A BRIEF HISTORY OF CLAN THOMSON by Tom Thompson

There was no single originating family named Thomson responsible for all the Scottish Thom(p)sons found today. The name is patronymic, in that the next generation is named after the father's personal name. Although many have been linked by the Thompson DNA project. Thomsons are very numerous over a large part of Scotland and are primarily found south of the Forth and Clyde. The lowlands or border lands are neither purely English nor purely Scottish. In fact, the border lands and the region known as Lothian just north of the border have now become the center of Scotland with Edinburgh as it's capital.

The earliest Thomsons; spelled with an (a), (e), and sometimes a (p), slowly evolved from the 12th century into families with a central head or leader in the border and Lothian areas of the Scottish lowlands from Dunfriesshire to Rosburghshire. The Thomsons of Eskdale were a rather small fifteenth-century clan closely aligned with the larger clans Beattison snd Nixons. In the 1540s, the English Lord Wharton reported to the Earl of Shewsbury that the Batysons, Thomsons, and Lytles of Esskdayle have made raiding (reiving) forays on several English towns. In 1547, the English Lords Lennox and Wharton crossed the Esk River to subdue the south of Annandale and Castlemilk. The continuing reiving on the borders resulted in several lairds and clans being forced to give an oath of obeisance to the King of England. Bell's MS, once preserved in the Carlisle Cathedral Library, lists the names of 166 Beatties and Thomsons who had surrendered to the English King. The 1551 peace accord created the Debatable Lands between the Esk and Sark rivers which belonged to neither kingdom.

The farmers of the fertile plains of Berwickshire and the middle Tweed valley saw themselves as different from the horsemen of Liddesdale. In 1569, the lairds of the eastern and middle marches asserted that, while they themselves were peaceable, the thieves of the western ranges were not. In a memorandum to the Scottish Privy Council, they insisted that reivers must be controlled. They produced a black list of the surnames of the worst offenders: All Armstrongs, Batesons, Bells, Crosiers, Elliots, Glendinnings, Hendresons, Irvines, Nixons, Routledges and Thomsons.

"The Steel Bonnets" by George MacDonald Fraser has a list of reivers he calls the riding surnames. 'In the west march the 'Nixons' were located on the upper Liddesdale, Bewcastle, and Line rivers. Less compact than the Armstrongs, they were important enough to have Thomson, Glendennings, and Hunters associated with them. Like other Liddesdales clans, they sometimes allied with England. In the Middle March, Fraser listed the Thomsons as riding with the English.

In 1581, the Scottish Parliament rendered a whole clan jointly answerable, in the way of retaliation for the delinquencies of each individual. In another statute passed shortly thereafter, the chief of each clan was made responsible for all the misdeeds of his surname. In consequence of these acts, in 1587, a roll was made of the nobles, barons, chieftains and clans residing in the Borders, Isles and Highlands. In this roll of the clans with chiefs in the West March appear the surnames: Scotts of Ewesdale, Batesons, Littles, Thomsons, Glendinnings, Irvings, Bells, Carruthers, Grahams, Johnstons, Jardines, Moffats, and Latimers. In addition, Monypeny's Chronicle, published in 1587, enumerates sixty-five Lairds and gentlemen as residing in Dumfriesshire. There were also twenty "chief men of name, not being Lairds," among which are included Young Archie Thomson and Sym Thomson.

"The Scotch-Irish" by Charles A. Hanna, 1902, lists Thomsons, Battison, and Beattie as border clans located in Eskdale in 1547. Fifty years later, he notes the Thomson clan has relocated to Annandale along with Irving, Bell, Carlye, Graham, et al.

A 1594, an Act of the Scottish Parliament for the "punishment of theft, robbery and sorning" lists the clans including Bells, Carlisles, Beatsons, Littles, Thomsons, Johnstons, et al.

At the union of the crowns in 1603, King James VI of Scotland left Scotland for London as King James I of a United Kingdom. He was determined to put down the continuing lawlessness on both sides of the border. His wishes were carried out through with sword, noose and torch until hardly a building stood in the whole of Eskdale and Liddesdale. Chiefs were hanged and those who survived were later ordered to sell out.

The clans began to scatter in the 17th century. Littles, Beatties, Thomsons, Elliots, Armstrongs and Irvings fled from persecution, poverty and overcrowding to the Ulster plantations. Many moved later into neighboring English Cumberland and

crossed the oceans to North America, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, proud of their origins - but, over the generations, losing contact with the descendants of those who stayed behind.

Tartan: The Scottish Register of Tartans has listed this information note: The Thomson Dress Blue has been adopted by the Clan Thom(p)son Society as the official Clan Society tartan and worn by many Thomsons regardless of spelling. The Clan Thom(p)son Society also wear the Thomson hunting, grey dress, and camel tartans.

Thompson Walls Historic site.   The site is described as a Pele Tower. Nothing visible remains today. The tower appears on 1584 'plan' by Dacre, though apparently this map illustrated houses he would like to see built as well as those standing. The name Thompson Walls has lasted though, suggestive of a structure, and a long history is given of ownership. The site was a barren waste in 1541 with farming development planed. Antechester is a DMV.

Informational notes: The claim that Thomson is an anglicized form of MacTavish is inaccurate. Consider these common sense facts:

▮   The Argyll Hearth Tax Roll of <u>1694 lists Donald MacCombis and a single tenant (Brown) as living on Dunardry.</u> If there was a MacCombis (MacTavish) clan it would have consisted of only these two individuals. In fact, the tax roll has a total of only 17 MacCombis is all of Argyll. The spelling evolution resulting in the surname MacTavish on Dunardry went from VcCauus, to VcKavissl, to MacCawis, to Dugald McTavish on/about about 1720, as son and heir of Archibald McCzawis.

▮   MacTavish is anglicized from the Gaelic McCawis.   How can you further anglicize an English name?

▮   If all 17 (1694 Argyll Hearth Tax Roll) of the MacCombis scattered throughout all of Argyll changed their names to MacTavish, their number would not begin to compare with the numbers of Thomsons living in the lowlands where they had flourished for hundreds of years as Thomsons.

▮   King James pardoned, by name, 40 fighting men with the Thomson surname riding with John [Maxwell], Earl of Morton for all crimes committed between 1569 and 1585. Common sense tells us that 40 Thomsons of fighting age, from Eskdale, recorded more than 100 years before there even was a name MacTavish cannot be descended nor connected to the wee family in Argyll.

▮   The McCombis (or any variation) were not included in the 1587 roll of clans because a handful of related individuals does not constitute a clan.

▮   A chief can only be the head of ONE family surname. The chief of Clan MacTavish is only the legitimate chief of the clan and name MacTavish.

▮   The Scottish Parliament repeatedly recognized MacThomas and Thomson as two separate and individual names/clans already present in the 1500s. Thomson and MacThomas are both derivitives of 'Thomas.' Lord Lyon has formally recognized three distinct names: Clan MacThomas of Glenshee, Clan MacTavish and Clan Thompson International. In the 21st century, these three names cannot be co-mingled or interchanged. An individual named MacThomas is no more a member of Clan Thompson International than he is a member of Clan MacTavish and so on.