



Clan Forbes, known to be of ancient extraction, originated in the Aberdeenshire lands of Donside, which lies in the heartland of the Kingdom of the Picts, Scotland's oldest race of people.

The Clan derives its name from the ancient parish of Forbes, which in turn is said to have taken its name from the Gaelic "Forba"

meaning a field, compounded with the Pictish suffix "-ais". The traditional origins of the Forbes holds that the founder of the Clan, Oconocher, slew a bear which lived in the Brae o' Forbes, and he and his family took up residence there. The earliest Forbes on record is John of Forbes who held the lands of Forbes in the 13th century, and his son or grandson, Alexander, was killed while defending Urquhart Castle on Loch Ness against the English troops of Edward I. The tenure of the Clan Forbes over its lands was confirmed in a charter of 1271.

Sir John Forbes, known as "John of the Black Lip", lived during the late 14th and early 15th centuries, and had four sons from whom the four branches of the Clan descend - Forbes of Pitsligo, Waterton, Foveran, and Culloden. The eldest of Sir John's sons, Alexander, was created Lord Forbes by King James II in 1442, and this title, Scotland's premier barony, is to this day retained by the chief of Clan Forbes. The Forbes' relationship to the Crown of Scotland was strengthened when Alexander married King Robert III's granddaughter. However, when the Gordons became the earls of Huntly, this led to conflict between the two rival Clans, although this was partially allayed when the 8th Lord Forbes married a daughter of the earl of Huntly.

Whilst members of Clan Forbes distinguished themselves in many of Scotland's battles, from the Battle of Duplin in 1332 to the involvement of some branches of the Clan in the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745, it was during the 2nd Jacobite rising that the Forbes name became associated with compassion for humanity. Duncan Forbes, Lord Advocate (1725-37) and President of the Court of Session (1737-47) strove to dissuade a number of Clan chiefs from joining Bonnie Prince Charlie's doomed army in the 1745 uprising. After the Battle of Culloden, where the rebellion collapsed, Forbes pleaded with the government to show mercy to the survivors of the battle and worked to help the situation of the prisoners. Clan Forbes were great builders of castles, and many remains, notably Corse Castle (built in 1581) and Craigievar Castle (completed in 1625), still stand as testament to the Forbes' industry. The Chief of the Clan is the 22nd Lord Forbes K.B.E., and the Clan crest is a stag's head, with the motto "Grace Me Guide".

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