


# NESBITT ~ NISBET HISTORY & FAMILIES



 Nisbet Horsemen leaving Nisbet Castle (Artist: Andrew Spratt)



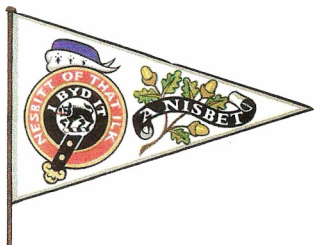
Arms of the Clan Chief



Clan Badge

**THE NESBITT NISBET SOCIETY (BRITISH ISLES)**

# THE NESBITT NISBET SOCIETY



The Nesbitt / Nisbet Society was founded in 1980 by Prof. John A. Nesbitt of the University of Iowa. Its aims are to assist with genealogical research into Nesbitt/Nisbet families, to identify and preserve our Clan's heritage, and to encourage communication and social gatherings world wide.

The UK branch was founded in 1983, the North American branch in 1985, and the Australian branch in 1986. Each branch also serves neighbouring regions, and all three work closely together. Total membership is 400+.

We assist our members with genealogy, with our research books, personal records, databases, and a thriving DNA project. We also publish newsletters and other materials that are sent to all subscribing members. Each branch has official Clan Gatherings, those in the British Isles usually held in locations with historic N/N associations; those in North America in association with one of the well-known Highland Games. Clan tents are also set up at many Highland Games in the USA *right*.



Recent meetings have been held at Gunsgreen House, Eyemouth (with a visit to Nisbet House, *below*, Kilmarnock (Covenanters), Durham Castle, Dirleton Castle and Paxton House.



Each branch has its own membership; 2009 subscriptions are: British Isles: £12 (UK) £16 overseas; North America US\$25; Australia Aus \$15. Membership is open to all, whether descended from or related to N/Ns, or interested in the family.

British Isles: [www.nesbittnisbet.org.uk](http://www.nesbittnisbet.org.uk)  
North America: [www.ibydeit.org](http://www.ibydeit.org)  
Australia: [www.nnsoc.asn.au](http://www.nnsoc.asn.au)

Or write to: Nesbitt/Nisbet Society, 114 Cambridge Road, Teddington, TW11 8DJ, United Kingdom.

# WELCOME FROM THE CHIEF OF THE NAME

The Nesbitt/Nisbets, in their many spellings, are a small family, but have taken a remarkably active role in history in their Scottish homeland, and in the many countries around the world in which they have settled.

It was the heroic and ultimately tragic participation of Sir Alexander Nisbet of that Ilk in the Civil War of the 17th century that interrupted recognition of the Chief of the Nesbitt/Nisbet name. My family's links to these stirring events were never forgotten. Although Nisbet House was lost to the family in 1649, my great-grandparents were able to live there in 1935-6. In 1995 my father was recognised as Chief of the Name (i.e. family or clan) by the Court of the Lord Lyon in Edinburgh; I succeeded my father in 2000.

I have been involved in running the Nesbitt Nisbet Society since the 1990s, and the continuing close collaboration between Chief and Clan Society has continued to work well. As an example, this booklet is being issued to mark the 2009 Gathering of the Clans in Edinburgh, where the Society has been able to organise a four day programme with a dinner, tour and lively clan tent.

Recognition of a family Chief in 1995 has ended confusion over our status: we are not a sept of another family, but a fully recognised Scottish family or clan in our own right.

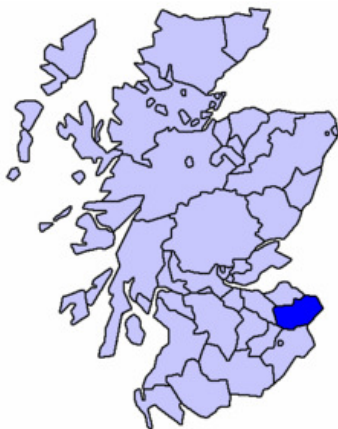
The only correct clan badge or tartan for a Nisbet is that of the Nisbet family - both illustrated in this booklet! Incidentally, although we lowland families tend to think of ourselves as families rather than clans (a Highland term), in practice the terms are interchangeable today.

It is a pleasure to welcome all readers of this booklet to the wider fellowship of the Nisbet family. I hope you enjoy this booklet, and consider joining the Nesbitt Nisbet Society. It is a fantastic conduit for communication, whether purely social or for family history research. Our long history, rich in incident and personalities, is surely one of which we can all be proud. I hope you will get the same enjoyment as I do in exploring it further.



Mark Nesbitt of that Ilk

# CLAN ORIGINS - BERWICKSHIRE



The lowland family of Nesbitt or Nisbet has its roots in the county of Berwickshire, in the Scottish Borders. Like the families of Home and Swinton, our descent can be traced from Gospatric, Earl of Northumbria (d. 1073). East and West Nisbet appear in charters of King David I (now in the archives of Durham Cathedral) in the mid-twelfth century, the earliest records of the line of Nisbet of that ilk. Interestingly, until the 16th century, the lands are most often spelled Nesbit, which has a claim to be the original spelling.



