

Clan Irving

The Border Irvings & Irvines

Preface to the digital copy of the 1996 Reprint

This digital copy is taken from the 1996 Reprint produced by Dumfries and Galloway Council of which this is book number 105. Permission has been granted by the Council for this digital copy to be made with this preface replacing the 1996 original.

Much of what has been written about the history of the Irvings & Irvines in the Borders and Lowlands you will find in the original "The Book of the Irvings Etc" by Colonel J.B. Irving, published in 1907 which draws on many differing sources for its content. The 1996 Reprint contains an extra chapter "The Irvings of Newton" by Miles Irvine published shortly after the Colonel's original.

Also within this digital copy of the 1996 Reprint, I have included an up to date chart which should clarify any confusion over the Clan Chief Irving of Bonshaw and the person known as the Laird of Bonshaw Tower – one is the line of the Clan Chiefs and the other is solely the owner of the property and estate.

Colonel John Beaufin Irving authored the original publication with the support and assistance of many others and about 400 copies were produced in c.1907. There were also a few leatherbound hand crafted versions for the immediate family and I have inherited one of these from my father. It is a magnificent possession to have, bound with steel buckles and leather straps.

I am led to understand there is a Location Index for the originals at Bonshaw Tower with books located worldwide: the House of Commons Library in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and in the United States of America including the Library of Congress, Washington DC.

However, modern day research has inevitably uncovered some inaccuracies and embellishment of the historical facts stemming from a principal source referred to as "The Original of the Family of the Irvines or Erinvines", by Dr Christopher Irvine of Edinburgh, Physician General and Historiographer of Scotland.

Dr Christopher Irvine (c.1620-1693) was a prolific author, writing a number of books mostly on medical matters of the day, yet he is credited with writing the

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aforementioned short family history in 1678. The copies available today are copies drafted by a Benjamin Higgins in 1784. An original of this publication has yet to be found as an extensive search of public libraries and private collections has yielded nothing.

We have been given copy of this document by a descendant of Dr Christopher Irvine, who confirmed the direct family do not have an original and the version sent to us turns out to be a re-print (No.27) of an original copy dated 1784.

However we should not let this detract from the colourful history of the Border Irving & Irvine Clan and the content of this book should make for interesting and informative reading.

To update the reader, Bonshaw Tower and the estate has changed hands a number of times since Colonel J.B. Irving died in 1925.

Colonel J.B. Irving's predecessor was Robert Nasmyth Irving (1827-1894) who wasted most of his life away from the estate, leaving it heavily mortgaged; he died in 1894, unmarried and with substantial debts. It is he who is regarded by Colonel J.B. Irving in this book as "the traitor" and referred to by his initials "RNI".

Colonel J.B. Irving (1844-1925) was the exact opposite of his predecessor. On Robert Nasmyth Irving's death in 1894, he was given sasine of Bonshaw, in other words he inherited the Tower & House and what was left of the estate as lawful heir of succession.

He was succeeded by his youngest and surviving son, Captain Sir R.B. Irving (1877-1954), KB, OBE, RD, DL, who had a long and distinguished career at sea, fought at the Battle of Jutland and commanded the 'Queen Mary' in 1936. He was granted a knighthood in 1943 and retired in 1944.

Having succeeded to the Bonshaw estate upon the death of his father in 1925, and his mother dying the following year, Captain Sir R.B. Irving devoted much of his time at Bonshaw in trying to preserve what was left of the estate. He died in 1954 without issue and his successor and heir was his nephew, Commander G. R. I. Irving RN (1895-1970).

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Commander G.R.I. Irving RN inherited the remainder of the estate in 1954 and was in his sixtieth year, previously a WWII Royal Navy serving officer, he took the decision to sell, but only to an Irving. Eventually Mr. & Mrs. E. Keys-Irving Straton-Ferrier, who were living in Australia at the time, purchased the property. They were descended from the Irvings of Wysebie, a branch of the Clan which went to Australia in the early 1900's. Within a few years of taking possession of the Bonshaw property her husband passed away. As time went on, Mrs. Keys-Irving Straton-Ferrier herself died, and her son and his wife, who were living there with her, decided they needed to move on.

Bonshaw Tower & House was purchased in 1986 and is still owned by an Irving from a junior line within the Irvings of Gribton and Dumfries branch of the Clan.

Rupert Irving of Bonshaw

Clan Chief & Chief of the Name and Arms