

HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS

By Constance Pitcairn

Updated by Sheila Pitcairn F.S.A.Scot., L.H.G.

There is, I believe, a desire in the minds of many to know something, however fragmentary, of the lives of their forefathers. My original idea in writing a history of the Pitcairns who lived in the old Kingdom of Fife from 1250 to 1809 was the hope that it might interest various members of our family; but inasmuch as the Pitcairns were mixed up with the social and political life of the times in which they lived, and as Fife in the olden days saw many stirring scenes and events of national importance (Falkland Palace and Dunfermline Palace in Fife being for long the favourite abodes of the kings of Scotland, and St Andrews the centre of religious life and learning), it is possible others may care to read the history of an old Fife family, and the doings of bygone time.

The Ramsays, the Balfours, the Beatouns of Balfour, the Lindsays of the Byres, and the Lindsays of Kirkforthar; the Murrays of Balvaird, the Seatons, the Murrays of Ochtertyre, the Ruthvens of Red Castle, the Douglasses of Glenbervie, the Erskines, the Melvilles, the Anstruthers, the Aytouns, and the Hamiltons, were all connected by marriage at one time or another with the Pitcairns.

The Pitcairns were a peaceable family; they seem to have done few dodgy deeds of valour, but lived as simple Scottish country gentlemen on their own lands, taking their part in the ordinary life of the day as magistrates and sheriffs of the county. Robert Pitcairn Secretary of State during the Regency and in the reign of James VI, was a notable man of his time, was much at Court, Commendator of Dunfermline, and Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth I. Other Pitcairns had the hereditary honour of being chief falconers to the king, with the right to a sleeping-chamber in the palace at Holyrood. Two or three were gentlemen of the bed-chamber to King James VI and Charles I. Two of the Pitcairn descendants were Lord Chancellors and four were famous doctors.

But although few were distinguished in battle or in arms, it appears to me that a golden thread ran through the lives of many of the Family. They were remarkable for their kindness and charity, for their affectionate loyalty to friends and relations, and especially for their devotion to their King and Country, notably Andrew Pitcairn and seven of his sons were killed at the battle of Flodden Field. Some were ardent Jacobites, their estates being confiscated in consequence. Few were soldiers, but many had literary tastes. Some were clergymen, others practised medicine; not a few lived noble lives, and tried to serve God and do good in their generation. The Pitcairns being a Family of some distinction in Fife, and for six hundred years having lived on their estates at Innernethy, Pitlour, Pitcairn, and Forthar, they naturally intermarried with many of the well-known country families.

It seemed therefore a good thing that a record should be written of them; for it is not, after all where a man is placed, or how great his possessions are, which makes him of interest to his fellow-men, but what his character is, and the good he does with the means at his disposal in the times in which he lives.

To be a patriot, a philanthropist, to have the welfare of others at heart, to alleviate suffering, to minister to those in sorrow, is, to my thinking, in so far as men try to carry it out, worthy to be recorded for future generations.

I feel I must express how imperfect I think this book is, and how very far it falls short of what I should like it to be; but with all its imperfections, at any rate I have tried my best that the information contained in it should be as accurate as possible and from undoubted sources.

In compiling this History of the Pitcairns, I acknowledge with grateful thanks the kindness and help I have received from the Duke of Athole, the Earl of Elgin, the Earl of Lindsay, and from Sir W. Balfour Pail, Lord Lyon King-at-Arms, for his great kindness in giving me valuable information about the Pitcairn Arms. My sincere thanks are also due to Mr W. Lindsay K.C., and Sir Patrick Keith Murray, Bart. of Ochertyre, who have given me much valuable information relating to the various marriages. To Mr Seton of Ayton for his kind help, with notes as to the Arms of Pitcairn. To Mr Edward Balfour of Balbirnie and Mr Charles Balfour of Newton Don, and especially to the latter, who has kindly taken great trouble in writing a full account of the transfer of lands between the Balfours and Pitcairns in 1500-1600, which I give verbatim in the book.

My father's researches in 1864 have also been most valuable and helpful, as he had the necessary registers searched for the births and deaths of the Forthar Pitcairns as far back as 1642.

