

MacMillan Symbols



The symbols pictured above are the Kilmory Cross and a shield, or crest, that was used around the year 1742. The cross is located in Kilmory Chapel in South Kintyre. This is one of the finest stone crosses in Scotland, said to be inferior only to St Martin's Cross in Iona. It is about twelve feet high and is composed of solid chlorite slate. On the left of the cross is the Virgin Mary with a halo around her. Her head is slightly averted, as if turning away her face in sorrow from the dreadful sight before her, and her hand is placed upon her heart, which this sword of grief, according to the prophecy, has pierced.

On the right side of the cross is John, the beloved disciple, with his right hand holding to his heart a copy of his gospel. Below the crucifixion, there is a long two-handed sword finely carved. On the back side of the cross as pictured on the image on the right side of the page, there is an elaborate pattern of interlaced work at the top, filling all the rounded disk. Below, on the shaft, is carved a representation of a Highland chief hunting the deer, which is remarkable as the earliest specimen of the Highland dress in existence. Beneath the huntsman there is an inscription in ancient Saxon characters, which can be easily deciphered as:

“Haec est crux Alexandri MacMullen”

(This is the cross of Alexander MacMillan)

The shield is pictured between the two images of the cross. This was a coat of arms that was in use by the Galloway MacMillans in the year 1742, which was just three years before our ancestor, James MacMillan, left for Ireland. The exact form of the coat of arms varied somewhat depending on the time period and also upon the region of Scotland where it was used. Although MacMillan is one of the oldest clans, it scattered into different regions quite early and the symbols that developed varied somewhat from place to place. The dragon motif, however, seemed to be common to almost all of the coats of arms as are the three stars.

The images were downloaded from the Clan MacMillan web site. On the clan website there is an explanation that symbols such as the shield are tightly controlled by law, and it is illegal, at least in Britain, to use a symbol that is licensed to another. The use on such things as newsletters and letterheads is forbidden, but logos such as is seen here can be used enclosed in a buckled belt by clan members. It isn't clear how this is affected by American law, but etiquette concerns probably preclude their use without checking to see if a particular symbol is registered. Tartans, on the other hand, are not controlled by law and can be used and reproduced freely.





This is an actual photograph of the front and back of the slate cross. There appear to be old tombstones leaning against the wall on the right. These were recently brought inside to prevent further weathering and erosion.

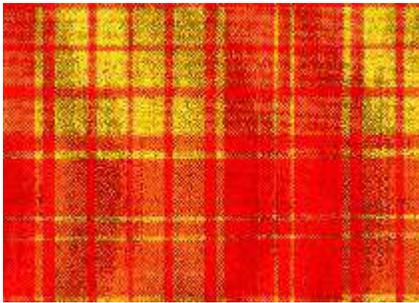
The Clan



This buckled crest is the insignia used by members of Clan MacMillan

This is the crest of the Clan MacMillan, downloaded from the Clan MacMillan web site. It depicts a MacMillan symbol, the Claymore sword. This is a double sided sword that was wielded with both hands and was used as a weapon in battle by many generations of highland Scots. The MacMillans were initially a highland clan, but over the centuries they have become widely dispersed and now occupy some other lowland and coastal areas as well.

MacMillan Tartans



Dress in Old Colours

This sett is reputed to have been worn by Robert the Bruce and passed to members of Clan MacMillan. Being only red and yellow, it can be rather garish for ordinary day use and is uncommon.



Ancient in Old Colours

Ancient MacMillan. *The most authentic and long lived MacMillan Tartan is the Ancient, varying by the use of different dyes from near khaki to psychedelic, with most wearers opting for something in between. If any tartan is a true MacMillan it is the Ancient being readily identifiable in the McIan print.*

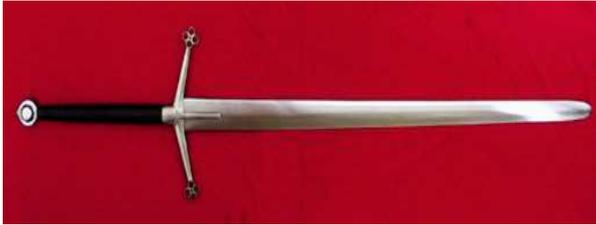


Hunting in Old Colours

Hunting MacMillan. *Former President of the Clan MacMillan Society, Major Cameron Macmillan, always referred to this as Baillie Macmillan's tartan. Cameron was a boy in the 1890s when this tartan was a new product issuing from the Baillie's highland outfitting establishment in Partick. It did not really catch on until the late Chief, General Sir Gordon MacMillan, decided to dress all his family in it to make them easily identifiable from the rest of the clan who wore the Ancient. An idea which rather collapsed by Sir Gordon's move popularising the Hunting sett. The Hunting Tartan is predominantly green with yellow and red lines. The green can vary with dying from a bluish mid-green to almost black (a form found in North America).*

Tartan goes back a long way and is not peculiar to Scotland. However in Scotland it was adopted to an extent it became a national characteristic. Furthermore it was not necessarily associated with a clan or a name. It was associated with a district. So all the people in one area would wear clothes made of a similar cloth and this would have the distinctive sett of the locality. That they would, in the Highlands at any rate, belong to the same tribe was incidental. Incomers who settled would adopt the same sett. But prior to 1800 communication between adjacent communities would at best be difficult, and in winter, impossible. So before 1745 tartans were geographical rather than family and if one did travel, cloth picked up on the way would be worn indiscriminately. At Culloden the Jacobite side wore any tartan to hand and in many cases several different ones at the same time. What identified the members of Prince Charlie's army were their blue bonnets not their tartan.

After 1746, the wearing of highland dress and tartan was proscribed by the Act of Disarming, not repealed until 1782 by which time a generation had grown up to wear broadcloth. (Not altogether though, tartan cloth was re-dyed with varying success or, at the domestic level, buried in a bog to kill the contrast. Hence the still prevalent race memory that a kilt should never look new).¹



This is an example of a replica of a Claymore sword currently being offered for sale in an antique replica catalog. A typical price for an item like this varies from about \$250 to \$600.



Castle Sween in Argyll is one of the oldest castles in Scotland. It was built in the 11th or 12th century, and has a curtain wall, enclosing a rectangular courtyard, and a keep. It is said to be named after Sueno, an 11th century Dane. He may have been the builder of the castle. It was held by the McSweens until it was captured by Robert the Bruce in 1315. It was then held by the McMillans, the Stewarts of Menteigh, the MacNeils of Gigha for the MacDonald Lord of the Isles, and in 1481 the Campbells became keepers for the Crown.

During the time of the McMillans the western wall was dismantled and a round tower and a new rectangular building were added at the northwest corner. The tower is standing today, and is known as McMillan's Tower. The Campbells became keepers for the Crown in 1481. In 1647 it was captured and partially destroyed by Alaisdair Colkitto MacDonald. One tower collapsed in the 19th century. It has been repaired and open to the public.



This is Kilmory Chapel, where the famous Kilmory Cross is located.

¹Some of the images and descriptions on this page were obtained from the Clan MacMillan web page at <http://www.clanmacmillan.org/index/html> and are used here with verbal permission from Clan Leader George MacMillan during my visit to Findlaystone in the year 2004.