

# Origins Part 4: Auchenhamperis and Monymusk References

This section examines the possible link between the early **Davidson family from Auchenhamperis** and the use of the **St Giles** motif. While researching the use of the **New Davidson** arms in the 1500s, it became clear, as is set out below, that all the known examples of arms in the north-east of Scotland were those of members of the extensive and expanding Davidson family from Auchenhamperis, and they were using the **New Davidson** form of arms, duly differentiated and developed from the earlier **Old Davidson** design which used the **St Giles** motif.

Auchenhamperis today is open farming country located between Huntly and Turriff. The landscape is probably little changed from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century with its small population scattered amongst the farms.



Auchenhamperis today

The north-east Davidsons of the town of Aberdeen and those living near Donside and Huntly were traditionally said to be descended from **Alderman Robert Davidson** [killed at Battle of Harlaw in 1411]. By the 1500s a **Thomas Davidson**, believed to be a grandson of Alderman **Robert Davidson**, and his family, held lands at Auchenhamperis, near Huntly and then at Monymusk on its monastic estates.

The lands near Monymusk came into Davidson hands when **Thomas Davidson of Auchenhamperis** was Procurator, or Factor or Land Agent, for the Prior of the church lands after 1500. The occupancy of these lands was mostly relinquished by about 1537 by a son of Thomas Davidson.

Monymusk today is a lowland farming and forestry area with an old village centre surrounded by interesting historical buildings. It is quite different from Auchenhamperis.



Monymusk today

It is likely that many Davidsons from Aberdeenshire may stem from this family.

In 1559, **Patrick Davidson of Auchenhamperis** is recorded as Kintyre Pursuivant of the Lyon Court. In 1580, he became Ross Herald and was named as a member of the Rathilde Court. As such he would have had his own arms as a matter of fact.

Patrick's father was **Thomas Davidson**, the King's Printer, who was born in Birse, Aberdeenshire, and in 1528, was a Burgess of Edinburgh. Thomas Davidson, a son of **Thomas Davidson of Auchenlayes**, of the Auchenhamperis Davidsons, used a Davidson heraldic motif in his printer's mark.



The Printer's Mark of Thomas Davidson  
Three Arrows can be distinguished

A relation, to some degree of Thomas, the King's Printer, was **Sir or Master William Davidson** whose incised arms are to be found built into the gable of St Mary's Church, Auchindoir, in 1638. William Davidson was a long-serving Minister of this church from the 1620s-1660s. His arms follow the **New Davidson** design.



Arms of William Davidson at St Mary's,  
Auchindoir, Aberdeenshire

**Patrick Davidson, Ross Herald**, was a cleric; his four natural children were legitimised and their numerous descendants are found throughout the Garioch in Aberdeenshire and elsewhere. No record of any arms that Patrick Davidson would have had as Ross Herald has survived. However, it is possible to attempt to provide a possible explanation of what design they followed.

Patrick's named heir was **Mr Thomas Davidson**, Advocate of Aberdeen c.1580. Thomas Davidson's son was **Alexander Davidson of Carnbrogie [Cairnbrogie]**, also an Advocate in Aberdeen. He matriculated arms at the Lyon Court. Thus we can work backwards.

We know the description of Carnbrogie's matriculated arms and we would have expected that he would have followed the charges of his grandfather Patrick Davidson. Carnbrogie has no record of any crest or motto which suggests to me that he simply differentiated his grandfather's older established arms. As such we can deduce that Patrick Davidson, Ross Herald, could have used:

*"Azure, on a fess Argent with a reclining or couchant deer Gules, two Pheons in chief and one in base Or"* possibly with the base pheon pointing up; in effect the **New Davidson** arms described earlier in this paper.

It is equally possible that the seals of **Master William Davidson Burgess of Aberdeen** could be that of a William who was also listed in 1566 as an Advocate. William was named as chaplain in Alness in 1574. He died in 1587. Mr William Davidson had two sons Patrick and William. As was common in many Scots families, the same Christian names were used repeatedly through different branches, and their issue, of the Auchenhamperis family. Attempting to identify the lines of descent of these families with the sons, brothers, uncles and cousins of the same Christian names, is almost impossible.

The **St Giles** motif may have been included because of the international links of Davidson Auchenhamperis merchants of Aberdeen in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were seamen and traders and had strong contacts, not only with the Baltic, but also with Flanders and France. These Davidsons intermarried repeatedly with the neighbouring Leslies, a family with known Crusader connections. Two brothers of Leslie family were involved in the 1365 Crusader assault on Alexandria. The Auchenhamperis and Monymusk Davidsons also had continuing connections with the Huntly Gordons, whose Seton forebears were also Crusaders.

**John Davidson, Parson of Newlands**, used the **Old Davidson** design varied with an indistinct floral motif in his seal of 1536, as has been said above, indicating that he was either a younger son or that his maternal forebears used certain floral charges. Newlands is in the Borders; his family, however, could have originated anywhere in Scotland.

It is not known how long, prior to the Act of 1672, the **New Davidson** design had been used by families outside north-east Scotland. It could well be that, after the publication of Stoddart who could have had access to, and recorded any arms of Patrick Davidson, Ross Herald of the Lyon Court, examples of Davidson arms were thereafter widely copied throughout Scotland.

There is little known as to why certain individuals selected a differentiated form of the arms of a historically known family.

For example the **Davidsons of Cantray** near Inverness, who matriculated in 1788, were descended from an established Inverness merchant family. They claimed a cadet variation of the Corriehill Arms matriculated from 1672 to 1685. **Corriehill Davidsons** were from Dundee and had no known Inverness roots and there are no known connections between these families.

The **Balgay Davidsons** of Dundee use the *New Davidson* design in their early recorded matriculated arms, similar to that of **Sir William Davidson of Corriehill**, a Low Countries merchant who was knighted by Charles II. Sir William Davidson was probably of the Balgay family and could be a brother or cousin of **Robert Davidson of Balgay**.

The **Balgay Davidsons** could claim to be the most senior line of the Davidsons, but we suspect that they were the family nearest to Edinburgh, first visited by the perambulating Lyon Court following the Act of 1672, and that they pre-empted the form published by Stoddart of the arms of *New Davidson*.

It can be said that by the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a weakening of the older laws relating to the use of arms and that it was the name, rather than proven family relationship, that dictated the use of varying forms of the arms throughout Scotland. Differentiations or changes of the charges were then used to vary from what had already been matriculated or used in earlier times.

However, the fact that the earliest records, c.1500, of the use of the separate pheons in Aberdeen leads me to believe that those charges were first adopted in that region by the Auchenhampers and Monymusk families.

Contacts and relationships between Davidsons in other centres throughout Scotland may have been closer than we suspect. Davidsons in the South of Scotland used the *Cross Formy or Patee* and as such influenced the arms of Davisons of the same stock in Northumbria across the Border in England.

## What can be deduced?

**The Cult of St Giles** and the possible Crusader involvement constitute the most likely explanation as to why the arrow and the deer were first used in the *Old Davidson* design. Similarly the use of *Cross Formy or Patee* found in the *Davidson 1520* design probably had its origins from the Crusader influences.

After the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the main design used by the scattering Scottish Davidsons followed that of the *New Davidson*, which suggests that the name and the arms were already recognised, or even that there may have been a believed family connection of those of that name, and so dictating the use of the various differentiated arms throughout Scotland and elsewhere.