The 1654 [Blaeu Atlas of Scotland](#) clearly shows the location of the recently rebuilt Nisbet House at West Nisbet and the original East Nisbet Castle location along the Blackadder River. The castle (marked as *E. Nisbeth Cast*) was probably in ruins at this time, as the stones from it are said to have been used to build the house at West Nisbet. Also shown are the castles of the Blackadder and Wedderburn families, closely connected to the Nisbets.





Nisbet House in 1935-6

In the 12th century, castles were built by the Nisbet family at West Nisbet, two miles south of the town of Duns, and at East Nisbet, now known as Allanbank, southeast of Duns on the Blackadder River. The castle at East Nisbet is long gone, but at West Nisbet the original pele tower was incorporated into the east end of a magnificent new fortified mansion house, built in 1630 by Sir Alexander Nisbet of that Ilk (1580-1660). Nisbet House still stands, with an eighteenth century tower added to its west end. The privately owned house is located on just a few acres of land and is a family home. A good view of the house may be obtained from the A6112. Readers are urged not to approach the house or to contact the owner; the Society can help with any information required.

The family of Nisbet of that Ilk lost its estates in the Civil War of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Sir Alexander was a fervent supporter of King Charles I, and was to lose three sons, as well as his newly built tower house. The family motto, "I byd it" (I endure it) was all too appropriate. The eldest son, Sir Philip Nisbet, was executed in Glasgow after the Battle of Philiphaugh, Col. Robert Nisbet was captured with Montrose and executed at Edinburgh in 1650, and Major Alexander Nisbet was killed at the siege of York in 1644. His son, Adam Nisbet, had one son, Alexander Nisbet, the author of *A System of Heraldry*. Related families settled in Edinburgh, Dirleton, Eyemouth, Dalzell, Carfin and Greenholm, all in Scotland.



Nisbet House today

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The origins of our name lie in the twelfth century adoption of surnames based on place-names; Nesbit (or Nisbet) is the Old English *neosu-byht*, *nese* meaning 'nose' and *byht* 'bend', thus 'noselike bend', such as the ridge of a hill.

Nisbet of that Ilk means Nisbet 'of the same', in other words, Nisbet of Nisbet. Ilk is a common usage among lowland Chiefs, in comparison to highland practice such as The Macnab, or Macnab of Macnab.

The spelling of the name is not a reliable guide to area of origin, but in the 1881 census the spelling Nesbit is most common in Northumberland, and Nesbitt in Durham; with the Scottish Borders in second place for both spellings. Nisbet is most common in the Scottish Borders.

Over 228 spellings of Nesbitt/Nisbet have been found in historical documents; they include: Naesbeet; Naesbut; Naesby; Naisbitt; Naisby; Nasebitt; Nechisbit; Nesbay; Nesbet; Nesbiet; Nesbit; Nesbite; Nesbith; Nesbitt; Nesbut; Nesby; Nesbyth; Nездrit; Nesebet; Nesebite; Nesebith; Neshbeet; Neshbit; Niesbet; Nisbet; Nisbeth; Nisbett; Nisbiet; Nisbit; Nisbith; Nezbet; Nezbet; Nysbeet; Nysbeth.

# BERWICKSHIRE



Paxton House, built near Duns for the Home family in 1758, has close Nisbet family connections, with plasterwork by James Nisbet. The UK Gathering was held here in 1999.



Currently being restored, the impressive Gungahlin House overlooks Eyemouth harbour and was regularly used as a store for smuggled tea. This house was designed by Robert Adam in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the merchants John & David Nisbet. The UK Gathering met here in May 2008. The house is under restoration as a museum, with holiday flats too.



# EDINBURGH



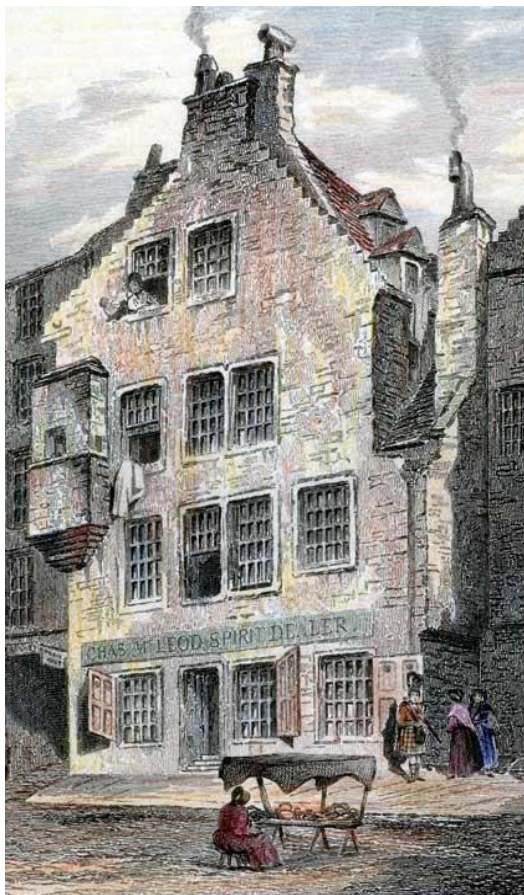
The Dean Estate (*above*) was acquired in 1609 by Sir William Nisbet of Dean. The old House of Dean was demolished in 1845, to make way for the Dean Cemetery in Edinburgh. Many sculptured stones from the house survive in the cemetery, including the arms of Henry Nisbet, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and his son Sir Patrick.



