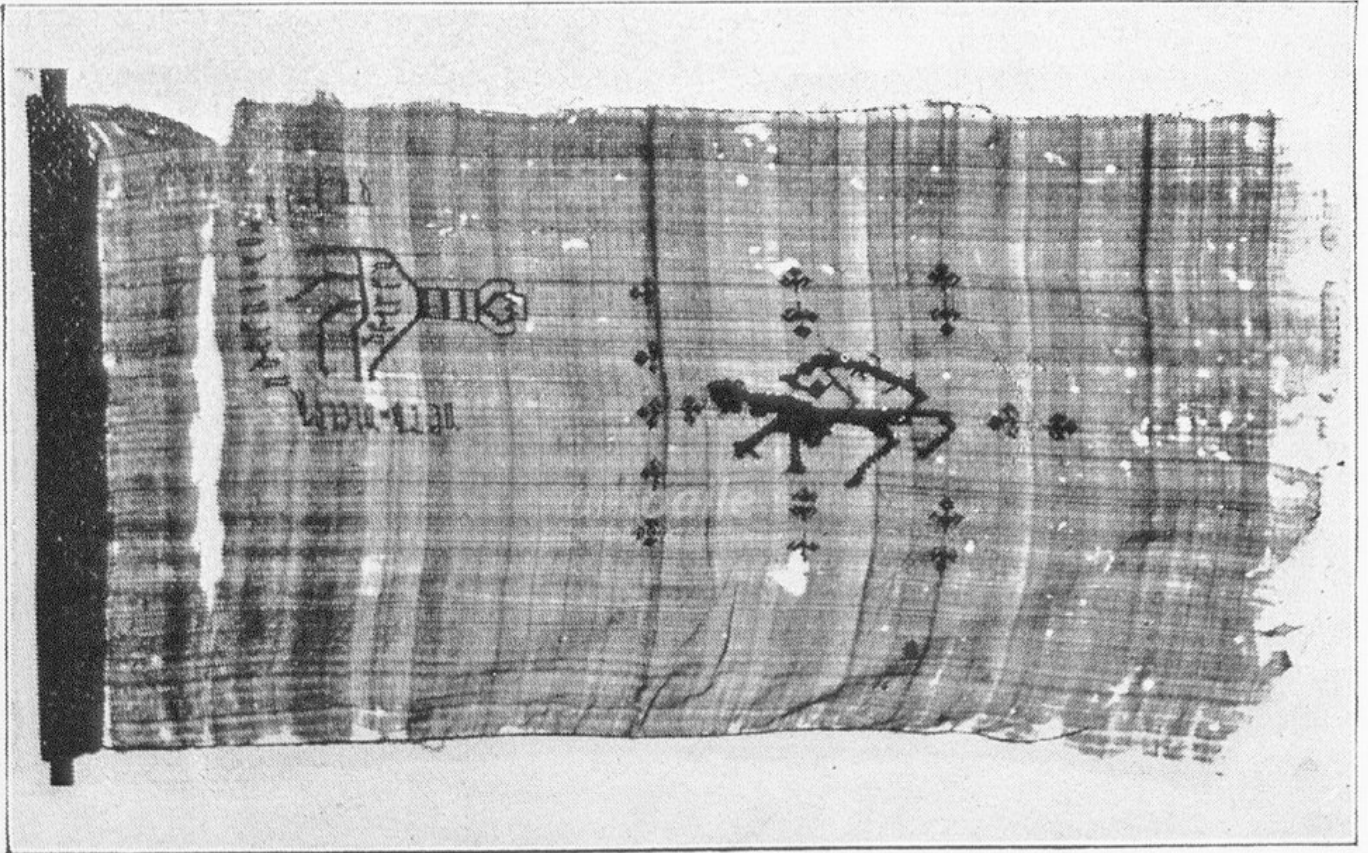
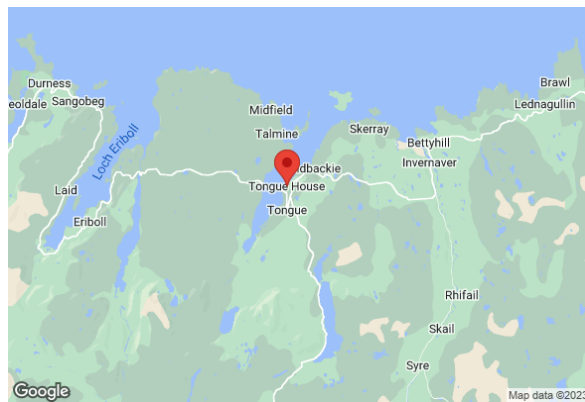


BRATACH BANA



THE WHITE BANNER (AN BHRATACH BHAN) OF THE CLAN MACKAY,
CARRIED IN BATTLE BY THE ABRACHS.

