

The Johnstone Clan

This historical account was taken from Russell C. Honey's book, *The Gentle Johnstones, The Story of the Johnstone Family*.

The Johnstone Family has its beginnings in ancient Scotland, in the western borders in the region of Annandale, which was inhabited by the Celts, in the county of Dumfriesshire. In 1124, King David I of Scotland granted to the first Robert de Bruce, a Norman, the Lordship of Annandale and 200,000 acres. His descendent, the eighth Robert de Bruce, would lead the Scots in their heroic fight against England which gave them their independence. The de Bruce family was to play a pivotal role in the identification and formation of the Johnstone family. The two families were to become close allies over the years. Five hundred years after granting the title of the Lordship of Annandale to the De Bruce family, King Charles II was to grant it to Lord James Johnstone, the Chief of the Johnstone Clan.

One of the Norman Lords arriving in Scotland in the 1100s was a man named "John". At that time surnames were not being used. They did not appear until 1,000 AD. The first people in Scotland to acquire surnames were the Norman Nobles, who came from France with William the Conqueror and were of Viking ancestry. The "John" mentioned, had lands granted to him by the Bruce family. Documents show the name as simply "John", that being the only name he had. Those lands became known as "Johnstun" or "John's town". "Tun" from the Celtic language translates to "town" or "lands".

His son Gilbert was to first use the surname Johnstun in the period from 1170 - 1194. Gilbert was the first member of the family of Johnstone who took the surname, derived from the lands called after his father John.

The foregoing account is supported by Fraser in his book, *The Annandale Family Book of Johnstones*, where he states: "Either from the first Bruce of Annandale, who settled there in 1124 or his immediate successor, 'John', father of Sir Gilbert Johnstone, obtained the lands of Johnstone. They were situated in the heart of Bruce's great Lordship, and not far distant from his famous castle of Lochmaben. 'John' of the single name, who either by

inheritance of gift from Robert Bruce, received lands in Annandale and bestowed his own name on them, calling them 'Johnstun', now 'Johnstone', both estate and parish. His son Gilbert is called indifferently Gilbert, son of John, or Gilbert de Johnstune".

The book, "Tabular Genealogy of the Direct Line of Descent of the Johnstones of Johnstone, Earls and Marquises of Annandale", sets out in much detail the lineage of the family from John to the present Chief, Patrick Andrew Wenworth Hope Johnstone of Annandale. This document is (or was) available at the Moffat Museum in Moffat.

"John, who gave name to Johnston or Johnstone in the Parish of Johnstone in the Lordship of Annandale and Shire of Dumfries, Gilbert son of John is named in writs dated after 1194, and John must therefore have been a prominent settler before that date, circa 1170 - 1194."

"Gilbert was later to be knighted. The name Johnstone was to not only belong to the Lord, but the people who gathered under the Lordship. The clan system evolved as a grouping under the family of persons who, for various reasons, sought the protection and prestige of the overlord".

The Johnstone family from its beginnings has been noted for its respect of kinship. There was great pride in the family. They made the chief's quarrel their quarrel, and if need be, they would fight to the death. It was a legacy of the Celtic blood, something which would not be understood by an outsider. The border area of Scotland, just north of England, was to be home to many clans, and one of the most dynamic and boisterous was the Johnstone family, who over the centuries were to feud off and on with their neighbours, the Maxwell family.

The emblem or crest of the Clan contains the motto, "Nunquam Non Paratus" (Never Unprepared). There are different versions of the origin of the winged spur which appears in the crest. It is based upon the ancient and loyal respect and esteem between the Bruce family and the Johnstone family.

One account tells of Robert Bruce who in hiding from the English, when an illiterate member of the Johnstone Clan learned that there was



treachery afoot which would disclose Bruce's whereabouts to the English. He was able to get a message to him, telling of the danger and to flee. The message was a spur to which the Johnstone had tied a feather. Bruce understood the message and left immediately.