I have also to thank the Earl of Minto, Sir Ralph Anstruther, and Bart. Of Balcaskie, Mr W.B. Skene of Pitlour, Mr Pitcairn of Pitcullo, and Mr James E. Pitcairn, for allowing their family pictures and miniatures to be copied; Mrs Gorman, Mrs Rice and particularly Mrs Pitcairn Campbell, for the loan of family papers; Captain Murray, Thriepland, for information from his family history; and to the late Sir Peter Arthur Halkett for his kindness in sending a photograph of the passport of Robert Pitcairn, A.D. 1574. To Colonel Home and Mrs Drummond for photographs of Pitcairns House, and to Lord Rollo, the proprietor, for allowing them to be taken. Also to the Rev. David Lee Pitcairn, Colonel Dalbiac, Miss Onslow, Mr Morries of Gogar, Mr Alan Reid, and Dr Maitland Thomson of the Register House, Edinburgh, for valuable information and to all of whom I am sincerely grateful.

I should not like to miss this opportunity of thanking Messrs Blackwood & Sons for their unvarying courtesy, and great help, in giving me the benefit of their valuable advice in connection with the arrangement of this book.

CONSTANCE PITCAIRN.

April 1905.

Note: - The History of the Fife Pitcairns by Constance Pitcairn, has been update by Sheila Pitcairn, F.S.A. Scot. L.H.G. There are ten branches, that can be seen on www.royaldunfermline.com

The History of Fife Pitcairns with Genealogy charts by Sheila Pitcairn. This work can be corrected and updated from time to time with new information added.

June 2014.

THE ORIGINAL ARMS OF THE PITCAIRNS

The Arms of Ramsay were added to the Original Pitcairn Arms by Quartering. The male Pitcairn's Original Arms of Argent Three Mascules (Lozenges) Gules (background of Silver with three Red Diamond Shapes), became the First and Fourth Quarter and his Heiress Mother's Arms Argent an Eagle displayed Sable (background of Silver with a Black Eagle) became the Second and Third Quarter.

The Arms of Pitcairn of Forthar 1630, used by Constance, at the beginning of her book, threw up a few problems, these Arms were referenced in Sir James Balfour's Manuscript,

1. The 1st and 4th quarter, Azure three Mascules Or. In other words a background of blue with three Gold Lozenges. As shown by Constance Pitcairn's Arms of the Pitcairns of Forthar 1630.

The definitive source for the Pitcairn Arms, according to the Lord Lyon Office is Nisbet's `System of Heraldry'. Whilst we have quite a few other sources they are not definitive. For example, Sir James Balfour's manuscript was only one source of pre registration and whilst not always accurate, he only mentions the Shield in his Notes and not the full Arms as Constance has shown.

In Nisbet's he quite clearly quotes the Pitcairn Arms as Argent, three Mascules Gules for the shield. In other words a background of Silver with three Red Lozenges. Mascules are a very ancient Scottish symbol, but during the registration period were somehow changed to a Lozenge. (Diamond shape).

2. In Balfour's manuscript there was only reference to a shield, not to a crest or motto!

Nisbet's mentions the Motto as "Plena refulget" which translates into the "Full Moon Shines". Constance's Pitcairn's picture clearly shows the Crest as the "Sun in its Splendour" instead of the "Moon in her Compliment Proper"