The White Banner or 'Bratach Bhan' is one of the most important relics of the Clan Mackay. It is said to have last been carried at the Battle of Druim na Coup near Tongue in Sutherland in 1433 when Ian Abrach, the illegitimate son of Angus Dhu, led a charge against the Sutherlands. The original banner is in the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. The photograph is from 'Sutherland and the Reay Country' edited by Rev Adam Gunn & John Mackay, 1897. The area was an historic crossroad for [Gael](#)s, [Pict](#)s and [Viking](#)s.



Clan Mackay (/məˈkaɪ/ *mə-KY*; Scottish Gaelic: *Clann Mhic Aoidh* [ˈkʰˠv̥ɑ̃ũn̪yˠv̪ɨçˈkʲɨj]) is an ancient and once-powerful [Highland Scottish clan](#) from the far North of the [Scottish Highlands](#), but with roots in the old [Kingdom of Moray](#). They supported [Robert the Bruce](#) during the Wars of Scottish Independence in the 14th century. In the centuries that followed they were anti-[Jacobite](#). The territory of the Clan Mackay consisted of the parishes of [Farr](#), [Tongue](#), [Durness](#) and Eddrachillis, and was known as [Strathnaver](#), in the north-west of the county of [Sutherland](#). However, it was not until 1829 that Strathnaver was considered part of Sutherland when the chief sold his lands to the [Earls of Sutherland](#) and the [Highland Clearances](#) then had dire consequences for the clan. In the 17th century the Mackay chief's territory had extended to the east to include the parish of [Reay](#) in the west of the neighbouring county of [Caithness](#). The chief of the clan is [Lord Reay](#) and the lands of Strathnaver later became known as the Reay Country.



Crest: A dagger held erect

Motto *Manu forti (With a strong hand)*^[2]

War cry *Bratach Bhan Chlann Aoidh!*

Profile

Region [Highland](#)

District [Strathnaver](#)

Plant badge Bulrush^[2]

Pipe music *Bratach Bhan Chlann Aoidh (The White Banner of MacKay)*^[2]

Chief



[Æneas Simon Mackay](#)

[15th Lord Reay](#) (Morair Maghrath)

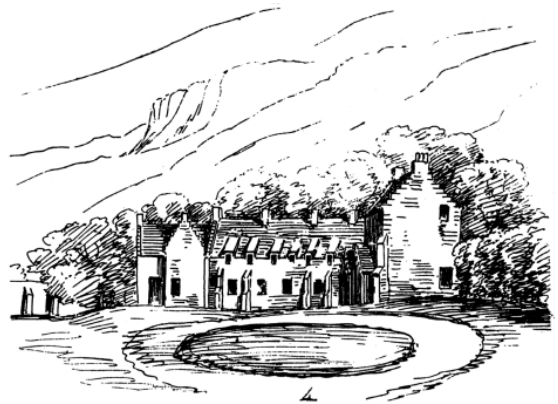
They were originally from Ireland but after losing in a battle, they were deported and settled in Moray, defeated and dishonored. But out of the blood of battle their Clan will live on. The first Chieftain of the Clan was born around 1210 A.D. and was a direct descendant the 1st Earl of Ross, Malcolm MacHeth, his name was Iye MacKay. It is said that after a conflict between the clan and their supporters against King Malcolm IV of Scotland, they fled north to the hills of Ross and Strathnaver. While in the north they met Norse Harald Maddadsson, Mormaer of Caithness who was an enemy to the King as well.

The name MacKay comes from the Gaelic Mac Aoidh meaning Son of Fire. The women were called Nic Aoidh, meaning Daughter of Fire They are one of the most influential Clans of Scottish history. From the roots of the Clan in the Province called Moray to even further back to the most popular tales of the origins. Their Crest was of a dagger held erect and the clans' tune is titled MacKay's March and The White Banner of MacKay.

