



CLAN STRACHAN DINNER HELD AT THE ROYAL SCOTS CLUB, EDINBURGH



1 Sydney Scobie, James Brown, Dr Lloyd Strachan, Walter L Strachan
 2 Lize Strachan, Major Ben Strachan CMG, Rob Strachan (Commander)
 3 Kathy and Mike Strehun
 4 Fiona and Roddy Strachan of Berholm
 5 Dennis Strawhun, Jim Strachan
 6 Dina and George Strachan
 7 Drew and Pam Strachan, Margaret and Jim Strachan
 8 Mr and Mrs Clive Strachan
 9 Mr and Mrs Mike Strahan

Heartlands

TEN PLACES THAT ALL MEMBERS OF CLAN STRACHAN SHOULD VISIT BEFORE THEY DIE



2

CLACHINABEN

Immortalised in the old couplet 'Clachnaben and Bennachie, Are two landmarks frae the sea', Clachnaben and its companion, Bennachie, are both visible from a great distance thanks to their granite caps, which catch the sunlight from miles away. At 511 metres tall, Clachnaben towers over the village of Strachan.

BATTLE OF INVERURIE

Also known as the Battle of Barra, the engagement took place on the edge of the village of Oldmeldrum in Aberdeenshire in 1308. Robert the Bruce defeated John Comyn, the 5th Earl of Buchan, effectively ending opposition from within Scotland to his claim to the throne. The Strachans fought on the side of Comyn during the battle.

3



Claypotts Castle

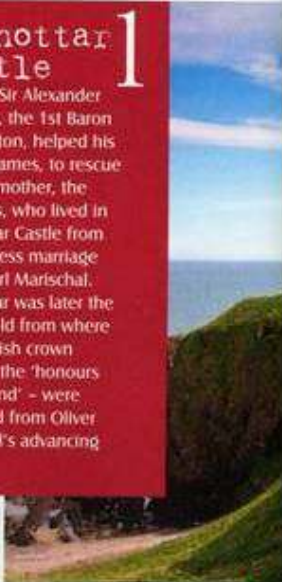
Built by John Strachan between 1569 and 1588, the most famous owner of Claypotts Castle in Dundee was John Graham of Claverhouse, better known as 'Bonnie Dundee', the Jacobite who led opposition to William and Mary. The castle, which was occupied until the 19th century, is now cared for by Historic Scotland.

5

Dunnottar Castle

1

In 1623, Sir Alexander Strachan, the 1st Baron of Thornton, helped his cousin, James, to rescue James's mother, the Countess, who lived in Dunnottar Castle from her loveless marriage to the Earl Marischal. Dunnottar was later the stronghold from where the Scottish crown jewels – the 'honours of Scotland' – were protected from Oliver Cromwell's advancing army.

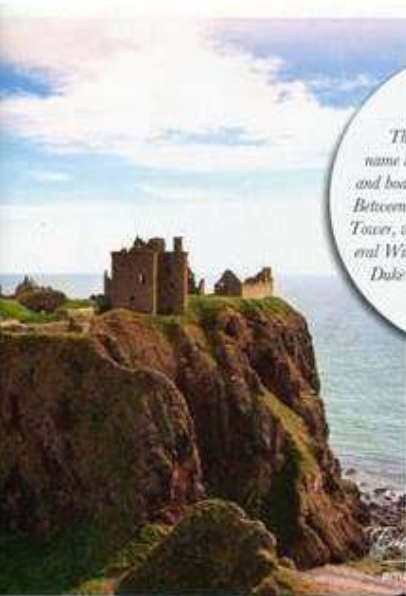


4



CASTLE HILL OF STRACHAN

Lying to the east of the village of Strachan, Castlehill is believed to have been the site of a timber fortress that was occupied by the Strachan clan from the mid 1200s until the early 14th century. After defeating the Earl of Buchan at the Battle of Inverurie in 1308, Robert the Bruce's army is thought to have burned the fort at Castle Hill of Strachan.