In 1297 William Wallace (Brave Heart) was to lead a rebellion against England and take the first steps toward nationhood for the Scots. The Johnstones' and Bruce's rallied behind Wallace. After the execution of Wallace, the younger Bruce assumed leadership of the Scottish forces and led them to victory at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. The Battle of Bannockburn was a decisive event in Scottish history. Bruce and the Scots defeated the English and established Bruce on the throne of Scotland.

The colourful history of the Johnstones continues in their occupation in times of peace. For the next 300 years the Border areas of both England and Scotland were to be part of every battle between the two countries.

In the periods of peace, the inhabitants on both sides of the border had no means with which to feed and protect their families. They became known as "reivers" as they took to raiding each other in order to survive. The word reiver is an obsolete term that means, "to plunder or rob."

Reiving was about the only occupation of the Borders. On either side of the border, a raid on a farm left the victim with only one alternative.... starvation.

For men whose sole wealth lay in their herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, there was only one obvious answer, and that was to replace the stock from someone else. Reivers would must members of the clan, waiting for an appropriately dark night, would ride over the border to raid, in order to not only replenish their loss, but also to wreak revenge. The numbers involved might vary from a few close family members to an army recruited from the clan or a group of friendly clans.

The seat of the Johnstone family home was [Lochwood Tower](#). Lochwood Tower is situated on the northern boundary of the Parish of Johnstone, in a wood of oaks and surrounded by deep bays and marshes. In its proximity, about a mile away, is the River Annan. The following stanza from local poetry describes the environment:

Where placid Annan peaceful flows
And laves its low-laid level vale,
The Lochwood's lofty towers arose,
Where dwelt the Lords of Annandale,
On Johnstone Moor, midst wavering grass
The towering fortress frowned afar,
Surrounded by a deep morass,
A safe retreat in time of war.

Other local poets have described the oaks in the wood near Lochwood as having stately grandeur. One of the oaks has a girth of 17.5 feet.

The reverend oak takes back
The heart to elder days of holy awe,
Such oaks are they, the hoariest of their race,
Round Lochwood Tower, the Johnstone's ancient family seat,
Bow'd down with age, and all o'er
With scurft moss and parasitic hair.

The Johnstone stronghold was to experience the effects of raids and border warfare and in particular the feuds. In 1585 Lochwood tower was the scene of a destructive, deliberate fire set by Robert Maxwell. The fire destroyed the charter chests with all the family title documents, charters, etc. Their destruction made the task of writing the history of the early members of the family from the 12th century to the 16th century, one of much difficulty. Lochwood Tower was rebuilt after the Maxwell torching and again inhabited by the Johnstone Family. It continued to be their principal residence until an

accidental fire about the year 1710 destroyed it. After this, it was not to be rebuilt, but gradually began to deteriorate and now lies in ruins.

As the centuries progressed, the family emigrated from Scotland to various parts of the world. In the 1600's, members of the Johnstone family were among the earliest settlers of Northern Ireland. It appears to be here that the "e" was dropped from the name, and it evolved to Johnston. In the late 1600's and 1700's, immigration began to the United States and Canada, particularly the area of Nova Scotia.

One of the most colourful of the Johnstones of that era was George Johnstone, who was born in Annandale. At age 17 he fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775. Then at age 22, when he was on a ship in route to Australia, he met a beautiful 16 year-old Jewish girl, Esther Abrahams, who was being transported to Australia because she had stolen a piece of lace valued at 50 shillings. That meeting was the beginning of a love affair that was to last their lifetime. In Australia, the couple were to prosper. George was to become Lt. Governor of the New South Wales colony and the two were to own a large estate named Annandale, after George's birthplace. Additionally, Esther was to become a founding member of the Great Synagogue of Sydney.

Sir Walter Scott, one of the most popular novelists of all times, wrote often of the Johnstone Family. In *The Fair Maid of Perth*, written in 1828, he writes tongue-in-cheek:

Within the bounds of Annandale,
The gentle Johnstones ride,
They have been there a thousand years,
A thousand more they'll ride.