Tongue House is the historic seat of the [Clan Mackay](#), after they abandoned [Castle Varrich](#) (*Caisteal Bharraich*). The ruins of the castle, built at Tongue in the eleventh century after the clan were expelled from their ancestral Province of [Moray](#) to County Sutherland, are a popular tourist attraction. A battle for succession some time around 1427 to 1433 culminated in the [Battle of Drumnacoub](#), in which two factions of the clan fought on Carn Fada, between the Kyle and Ben Loyal.



Modern Rebuild



Olde Postcard

TONGUE HOUSE: This was a property of the Mackays. The present House of Tongue was the main seat of the Mackay Lord Reay, after their tower had been torched by Cromwell's forces in the 1650s as the Mackays were Royalists. Donald Mackay, Lord Reay, is on record in the 1630s and 40s, and his son was John Mackay, 2nd Lord Reay. The original site of a "tower house", which was demolished by 1830. 'Tung' is shown on Pont's map of Strathnaver as a small tower or house, and then on Blaeu's map of Strathnaver. The present House of Tongue dates from 1678, and is rambling building with a main block of three storeys with corbiestepped gables and harled walls. The house was extended in 1750 and altered later. There is a walled garden. It is the Scottish home of the Countess of Sutherland. Formerly the seat of the Clan Mackay, the house sits on the site of the clan's previous home. It is said to have been burned by Cromwell's army in 1656, while pursuing the Chief of Mackay. It was rebuilt by the Mackays several years later. But in 1829, Tongue House and the majority of the Mackay Estate had to be sold to pay off debts owing to the Sutherland family. The property later passed to the Dukes of Sutherland, and is still held by the Countess of Sutherland, who also holds [Dunrobin Castle](#), although the Mackay Lords Reay still flourish.

Garden open occasionally as part of Scotland's Gardens Scheme. Web: www.scotlandsgardens.org



[CAISTEAL BHARRAICH CASTLE VARRICH](#)

Dramatic ruin visible from Tongue in the Far North. You can walk across and back for a drink in a local bar. The castle is located on a prominent rise overlooking the Kyle of Tongue. This was the ancient seat of Clan Mackay and may date back as much as 1000 years. It was built in the 1400s, possibly over a previous Norse fort. It was occupied until the Mackays moved out to the nearby House of Tongue.



In 2004 six "Mackay Country" signs were installed welcoming people to the area that was once the territory of the clan.^[69] They were placed at [Kylesku](#), [Achfary](#) (both in parish of Eddrachillis), [Forsinard](#), Dalvina, [Crask](#) (all three in parish of Farr) and one on the [A836 road](#) at the border between the counties of Caithness and Sutherland.^[69] In 2014 the latter was vandalized.^[69]

MUSICAL RECORDINGS FOR BRATACH BANA

The lead tune is taken from the olde Gaelic song with words by Callum Kennedy, but HIS words talk of the “Bhratach Bhan” (White Flag) of the Viking longboats & the the clans of Skye. How-ev-er there’s nay mention of Clan McKay, so a wee bitty of “poetic licence” from good olde Callum.

Lyrics:

'Ic iarla nam bratach bàna
'Ic iarla nam bratach bàna
'Ic iarla nam bratach bàna
Chunna' mi do long air sàile

Sèist:

Hi 'illean beag hó ill ó ro
Hi 'illean beag hó ill ó ro
Hi 'illean beag hó ill ó ro
Hu hoireann ó hu ó éileadh

Chunna' mi do long air sàile
Chunna' mi do long air sàile
Chunna' mi do long air sàile
Bha stiùir òir oirr' 's dà chrann airgid

Bha stiùir òir oirr' 's dà chrann airgid
Bha stiùir òir oirr' 's dà chrann airgid
Bha stiùir òir oirr' 's dà chrann airgid
'S cupaill de shìoda na Gaillmhinn

'S cupaill de shìoda na Gaillmhinn
'S cupaill de shìoda na Gaillmhinn
'S cupaill de shìoda na Gaillmhinn
Sìoda reamhar ruadh na Spàinne

Sìoda reamhar ruadh na Spàinne
Sìoda reamhar ruadh na Spàinne
Sìoda reamhar ruadh na Spàinne
Cha b'ann an Glaschu a bha e