In summary the Original Arms of the Pitcairns are as follows: -

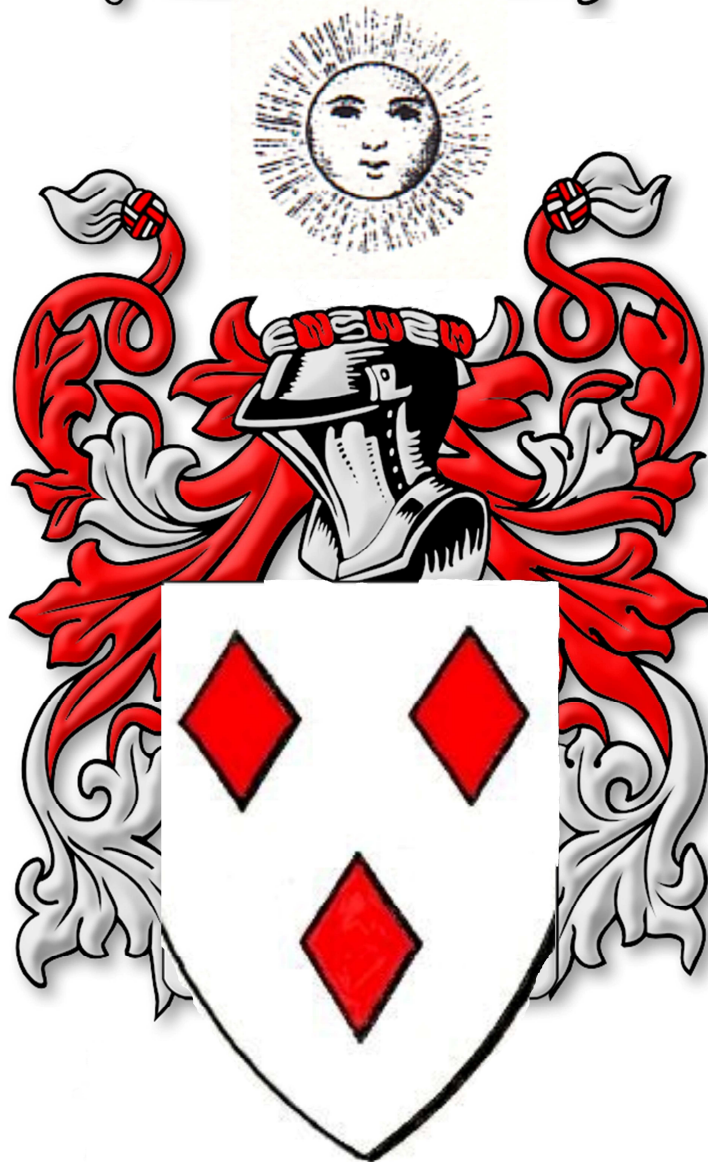
Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules,

Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.

Motto - Plena refulget.

ARMS OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS

Plena refulget



Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules,
Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.
Motto - Plena refulget.

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ARMS OF PITCAIRNS OF FORFAR



Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th
.Argent three Lozenges Gules,
Elizabeth Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd Argent
an Eagle displayed Sable.
Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules,
Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.
Motto - Plena refulget.

THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS FAMILY BRANCH 1.

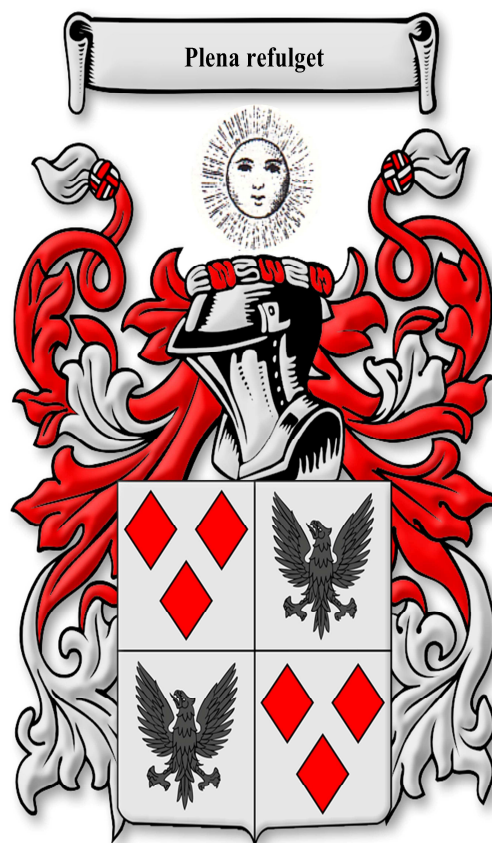


ARMS OF PITCAIRN

Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules
Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper
Motto - Motto - Plena refulget.

Contains History of -

WILLIAM de PITKARAN 1249
JOHN de PETCARN OR PITCARNE 1250



ARMS OF PITCAIRN OF THAT ILK AND FORTHAR

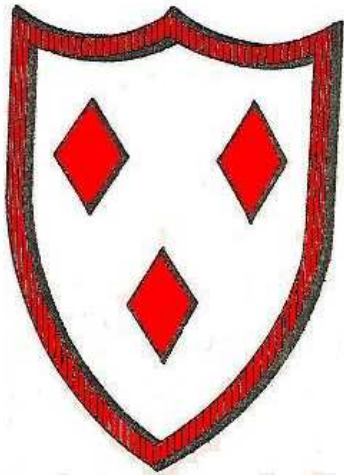
Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th
Argent three Lozenges Gules, and
Elizabeth Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd
displayed Sable. an Eagle displayed Sable.
Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules,
Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.
Motto - Plena refulget.

