

The Clan WATSON Society

<https://clanwatson.org>



Ancient



Modern



Weathered

CREST: Two hands holding the trunk of one oak tree sprouting out fresh branches, the hands issuing out of clouds, all proper

MOTTO: Insperata Floruit (Flourished Unexpectedly)

Name Variants: MacBhaididh, MacQuat, MacQuattie, MacQuhat, MacQwat, MacRowatt, MacUait, MacWalter, MacWater, MacWatson, MacWatt, MacWatters, MacWattie, Vatsoun, Walter, Walterson, Wasson, Waters, Waterson, Watson, Watsone, Watsoun, Watt, Wattie, Wattson

A Short History:

It is unknown exactly when the name Watson was introduced to Scotland, but we start to see it in records dating back to the 14th century. The name is derived from Wat, the diminutive form of Walter, an Old German name meaning “mighty warrior” or “ruler of the army”. Two potential routes by which the name Walter entered the British Isles are either with Normans in the form of Gaultier or with Dutch or Flemish traders in the form of Walter or Wouter. In old times, the name appears to have been primarily concentrated around the south east of Scotland and the north east of England. Although not a clan in the traditional highland sense, the Watsons are legally recognised by the Court of the Lord Lyon as an armigerous clan, with the last registered chief being James Watson of Saughton, whose arms were matriculated in 1818. We also have a contemporary account from 1794 stating that his father, Charles Watson of Saughton, was chief of the name in Scotland, although to date we have been unable to locate any records to validate this. James’s last surviving heir, his daughter Helen, married the Lord Aberdour, a member of the Douglas family who became the 18th Earl of Morton. The Douglas have expressed that they are not interested in taking up the title of Chief of Clan Watson and so the chiefship currently lies dormant while the society searches for other hereditary heirs. Clusters of prominent Watsons are found in several key cities in Scotland from the early to mid-16th century onwards. They are nearly all successful merchants and many of them held civic positions such as bailies and provosts. We are aware of links between some of these clusters – for example, the Watsons of Damhead and Muirhouse were descended from the Watsons of Saughton – and see hints that other clusters were also connected to the Saughtons. Our current working assumption is that the Watsons built a reasonably successful trading and political empire that spread to key cities in Scotland, to London, and as far afield as the Caribbean as the British Empire expanded.

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