Cha b'ann an Glaschu a bha e
Cha b'ann an Glaschu a bha e
Cha b'ann an Glaschu a bha e
No 'n Dùn-Bheagain, 's beag o'n làr e

No 'n Dùn-Bheagain, 's beag o'n làr e
No 'n Dùn-Bheagain, 's beag o'n làr e
No 'n Dùn-Bheagain, 's beag o'n làr e
No 'n Dùn-Tuilm nam bratach bàna

English Translation:

*The son of the earl of the white banners
The son of the earl of the white banners
The son of the earl of the white banners
I saw your longship on the sea*

Chorus (after each verse):

*Hi 'illean beag hó ill ó ro
Hi 'illean beag hó ill ó ro
Hi 'illean beag hó ill ó ro
Hi 'illean beag hó ill ó ro
Hu hoireann ó hu ó éileadh*

*I saw your longship on the sea
I saw your longship on the sea
I saw your longship on the sea
There was a helm of gold on her, and two silver masts*

*There was a helm of gold on her, and two silver masts
There was a helm of gold on her, and two silver masts
There was a helm of gold on her, and two silver masts
And shrouds of Galway silk*

*And shrouds of Galway silk
And shrouds of Galway silk
And shrouds of Galway silk
Rich red silk from Spain*

*Rich red silk from Spain
Rich red silk from Spain
Rich red silk from Spain
It was not in Glasgow that it was seen*

*It was not in Glasgow that it was seen
It was not in Glasgow that it was seen
It was not in Glasgow that it was seen
Nor in Dunvegan, small and lowly*

*Nor in Dunvegan, small and lowly
Nor in Dunvegan, small and lowly
Nor in Dunvegan, small and lowly
Nor in Duntulm of the white banners*

How-e-ver a supporting tune “Black Bear”, has almost become more associated with the dance. The first recording for the dance by Andrew Rankin and his band in 1971 included “Black Bear”, which elevated the tune to “legendary” status associated with the dance! The tune had lyrics added to it by Andy Stewart, who called the new song “The Tunes of Glory”!

BLACK BEAR

The Black Bear is native to North America. We surmise that the tune might have been a common Sailors’ Hornpipe (dance music) that was based on or named after a dancing Bear that formed part of traveling entertainment troupes common at one time around Britain and some other European countries some hundred or so years ago. The Black Bear is reputedly the fastest regimental march in the UK army. This old, very popular, tune is traditionally played as a marching off parade tune by every Scottish regiment returning to their barracks after a route march or a day’s manoeuvres. This is the one occasion when they are not expected to march in step. The tune is played fast and the soldiers march along even faster as they head for home.

It is one of the most recognizable pipe songs in the world and the idea of the massed pipes and drums marching off to anything else would be unthinkable.

[Origin of the name.](#)

There is some debate on the meaning of the title of this tune. An early manuscript (1866) of the tune has the title written as 'The Black Baird'. There is a Scottish surname ‘Baird’ which comes from the Gaelic ‘bard’ (a genealogist poet) but others have translated this as the Scots for 'beard' as it appears in some old Scot and Lallans (*) dictionaries. They believe it may be a reference to the black beard (white ones were dyed in black) worn by some Indian tribesmen fighting against Scottish regiments or possibly to the beard-like appearance of the dirty faces (being black from dirt or more likely, gun powder smoke, in those days of black powder) of Scottish soldiers when returning to their barracks after some days’ manoeuvres. Others have suggested that the soldiers would be bearded themselves, especially during the Victorian era, when full beards were not only tolerated, but encouraged in many Highland regiments -- some (like the Camerons) even paid a small stipend for those who grew a beard.



(*) Lallans [i.e., "Lowlands"] is the term now generally used for the Scottish off-shoot of English, which is considered by some scholars as divergent enough to constitute a language in itself as opposed to being merely an English dialect. It has also been known as "Doric" or "Broad Scots".



Others have suggested the "black bear" refers to the bearskin busby used by some British Army regiments for ceremonial guard duty, but that is only worn by Guards and Grenadier units. The tall dress bonnet worn by the Highland regiment was (and is) made of black ostrich-feathers, not bear-skin.

However, the Black Watch in the French and Indian Wars (Seven Years War) wore a bearskin strip on their bonnets as both a battle honour and badge of service in North America (see photo of a BW soldier in period uniform by war artist D. J. Neary). It has always been the understanding of some of the older generation of pipers that the name originated from the practice of wearing the bearskin strip during this period of service in North America.