STRACHAN

The village that gave the clan its name lies to the south-west of Banchory and boasts a church and a primary school. Between Strachan and Banchory lies Scolty Tower, which was built as a tribute to General William Barnett, who fought with the Duke of Wellington in the Napoleonic Wars.

6



8

CAIRN O' MOUNT

Famous as one of the first roads to be closed by snow each winter, the Cairn O' Mount is a stunningly beautiful high mountain pass in Aberdeenshire that leads drivers from the south from Fettescairn to the district of Strachan. The B974 passes close to the cairn from which the road and the 455-metre hill take their name. The cairn is believed to be around 4,000 years old.



9

MILL OF STRACHAN

Mill of Strachan lies on the edge of the village and at the heart of the district of Strachan in Kincardineshire. Rob Strachan, the clan commander, now runs a trout fishery on the site while Tricia, his sister, operates an equestrian centre with a Highland pony stud.



10



Celtic Park

One of today's most famous Strachans, Gordon, took over as Celtic manager in June 2005 and went on to win three Scottish Premier League titles on the trot. He resigned in May 2009, just a day after failing to win a fourth title. Strachan's managerial career has also included Coventry City, Middlesbrough and now the Scotland national side.

Culloden House

A Strachan castle once stood on the site now occupied by Culloden House, where Bonnie Prince Charlie stayed for two nights before the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Timothy Pont's map of 1595 shows the original castle had two towers. The house is now a hotel.

Bluffer's guide

TEN IMPORTANT FACTS THAT EVERY ASPIRING MEMBER OF CLAN STRACHAN SHOULD KNOW

Clockwise from right:
Clachnaben; Dunnottar Castle;
Gordon Strachan; Map of Nova
Scotia.



1 Lying 20 miles to the south-west of Aberdeen, the district of Strachan is the birthplace of the clan that shares its name. The name 'Strachan' is believed to be derived from two Gaelic words - 'Strath' meaning 'broad valley' and 'Aven' meaning 'river'. Three rivers - the Aven, the Dye and the Feugh - flow through the district and are all tributaries of the River Dee, leading to one translation for the name as the 'vale of the waters'. The district measures roughly 20 miles in length and about 12 miles in width and covers an area of about 56,000 acres.

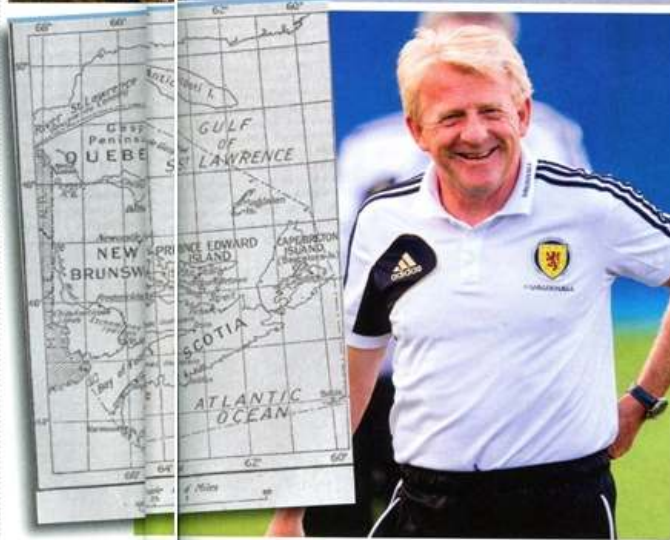
2 The name Strachan began to be used at the dawn of the 13th century, when King William appointed William Giffard as thane of Strachan. Giffard, who held lands near Haddington in East Lothian, in turn chose Waltheof de Strachan, one of his allies, to be his 'terre-tenant' to manage the lands, paying Giffard in either money or produce. Waltheof is thought to be the first person to use Strachan as a surname - at that point in history, surnames often denoted the place from which a person came, rather than their family name.

