

Clan Irving

The Border Irvings & Irvines

Clan Chiefs and Lairds of Bonshaw Tower and Drum Castle

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I was encouraged to draft this article when I was in conversation with an American friend with whom I spent some time, and hours, explaining that in Scotland there is a great deal of difference between someone who owns land and calls themselves a Laird and that of a formally recognised Clan Chief.

There is a common misunderstanding of exactly what is meant by the Scottish title of Clan Chief and what is meant by the Scots term of Laird.

For quite a few people this has been confused to mean one and the same, as after all this is Scotland and aren't these words more or less meaning the same thing.

Sadly but no.

These words mean very different things and this article will set out exactly how different these words are, and in Scotland it is important to get it right.

What I will also set out is how both Chiefly lines of Bonshaw and of Drum, having disposed of their respective ancestral seats in 1955 and 1975 respectively, still retain their titles as Chief Of The Name And Arms and as Clan Chiefs as formally recognised by the Court of the Lord Lyon.

Clan Chief

Whilst Scottish Law recognises the existence of Scottish Clans, Clan Chiefs and Chieftains, the title is only of social dignity or precedence, and as such does not devolve any interest for which the law has jurisdiction.

The Court Of The Lord Lyon is the formal legal jurisdiction and heraldic authority for Scotland, dealing with all matters relating to Scottish Heraldry and Coats of Arms and maintains the Scottish Public Registers of Arms and Genealogies. The equivalent in England would be the College of Arms.

The Court of the Lord Lyon makes the recording of the dignity of a Clan chiefship acknowledged by attestation in other words by proof of evidence. This involves a formal petition being made to The Court of the Lord Lyon, more generally referred to as Lyon Court, along with supporting proofs of evidence, genealogies and formal documentation.

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This supporting documentation is extensive, detailed and thorough without which the petition is most likely to fail.

The process of preparing and submitting a formal petition to Lyon Court is lengthy and not without expense with the detailed and thorough research often involving accredited members of ASGRA – the Association of Scottish Genealogists & Researchers in Archives.

The Association of Scottish Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (ASGRA) is the only accrediting body for professional genealogists in Scotland. The organisation promotes the highest standards in the profession of genealogy and historical research with Members undergoing rigorous assessment before being accepted as full members of the association.

The formal Grant of Arms is often stated as “Chief of the Name and Arms of ...” with the heraldic territorial designation following, for example, “Chief of the Name and Arms of Irving of Bonshaw”. It is this designation which is the accepted formal term for a Scottish Clan Chief.

The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs is the definitive and authoritative body for information on the Scottish Clan System, Scottish Chiefs and the website is a further useful point of reference <https://www.clanchiefs.org.uk/>.

Laird

Lyon Court states that the term “laird” has generally been applied to the owner of an estate, these days by the owner himself or, in years gone by, those employed living and working on the estate.

There are a number of well known examples where the owners of an estate have styled themselves as “Lairds of ...” but it must be noted this is not a formal hereditary title nor is it a recognised term in Scottish nobility.

The term Laird is a description and would be tied to a physical property such as a small Scottish shooting estate. It would not be appropriate for the owner of a normal residential property, far less the owner of a small souvenir plot of land to adopt this term.

It goes without saying that the term “laird” is not synonymous with that of “lord” or “lady”. In England for example the equivalent use would be that of a local squire or land owner.

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“Laird”, as explained above, is a Scottish description applied to the owner of an estate commonly by the people round about or working on it.

Conclusion

To be Clan Chief, one does not buy or sell a chiefship when you sell a property or an estate and there are a few examples:

John Macleod of Raasay who actually lives in Tasmania, Australia. Raasay has not been owned by his family for generations.

The Irvines of Drum are a respected Scottish Family created by Royal appointment in 1323 but their ancestral seat was disposed to the National Trust for Scotland in 1975. Their Clan Chief is Alexander Irvine of Drum 27th Baron Drum who succeeded in 2019.

The Irvings of Bonshaw are a Scottish Border Reiver Clan with earliest known records from 1100s and their ancestral seat was sold in 1955. Their Clan Chief is Rupert Irving of Bonshaw 20th Clan Chief who succeeded in 2021.

In cases such as described above, and to avoid confusion in the eyes of the Scottish and overseas public, the differences would have to be made absolutely clear.