However there is another possibility. The Scots word for barley is "bere" and, in 18th and 19th century documents, it is usually spelt thus, but sometimes "bear" (pronounced "beer"). An old popular variety of this grain had black beads on the heads and was known as "the black bere". There seems little doubt that the word "beer", meaning ale, comes from "bere" meaning barley. Perhaps, therefore, the tune should be called "The Black Beer".

Origin of the yell.

It used to be customary, in some regiments, for the pipers to play this tune when entering the barracks after a route march or a day's manoeuvres. At a certain point, the whole battalion gave a great roar, possibly in anticipation of foaming pints in the mess! For others the great roar in The Black Bear, is to mask the "Dreaded Measure" in that tune (1st line - fourth bar) often misplayed by pipers. But, what is it they yell?

It is said that the drummers yell sounds like some inarticulate battlecry like "hoora". It was also told, in the 51st Highland Division, that during the Great War, the drummers could hear shells when the pipers couldn't and they had to yell to warn them. It's just an inarticulate scream. Sort of an "Aaawwooooh!".

The audience just say "hoy" or "Ahoy" or "Oye" but when the yell sounds like "ye-yuck" it is supposed to be a warning to the dirty soldiers returning to their barracks to look sharp and presentable before to meet attractive Highland women.

Nowadays to most fans of the pipes, this somewhat unintelligible "Aaawwooooh!" is a perfectly suitable holler to signal the end of the working day and permission to head directly to the pub.

The Cameronian Regiment.

The Black Bear quick march, in particular, has historic significance as it is associated with the Cameronian Regiment, which was formed by Covenanters in 1689. Richard Cameron, a Covenanted schoolteacher who advocated a particular type of protestanism in Southern Scotland, rallied a few men round him and declared war on the king. He was killed and ever since, this famous Rifle Regiment wears black buttons in memory of his death. The survivors called themselves Cameronians, a fierce and grim-faced group which, in time, is turned into a loyal Protestant regiment, fighting on God's side in a holy war. The British authorities decided to use it in their fight against the Roman Catholic Highlanders. The regiment first fought in 1689, when 1200 recruits broke a 5000 Jacobite veteran force, thus earning a reputation for fierceness.



Then, it marches into history as one of the great regiments of the world. Because of its origins in a religious movement, the regiment issued bibles to all of its new soldiers as part of their kit. Also, The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) were the only regiment in the British Army that carried their weapons into church. This was a tradition that started in the Covenanter days when the Covenanters posted armed pickets at the beginning of worship services to keep a lookout for foes. The Cameronians continued this practice even after being taken into British service. They would post double sentries at the four corners of the church.

Dday movie

In the movie "The Longest Day" - 1962, starring John Wayne, Robert Mitchum and Henry Fonda - Bill Millin (Lord Lovat's piper) role was played by Leslie DeLaspee, the Pipe Major to the London Scottish Territorial Army Pipe band. After Lord Lovat and Bourvil meeting, the Lord asks "Blue Bonnets" to his piper but "Black Bear" is played! There is also an audio/visual unsynchronization: when Lovats commandos land, the piper is playing "Black Bear"; however, when we see the piper he is still trying to inflate the bagpipe using one hand.

BLACK BEAR Lyrics

The singing version called "The Tunes of Glory" is sung by [Andy Stewart](#).

CORE WORDS

**Now when the pipes are ringing and the kilts are swinging
And your heart is singing as you gaily march along.
You can hear the story that is brave and roary
In the tunes of glory of an old Scots song.**

**If you're standing near them and you ever hear them
You will want to cheer them as you feel the glory there
Because the rhythm fills you and the drum beat wills you
And the music thrills you of the old BLACK Bear**

**Brave are the orders we carry before us
Brave are the hearts that will lift in the chorus
Hear them playing, hear them saying
That's the story in the tunes of glory**

Whole Song

Now when the pipes are ringing and the kilts are swinging.
And your heart is singing as you gaily march along.
You can hear the story that is brave and roary
In the tunes of glory of an old Scots song.

If you're standing near them and you ever hear them.
You will want to cheer them as you feel the glory there.
Because the rhythm fills you and the drum beat wills you.
And the music thrills you of the old Black Bear.