3 During the Scottish Wars of Independence, the family 'de Strachan' is believed to have opposed Robert the Bruce's claim to the throne and supported the 'Toom Tabard', John Balliol, and later the Comyn claim to the throne. After defeating forces loyal to Comyn at the Battle of Inverurie in 1308, Bruce began consolidating his victory across Scotland and started disinheriting lands belonging to those who supported his opponent. The lands of the 'de Strachan' nobles were confiscated, they were disinherited and the barony passed to Sir Alexander Fraser, Bruce's Great Chamberlain.

4 After Robert the Bruce's son, David, was captured by the English, the clan was reinstated. This meant that, by 1355, almost all those who had formerly benefited from the Strachans had renewed their allegiance to the clan. After this, the most powerful Strachan seats became Thornton, Monboddoo, Glenkindie, Carmyle and Lenturk.

5 Despite considerable debate, there are two equally accurate pronunciations of the surname Strachan. The first is based on the Gaelic derivation and is pronounced 'strawn' with a silent 'ch'. The second comes from a more Anglicised Scots dialect and is pronounced 'strak-han'. The two different pronunciations are likely to have originated as a result of the Strachan's precarious position as a clan situated in the Highlands where Gaelic was more frequently spoken but also with a number of Scots-speaking Lowland descendants.

6 The last clan chief was Admiral Sir Richard Strachan who died in 1828 leaving no male heirs. Strachan carried on the family tradition and joined the Royal Navy in 1772, at the age of 12. He is best known for capturing four French ships that escaped from the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Strachan was a popular admiral, despite his unruly temper and persistent cursing, which earned him the nickname of 'Mad Dick' amongst his men.



7 Sir Alexander Strachan, 1st Baron of Thornton, was embroiled in a scandal in the early 17th century when he assisted his cousin James Keith's mother, the Countess Marischal, to leave her home at Benholm Castle and escape her unhappy marriage to the Earl of Marischal. When the earl was away, Alexander, James and the Countess stole the furnishings and valuables from both Benholm and Dunnottar Castle and carried them to Thornton, where the countess would live with Sir Alexander, who she was to later marry. The theft and his affair with the countess well and truly thrust Strachan into the limelight, but it did not dampen his relationship with King Charles, who made Alexander a Baronet of Nova Scotia in 1625.

8 Arguably the most famous member of the clan today is Gordon Strachan, manager of Scotland's national football team. Born in 1957, Strachan was part of the Aberdeen team that beat Spanish side Real Madrid 2-1 in Gothenburg in 1983 to win the European Cup Winners' Cup. He played 635 league matches for Dundee, Aberdeen, Manchester United, Leeds United and Coventry City, scoring 138 goals. He also scored five times during 50 appearances for Scotland, taking over as Scotland coach in January 2013.

9 As part of the revival of the clan, the Clan Strachan Society created the 'Order of the Heart' in 2013 to reward 'a select few virtuous and deserving individuals for pre-eminence contributions, service or personal sacrifice to the benefit of Clan Strachan'. Recipients so far have been: Benjamin and Lize Strachan; Ian and Griselda Thornton-Kemsley; Much Honoured Roddy Strachan, Baron of Benholm; Sir Hew Strachan, Laird of Glenhighton; Rob Strachan; James Andrew Strachan; and Dennis Craig Stawhun.

10 History doesn't record what clansmen shouted as they raced into battle but historians can almost be certain that the clan's war cry would have been 'Clachnaben', the name of the mountain that looms over the village of Strachan. Physical features within the clan district would usually offer inspiration for such calls and, rising to an impressive 511 metres above the village, Clachnaben provides the ideal landmark.

Please Note: As it applies to #2 above, recent research seems to indicate Waltheof de Strachan succeeded William Giffard (c.1195 to 1214), was the superior of the Strachan territory, and holding these lands in *feu-tenure* as a direct vassal of King William of Scotland. Various grants and charters seemingly suggest that prior to succeeding to the lands of Strachan, Waltheof was likely descendant from the de Quincy family. It is perhaps even more likely that he is descendant from Cospatric, Earl of Lothian; whose father was Waltheof of Allerdale; whose father was Cospatric, Earl of Northumbria. **Octreda, sister of Waltheof** of Allerdale married Duncan II of Scotland d. 1094. Both families have strong connections in areas around Dunfermline in Fife, as well as East Lothian. This seems to provide evidence to suggest Lowland origins with Anglo-Norman descent.

