The Welsches of Tweedsmuir

Research into the above family indicates that a John Welsh father of a John Welsh born 27-06-1667 in Over Menzion in Tweedsmuir has emerged as the Patriarch of this family.

Johne Welsh was descended from a James Welsh of Craig Kingledores. According to the Privy Council records of 1684 John Welsh the elder was the son of Margaret Laidlaw of Over Menzion and known by the authorities as Black John Welsh. This nickname was applied, no doubt, because he had black hair but it was mainly to distinguish him from others with the same name and hence could be identified. The headstone for John Welsh the younger born in 1667 is the oldest surviving headstone in Tweedsmuir Kirkyard. The descendants of Johne Welsh, (John Black Welsh) who was undoubtably a Covenantter himself, include several other well known Covenanters, two Church of Scotland Ministers, also the Rev. David Welsh D.D. (David Welsh when the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland famously walked out with over 200 other Members to form The Free Church in 1843) and also included with this group is the Rev Robert Welsh D.D. the first Minister of the Free Church in Broughton from its opening in 1843. One would be forgiven that with this progeny that there was possibly a family connection with the Rev. John Michael Welsh D.D. of Irongray (1612-1681) in Dumfriesshire a main leader of the Covenanting movement. However, continuation of this research - which follows - indicates that this connection is unlikely even though I know that Welsh family trees on Genealogical sites on-line do show this connection. Maybe I have missed something! A basic Family Tree of the members of the Welsh family of Tweedsmuir is at the end of this page - please note that this is not a full Welsh family tree but it does include most of people mentioned below and also those listed on the headstones in Tweedsmuir Kirkyard. The family history is quite complex as there were several inter-marriages between different Welsh families.
The armorial on the left was matriculated with The Court of The Lord Lyon in Edinburgh in 1771. Doctor James Welsh Physician in Winchester who inherited the Estate of Cornlee in the County of Dumfries from a long line of Ancestors. Bears. Argent on a Saltyre Sable, five Annulets Or, CREST an eagle perching on a broken trunk of an oak tree, out of which is growing a small branch with leaves, all proper. And in an Escroll above this. MOTTO. Auspice Numine.

The estate of Cornlee is no longer in existence but it was in the Parish of Irongray, about seven miles west of the town of Dumfries.

This armorial is completely different from the Irish/English Welsh version which is Argent, Chevron Gules, three Pheons (Arrow heads). The crest and motto are also different. Hence the Dumfries armorial can be considered as the Scottish Welsh family armorial.

The parish of Irongray was the home of John Michael Welsh D.D. of Irongray (1612-1681) who was a leader of the Scottish Covenanters movement. John Welsh was a grandson of Elizabeth Knox, daughter of John Knox (c1514 1572) and his second wife Lady Margaret Stewart, who had married John Welsh of Ayr.

John Welsh of Irongray married Elizabeth Somerville (1624-1663) on 18-02-1653 at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh. They had several children.

At this time there were several Welsh families in Tweedsmuir and surrounding parishes. It is obviously a thought that they could possibly be related to the Welshs' of Irongray? However, the Welsh families in Tweedsmuir parish were mostly tenants of small hill farms while those of Irongray were well-to-do land owners with a well documented pedigree. I don't think that this wealth transition could have taken place in one generation. What the two groups did have in common were Calvinistic ideals and Covenanting zeal in their beliefs.

By the nineteenth century some branches of the family did become owners of their farms - namely the Ericstane/Earlshaugh branch that had also other farms in Peeblesshire and Roxburghshire, and the Glenholm/ Mossfennan branch. In the former Free Church building in Broughton there is a large beautiful memorial stained glass window to Robert Welsh of Glenholm. A small section of this window depicts the crest and motto of Welsh family of Scotland. More about the Glenholm family and image of window below.