This memorial in Greyfriars Kirk honours Alexander Nisbet, expert heraldist and grandson of Sir Alexander. It was unveiled by John Buchan in 1936. The old Nisbet burial vault was in Greyfriars Kirk Yard, but its location is unknown.



Also in Greyfriars Kirk Yard is the Martyrs Monument, which reminds us of those, including Nisbets, who died in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century persecution of the Covenanters (see p. 11 for more details). The Covenant, signed in Greyfriars Kirk on 28th February 1638, was a protest against the attempts made in the 1630s by Charles 1 to impose episcopacy and Anglican-style liturgy on the Scottish Church.



Dirleton House (*left*) was built for Sir John Nisbet, Lord Dirleton (1610-1688), an eminent lawyer, unpopular Lord Advocate, and buyer of the Dirleton estate in East Lothian in 1663. This house is one of the oldest dwellings in the city and is located at 82 Canongate, in the Royal Mile.

Many Nisbet-related manuscripts and books can be found in the National Library of Scotland and the nearby Edinburgh Central Library.

In St. Giles Cathedral the Montrose window (*right*) commemorates the officers who served with Montrose. This pane shows the arms of Sir Philip Nisbet, son of Sir Alexander, who was captured at the Battle of Philiphaugh in 1645, and beheaded in Glasgow, where he is buried.



# EAST LoTHIAN



In 1663 Dirleton Castle and its estate were acquired by the Nisbets of Dirleton; the family donated the castle to Historic Scotland in 1923 and it is open to the public. The Nisbets abandoned the castle as a residence and built a large new mansion near the village of Dirleton. Archerfield (*below*) has recently been converted to a golf course and county club.



Winton House, likewise in East Lothian, and the family home of Sir Francis Ogilvy, is sometimes open to the public. It contains many portraits relating to the Nisbets of Dean and Dirleton.

# AYRSHIRE

Nisbets have been living in this part of southwest Scotland since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Well documented families include Nisbet of Greenholm, remembered in family monuments in Galston Parish Church, Nisbet of Hardhill, and Nisbet of Sornhill.

Nisbets played a prominent role among the Covenanters of the 1670s-80s. After the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, he attempted to impose state control over the Church. Many ministers were expelled from their churches, but continued to preach to their congregations on the hillsides.

Government repression continued, peaking in the "killing times" of 1685. John Nisbet "The Martyr" of Hardhill (1627-85) fought on behalf of the Covenanters at battles such as the Pentland Rising (1666). In 1685 he was captured by his cousin, Robert Nisbet, and hung in Edinburgh. He is remembered by memorials in the kirkyard at Loudoun Church, Newmilns (*right*) and at the entrance to the Martyrs Church in Glasgow. His nephew, John Nisbet the younger, was executed in Kilmarnock in 1683; the spot is marked by a pavement memorial.



The current Loudoun church at Newmilns is 19<sup>th</sup> century; Murdoch and John Nisbet would have attended Old Loudoun Kirk, in a lovely setting above Newmilns (*left*).

# ENGLAND - AND THE CONTINENT

The origins of the family in England are unclear. Nesbit is an ancient place name in northern England. The manor of Nesbit Hall, Hesleden, County Durham, is recorded as of 1350. The township of Nesbit, north of Doddington, Northumberland, is recorded by 1242, and was held by the de Vesci family. The township of Nesbit in the parish of Hart, ward of Easington, County Durham, is recorded since 1311. In all three cases there is no evidence of use of Nesbit as a surname, although Philip Nisbet, ancestor of the current clan chief, came to Easington as rector in 1644.

The Manor of Nesbit two miles south of Stamfordham, Northumberland is first mentioned in 1213. In 1240 part of the land was held by Walter de Nesbit; in 1256 a Walter Nesbit and a Thomas, son of Adam Nesbit, held land from the Priory of Hexham. These names are certainly reminiscent of those carried by the Berwickshire family, but disappear from the locality by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There was a pele tower at Nesbit, held by Sir Thomas Grey but gone by 1540.

Further evidence for an early group of the family in England is from the life of Thomas Nesbitt, a Durham monk who became Prior of Coldingham (1447-1456), and whose uncle was a Hull wine-merchant.

The history of the family in Durham and Northumberland is complicated by the many who worked in the coal mines in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with attendant population movements. So far, it has proved hard to trace many lines in these counties before 1700, so DNA is probably the best approach. Nisbetts are also recorded in London by 1680.



Scots are well-known travellers; William Nisbeth of Rochel (1596-1660) was a Captain in the Swedish Army and is buried in Uppsala; his descendants in Sweden bear the arms *left*. Nisbets were prominent Baltic merchants in Danzig and Elbing from 1500. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century members of the family settled in France, Germany, and Italy, where many descendants reside today.