Brave are the orders we carry before us
Brave are the hearts that will lift in the chorus
Hear them playing, hear them saying
That's the story in the tunes of glory

When the pipes are ringing and the kilts are swinging.

And your heart is singing as you gaily march along.
You can hear the story that is brave and roary
In the tunes of glory of an old Scots song.

Brave are the orders we carry before us
Brave are the hearts that will lift in the chorus
Hear them playing, hear them saying
That's the story in the tunes of glory

When the pipes are ringing and the kilts are swinging.
And your heart is singing as you gaily march along.
You can hear the story that is brave and roary
In the tunes of glory of an old Scots song.

Brave are the orders we carry before us
Brave are the hearts that will lift in the chorus
Hear them playing, hear them saying
That's the story in the tunes of glory

If you're standing near them and you ever hear them.
You will want to cheer them as you feel the glory there.
Because the rhythm fills you and the drum beat wills you.
And the music thrills you of the old Black Bear.

Brave are the orders we carry before us
Brave are the hearts that will lift in the chorus
Hear them playing, hear them saying
That's the story in the tunes of glory



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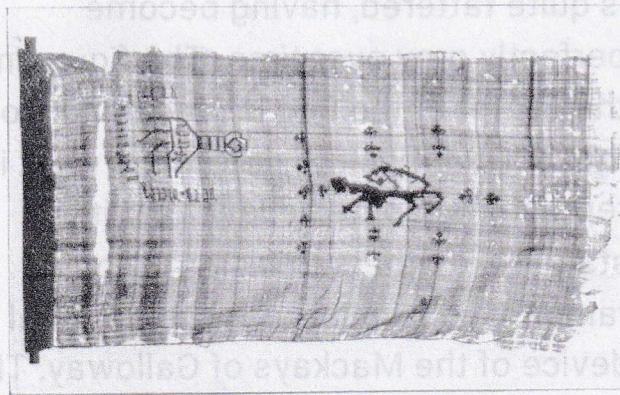


MACKAY APPAREL



SCOTTISH CLAN MAP

A' Bhratach Bhan, the White Banner of Clan MacKay



THE WHITE BANNER (AN BHRATACH BHAN) OF THE CLAN MACKAY, CARRIED IN BATTLE BY THE ABRACHS.

A' Bhratach Bhan, also known as the Mackay Banner, is a legendary and ancient artifact of the Mackay clan. The flag is believed to have been in the family for hundreds of years, and its history is shrouded in mystery and folklore. Despite the limited information available, the Mackay Banner holds great significance to the Mackay clan, serving as a symbol of their proud heritage and a link to their ancestral past.

According to clan history, Robert Mackay, son of Neil of Achness, was the



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MACKAY POP SOCKET



CLAN MACKAY CREST





custodian of the banner. The flag is said to have been passed down from generation to generation, eventually ending up in the possession of Alexander Mackay, a county assessor in Thurso. While its exact history is unknown, the Mackay Banner is believed to have been present in many hard-fought battles, including the battle of Drumnacoub, where Ian Abrach led the Mackays to victory.

The flag itself is made of knitted silk and is quite tattered, having become perfectly grey over time. The figure in the center of the flag is faded and worn, making it difficult to determine what it represents. Some believe that it is a stag, while others think it may be a rampant lion, which was the armorial device of the Mackays of Galloway. The motto "Bith treun, bith bevaliant" (be valiant) is still legible on the flag, serving as a reminder of the bravery and determination of the Mackays.

Hugh "llamar" Mackay, who had the banner in his keeping for many years, related a story about a wealthy clansman who offered a large sum of money for the flag. However, Hugh refused to sell the banner, stating that he would rather burn it than part with it. This shows the deep sense of pride and loyalty that the Mackays have for their family and their heritage, and the importance of preserving their traditions and memories for future generations.



The Mackay Banner is a symbol of the Mackay clan's proud heritage and a link to their ancestral past. Despite its tattered condition, it remains an important artifact that inspires the Mackays to uphold their traditions and honor the memories of their ancestors. By preserving the banner, the Mackays ensure that their proud heritage will continue to be passed down from generation to generation, serving as a reminder of the bravery, determination, and loyalty that have been hallmarks of the Mackay clan for centuries.

A' Bhratach Bhan, the White Ba...