Examination of the birth records from 1644, when the first Tweedsmuir Church became operational, to 1700 indicate that there were 58 births with the surname of Welsh/Welch recorded in the parish between these dates. This number is quite significant bearing in mind that at this time not all births etc were recorded and there were many blanks - for various reasons - in the Tweedsmuir Kirk records. One of those recorded was the birth of an unnamed son of a Johnne Welsh in Nether Menzion in 1680. A witness was a John Welsh of Over.
Menzion (ie there were Welsh families at both Nether and Over Menzion in 1680)! The first appearance of the Welsh name outside the vital records would be a John Welsh of Tweedhopefoot who in 1685 was a companion to John Hunter the Covenanter who was shot dead near the Devil's Beeftub. Welsh' escape to the house of his Aunt's house at Carterhope at the head of the Fruid valley is described on the Covenanters in Upper Tweeddale (history-heritage/before-1800/covenanters-in-upper-tweeddale) page. There is a headstone in Tweedsmuir Kirkyard, separate from the group of Welsh headstones for John Welsh senior of Tweedshopefoot who died in 1764 aged 68 married to Jean Tweedie - It must have been his father also a John Welsh that was the companion to John Hunter. A John Welsh of Tweedhopefoot had the nickname of "Babe" because of his height and stature. The aunt at Carterhope was probably also a Welsh as the records indicate that there was a Welsh family at Carterhope a few years later. A James Welsh A.M.(1671-1755) of Over Menzion was the sixth Minister of Tweedsmuir Parish - name appears on plaque of list of Ministers of the Parish in the present church. This concentration of Welshests in Tweedsmuir parish would indicate that the families were well established in the area as early as 1644 and enforces the view that they were unlikely to have been descended from the Welsh family of Irongray. Despite these numbers in the sixteenth century by the first census of 1841 there was not one single Welsh recorded in Tweedsmuir parish! However they were at Ericstane and Glenholm in the adjoining parishes.

In the Tweedsmuir Kirkyard there are ten headstones associated with the family of Welsh. Nine are in a cluster - indicating some family association with one headstone completely separate. The oldest headstone of the group, in fact the oldest in the Kirkyard, is for John Welsh who died in Over Menzion on 16-04-1711 aged 44. He was thus born in 1667. He must be the John Welsh that was a witness to the birth record of 1680.

The Royal Proclamation for Peebleshire of 1684 that denounced those charged with rebellion who had fled from justice included a John Welsh of Menzion. As shown above there were John Welsh families at both Nether and Over Menzion so we are not sure from which farm he came. It is not recorded who John Welsh of Over Menzion married but he had at least sons John Welsh (1703-1779) who farmed Over Menzion, George Welsh (1707-1771) of Carterhope and Robert Welsh (1709-1787) of Glenholm. The image below is of the ruins of Over Menzion today - modern afforestation has taken over from sheep farming. The small size of some of the hill-farm houses is surprising. Over Menzion is at the head of the valley while Nether Menzion was about halfway up the valley. The site of the latter has more or less disappeared apart from some drystone dykes. Afforestation has taken it's toll and the construction of the weir on the Menzio burn part of the water works collection system for the Talla reservoir probably contributed to the disappearance of the farm site.
Also on the Peeblesshire 1684 Proclamation was a James Welsh of Fingland. For the full list of names on the Proclamation see the Covenants in Upper Tweeddale (history-heritage/before-1800/covenants-in-upper-tweeddale) page.

Rev David Welsh D.D. (1793-1845) was born in Ericstane in Moffat parish. His parents owned and farmed Earlshaugh in Tweedsmuir parish. He was a Minster in the Church of Scotland and in due course became the Moderator. In 1843 as the retiring Moderator he famously led out from the General Assembly in Edinburgh a group of 121 Ministers and 73 Elders to Tanfield Hall in Cannonmills. There the group constituted themselves as The Free Church of Scotland. There is a memorial plaque, on the right, in Tweedsmuir church however it is silent on the formation of The Free Church.

Also in Tweedsmuir church, shown below, are two brass wall plaques which are memorials to two cousins, both named Tom Welsh, that fell in WW1. Their relationship can be traced on the Welsh Family Tree that follows below. Not only were they full cousins but their respective fathers had married two sisters.

The upper plaque commemorates the Tom Welsh M.C, M.B. Ch.B Captain in the South African Medical Corps who died at Arras in France on 12-04-1917 aged 33. He was baptised as Thomas.