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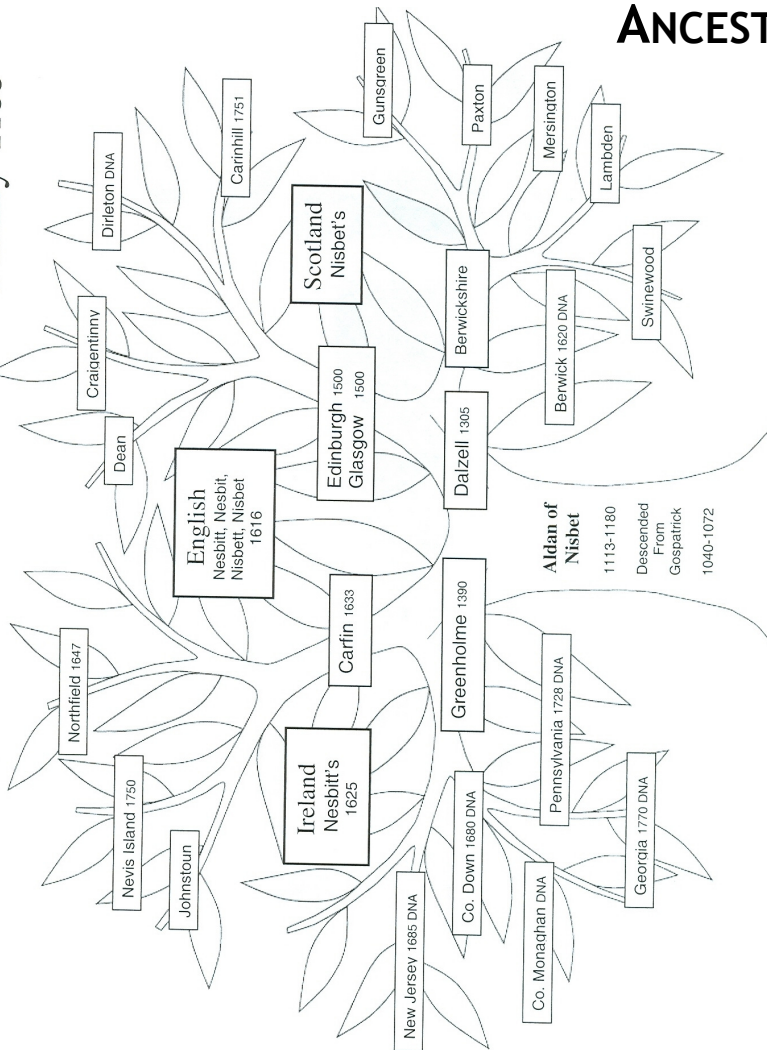
## The Nesbitt-Nisbet

This tree represents the many branches of the family in Scotland, England, and Ireland. Information was taken from Nisbet of that ILK and our DNA testing project results.

Not all these branches have been proven, but we hope further DNA testing will assist us in learning more about our heritage.

Through our DNA testing, we have shown the Dirleton and Berwick branches do match our Clan Chief and the primary family connected at the base of the tree.

## Family Tree



As suggested by DNA testing and Nisbet of that ILK but certainly NOT proven. Tom Nesbitt, NN Society 2007

# DNA

The Society's DNA testing project uses a simple saliva sample sent in to the Family Tree DNA lab; this results in a 37-marker code that represents our Male Y-DNA. Male Y-DNA is very consistent in men and rarely changes, even over hundreds of years. We then compare this code with other Nesbitt / Nisbet men and when we have a match, we have new DNA cousins.

The DNA testing project was started by Tom Nesbitt of PA to help determine which of our members of PA and MD were really connected to each other. After initial results proved connections that no one knew existed, the project was expanded to all members of the US, UK and Australia Societies. So far we have three large DNA groups and two smaller ones.

To date we have tested 75 people. For some members, this has been their first connection ever made to another NN family in our Society. The project is open to all males (as they bear the Y chromosome) bearing a Nisbet name, however spelt. It is not necessary to be a member of the Society.

**DNA Group One.** Mark Nesbitt, our Clan Chief, is descended from Aldan of Nisbet 1113-1180 and several members in the US match his DNA code and may come from the Dirleton branch, as well as the former UK President David Nisbet who lives near Nisbet House and matches this group.

**DNA Group Two.** This very large group appears to be the descendants of the Greenholm line who were strong supporters of the Covenanters of western Scotland. Five family members were executed and the rest fled to Northern Ireland to seek refuge. In the early 1700's, their descendants immigrated to NJ, PA, and MD along with thousands of Scots-Irish settlers.

