he accompanied Charles II. in his march into England, and was taken prisoner at the battle of Worcester in 1651, when his estates were forfeited by Cromwell. He wrote several elaborate works, but the most creditable is his translation of Rabelais. Such, notwithstanding, was the universality of his attainments, that he deemed himself capable of enlightening the world on many things never “dreamed of in the philosophy” of ordinary mortals. “Had I not,” he says, “been pluck’d away by the importunity of my creditors, I would have emitted to public view above five hundred several treatises on inventions, never hitherto thought upon by any.” The time and place of his death are unknown. There is a tradition that he died of an inordinate fit of laughter, on hearing of the restoration of Charles II. The male line ended in Colonel James Urquhart, an officer of much distinction, who died in 1741. The representation of the family devolved on the Urquharts of Braelangwell, which was sold (with the exception of a small portion, which is strictly entailed) by Charles Gordon Urquhart, Esq., an officer in the Scots Greys. The Urquharts of Meldrum, Aberdeenshire, obtained that estate through the marriage, in 1610, of their ancestor, John Urquhart of Craigfintry, tutor of Cromarty, with Elizabeth Seton, heiress of Meldrum. The Urquharts of Craigston, and a few more families of the name, still possess estates in the north of Scotland; and persons of this surname are still numerous in the counties of Ross and Cromarty. In Ross-shire, Inverness-shire, and Morayshire, there are parishes of the name of Urquhart.

### FOOTNOTES:

[228] *Highlands of Scotland*, p. 288.

[229]For portrait of General Hugh Mackay, vide vol. i. p. 361.

[230]Skene's Highlanders, vol ii. p. 301.

[231]See p. 61, vol. i.

[232]See p. 60, vol. i.

[233]For view of old Dunrobin Castle, vide vol. i. p. 83.

[234]Details of these feuds will be found in vol. i.

[235]For the circumstances attending this unnatural murder, which the Earl of Caithness is said to have instigated, see vol. i. p. 90.

[236]In reference to this, we extract the following from the Scotsman, Feb. 12, 1869:—"Within the last few days a handsome monument from the granite works of Messrs Macdonald, Field, & Co., Aberdeen, has been erected in the churchyard of Balquhidder, bearing the following inscription:—"In memoriam of the Clan Laurin, anciently the allodian inhabitants of Balquhidder and Strathearn, the chief of whom, in the decrepitude of old age, together with his aged and infirm adherents, their wives and children, the widows of their departed kindred—all were destroyed in the silent midnight hour by fire and sword, by the hands of a banditti of incendiaries from Glendochart, A.D. 1558. Erected by Daniel Maclaurin, Esq. of St John's Wood, London, author of a short history of his own clan, and for the use of his clansmen only.—October 1868."

[237]For the information here given, we are mainly indebted to the MS. above referred to.

[238]History of Scotland.

[239]Fraser's Chiefs of Colquhoun.

[240]Fraser's Chiefs of Colquhoun.

[241]Low's Scot. Heroes, App.

[242]See view of Culloden House, vol. i. p. 657.

[243]See portrait, vol. i. p. 679. Details concerning this true patriot and upright judge will be found in the account of the rebellion of 1745.