The lower plaque commemorates Tom Welsh of Earlshaugh and Tweedshaws, Captain in the Kings Own Scottish Borderers. Killed in action at the Dardanelles 12-07-1915.

What is strange is that the Tom Welsh of the KOSB is well documented while Tom of the South African Medical Corp is not so well documented despite being a Doctor and being awarded the Military Cross as indicated on his plaque.

Tom of the SAMC was a very courageous man. He was awarded the Military Cross "for great courage and determination in organising and leading Stretcher Parties under very heavy fire." He was also mentioned in Despatches by General Sir Douglas Haig "for gallant and distinguished service in the field."
Both men appear on a Welsh headstone in the Kirkyard but only the Tom of the KOSB appears on the Tweedsmuir War Memorial in the vestibule of Tweedsmuir church - on left. And it is only Tom of the KOSB that appears on the Moffat War Memorial! These omissions resulting in two cousins being treated differently does seem very odd - one must assume that it is because Tom of the SAMC was born in Leith and hence considered as an Edinburgh man. The South African connection is maybe significant as he emigrated there after he left Edinburgh University to take up a position as a Medical Officer on Wit Deep Mine, Transvall. Tom of the SAMC does not appear on the Leith Roll of Honour. Both appear as Tom Welsh on the memorial at Merchiston Castle school in Edinburgh where they both attended. They also both appear on the Edinburgh University Role of Honour with Tom of the SAMC listed as Thomas. There was a
memorial service for Capt. Tom Welsh of the KOSB in Tweedsmuir Kirk on 25-07-1915 led by the Rev. W. S. Crocket D.D. Minister of Tweedsmuir. Was there a memorial service for Capt. Tom Welsh of the SAMC anywhere?

More about the Tweedsmuir War Memorial can be found here (/history-heritage/places/tweedsmuir-war-memorial).

Rev. William Welsh D.D. (1820-1892) born in Cardon, Glenholm was the first Minister of the former Free Church in Broughton in 1843. Memorial plaque in church on left. This church closed for worship in 1970 and became the much loved John Buchan Museum. The museum has now moved to Peebles and the church building is now a private residence and possibly a gallery.
Detail (above) from the Memorial window in the Broughton Free Church building to Robert Welsh uncle of the Rev. William Welsh D.D. Detail shows the crest and motto of the Scottish Welsh family. One might think that this alludes to the fact that the Welshs' of Glenholm are descended from Irongray. However, I think here that the Welsh crest/motto is being used solely as a Welsh "logo". This was a fairly common practice in the nineteenth century. Image of full window below showing the logo at the foot of the centre light.

**Welsh Family Tree**

(Updated 23-01-2015)

The following tree is fairly skeletal and leaves out many collateral descendant lines but it does include the Welsh family members mentioned in the above text and also includes the names on the Welsh headstones in Tweedsmuir Kirkyard and on memorials in churches.
Descendants of Johne Welsh (Black Welsh)

JAMES WELSH of CRAIG KINGLEDORES - alive 1585.

Child of JAMES WELSH CRAIG KINGLEDORESS is:

i. JOHN WELSH OVER MENZION - alive 1585.

Grandchild of WELSH OVER MENZION is:

i. WELSH.

WELSH he met MARGARET LAILDLAW. She died in Over Menzion, Tweedsmuir.

Child of WELSH and MARGARET LAIDLAW is:-

1. JOHNE WELSH (John Black Welsh in 1684).

Children of JOHNE WELSH (John Black Welsh) are:

2. i. JOHN WELSH, b. 27-06-1667, Over Menzion, Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire.; d. 16-04-1711, Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire..

ii. REV JAMES WELSH (BACHELOR), b. 27-08-1671, Over Menzion, Tweedsmuir.; d. 1755, Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire. (6th Minister of Tweedsmuir Parish Church).