What we all want to know is that someone is who they really are and not an impostor.

Rupert Irving of Bonshaw

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### Reference:

The Court Of The Lord Lyon  
Standing Council Of Scottish Chiefs  
Association of Scottish Genealogists  
and Recorders in Archives

[www.courtofthelordlyon.scot](http://www.courtofthelordlyon.scot)

[www.clanchiefs.org](http://www.clanchiefs.org)

[www.asgra.co.uk](http://www.asgra.co.uk)

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## **Clan Chiefs of Bonshaw and Lairds of Bonshaw Tower 1506 – To Present**

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## Clan Chiefs of Bonshaw and Lairds of Bonshaw Tower 1506 – To Present

|                                                                     |                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>William Irving 1<sup>st</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                     | fl.1506 succeeded by his eldest son                                      |
| <b>Edward Irving 2<sup>nd</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                      | d. before 1522, succeeded by his eldest son                              |
| <b>Christopher Irving 3<sup>rd</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                 | d. by 1568, succeeded by his eldest son                                  |
| <b>Edward Irving 4<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                      | d. by 1605, succeeded by his eldest son                                  |
| <b>William Irving 5<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                     | d. 1647, succeeded by his eldest son                                     |
| <b>Edward Irving 6<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                      | fl. 1632; d., by 1655, succeeded by his eldest son                       |
| <b>James Irving 7<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                       | heir in 1655; in 1658, succeeded by his cousin                           |
| <b>Harbert Irving 8<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                     | d. 1660, succeeded by his eldest son                                     |
| <b>William Irving 9<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                     | lands adjudged from him by Sara Douglas in 1691, succeeded by his cousin |
| <b>William Irving of Woodhouse, then 10<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b> | infert in 1703, succeeded by his eldest son                              |
| <b>John Irving 11<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                       | b.1699 – d. pre-August 1750, succeeded by his son                        |
| <b>William Irving 12<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                    | d. 1772; entailed the estate in 1765, succeeded by his eldest son        |
| <b>John Robert Irving 13<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                | d.s.p 1839; heir of entail, succeeded by his surviving son               |
| <b>Rev John Irving 14<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>                   | 1757 – 1870; heir of entail                                              |
| <b>Robert Nasmyth Irving 15<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw</b>             | d.s.p 1894; heir of entail, succeeded by his cousin                      |

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**Colonel J. B. Irving 16<sup>th</sup>  
of Bonshaw**

1844 – 1925; heir of entail by adjudication and succeeded by his surviving son

**Captain Sir R. B. Irving 17<sup>th</sup>  
of Bonshaw**

1877 – d.s.p 1954; second surviving son and heir of entail, succeeded by his nephew

**Commander G. R. I. Irving  
18<sup>th</sup> of Bonshaw RN (Retd.)**

1895 – 1970; heir of entail, succeeded by his only son, sold Bonshaw Tower & House to Irvings of Wysebie, **Lairdship of Bonshaw Tower expired**

**Captain R. A. S. Irving 19<sup>th</sup>  
of Bonshaw RN (Retd.)**

1930 – 2021; succeeded by his eldest son

**Rupert C. Irving 20<sup>th</sup> of  
Bonshaw**

b. 1958 – Clan Chief & Chief of the Name and Arms of Irving of Bonshaw

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## Lairds of Bonshaw Tower 1955 – 1986

Mr J. & Mrs E. Straton-Ferrier  
Keys-Irving

Descendants of the Irvings of Wysebie, purchased the property in 1955, John survived by his wife Eileen who subsequently d. 1986; Bonshaw Tower & House sold by their successors.



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## Lairds of Bonshaw Tower 1986 – To date

|                          |                                                                                    |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dr J.B. & Dr M.A. Irving | Purchased the property in 1986, divorced in 2001 and Dr J.B. Irving d. 2005        |
| Mr & Mrs C.J.E. Irving   | 2005 – to date, eldest son of Drs J.B. & M.A. Irving acquired the property in 2005 |

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## Reference:

The Book Of The Irvings &c. by Colonel J.B. Irving (Rosemount Press Aberdeen 1907)  
Original research carried out in 2013 by Mrs D. Baptie AGRA ASGRA

## NB:

Dates shown are year of birth or year of accession to date of decease.