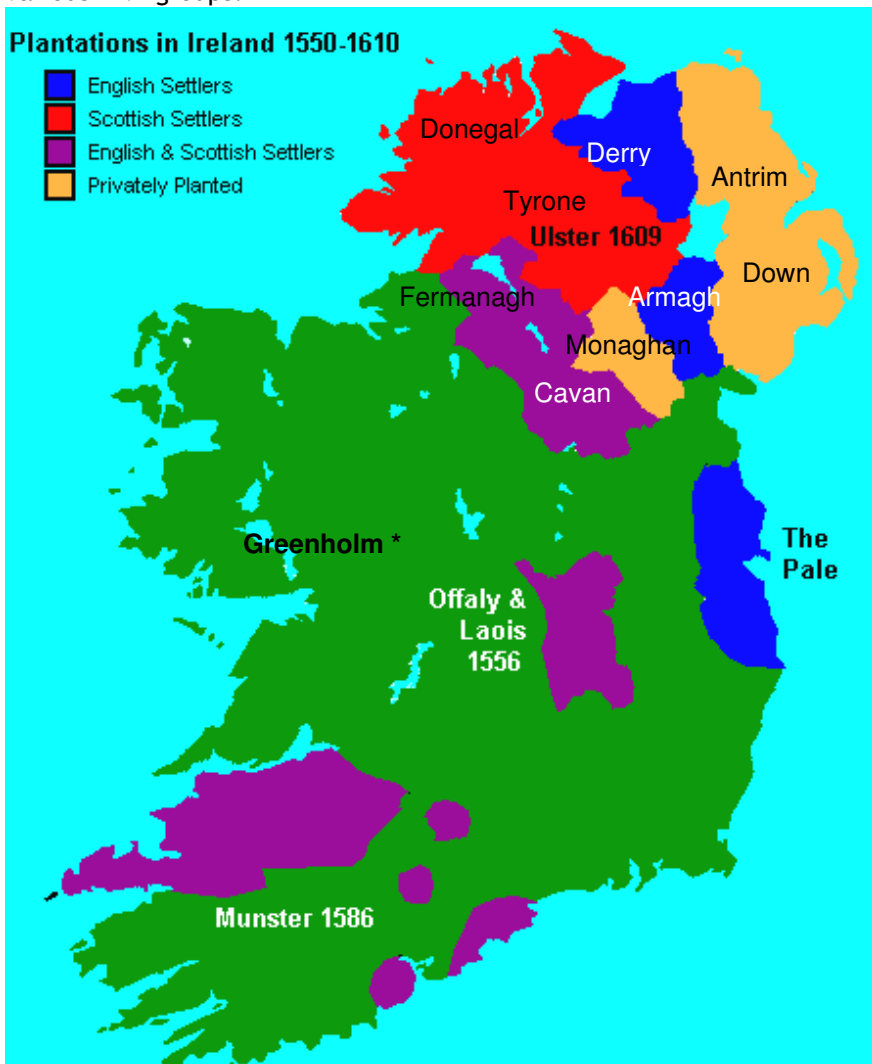
**DNA Group Three.** This large group appears to be connected to both Scottish and English NN families moving outward from the Borders. Also connected are the descendants of Alexander Nisbet born 1731 at sea on route to America, who settled in NC.

**DNA Groups Four & Five.** These two groups are currently very small and we have no definite location for those who match.

Join at: [www.familytreedna.com/project-join-request.aspx?group=Nesbitt](http://www.familytreedna.com/project-join-request.aspx?group=Nesbitt)

# IRELAND

The Nisbet family of the Borders area started moving outward in all directions over 500 years ago. The branches of the primary family moved to Berwick, Edinburgh, and Dirleton. Other branches moved south to England and west to Greenholm. During the 1600's many families moved to Northern Ireland to settle there on James II's plantations of Ulster (*below*). The movement of some of these groups seems to match the various DNA groups.



After King James colonized Jamestown, VA in 1607, he started to colonize the Plantations of Ulster in Northern Ireland in 1609. The Lowland Scots travelled a short distance to settle in this new land, including many Nisbet families from Southern Scotland. It is here that the name usually changed its spelling to Nesbitt.

The Lowland Scots who migrated to the Ulster plantations during the 17<sup>th</sup> century did not intermarry with the native Irish who were mostly Catholic. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, they started immigrating to the US and Canada and were called the Scots-Irish to distinguish them from the native Irish. The preferred term today is Ulster Scots and many of our Society member's ancestors lived for some time on the plantations of Ulster. The Catholic Irish did not immigrate to America in large numbers until the great potato famine of 1845, with Boston and New York as their primary destinations.