Contains History of -

HENRY PITCAIRN 1456

THE HISTORY OF THE *FIFE PITCAIRNS* FAMILY BRANCH 2

INNERNETHY & PITCULLO CASTLE



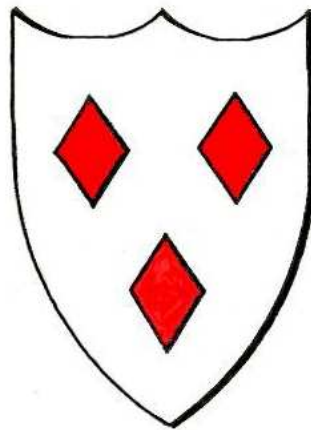
ARMS OF PITCAIRN OF INNERNETHY

The Arms appear to have died out when the Lands were sold in 1655 by Andrew Pitcairn 15th Laird of Innernethy.

Argent, three Lozenges Gules, within a Bordure Gules.

Crest: A Star, surrounded with Clouds.

Motto: Spes Lucis Æternæ



ARMS OF PITCAIRN OF PITCULLO CASTLE

William Pitcairn ancestor of the Pitcairns of Pitcullo Castle from James Pitcairn of Cordoun 1661.

Argent, Three Lozenges, two and one Gules.

Crest: The Sun.

Motto: Spes Lucis Æternæ

This family adopted the use of the original Pitcairn Arms

Contains History of -

WILLIAM PITCAIRN (ELDER) ANCESTOR OF
JOHN PITCAIRN, PROVOST.

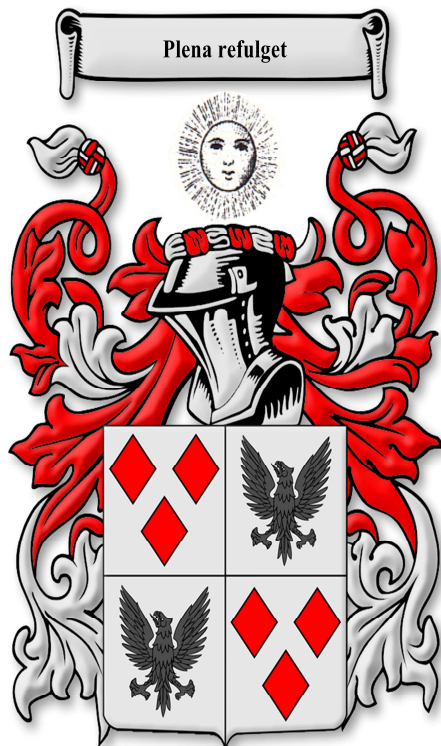
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THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS

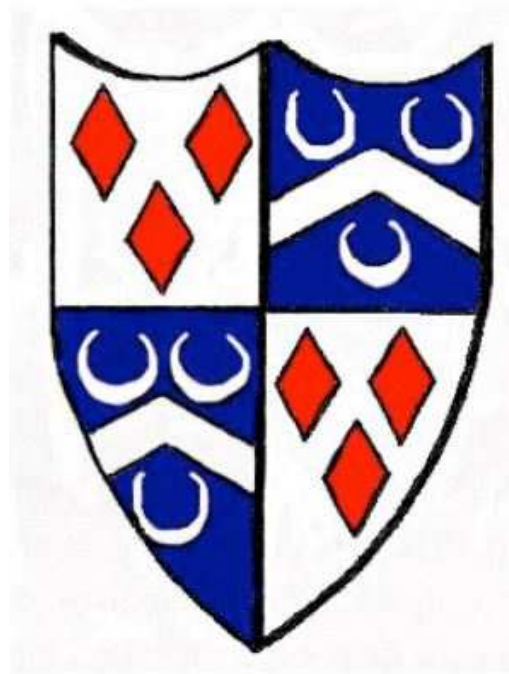
FAMILY BRANCH 3

PITCAIRNS OF PITLOUR

This family is descended from Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk and Elizabeth Ramsay 1456, therefore it may be possible for family of this branch to matriculate their Arms from their ancestor who's Arms are shown below.



Arms of Pitcairn of that Ilk and Forthar
Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th
Argent three Lozenges Gules, and Elizabeth
Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd Argent
an Eagle displayed Sable.
Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules,
Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.
Motto - Plena refulget.



