

ISSUE No 05
AUTUMN 2025

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GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN

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44th Annual Highland Gathering



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The Last Grove of Alba

Paganism and Everyday Life

Death of Paganism in Scotland



Clan Fleming Scottish Society

SEPARATED BY OCEANS - UNITED BY HERITAGE

THE DEED

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COVER IMAGE

*Illustration for the Death
of Paganism in Scotland
of the Callanish Stones*

DEED DESIGN

Ian Fleming

Let the deed shaw...

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CLAN V HOUSE

Clan Fleming versus the House of Fleming

by **Jim Fleming**

Some members of the Scottish diaspora take the view that there is no Clan Fleming because the Flemings were a lowland family while the clan tradition was concentrated in the highlands. They propose that our society should promote itself as “House of Fleming” or something similar rather than “Clan Fleming”.

Proponents of this view argue that the ancestral lands of highland clans were owned collectively with the clan chief responsible for preserving them for future generations and contrast this with the noble houses where an hereditary lord held title in the land and members of his family were basically vassals. They hold that clanship is restricted to those that were listed in the Parliamentary Acts of 1587 and 1594 as detailed on a map that depicts the “Possessions of Highland Proprietors”. Some proponents nevertheless concede that clanship extends to Borders families that organised and behaved as clans.

**Not all chiefs are
the head of a clan
Some are heads
of a ‘family’**

The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs

The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs asserts this position, defining a chief as a person who has been recorded by the Lord Lyon King of Arms as being in right of the undifferenced arms of the name while noting that not all chiefs are the head of a clan; some are the heads of a “family”.

But there are others who see this as an unnecessarily hardline interpretation.

They point out that the meaning of the word clan has widened since it was incorporated into English from its Gaelic origins centuries ago.

The latest Macquarie Dictionary provides a typical modern definition: a group of families or households, as among the Scots, the heads of which claim descent from a common ancestor; a group of people of common descent. This suggests that the application of the word clan is not restricted to Scotland, let alone to the Scottish Highlands.



The word originates in the Gaelic word *clann*, meaning children or kindred. But its use has spread from these Scottish origins and has been adopted worldwide to describe social groups of people who share a common ancestry or kinship. Sociologists give the following as examples of clan systems: Scottish clans; the Indian caste system (where clans are called “gotras”); some African societies that trace ancestry through the female line; Native American tribes. The word is also used by Aboriginal Australians to describe groups that could otherwise be called a tribe or sub-tribe.

Sociologists use the word to describe an extended family structure where members are connected through blood relations or marriage. They describe several clan characteristics: common ancestry; kinship (blood relationships and marriage ties); shared identity (such as traditions); group solidarity (where the group identity is reinforced through rituals, ceremonies, mottos, insignia, etc); internal organisation (a hierarchy or system of elders and decision-makers). They note that clans can serve several important functions: social support; preservation of traditions; provision of a sense of identity and belonging; conflict resolution through mediation within the group; resource sharing.

Based on the traditionalist viewpoint, the Fleming family would not qualify as a clan because all of its traditional seats (Biggar,

Cumbernauld and Wigtown) were in the lowlands. It has also been argued that the Lords Fleming would have been horrified to be considered as clan chieftains; that their family didn't exhibit clan behaviour; and that they should be primarily viewed as loyal to the crown rather than to a clan system.



THE FLEMING FAMILY,

whose motto emphasises loyalty and whose crest (the goat) is emblematic of persistence and strength, were certainly very loyal to the crown through many centuries. But its leaders did turn against the crown to preserve their own interests on occasion. For example, Malcolm 3rd Lord Fleming was given respite in 1526 by King James V for treasonable conversing with Alexander Forrest and several other Englishmen in time of war.

Scottish clans are renowned as “tribal” organisations often characterised by inter-clan feuds where loyalty to the clan ranks above other loyalties. The Fleming family's feud with the Tweedie clan is famous because it led to the assassination of John 2nd Lord Fleming in 1524. But the Fleming family also had another major feud with the Kennedy family that came very close to blows before being ultimately resolved through long-running legal processes. Furthermore, the Lords Fleming entered into bonds of manrent (legally recorded written oaths affirming mutual support in times of trouble) with several other lords, a classic clan strategy.

So, the Fleming family walked like a clan and quacked like a clan. So did a lot of other lowland families whose heritage is nowadays promoted by a society like ours. For example, all of the following lowland families have society websites that refer to them as a clan: Baird, Boyd, Cunningham, Douglas, Duncan, Fergusson, Forbes, Hamilton, Hay, Innes, Johnston, Keith, Kerr, Leslie, Livingstone,



*An image typical of Lowland Border Reivers from **Clint Edward's** YouTube video 'Highland Clans vs Border Clans', which ties in neatly with many aspects of this article by Jim Fleming about **Clan V Family**.*

*Click on the image or on the following link which will take you to out of the **DEED** Newsletter and into Youtube where you can view the **Highland Clans vs Border Clans** video*

Montgomerie, Napier and Wallace. The Fleming family was linked by marriage to several of these. The only family societies that don't use the word clan are the Stewart Society and the Family of Bruce, both royal houses. This is despite the fact that there were several Stewart clans listed in the 1587 Parliamentary Act.

Our society's mission is to enlighten the Fleming diaspora on the significance of our family in Scottish history as well as to promote and celebrate Scottish cultural traditions. We could probably do this as well as the “House of Fleming Society” as under our current name. It is doubtful, however, whether our target audience is aware of or cares much about arcane arguments about Clan versus Family.

Scottish Lowland Family Clans

Baird

Boyd

Cunningham

Douglas

Duncan

Fergusson

Forbes

Hamilton

Hay

Innes

Johnston

Keith

Kerr

Leslie

Livingstone

Montgomerie

Napier

Wallace

Our society now has a choice between conforming to a hidebound and outdated orthodoxy or taking a pragmatic decision based on the modern understanding of the word clan. The other Lowland families have already voted and the results are in!



Jim Fleming is a retired Customs Director and lives on Sydney's lower north shore. He began researching his family history in 1983 and has been a member of the Society of Australian Genealogists since then. Aside from genealogy he enjoys travelling and singing baritone in two choirs. He is Secretary and Historian of the Clan Fleming Scottish Society. e: cfss.historian@gmail.com

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THE LAST GROVE OF ALBA

by **Bill Zima**

In the ancient hills of Alba — what we now call Scotland — there lived a Druid named Maela, a woman whose eyes mirrored the grey skies and whose voice could still a restless wind. She was a Lorekeeper, guardian of stories and seasons, and the last of her grove.

THE DEED



Clan Fleming Scottish Society SEPARATED BY OCEANS - UNITED BY HERITAGE



Clan Fleming
SCOTTISH SOCIETY
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