

Clan Leslie Society INTERNATIONAL



Clan Leslie Septs: *Abernethy*

According to one source, the first Abernethy of record was Hugh. He was succeeded by his son Orm, around 1150. Orm may have given his name to the lands of Ormison in East Lothian. His son Lawrence founded the Baronial House of Abernethy. It lasted somewhat over a century. We turn to the basic Leslie source for an account. The text below is quoted verbatim from the Historical Records of Leslie by Colonel Charles Leslie, K.H., 26th Baron of Balquhain, Edinburgh, 1869.

"The great lordship of Abernethy, of which the barony of Ballinbreich formed a part, was held by Orm, the son of Hugh, in the reign of Malcolm IV, about 1160, and also by grants from William the Lion, about 1190. Orm's son, Lawrence, assumed the name of Abernethy from his lands. He gave the Canons of the priory of St. Andrews ten shillings yearly, payable out of Ballinbreich, with the consent of Sir Patrick Abernethy, his son and heir, about 1230. Sir Patrick's son, Hugh de Abernethy, possessed great influence previous to and during the reign of Alexander III, about 1360. Sir Hugh de Abernethy died before 3rd September 1296, as, on that date, we find that King Edward I of England ordered the sheriff of Forfar to repon Maria, quae fuit uxor Hugonis de Abernethy, in her lands. Sir Alexander de Abernethy succeeded his father. Sir Hugh. He swore fealty to Edward 1, 10th July 1292, and again 25th June 1296, and adhered to the English interests. He was made warden of the country between the Forth and the mountains by Edward II in 1310. He was one of the English plenipotentiaries appointed to treat with King Robert Bruce in 1312. He got a grant from Edward II of the manor of Wyleighten, 3rd May 1313. On the death of Sir Alexander de Abernethy the lordship of Abernethy was divided between his daughters and co-heiresses, Margaret, married to John Stuart, Earl of Angus, and Mary, married to Sir Andrew de Leslie, VI Dominus Ejusdem."

When the lordship of Abernethy came to an end with Sir Andrew, the family of Abernethy became, so far as can be established, the first sept of Clan Leslie. The family itself continued and while small, remains one of the older Scottish families, going back to the 13th century.

As with many Scottish families, the name appears in various spellings. One David Abernyth was the Vicar of Drisdale in East Lothian. Abernethies have been identified a century earlier, in the same area. A Scottish knight, John of Abrenethy, received his knighthood in 1339.

In the 17th Century, when so many Scots established themselves on the Continent, Abernethys appeared in Prussia as "Abernetti" and in Sweden as "Ebbernet." The first of the family reported to have appeared in America was one William Abernathy who is said to have arrived in Connecticut during the first half of the 17th century. Abernathys also settled in Ireland. One of them, John (1680-1740) became a celebrated and highly controversial clergyman.

After being educated at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, he was appointed as a Presbyterian divine at Antrim, Ireland. After fourteen years of his pastorate he became embroiled in dissention within the Irish Presbyterian Church and contributed to a schism within it which lasted a century. If he lived today he probably would be considered a tolerant, ecumenically-minded cleric, but in his time he was considered a trouble-maker. An English historian has said of him that his name should be "honoured by all who love freedom of conscience and opinion." Another John (1764-1831) born in London, following Scottish medical tradition, became a famous surgeon and medical professor. His lectures were so popular that the hospital to which he was attached had to build an auditorium to take care of all his students. Other Abernethys of our time have given the name distinction, so that while the family vanished from the rolls of the Scottish nobility long ago, it has continued, for seven hundred years, to be an honored name.

At this point, we should return to Mary Abernethy, who married Andrew, the Sixth Lord Leslie. The marriage took place in 1316. With it, Sir Andrew acquired the barony of Ballinbreich (the Clan Leslie battle cry) in Fifeshire, and the barony of Cairney (which presumably is now Cairny — Carney became a Leslie Sept) in Forfar. The charters were granted by King Robert I the Bruce.

Sir Andrew quartered the Arms of Abernethy with his own, which shield subsequently was carried by the Earls of Rothes. From this union descended the remaining Lords Leslie, the Earls of Rothes and Ross, and the first Baron of Balquhain. From the last-named are descended, aside from the Rothes, about all the branches of the Leslies in Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Russia, France and so on. This means that any Leslie in direct descent from any of those branches has at least an atom of Abernethy blood, which makes Mary an ancestress to a vast number of Leslies.

— Alexander Leslie Klieforth