ARMS OF PITCAIRN OF PITLOUR
Quarterly, first and fourth,
Argent, three Lozenges, 2 and 1
Gules, for Pitcairn; second and third Azure a
Chevron between three Crescents Argent
Crest, an Anchor in Pale Azure.
Motto, *Sperabo*. (I will Hope)

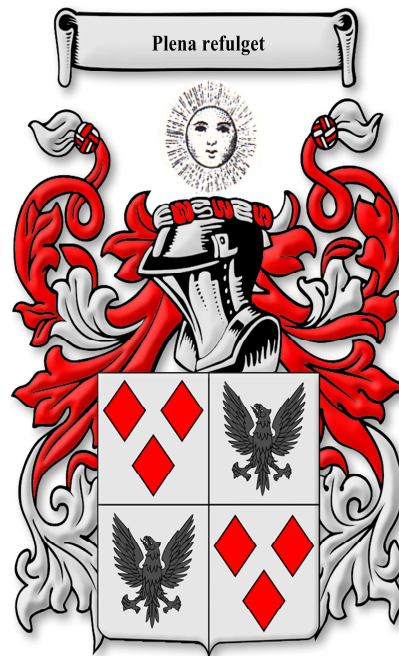
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Contains History of -

PATRICK PITCAIRN OF PITLOUR  
WILLIAM PITCAIRNE OF PITLOUR  
HENRY PITCAIRN OF PITLOUR  
PATRICK (II) PITCAIRN OF PITLOUR  
JOHN SKENE.

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# *THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS FAMILY BRANCH 4 PITCAIRNS OF WESTER DRUMMIS AND OF GLASGOW*

This family is descended from Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk and Elizabeth Ramsay 1456, therefore it may be possible for family of this branch to matriculate their Arms from their ancestor who's Arms are shown below.



Arms of Pitcairn of that Ilk and Forthar.  
Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th  
Argent three Lozenges Gules, and Elizabeth  
Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd Argent  
an Eagle displayed Sable.  
Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules,  
Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.  
Motto - Plena refulget.

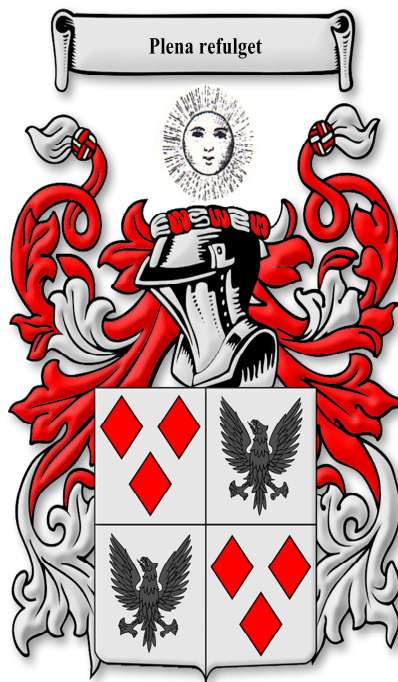
Contains History of -

DAVID PITCAIRN OF WESTER DRUMMIS AND OF GLASGOW  
THOMAS PITCAIRN  
JOHN PITCAIRN

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# THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS FAMILY BRANCH 5 ROBERT PITCAIRN OF DOUNFIELD

This family is descended from Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk and Elizabeth Ramsay 1456, therefore it may be possible for family of this branch to matriculate their Arms from their ancestor who's Arms are shown below.

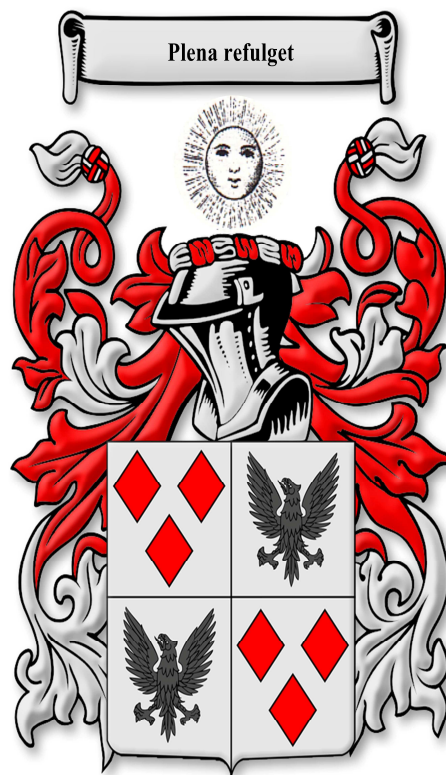


Arms of Pitcairn of that Ilk and Forthar.  
Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th  
Argent three Lozenges Gules, and Elizabeth  
Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd Argent  
an Eagle displayed Sable.  
Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules,  
Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.  
Motto - Plena refulget.

# THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS FAMILY BRANCH 6 DAVID PITCAIRN

## THE COMMENDATOR'S DOMESTIC SERVITOR

This family is descended from Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk and Elizabeth Ramsay 1456, therefore it may be possible for family of this branch to matriculate their Arms from their ancestor who's Arms are shown below.



Arms of Pitcairn of that Ilk and Forthar.  
Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th  
Argent three Lozenges Gules, and Elizabeth  
Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd Argent  
an Eagle displayed Sable.

Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules

Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.

Motto - Plena refulget.

# THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS FAMILY BRANCH 7

## THE PERTSHIRE PITCAIRNS

These families are descended from Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk and Elizabeth Ramsay 1456, therefore it may be possible for family of this branch to matriculate their Arms from their ancestor who's Arms are shown below.



Arms of Pitcairn of that Ilk and Forthar. Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th Argent three Lozenges Gules, and Elizabeth Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd Argent an Eagle displayed Sable.

Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules

Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.

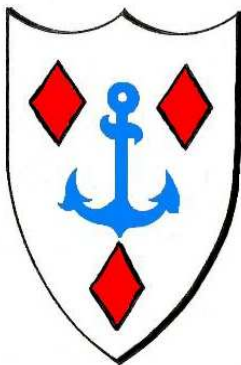
Motto - Plena refulget.

Chart 1.

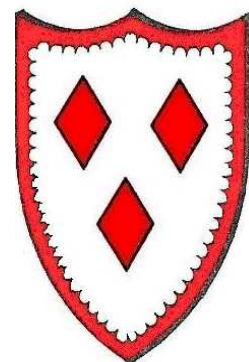
Contains families of -TRETTON OF KINTILLO  
ALEXANDER PITCAIRN, ROBERT PITCAIRN,  
FRIEND OF ANDREW CARNEGIE. JOHN PITCAIRN U.S.A.  
HAROLD PITCAIRN, INVENTOR HELECOPTER

Chart 2.

Contains families of - CRAIGEND, SCOONIEBURN  
DOUGLAS PITCAIRN  
JOHN PITCAIRN (BANKER)



John Pitcairn, of Pitcairn  
Had a grant of Arms in 1808  
Arms: Shield, three Lozenges,  
with an Anchor in the centre  
Crest: The Sun in his Splendour  
Motto: Spes Lucis Æternæ



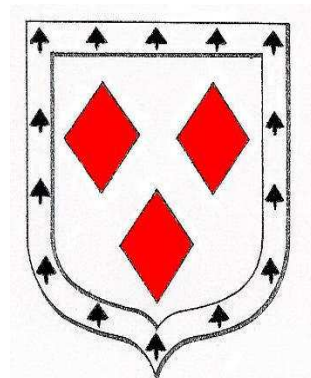
Arms of Robert Pitcairn W.S.  
1793-1855 Arms, Argent,  
three lozenges, Gules, within  
a Bordure Engrailed Gules.  
Crest, Sun in his Splendour  
Motto, Spes Lucis Æternæ  
Author of 'Criminal Trials'

# THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS FAMILY BRANCH 8 PITCAIRNES OF PITCAIRNE & UNSTOUN

These families are descended from Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk and Elizabeth Ramsay 1456, therefore it may be possible for family of this branch to matriculate their Arms from their ancestor who's Arms are shown below.

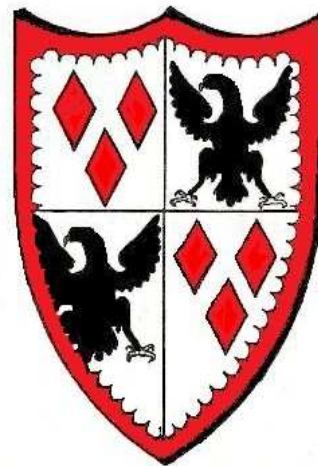


Arms of Pitcairn of that Ilk and Forthar.  
Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th  
Argent three Lozenges Gules, and Elizabeth  
Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd Argent  
Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules  
Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.  
Motto - Plena refulget.