(The following three persons are probably related to the Black Welsh but the connection is not proven:-

a. Walter Welsh married to Marion Laidlaw at Badlew in 1684.

b. James Welsh at Fingland in 1684.

c. John Welsh at Tweedhopefoot 1685 - son John Welsh married to Marion Tweedie died 11-10-1764 aged 88 and buried in Tweedsmuir Kirkyard)

Generation No. 2

2. JOHN WELSH (JOHNE1) was born 27-06-1667 in Over Menzion, Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire., and died 16-04-1711 in Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire.
Children of JOHN WELSH are:

3. i. JOHN WELSH, b. 1703, Over Menzion, Tweedsmuir.; d. 1779, Hundleshope, Manor, Peebleshire.

4. ii. GEORGE WELSH, b. 1707; d. 02-1771, Carterhope, Tweedsmuir.

5. iii. ROBERT WELSH, b. 1709, Over Menzion, Tweedsmuir.; d. 01-09-1787, Mossfennan, Glenholm.

Generation No. 3

3. JOHN WELSH (JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 1703 in Over Menzion, Tweedsmuir., and died 1779 in Hundleshope, Manor, Peebleshire. He met MARY WELSH. She was born 1703, and died 07-12-1768 in Hundleshope, Manor, Peebleshire.

Children of JOHN WELSH and MARY WELSH are:

i. ELIZABETH WELSH, b. 13-11-1734, Over Manzion, Tweedsmuir.

ii. JAMES WELSH, b. 12-02-1735/36, Tweedsmuir.

iii. ISABELL WELSH, b. 24-05-1738, Over Menzion, Tweedsmuir.

4. GEORGE WELSH (JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 1707, and died 02-1771 in Carterhope, Tweedsmuir. He met JANET WELSH. She was born 1710, and died 1753 in Carterhope, Tweedsmuir.

Children of GEORGE WELSH and JANET WELSH are:

i. JOHN WELSH, b. 02-01-1734/35, Tweedsmuir.

ii. JEAN WELSH, b. 11-02-1735/36, Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire.

iii. JAMES WELSH, b. 28-05-1737, Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire.

iv. ROBERT WELSH, b. 1739, Tweedsmuir; d. 26-03-1813, Tweedsmuir; m. MARGARET SCOTT; b. 1756; d. 29-12-1822, Tweedsmuir.

v. GEORGE WELSH, b. 15-09-1741, Tweedsmuir; d. 1758, Tweedsmuir.
6. DAVID WELSH, b. 1745; d. 1825.

5. ROBERT WELSH (JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 1709 in Over Menzion, Tweedsmuir., and died 01-09-1787 in Mossfennan, Glenholm.. He met GRIZEL BURNET. She was born 1714, and died 16-10-1744 in Tweedsmuir, Peebleshire..

Children of ROBERT WELSH and GRIZEL BURNET are:

i. JOHN WELSH, b. 1740; d. 16-07-1797, Mossfennan, Glenholm..

7. ii. WILLIAM WELSH, b. 1741, Mossfennan, Glenholm.; d. 02-08-1823, Mossfennan, Glenholm..

Generation No. 4

6. DAVID WELSH (GEORGE3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 1745, and died 1825. He met MARGARET WELSH 10-09-1773 in Drumelzier, Peebleshire.. She was born 1756, and died 1807.

Children of DAVID WELSH and MARGARET WELSH are:

8. i. ALEXANDER WELSH, b. 1776; d. 1810, Gibraltar..

9. ii. JAMES WELSH, b. 1791, Moffat.; d. 18-11-1856, Ericstane, Moffat..

10. iii. REV DAVID WELSH DD, b. 11-12-1793, Braefoot Farm, Ericstane, Moffat.; d. 24-04-1845, Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire..

7. WILLIAM WELSH (ROBERT3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 1741 in Mossfennan, Glenholm., and died 02-08-1823 in Mossfennan, Glenholm.. He met CHRISTINA WELSH, daughter of ALEXANDER WELSH and MARION TWEEDIE. She was born 1754 in Drumelzier., and died 23-07-1811 in Mossfennan, Glenholm..

Children of WILLIAM WELSH and CHRISTINA WELSH are:

i. GRIZEL WELSH, b. 10-11-1778; d. 1778.

ii. ANN WELSH, b. 1781; d. 11-09-1806.
iii. ROBERT WELSH, b. 1783, Cardon, Glenholme.; d. 28-06-1855, Mossfennan. (Buried in Tweedsmuir).