Words: Peter Stone
Image: Angus Blackburn

Taking command

ROB STRACHAN HAS BECOME THE FIRST LEADER
OF CLAN STRACHAN FOR 186 YEARS AND IS
RISING TO HIS NEW CHALLENGE.

Rob Strachan, clan
commander, in the Mill Loch,
one of the tributaries of the
Water of Leith near Banchory.

*We're creating
new ways of
working together
as a clan.*



I've got to be careful how I pronounce my own surname

Above: As well as being proficient with the bagpipes, Rob also plays the guitar, harp and piano. Right: The Strachans' heartlands lie in Aberdeenshire.

In the hallway of his home, Rob Strachan points to his clan's ancient heartlands on a 'Scotland of Old' map that hangs on the wall. His finger traces the outline of the land around the village of Strachan in Aberdeenshire, before moving up to an enclave further north-east and then finally to the clan crest that adorns the foot of the poster.

As the first head of the clan for 186 years, Rob has a special interest in tracing the heritage of his forebears. In April, the Lord Lyon of Arms – the supreme authority on all heraldic matters in Scotland – recognised Charles Robert Lund Strachan (better known as simply 'Rob') as commander of the Clan Strachan.

Rob will hold the title for five years and – if no other claimants to lead the clan come forward and if his fellow members of the clan are happy with his performance – then he will be recognised by the crown as the hereditary chief of Clan Strachan. But first, Rob has a few things to get to grips with.

'I've got to be careful how I pronounce my own surname,' he jokes. Although Rob pronounces his surname as 'Strawn', he is conscious that other members of the clan say 'Strakhan'.

'It means that, when I speak at public engagements, I'll end up saying "Strawns and Strakhans", which makes it sound like I don't know how to say my own name,' he laughs.

Yet such diplomatic manoeuvres appear to come easily to Rob, whose father served as British ambassador to Yemen, Lebanon and Algeria. During his time in Beirut, Ben Strachan became the first senior British diplomat to meet with Palestinian Liberation Army leader Yasser Arafat – in a private gathering and without instructions from his government. That meeting has been hailed as the breakthrough that eventually led to the Oslo Accord between Arafat and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Hopefully Rob won't face such gruelling postings as clan commander, but any diplomatic skills he inherited from his father have already been put to good use on the road to taking up the role.

Back in 2007, the Clan Strachan Society had asked Robin Blair, the then Lord Lyon King of Arms, to recognise Ben Strachan as the clan's commander. The society's request was turned down because it had not followed the guidelines laid down for holding an official family convention or 'Derbhfine' to decide on the matter.



After the rules changed in 2010, the Strachans became the first clan to use the new guidelines to begin the process for choosing a commander. Due to his declining health, Ben and his wife, Lize, chose their son, Rob, as their 'family representor' at the convention.

In 2012, David Sellar, the then Lord Lyon of Arms, appointed Charles Burnett, Ross Herald Extraordinary, to oversee the process and, in the spring of 2013, a teleconference involving about 20 Strachans selected from around the world was convened to select a candidate. Rob was pitted against noted historian Professor Sir Hew Strachan, Laird of Glenhighton and now lord-lieutenant for Tweeddale, and the Much Honoured Roddy Strachan, Baron of Benholm.

'We went through round after round of questions,' explains Rob. 'I think what swung it for me in the end was when we were talking about the future and what would happen to our land. I suggested the clan society could perhaps buy land in the area and we could create a clan heritage centre.'