## NORTH AMERICA

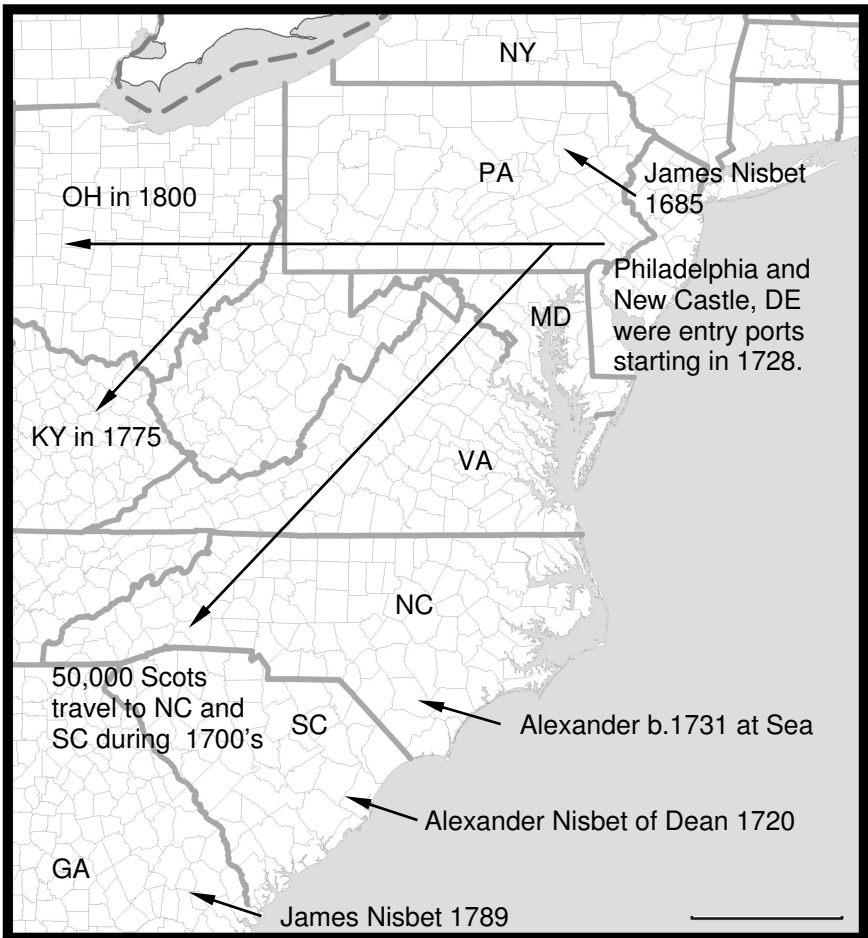
Due to the religious wars in Scotland during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many of our ancestors fled to Northern Ireland to settle on the plantations of Ulster. In the 1700's, they immigrated to America in five great waves: 1717 - 1718, 1725 -1729, 1740 -1741, 1754 - 1755, 1771-1775. Approximately 200,000 Ulster Scots left the plantations of Ulster, immigrating to America through the ports of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, and to the ports of Canada.

They were all Presbyterians, and brought their faith and ministers with them. Pennsylvania was a primary destination due to William Penn's Colony promising religious freedoms for all faiths. Pennsylvania provided fertile valleys for crops and wooded hillsides for timber. They settled along the western frontier and lived under constant fear of Indian attacks, then moved west into OH, and KY. Due to the increased land



prices in PA and MD, thousands of Scots travelled the great wagon road south from Philadelphia to the Carolinas during the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, settling in the foothills of NC. Others immigrated directly into Charleston, SC, such as Sir Alexander Nisbet of Dean, who built his plantation house (*right*) in 1725.





Plum Grove. The 1831 home of Jonathan Nesbitt of Clear Spring, MD

# AUSTRALIA

The European settlement of Australia began with the arrival of the First Fleet at Sydney in 1788. The earliest recorded N/N convict is believed to be Ann Nisbet, sentenced to death at the Old Bailey for forging coinage, but transported to New South Wales (Australia) on the *Indefatigable* in 1812. A further 9 N/N convicts arrived before the cessation of transportation in 1851. Several N/N's arrived as soldiers and police in these early settlements. The gold rush of the 1850s enticed many immigrants, especially to New South Wales and Victoria, some came North America or New Zealand. Non-convict settlers are thus far more numerous; 1683 N/Ns travelled as passengers to Australia between 1826 and 1922, with a further 125 NNs as assisted (subsidised) immigrants. Immigration appears to have been fairly evenly balanced between Scotland and England. The common forms of the surname in Australia are Nesbitt and Nisbet.

# NEW ZEALAND

The story of settlement in New Zealand is different. Trading stations were established in the early 19th century, but settlement greatly increased after the Treaty of Waitangi in 1839. The years 1853-1870 saw a surge of Scots, mainly from the Lowlands. This is reflected in the abundance of the Nisbet and Nisbett spellings of the surname today.

Ben Nesbit of North Berwick, East Lothian, was the first known member of the Nisbet/Nesbitt clan to settle in New Zealand. As an artisan and carpenter, he worked on two of the earliest European buildings to survive from the new colony, the Stone House and Kemp House in the early 1830s. They are at Kerikeri, in the very north of the North Island, and are in the care of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

Also among the earlier N/N settlers were John and Thomas Nisbet, their ancestors were of Chapelton, parish of New Kilpatrick, Dunbartonshire and of Auchinairn, parish of Cadder, Lanarkshire. They were among the first organized immigration colony from Scotland, who arrived on board the Bengal in 1840. They landed at Wellington; Tom was to end up digging for gold in Australia.



# FAMOUS FAMILY

**ARTHUR JAMES NESBITT** (1880-1954), financier. Founder of the stockbrokerage Nesbitt, Thomson and Company in Montreal, later to become BMO Nesbitt Burns, a major investment company.

**CATHLEEN NESBITT** (1888-1982), actress. Born in Cheshire, a star of stage and screen for 80 years, lover and fiancée of the poet Rupert Brooke.

**JAMES NESBITT** (1965-), actor. Born in Coleraine, Northern Ireland. Popular in both comedy (*Cold Feet*) and more intense work (*Occupation*).

