



*Archibald Campbell
1st Marquess of Argyll*

In the 17th century wars of Montrose, Sir John, 14th chief, who had been knighted by King Charles, after much shilly-shallying, joined Argyll's Covenanting army and in the inglorious rout of that force at Inverlochy he and his brother were taken prisoner. He then threw in his lot with Montrose the Royalist general. Archibald, the chief's brother, with Colkitt's fighting Irish, crossed Loch Long in boats provided by the Lamonts and landed at the Point of Strone.

After defeating a Campbell force in the heights above the point the Royalist army mustered at Toward and then harried far and wide in the Campbell lands. The Lamonts had their share in this killing and plundering particularly in North Cowal, and they attacked the old tower of Kilmun and the bishop's house in Dunoon. Dunoon is a place of grim memory for the Lamonts. There the Campbells carried out one of the massacres which stain their clan's history. In 1646 the Campbells made a concentrated attack on the Lamont castles of Toward and Ascog, and, when the garrisons surrendered under written guarantee of liberty, the Campbells ignored the terms of capitulation. The survivors of the defenders were carried in boats to Dunoon and in the church were sentenced to death. About 100 were shot or stabbed to death and another 36 of 'the special gentlemen' of the Lamonts were hanged from a tree in the churchyard and dead and dying were buried in pits. The Chief and his close kin were hustled away to Inveraray, where some were hanged. The Chief and his brothers being kept prisoner for five years. It was 16 years before the ringleaders of the

massacre were brought to justice, and Sir Colin Campbell was beheaded. The Clan Lamont Society in 1909 raised a monument on the spot where so many met their deaths.

After 1646, the much reduced Clan Lamont had a fairly peaceful history, finally having the good sense or luck to not get involved with any more losing causes. We stayed out of both the 1715 and 1745 Jacobite uprisings. This may have been due to the fact that they were now pretty well surrounded by Campbells, who always sided with the English government (To their great profit).

With the destruction of the Clan system in 1745, the structure of Highland society was changed for all time. When the power of the Chiefs was eliminated, so was their need for dedicated clansmen to protect and expand the clan lands. The result of this, in time, was the infamous Highland clearances; where chiefs cleared the land of crofters, and substituted the more profitable sheep. As was the case with the Lamonts, some chiefs tended to sell off the clan lands instead of shifting to sheep. Sadly, as a result of this policy, there are now none of the ancestral lands in Lamont hands. Starting very early, even before 1600, Lamonts have tended to disperse, and are now one of the most widespread of clans.



Highland Clearances

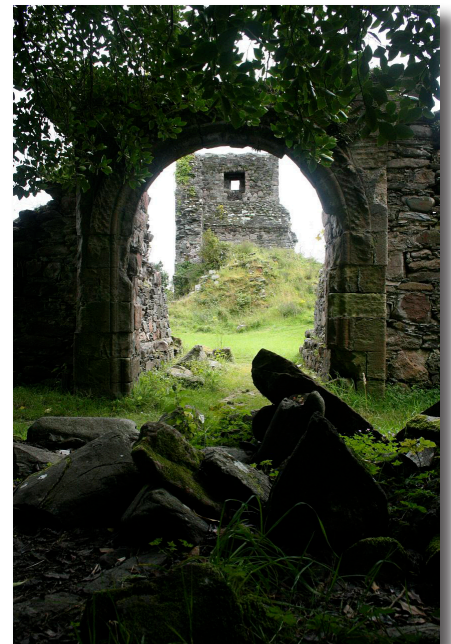


Toward Castle Artist's Depiction

Toward Castle

Toward Castle is located at the southeastern tip of the Cowal peninsula, and was built sometime in the mid 1400's. It served as the seat of the Lamont Chiefs until 1646, when it was destroyed by the Campbells. After its destruction, the Chiefs moved to Ardlamont at the southwestern tip of Cowal. It is impossible to tell exactly what the castle looked like in its prime, as no paintings exist. However, this much is known. The tower had two vaulted cellars of unequal size at ground level and a vaulted hall on the first floor. Entrance was at first-floor level in the south-west wall, with a mural stair in the east corner serving the cellars. The larger of these had a garderobe in the south-west