Lochwood Tower

Seat of the Johnstone Clan

Lochwood Tower (or Lochwood Castle), the seat of the Johnstone Clan, lies a few miles southwest of Moffat in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. It is located in upper Annandale. Lochwood is situated in the Parish of Johnstone, which takes its name from (or gave its name to) Lochwood's owners. The name "Lochwood" is derived from a forest (wood) near an ancient lake (loch), which later became a bog known as Lochwood Moss. Parts of the forest still exist in the form of thousand-year-old oak trees (the "Royal Oaks"), which grow adjacent to the Lochwood Tower site. Today Lochwood is in an advanced state of ruin. During the 1960s, Alastair M. T. Maxwell-Irving, FSA Scot, cleared away the rubble caused by the collapsing tower, restored the two-chambered vaulted basement (one of which chambers was the dungeon), and cemented the remaining walls firmly in place. At this time he found various artefacts, including the original iron yett (gate) to Lochwood. In 1547 the English soldier Sir Thomas Carleton described Lochwood as "a fair large tower with a barnekin (surrounding stone wall), hall, kitchen and stables all within the barnekin." On the outside, the tower measures 43 feet, 4 inches from east to west, and 34 feet from north to south. The floor plan of the tower was slightly L-shaped, with a spiral staircase in a wing in the northeast corner. The remains of the courtyard, surrounded by the barnekin, average approximately 150 feet from north to south, and 95 feet from east to west. It appears that the first Johnstone land holding in Scotland may have been further south, as the first such known land was at the southern end of Annandale. Gilbert, son of John (Gilleberto filio Johannis), later known as Sir Gilbert de Johnstone, received from William Bruce, Lord of Annandale, the use of a parcel of land with a building between the years 1194 and 1214. It is possible that the land

in Annan was not the first or only parcel held by the Johnstones. In any event, it is not known when the first Johnstones occupied Lochwood. On the Lochwood site are the remains of a Norman-style "motte and bailey" castle, the type of wooden fortification on a hill, which was common before the days of stone castles. It is generally believed that the existing three-tiered "motte" was built by Sir Gilbert de Johnstone or his father "John," although this cannot now be established conclusively. In fact, it is possible the Johnstones did not occupy the Lochwood site until after the Black Douglas Rebellion of 1455, in which the Johnstones assisted the King in putting down the most powerful family in Scotland. This would not be surprising, as during most of the fourteenth century, Annandale was either a war zone or under actual English military occupation. Also, for long periods of time, Annandale was under the dominion of the Black Douglases. The Exchequer Rolls of the mid 1450s contain an entry for the landholdings of the estate of Adam Johnstone of Johnstone (d. 1454) which list "Johnstone-tenement," "Bel-tenement," and "Kirkpatick." Lochwood is not mentioned by name, and it is possible that the Johnstones were in possession of Lochwood at this time. The stone castle of Lochwood was probably constructed during the lifetime of John Johnstone of Johnstone, who was Chief from 1454 through 1493, although this is not certain. The first known reference to the stone tower of Lochwood, by name, was in November 1476, in a Latin document in which John Johnstone of that ilk (Johannes Johnnestonune de eodem) conveyed the five-merk lands of Wamphray to his son John (W. Fraser). The document was written and signed at "Lochwood." From then on, Lochwood is frequently mentioned in connection with the Anglo-Scottish frontier. The English captured Lochwood by stealth in 1547, when a woman inside opened the gate at dawn. They found the castle very well provisioned and held Lochwood until 1550, burning it as they left. In 1585 Lochwood was burned again, this time by the rival Maxwell family, destroying the Johnstone charter chest and jewels. In his gallows humour, Robert Maxwell stated that he burned Lochwood so that Lady Johstone might have light to put on her hood! By the late 1600s, Lochwood was outmoded as a residence and its owner, the Earl of Annandale, spent most of his time in Edinburgh on government business. The

Marchioness of Annandale was at Lochwood as late as June 1706, and she wrote a letter from there to Earl of Marchmont. However, by this time Lochwood's days as the chief home of the Johstones were over. It was probably abandoned soon afterward, and is said to have burned a few years later.

For more information on Lochwood Tower, go to [The Lochwood Tower Page](#).