**LEWIS MARIANO NESBITT** (1891-1935), Italian explorer. After working as an engineer in the gold mines of the Rand (described in *Gold Fever*, 1936), travelled in Ethiopia (*Hell-Hole of Creation*) and Venezuela (*Desolate marches*). Killed in an airplane crash in Switzerland.

**MARY NESBITT** (1735-1825), courtesan. Poll Davis, a famous beauty (*right*), married Arnold Nesbitt of Lismore and drove him insane.

**RANDOLPH COSBY NESBITT, V.C.** (1857-1956), soldier. A Captain in the Mashonaland Mounted Police during the Mashona Rebellion, Rhodesia. On 19 June 1896 near Salisbury, Captain Nesbitt led a patrol of only 13 men to the rescue of miners at the Alice Mine in Mazoe Valley.



**EDITH NESBIT** (1858-1924), author. Edith's profound empathy with children, and sense of humour, has kept her books (*5 Children & It*; *The Railway Children*) in print for well over 100 years. Also a passionate socialist.

**ALEXANDER NISBET "THE HERALD"** (1657-1725), Edinburgh lawyer and author. Passionate heraldist, his *System of Heraldry* (1722) is still the main source for the history & arms of Scottish landed families.

**FRANCES (FANNY) NISBET, LADY NELSON** (1761-1831), wife of Admiral Lord Nelson (*over page*). Born Frances Woolward, married Dr. Josiah Nisbet (d. 1781), of the Carfin line. Met Nelson while she was a widow on Nevis;

they married there on 11 March 1787. Fanny's later life was overshadowed by Nelson's affair with Lady Emma Hamilton.



**HUME (SOMETIMES HERKIS) NISBET (1849-1923)**, artist, teacher and author. Much travelled in Australia and southeast Asia, prolific author of travel books and novels, a fine painter. Born in Stirling, with descendants in New Zealand today. Both his daughters became well-known artists; the dreamlike paintings of Noel Laura Nisbet (1887-1956) are sought-after.

**JOHN NISBET, LORD DIRLETON (1609-1687)**, Scottish judge. A controversial figure, Lord Advocate, persecutor of covenanters; bought Dirleton Castle.

**JOHN NISBET, THE MARTYR (1627-1685)**, Scottish covenanter. Great grandson of Murdoch Nisbet, wounded at the battles of Pentland Hills and Bothwell Bridge, in the "Killing Years" of 1667-8, and finally captured and hung in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh in 1685.

**MARY HAMILTON NISBET, COUNTESS OF ELGIN (1777-1855)**, (*right*). Vivacious heiress of the Dirleton Nisbets, unhappily married to Lord Elgin but assisted him in removing the Marbles while living in Constantinople.



**MURDOCH NISBET (1480-1558)**, translator of the Bible. A farmer at Hardhill, Ayrshire, Murdoch made the first translation of the New Testament into Scots. His manuscript was finally published in 1901-5.

**PEGGY NISBET M.B.E. (1909-1996)**, ran a very successful business making miniature dolls (now highly collectible) in Somerset, UK, 1953-1988.. There is a large display at the museum in Weston-super-Mare.

**ROBERT NISBET (1913-1996)**, sociologist. A libertarian thinker of unusual subtlety, teaching at the universities of California and Columbia, and an influential critic of big government in the early days of Reaganism.

**LOUISA CRANSTOUN NISBETT (1812-1858)**, actress. Leading actress on the London stage, married Captain John Alexander Nisbett in 1831.

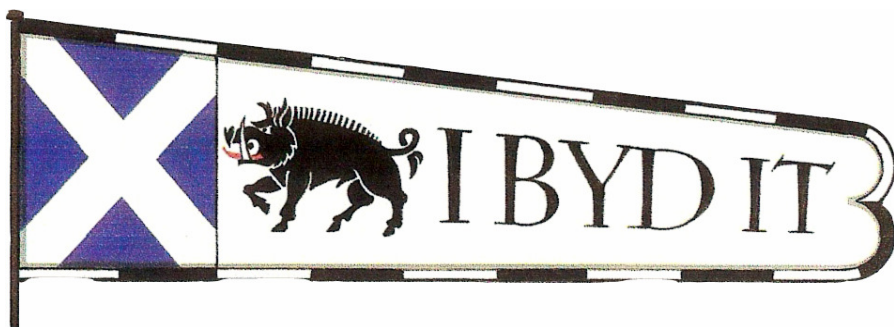


## FURTHER READING

There are many books and articles on our family - see the *Nesbitt/Nisbet Bibliography* (available online at the British Isles Nesbitt/Nisbet Society website); the Society's websites and archives include many other resources. The Nesbitt Nisbet Society publishes important newsletters and books; these can be found at national libraries in the UK, & the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Linen Hall Library (Belfast), Scottish Genealogy Society (Edinburgh), and Society of Genealogists (London).

The best general book on the family is *Nisbet of that Ilk*, written by Robert Chancellor Nesbitt (great-grandfather of the current chief) and highly readable, focusing on the Scottish origins. 250 copies were published by John Murray in 1941, the book was reprinted with extra material in 1994, and is available from the publisher [www.phillimore.co.uk](http://www.phillimore.co.uk) and from Amazon.

