



The Norse sagas, which extol the heroic exploits of its greatest warriors, record a Chief named Gunni, from whom the Clan Gunn are said to have descended. While others claim that the Clan is descended from Guinn, son of Olaf the Black, the Norse King of Man and the Isles, another derivation is from the Norse word Gunnr, meaning "war". While there is indeed a Viking influence on the Clan Gunn, the blood of their ancestors runs much deeper into the bedrock of Scotland, back to the land's earliest known people, the Picts. The Clan Gunn settled in the far north-east of Scotland near Morven in the heights of the Caithness-Sutherland border & this remained Gunn territory for many centuries. Throughout the Middle Ages, these lands became threatened by intrusions, & the Gunns were forced to battle with their neighbours, the Mackays & the Keiths. The struggle with the Keiths was further fuelled by the actions of a spurned Keith suitor when he abducted, on her wedding day, a beautiful Gunn woman, who committed suicide rather than stay with him.

In the 15th century, the Gunn Chiefs procured the hereditary office of Crowner of Caithness, which was a highly respected position of honour and power. About this time, in 1464, the two Chiefs of the Gunn and Keith Clans agreed to meet with twelve horses from each Clan in order to end the bloody feud which had ravaged their people for centuries. While the Gunns arrived with one man to each horse, the Keiths, in an act of dark treachery, arrived with each horse bearing two warriors. When fighting broke out, the Gunn Chief and Crowner, George Gunn, was slaughtered alongside his eleven clansmen in the uneven skirmish. The clash,

far from ending the feud, served only to stoke the fire of hate, and nearly 70 years later, the grandson of the slain Crowner exacted full revenge when he killed the Keith Chief, together with his son and 10 of his men, at Drummoy. The Gunns' warlike nature also led them to battle with the Mackays during the 16th century, until this was ended by the marriage of the Mackay Chief's brother and Gunn Chief's Daughter in the 1660's. The Clan also became involved in a great conflict with the Sinclair Earls of Caithness and the Gordon Earls of Sutherland, and achieved a great victory against them in 1585, when an outnumbered group of Gunns killed 140 of their enemies. While the Gunns were often occupied defending their territory, this did not stop them from being involved in other conflicts. During the 1745 Rebellion, the Gunns fought on the Government side, and helped to defeat and suppress the Jacobite rebels.

Ian Gunn suffered terribly from the Highland clearances, and the Clan was uprooted from its lands in the early 19th century, some migrating to new countries and others fishing from small villages on the coast. As the Clan disintegrated, the Chiefship of the Clan Gunn became lost, and the Chiefship is still vacant today. The Clan crest is a dexter hand holding a sword, and the motto reads "aut pax aut bellum" - "either peace or war".

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