

## **8<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Ailsa**

**Born: 13 September, 1956, in Culzean Castle, Ayrshire;**

**Died: 16 January, 2015, in Altamonte Springs, Florida, USA, aged 58.**

The 8<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Ailsa was the ebullient and perennially cheerful head of the house of Kennedy. Described as someone who “loved to party” and possessing “heart of gold”, Lord Ailsa combined his evident enjoyment of life as a bon viveur with a shrewd business sense in operating a tour company.

He combined these with a genuine love for and interest in clan affairs, notably in North America. He died suddenly at a dinner in Florida, the day before he was to have been introduced as a distinguished guest at the Central Florida Highland Games, the gathering presided over by Margaret Elliott of Redheugh, chief of Elliott, present as chief of the Games. Lord Ailsa was due to have been chief at the Loch Norman Highland Games in North Carolina in April.

Lord Ailsa was of the final generation of his family to be born in Culzean Castle, a family home before it was made over to the National Trust for Scotland. Raised in the other family seat of Cassillis Castle and educated at Strathallan, he studied forestry and farming while gaining a commission in the Queens Own Highlanders (TA). A born leader, he taught skiing and mountaineering to army youth teams in the Highlands and the Brecon Beacons in Wales before concluding his military career in the Ayrshire Yeomanry, founded by an ancestor a century-and-a-half ago.

A larger-than-life character, Archibald Angus Charles Kennedy, 8<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Ailsa, 19<sup>th</sup> Earl of Cassillis, 21<sup>st</sup> Lord Kennedy, 8<sup>th</sup> Baron Ailsa and chief of the name and arms of Kennedy, succeeded in the marquessate on the death of his father in 1994. The title is derived from Ailsa Craig, long a family property, and which Charles Ailsa put up for sale for over £2m in 2011. Last year, the price dropped to £1½ m.

The marquess could trace his ancestry to Duncan de Carrick, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Carrick, who lived around 1150. Through a successor, his family gained hereditary jurisdiction over much of what is present-day Ayrshire – and it is greatly to their credit that public service to this part of Scotland remains part of the Kennedy credo.

Charles Ailsa shared the entrepreneurial instincts of his father, David, 7<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Ailsa. In early life, as David Kennedy, he worked as a steam locomotive fireman and, as marquess, operated the Isle of Man Railway as lessee from the Manx Government for five years from 1967.

Charles Ailsa built up experiences in sales and marketing in agriculture before founding Lord Charles Tours, organising trips to Scotland, Ireland, Sweden and Lapland. However in 2011, in Hawaii for the opening of the Hawaiian Scottish Festival, he was bitten by a mongoose, resulting infection causing him loss of his lower left leg and right toes. It says

much for his spirit that he refused to allow his injuries to dampen his enthusiasm, spirit and determination.

He continued with Lord Charles Tours, promoting skiing, sledging and snowmobile tours, and participating in the Arctic Circle Trophy Challenge. In 2013 he became the first paraplegic to snowmobile through the Swedish Arctic, raising £5500 for the Scottish Diabetes Association. His 200-mile adventure almost ended in tragedy when hit by the worst storms to hit the area in over 20 years, he and his expedition colleagues were trapped in snow whipped up by 150-mile-an-hour winds for three days.

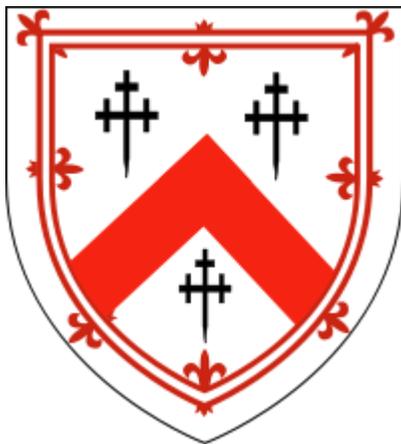
Typically – and in line with his family motto *Avisé La Fin* (Take note of the outcome) - he went straight back into action however, and two months later in California, successfully completed a canopy tour of a giant redwood forest at 300 feet.

Lord Ailsa has been described as “one of the great characters of the clan scene” and “larger than life”. He devoted a huge amount of time to his clan, his diaspora and to friends and associates, and was a regular figure at gatherings in the United States, from Kentucky to Florida and Georgia to California. Devoid of pomp, he’d party any where any time, glass of beer in hand, his lived-in face shining with bonhomie.

The Marquess is survived by his daughters Lady Rosemary and Lady Alicia-Jane, and his former wife Dawn née Keen – whom he married in 1979. The marquessate is entailed in the male line, and the title of 9<sup>th</sup> Marquess now passes to his younger brother Lord David Kennedy, who farms in Ayrshire.

- The arms of the marquessate of Ailsa are *Argent, a chevron Gules between three cross-crosslets fitchy Sable, all within a Royal tressure of the Second.*

“The Royal tressure must commemorate the marriage of James Kennedy of Dunure to Princess Mary in 1405” - p.128, *Lord Crawford’s Armorial*, ed. Alex Maxwell Findlater (Heraldry Society of Scotland: Edinburgh, 2008).



**GORDON CASELY**