



Clan Armstrong are renowned as one of the most powerful families in the turbulent Border regions of Scotland. The Armstrongs descend from Fairbairn, who held the position of armourer to an ancient King of Scotland. The legend of Fairbairn's loyalty recounts that when the King became dismounted during the heat of battle, Fairbairn scooped the fallen sovereign up onto his own horse with a single stroke of his well-muscled arm. In gratitude to Fairbairn's gallant service, the King named him Armstrong and granted his family the lands of Mangerston in Liddesdale. True to their name, the Clan's strength grew quickly, and the Armstrongs soon assumed further lands in Annandale and Eskdale.

Like many Border Clans, the Armstrongs were a law unto themselves and dictated the course of their own lives, free from the shackles of any overlord. The location of the Clan's territories meant that Scotland's Kings were unable to effectively control such a fierce and unruly Clan as the Armstrongs. The Armstrongs began to amass their fortune by cross-border raiding, regularly skirmishing into England to steal the sheep and possessions of less bold men. Indeed, the strength of the Armstrongs was such that they were said to be able to put 3000 horsemen into the field by 1528.

The Crown occasionally attempted to control the Armstrongs, but the notoriety of the Clan was such that even kings used subterfuge to gain their will. In 1530, James V betrayed all the ancient codes of honour when he seized the chieftain Johnnie Armstrong and 36 of his horsemen, as the unarmed Johnnie welcomed the King to stay at his castle. The Armstrongs virtually ruled the Borders through right of the sword, and this had caused the ire of the young monarch. As James V strung up the 37 men, Johnnie stated his own epitaph "I was but a fool to seek grace at a graceless face, but had I known you would have taken me this day, I would have lived in the borders despite King Harry [King Henry VIII of England] and you both." Such was the Armstrongs disgust at the King's treachery, that they refused to support the Scottish Crown when Henry VIII invaded Scotland in 1542. When another Armstrong, Kinmont Willie, was imprisoned during a time of truce, a hand-picked team of 40 defiant horsemen stormed the castle and secured his release. The last Chief, Archie Armstrong, was executed as an outlaw in

1610, and the lands of Mangerston were forfeited to the rival Scott Clan. The Clan Crest is of a strong right arm and the bold motto reads "Invictus maneo" meaning, in Latin "I remain unvanquished".

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