The teleconference attendees gave their undivided support for Rob to become their leader. An Ad Hoc Derbfhine was held on 11 April 2014 in Edinburgh, with the family convention giving its unanimous backing to the proposal for Rob to become clan commander. Before the end of the month, the Lord Lyon of Arms had recognised the decision of the Derbfhine, taking a major step forward in the revival of the clan.

'Nobody knows for sure why the line died out,' Rob says. Admiral Sir Richard John Strachan, the previous clan chief, died in 1828 without an heir.

Queen Victoria's love of Scotland triggered a

revival in the interest in clans and Scottish heritage and in 2005 Jim Strachan and Dennis Strawhun founded the Clan Strachan Society, which aims to 'restore legitimacy and honour to the name of Strachan'.

Rob's appointment as commander has brought the society a step closer to its goal and its new leader is enthusiastic about his role. Having travelled to Kuwait, Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, Algeria and Canada with his parents on their various postings,

Rob is no stranger to overseas adventures and he hopes his role will allow him to visit Strachans around the world.

'We're not sure what the role will involve yet,' says Rob. 'In effect, we're creating new ways

of working together as a clan, because we don't have a set way of doing things.'

One of Rob's first ideas lies a little closer to home. The Feughside Inn, which lies within the parish of Strachan, closed some 18 months ago and developers currently plan to turn the former drovers' inn into flats.

Rob has suggested that the

Nobody knows for sure why the line died out



clan could buy the inn and turn it into a heritage centre and somewhere for members of the clan to stay when they visit Scotland.

'It would require a lot of fundraising, but I think it would be great for the clan,' Rob enthuses. 'There are so many people around the world who are passionate about Scotland, but many don't have a lot of money and so a trip here can be a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. If we can offer cheaper accommodation for them then it will help them out.'

Rob is no stranger to big projects – after school at Loretto in Musselburgh, he studied at Harper Adams University, an agricultural college in Shropshire, and worked in the construction and landscape industry. His achievements included restoring the Old Mill on Mull, which he turned into a family home and bed and breakfast, as well as projects in London, such as working with his friend Robert Pinnoch on stages for Vivienne Westwood's fashion shows.

His brother, Jamie, is also up for a challenge. He has spent the past two years in Djibouti, where he is the main engineer building an aid tranship-

Above: Mill of Strachan is home to a trout fishery. Far left: Strachans at the Ad Hoc Derbfhine in Edinburgh in April 2014. Left: Rob has repaired the fish-rearing ponds.



Right: Rob with one of the Highland ponies from the equestrian centre run by his sister, Tricia.

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ment hub for the United Nations' World Food Programme. Ethiopia is land-locked and so, when there's a drought, it takes a long time for aid to arrive. The hub will allow grain to be stored as a back-up supply until aid can be delivered.

In 2008, Rob returned home to Mill of Strachan, a 50-acre property near the village of Strachan that his family bought 50 years ago. He restored the fish-rearing ponds on the site and now looks after the family's 60 breeding ewes and runs its trout fishery while his sister, Tricia, runs a Highland pony stud and equestrian centre.

Another facet of Rob's character that will prove useful as he leads his clan is his thespian streak. Although he's quite a private man, Rob also reads

There are so many people around the world who are passionate about Scotland

the boards with the Banchory Singers, most recently playing the Pirate King in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*, a role he decided to perform with a Scots accent. He's no stranger to performing, having played the guitar, harp and piano and gigged in pubs with his 28-year-old

son, Luke, a drummer and artist who is now also the clan's 'tanist' as Rob's male heir. Rob's song *Nefertiti Was A Queen* also reached the semi-finals of the 2010 UK Songwriting Contest and was played on BBC 6 Music and BBC Radio Scotland.

His other children are equally creative: Kaya, 24, is studying dance in Dundee; Poppy, 17, is choosing between studying geology, medicine or music; while Charlie, 14, has won the Oban chess tournament for the past two years and holds the under-14 Argyll standing jump record.

With diplomacy running in the family and a talent for performing, Rob appears to have all the right ingredients to become Scotland's next clan chief.



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