wall, and in the south-east a small mural chamber which may represent a former ground-level entrance. There were two floors above the hall, of which little more than the north-west wall survives. The north-west side of the courtyard wall was a continuation of the shorter wall of the tower-house. The south-eastern wall extended outwards with a building of roughly twice the tower's area; this contained three rooms at ground level. The Hall had a door to the outside. The northern end of the courtyard wall had a sixteenth-century gateway, whose arch is still intact (though the gatehouse above has gone), and is a very fine example of early renaissance carving: rope moulding, chequers, plain roll and corbels. The gateway projects to allow for shot-loops giving flanking fire along the wall. Within the gate was a vaulted passage with guardrooms either side. The ruins do not give the impression of a very large structure, but it was probably of average size for the time in which it was built. It was no humble pile of stones, as evidenced by the fact that Mary Queen of Scots, was entertained there in 1563.



Toward Castle Ruins Today

Kilfinan Parish Church

Kilfinan Parish Church figures prominently in the history of Clan Lamont. The earliest surviving written record of the clan, and one of the earliest of any clan; is a charter signed in 1235 by Sir Laumon, first Chief of Clan Lamont, and his uncle Duncan, giving the church to the monks of Paisley. Many of the early chiefs, including Sir Laumon's son Malcolm, are buried here. It is still an active parish church located on the western side of Cowal, near the shore of Loch Fyne, almost due west of Dunoon. It is currently (1995) undergoing a restoration project. Most of the funds for this project, have been donated by Lamonts around the world.



Kilfinan Church Today

Knockdow House

Seat of the McCorrie Lamonts of Knockdow, the house is located on a 6,000 acre estate, southeast of Dunoon, about 11 miles by route A 815. Located on a large wooded estate, it was built in 1817, and enlarged and remodeled by the last Lamont of Knockdow, Sir Norman Lamont, in recent times. The estate was sold in 1990. Fortunately, most of the contents pertaining to Clan Lamont, were bequeathed to the Clan Lamont Society by Sir Norman's heirs.



Knockdow House Today

An Clarsach Laomannach *The Lamont Harp*

The Lamont Harp, now in an Edinburgh museum, is the oldest surviving Celtic harp. The harp was the traditional musical instrument of the Celts, long before the adoption of the bagpipe in the 16th century.

The harp was the instrument of the bards, those individuals whose gift of oral recitation made them invaluable to the early clan chiefs. The Lamont harp dates from at the latest, the mid 1400s. It was in the possession of Lillias, a daughter of Duncan Lamont, our 8th Chief, when in 1464 she married Charles Robertson of Lude. The harp stayed at Lude, near Blair Atholl, until 1914, when it was purchased by the National Museum of Antiquities for 850 guineas. It is now one of the prized historical objects of Scotland. Here is the description of the harp by David Kortier, a well known harp maker, who has examined the Lamont Harp:



The Lamont Harp



*The Lamont Harp in her Current Home
Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh*

"The Lamont is entirely of one species of wood, a hardwood, which is unusual. It is clear to me that the wood is English walnut, not hornbeam, however. I immediately thought "walnut" when I had the harp in front of me, but the color did not seem right. (I am most familiar with American black walnut.) Later in the day, I visited the Russell Collection of Keyboards Instruments at the University of Edinburgh. There in front of me was acres of this same wood. The lid of one early harpsichord in particular (English, about 1720) looked as though it could have been from the same log as the Lamont. The Curator there informed me that the wood in question is walnut, meaning, of course, English walnut.

The other curious thing about the Lamont harp is an inscription, apparently previously not noted, on the harp. Robert Bruce Armstrong, in his exhaustive description of this harp around 1900, does not mention it, because the harp was covered with a heavy red paint then. It is scratched unceremoniously into the side of the soundbox, and says, Al. Stewart of Clunie his harp 1650. Here is a project for a research musicologist/historian!"