11. iv. ALEXANDER WELSH, b. 19-12-1785, Glenholme, Peeblesshire.; d. 1823, Cardon, Glenholme..

v. GRACE WELSH, b. 1788; d. 13-03-1855, Mossfennan, Peeblesshire. (Buried in Tweedsmuir).

vi. JOHN WELSH WS, b. 1791; d. 05-06-1845, Peebles..

vii. CHARLES WELSH, b. 1797; d. 01-04-1812.

viii. CAROLINE WELSH, b. 1799; d. 30-06-1814.

Generation No. 5

8. ALEXANDER WELSH (DAVID4, GEORGE3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 1776, and died 1810 in Gibraltar.. He met JANET BALLANTYNE 25-01-1801 in Yarrow, Selkirkshire. She was born 1782, and died 1850 in Moffat..

Children of ALEXANDER WELSH and JANET BALLANTYNE are:

i. ALEXANDER WELSH, b. 16-02-1802, Tweedsmuir; d. 20-02-1858, Warrambool, Victoria. Australis.

ii. KATHERINE WELSH, b. 15-08-1803, Tweedsmuir; d. 18-02-1836, Edinburgh..

iii. ROBERT WELSH, b. 24-03-1805, Tweedsmuir.

iv. MARGARET WELSH, b. 14-03-1807, Tweedsmuir.; d. 1884, Aberdeen; m. JAMES GORDON.

v. GEORGE MONTGOMERY WELSH, b. 05-07-1808, Tweedsmuir; d. 1833, Dumfries..

9. JAMES WELSH (DAVID4, GEORGE3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 1791 in Moffat., and died 18-11-1856 in Ericstane, Moffat.. He met MARGARET MARTIN 05-08-1819. She was born 1797, and died 1874.

Children of JAMES WELSH and MARGARET MARTIN are:
12. i. THOMAS WELSH, b. 1822; d. 18-12-1882, Ericstane, Moffat.

13. ii. JAMES WELSH, b. 1834, Moffat.; d. 18-06-1885, Ericstane, Moffat.

   iii. WILLIAM MARTIN WELSH, b. 1839, Moffat, Dumfriesshire.; m.HELEN BLACK, 22-06-1866, Liberton Mains, Edinburgh.

   iv. MARGARET WELSH (Single), b.1841, Moffat, Dumfriesshire.; d. 11-10-1891, Meikleholmside, Moffat.

   v. CATHARINE WELSH (KATE), b. 1843, Moffat, Dumfriesshire., d. 01-06-1907, Moffat.; m. (1) JOHN GRANT M.D.; m(2) JAMES HALLIDAY; b.1833, Dumfriesshire.

10. REV DAVID WELSH DD (DAVID4 WELSH, GEORGE3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 11-12-1793 in Braefoot Farm, Ericstane, Moffat., and died 24-04-1845 in Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire.. He met MARY HAMILTON 01-06-1830 in Glasgow., daughter of JOHN HAMILTON. She was born 1807, and died 17-07-1873 in 2 Gloucester Street, Edinburgh.

Children of REV DAVID WELSH and MARY HAMILTON are:

   i. DAVID JAMES WELSH, b. 1832; d. 1890.

   ii. JOHN HAMILTON WELSH, b. 1833; d. 22-11-1867.

   iii. HELEN WELSH.

   iv. MARGARET MARY WELSH.

11. ALEXANDER WELSH (WILLIAM4, ROBERT3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 19-12-1785 in Glenholme, Peeblesshire., and died 1823 in Cardon, Glenholme.. He met MARY TWEDDIE. She was born 06-06-1793 in Dreva, Peeblesshire., and died 22-12-1924.