ARMS OF DR ARCHIBALD PITCAIRNE 'HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS'  
Argent, three Lozenges Gules, within a Bordure Ermine,  
Crest. A Moon in her Complement Proper  
Motto. Plena refulgent.

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ARMS OF PITCAIRNE OF PITCAIRNE  
William Pitcairn, 17th Laird of that Ilk  
and Forthar sold Pitcairn in 1650 to his  
uncle John Pitcairn of Unstoun.  
Arms. Quarterly, 1st and 4th Argent,  
three Lozenges Gules; 2nd and 3rd Argent,  
an Eagle with Wings Displayed Sable,  
for Ramsay.  
Crest: a Moon in her Complement Proper.  
Motto: Plena refulget.

# THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS

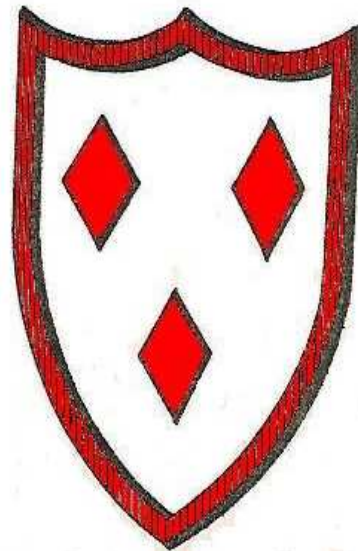
## FAMILY BRANCH 9

### PITCAIRNS OF DREGHORN CASTLE.

This family is descended from Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk and Elizabeth Ramsay 1456, therefore it may be possible for family of this branch to matriculate their Arms from their ancestor who's Arms are shown below.



Arms of Pitcairn of that Ilk and Forthar  
Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th  
Argent three Lozenges Gules, and Elizabeth  
Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd Argent  
Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules  
Crest - The Moon in her Compliment Proper.  
Motto - Plena refulget.



ARMS OF PITCAIRN OF DREGHORN  
David Pitcairn of Dreghorn Castle d.1709.  
Argent, three Lozenges Gules  
within a Bordure Gules.  
Crest. The Sun, Surrounded with Clouds  
Motto. Spes Lucis Æternæ

Contains families of -

DR WILLIAM ROBERTSON  
DR ROBERTSON'S DESCENDANTS

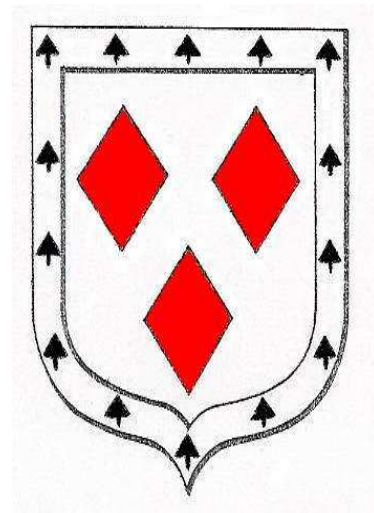
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# THE HISTORY OF THE FIFE PITCAIRNS FAMILY BRANCH 10 DYSART PITCAIRNS

This family is descended from Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk and Elizabeth Ramsay 1456, therefore it may be possible for family of this branch to matriculate their Arms from their ancestor who's Arms are shown below.



Arms of Pitcairn of that Ilk and Forthar  
Henry Pitcairn 10th laird of that Ilk 1st/4th  
Argent three Lozenges Gules, and Elizabeth  
Ramsay (Heiress), 1456, 2nd/3rd Argent  
Arms - Argent three Lozenges Gules  
Crest - The Moon in her Complement Proper.  
Motto - Plena refulget.



ARMS OF DR WILLIAM PITCAIRN OF DYSART  
Argent, three Lozenges Gules, within a  
Bordure Ermine  
Crest. A Moon in her Complement Proper  
Motto. Plena refulgent.

Contains families of -

DR WILLIAM PITCAIRN PRESIDENT of the  
ROYAL COLEGE OF PHYSICIANS. F.R.S. F.S.A.

Nephews were: MAJOR JOHN PITCAIRN  
ROBERT PITCAIRN MIDSHIPMAN  
DISCOVERED PITCAIRN ISLAND  
DR DAVID PITCAIRN F.R.C.P. F.R.S. F.S.A

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