## NESBITT / NISBET ARMS

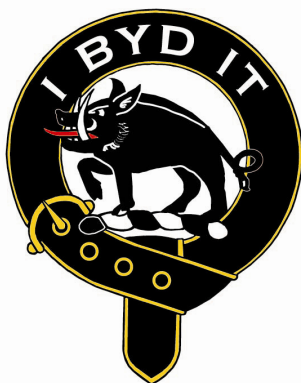


The origins of heraldry are with the European knights of the twelfth century. With their faces obscured by closed helms, with just slits for the eyes, identification by shield became essential. The earliest coats of arms are in northeastern France, by 1150. Many Normans migrated to Scotland in the reign of David II (1124-53), bringing heraldry with them.

We do not know the origins of most heraldic symbols. Internet legend has it that the Nisbets were granted arms bearing boars after protecting King William II from attack by a wild boar. This is, sadly, just a legend. However, it is notable that the neighbouring family of Swinton also has boars on its arms. Boars appear on Nisbet arms from 1454 onwards; the seal (*below*) is from a charter of Adam Nesbet, dated to 1486.

In Scotland the display of heraldry is strictly regulated by the Court of the Lord Lyon. A coat of arms is specific to one person; those of the children are differentiated by cadency marks. All arms are recorded in a public register.

All members of one clan or extended family share the same "stem" arms; in the case of Nisbet "Argent, three boars' heads erased Sable, armed Argent and langued Gules", meaning "White background, three black & torn off boars' heads, with white tusks and red tongues". The Chief's line bears these arms (*shown on front cover*); the various Dirleton lines vary them with a chevron; Greenholm have a black border, and so on.



Arms also include a crest (for Nisbets often a boar) and a motto. The Chief's motto is "I byd it", meaning "I endure it", appropriate for the family's 17<sup>th</sup> century troubles. Personal arms can be displayed as square or oblong flags (banners), as personal standards (*above*, p. 21) or a pinsel (p. 2), flown by the Chief's representative in his absence. Clan members who do not have granted or inherited arms may use the Clan Badge (*left*).



The Lord Lyon will grant arms for those resident in Scotland or the Commonwealth, and for those elsewhere (e.g. England, USA) with Scottish ancestry, subject to some rules. His office is very helpful. In general, grants of arms in Scotland, Canada and Ireland are simple and do not require an agent; in England procedures are complex and markedly more expensive. A coat of arms can be used for many purposes, including banners, bookplates, and porcelain.



Nisbet of that Ilk



Dean



Dirleton



Craigintinnie



Greenholm



Alexander Nisbet



Hamilton-Nisbet



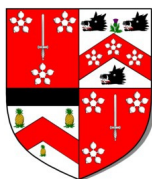
Bourdeaux



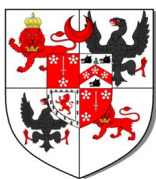
Nesbitt of Ilk



More Nisbett



Nisbet - Hamilton Families



BC, Canada



Toronto, Can



Leitrim, Ire



Donegal, Ire



Cavan, Ire



Carfin



More Nisbett



Clan Badge

## RECORDED ARMS (not all valid!)

Thanks to Stephen Plowman [www.heraldry-online.org.uk](http://www.heraldry-online.org.uk)

**For more information on heraldry:**

Court of the Lord Lyon

[www.lyon-court.com](http://www.lyon-court.com)

Heraldry Society of Scotland

[www.heraldry-scotland.co.uk](http://www.heraldry-scotland.co.uk)

Society of Scottish Armigers

[www.scotarmigers.net](http://www.scotarmigers.net)



Booklet by Tom Nesbitt, and Mark Nesbitt of that Ilk, 2009.  
Published by the Nesbitt/Nisbet Society (British Isles), 114  
Cambridge Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8DJ.  
Grateful thanks to many contributors for the illustrations  
and information within. ISBN 978-1-897875-14-8

# NESBITT NISBET TARTANS



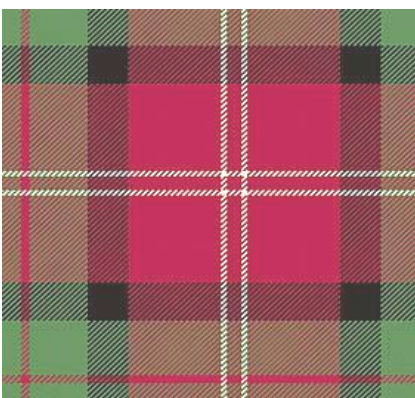
Modern



Ancient



Rose



Muted

Tartan cloth has a long history of use in the highlands of Scotland, although the link to named clans may be a 19<sup>th</sup> century development. The 1822 visit of King George IV gave a boost to tartan, and many clans (lowland as well as highland) adopted a tartan in the decades thereafter.

The Nisbet tartan is registered with Scottish Government's *Scottish Register of Tartans* and is widely available, and all those who wish to wear it may do so. The pattern appears in the *Vestiarium Scoticum* (1842) as the Mackintosh tartan; it is also very similar to that of the Dunbar clan (related to Nisbet), where the white stripes are black.