Children of ALEXANDER WELSH and MARY TWEDDIE are:

   i. REV WILLIAM WELSH, b. 1820, Cardon, Glenholme.; d. 25-12-1892, 23 Melville Street, Edinburgh.; m. CHRISTINA GUTHRIE, 22-03-1854, St Cuthberts Parish, Edinburgh.; b. 29-05-1833, Forfarshire; d. 17-02-1895, Edinburgh..

   ii. ANN WELSH, b. 1822; d. 1833, Mossfennan, Glenholm.
14. iii. ALEXANDER WELSH, b. 04-06-1823, Glenholme, Peeblesshire.; d. 07-06-1901, Mossfennan, Glenholm.

Generation No. 6

12. THOMAS WELSH (JAMES5, DAVID4, GEORGE3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 1822, and died 18-12-1882 in Ericstane, Moffat.. He met JANE JARDINE HALLIDAY 20-10-1874 in Meikleholmside, Moffat, daughter of JAMES HALLIDAY and JANE LITTLE. She was born 1849, and died 28-09-1912 in 5 Cambridge Street, Edinburgh..

Children of THOMAS WELSH and JANE HALLIDAY are:

    i. JAMES ROBERT WELSH, b. 14-11-1876, Ericstane, Moffat.; d. 05-07-1877, Silloth.

15. ii. TOM WELSH, b. 16-01-1879, Ericstane, Moffat.; d. 12-07-1915, Dardanelles. Capt Kings Own Scottish Borderers..

13. JAMES WELSH (JAMES5, DAVID4, GEORGE3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 1834 in Moffat., and died 18-06-1885 in Ericstane, Moffat.. He married (1) CATHERINE MARTIN DARLING KIRKWOOD (KATE). She was born 1853 in England, and died Bef. 1878. He met (2) JESSIE JARDINE LITTLE HALLIDAY 04-06-1878 in Meiklehomeside, Moffat., daughter of JAMES HALLIDAY and JANE LITTLE. She was born 1856 in Moffat., and died 08-04-1948 in Bariston, Bridge of Allan, Stirlingshire..

Child of JAMES WELSH and CATHERINE (KATE) is:

    i. JAMES ALEXANDER WELSH, b. 10-01-1873, Edinburgh.; d. 28-04-1891, 15 Pilrig Street, Leith, Edinburgh..

Children of JAMES WELSH and JESSIE HALLIDAY are:

    ii. WILLIAM HALLIDAY WELSH, b. 04-09-1879, Edinburgh.; d. 19-06-1972, Bridge of Allan, Stirling..

    iii. THOMAS WELSH (TOM). M.C. M.B. CH.B., b. 20-10-1884, 15 Pilrig Street, Leith, Edinburgh.; d. 12-04-1917, Arras, France. (Capt South African Medical Corp).
14. ALEXANDER WELSH (ALEXANDER5, WILLIAM4, ROBERT3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 04-06-1823 in Glenholme, Peebleshire., and died 07-06-1901 in Mossfennan, Glenholm.. He met JANET ELIZABETH THOMSON 1864 in Innerwick, East Lothian.. She was born 1836 in Edinburgh., and died 15-10-1913 in Mossfennan, Glenholme, Peebleshire..

Children of ALEXANDER WELSH and JANET THOMSON are:

i. ALEXANDER WELSH, b. 1869, Prestonkirk, East Lothian..

ii. JOHN WILLIAM WELSH, b. 1871, Prestonkirk, East Lothian..

Generation No. 7

15. TOM7 WELSH (THOMAS6, JAMES5, DAVID4, GEORGE3, JOHN2, JOHNE1) was born 16-01-1879 in Ericstane, Moffat., and died 12-07-1915 in Dardanelles. Capt Kings Own Scottish Borderers.. He met ALEXANDRA MARY BELL SMITH 04-04-1907 in Moffat. She was born 1883.

Children of TOM WELSH and ALEXANDRA SMITH are:

i. DAVID WELSH, b. 10-04-1908, Ericstane, Moffat..

ii. RONALD FINDLAY WELSH, b. 01-02-1911, Ericstane, Moffat..

iii. JOAN MARGARET WELSH, b. 29-04-1913, 2, Sunnybraes, Moffat.

(Alexandra Smith remarried in 1919 - her second husband was Edmond Holtby a farmer from Yorkshire - They had three children)

Tony Hope