Those marked in **Bold** are Clan Chiefs of Bonshaw and Lairds of Bonshaw Tower.

Those marked in **Bold Italics** are Clan Chiefs of Bonshaw.

Those not marked are Lairds of Bonshaw Tower only

Whilst the line of Clan Chiefs is proven from 1506 to present date, there is further research work being undertaken to support the present research findings for the Irwyns of Bonshaw & Dumbretton and the Ancient Line as shown above.

In many records the name is spelt differently with variations being de Irwyn, Irving, Irvine, Eryvine, de Hirewine depending on the writer's interpretation at the time until spelling became more formalised c.1600s.

Following genealogical terms are used:

- fl. = floruit, translated means flourished i.e. are known to have been alive at that date
- d.s.p = decessit sine prole, translated means died without issue
- d.v.p = decessit vitae patre, translated means died in the father's lifetime
- d. = deceased

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## **Clan Chiefs of Drum and Lairds of Drum Castle 1323 – To Present**

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## Clan Chiefs of Drum and Lairds of Drum Castle 1323 – To Present

|                                                             |                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>William De Irwyne 1<sup>st</sup> of Drum</b>             | 1323 granted by Royal Charter David II, barony created 1324, d. 1333                   |
| <b>Thomas De Irwyne 2<sup>nd</sup> of Drum</b>              | 1333 – d. 1380                                                                         |
| <b>Alexander De Irwyne 3<sup>rd</sup> of Drum</b>           | 1381 – d. 1411 Battle of Harlaw                                                        |
| <b>Alexander De Irwyne 4<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>           | 1411 – d. 1457                                                                         |
| <b>Alexander De Irwine or Irvine 5<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b> | 1457 – d. 1493                                                                         |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 6<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>              | 1493 – d. 1527                                                                         |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 7<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>              | 1527 – d. 1553                                                                         |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 8<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>              | 1553 – d. 1603, grandson succeeded, father died Battle of Pinkie 1547                  |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 9<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>              | 1603 – d. 1629                                                                         |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 10<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>             | 1630 – d. 1658                                                                         |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 11<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>             | 1658 – d. 1687                                                                         |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 12<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>             | 1688 – d. 1696, main line of Irvine of Drum became extinct                             |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 13<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>             | 1696 o d. 1720, previously Irvine of Murthill succeeded as lawful branch line and heir |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 14<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>             | 1720 – d. 1735                                                                         |
| <b>John Irvine 15<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>                  | 1735 – 1737                                                                            |

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|                                                              |                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Alexander Irvine 16<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>              | 1737 – d. 1744                                                                                            |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 17<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>              | 1744 – d. 1761                                                                                            |
| <b>Alexander Irvine 18<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>              | 1761 – d. 1844                                                                                            |
| <b>Alexander Forbes Irvine 19<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>       | 1844 – d. 1861                                                                                            |
| <b>Alexander Forbes Irvine 20<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>       | 1861 – d. 4 <sup>th</sup> April 1892                                                                      |
| <b>Francis Hugh Irvine 21<sup>st</sup> of Drum</b>           | 1892 – d. 25 <sup>th</sup> July 1894                                                                      |
| <b>Alexander Forbes Irvine 22<sup>nd</sup> of Drum</b>       | 1894 – d. ????                                                                                            |
| <b>Alexander Forbes Irvine 23<sup>rd</sup> of Drum</b>       | ???? – died 1940                                                                                          |
| <b>Henry Quentin Irvine 24<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>          | 1940 – 1975, disposed of Drum Castle to the National Trust for Scotland, <b>Lairdship of Drum expired</b> |
| <b>Lt Col Charles Francis Irvine 25<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b> | 1975 – d. 1992                                                                                            |
| <b>David Charles Irvine 26<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>          | 1992 – d. 2019                                                                                            |
| <b>Alexander Hugh Irvine 27<sup>th</sup> of Drum</b>         | 2019 – To Present Date                                                                                    |



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### Reference:

The Irvines of Drum and Collateral Branches by Lt Colonel Jonathan Forbes Leslie (Aberdeen 1909) National Library for Scotland

The Book Of The Irvings &c. by Colonel J.B. Irving (Rosemount Press Aberdeen 1907)

### NB:

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