

# CHAPTER 1

## Lockhart Country

*Lanark is celebrated, and deserves its reputation, as a remarkably healthy place.*

*(Statistical Account of the Parish of Lanark 1834-45)*

**D**rive westwards through the town of Lanark on the A73 and you will come to a fork in the road. The road to the right dips over a humped bridge and continues north to Carluke, famous for its fruit and its jam. The left branch becomes the A72. It crosses the Clyde and wends its way along the picturesque river valley, past the villages of Rosebank and Dalsersf, towards Hamilton and Glasgow.

Take the Carluke road. About a mile out of Lanark and to the left, you will catch a glimpse of the turrets of Lee Castle amid a forest of trees. The present castle dates only from the early 1800s, but there was one here for centuries before that.

Though the Lee heirs still manage their estates in the county, the castle has been sold. However, in Lanark, along the upper stretches of the Clyde, and dotted around the rolling

landscape in the names of features, mills and farms, you can see reminders of the family who until about 50 years ago owned and lived in this stately home.

For this is Lockhart country, the ancestral seat of the Earls of Lee and Carnwath - warriors, politicians, poets and martyrs who helped shape, for good or ill, the history of this part of Scotland.

Devotees of the work of Sir Walter Scott will be familiar with his novel *The Talisman*. Set during the Crusades, it tells of a supposed meeting between Richard I of England and the enemy leader, Saladin. Richard, sick in his tent, is visited by the Muslim in the guise of a physician. Saladin cures the king of his malady with the help of a mysterious amulet, which he dips in plain water to make a healing potion.

In his preface to the novel, Scott explains that the idea for his plot came from a legend '*... relating to a crusader of eminence ...often told in the west of Scotland, and the relic alluded to is still in existence, and even yet held in veneration.*'

The relic in question, the Lee Penny, was - according to Lockhart family tradition - paid to a Scottish knight, Sir Simon Lockhart, as ransom for a Muslim emir he captured in battle. Sir Simon was a member of an expedition to the Holy Land, led by Sir James Douglas and charged with the task of depositing there the heart of King Robert Bruce. Douglas was killed in Spain. Lockhart supposedly continued on his journey, when he had the adventure described in the legend.

It is doubtful whether Sir Simon did go to the Holy Land. The Crusaders' last fortress at Acre was taken in 1292. Bruce died in 1329 and his heart was buried in Melrose Abbey. Yet the Lee Lockharts do apparently possess a talisman with some wondrous properties. Scott goes on: '*... when the Church of Scotland chose to impeach many other cures which savoured of the miraculous, as occasioned by sorcery, [it] did not presume to condemn; and ... there can be no reason for doubting that water which has been poured on the Lee-penny furnishes a congenial cure.*'

The Lockharts of Lee maintain that the present day spelling of the name is a later corruption of *Lockheart*, which dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. It began life as a nickname. Sir Simon - it appears - was entrusted with the key to the casket containing Bruce's heart.

But whatever truths lie behind the legend, it is clear the name is much more than 700 years

old. It began life as *Locard*, *Locerd* or *Lokhard*, either some kind of stronghold or an occupational reference similar to shepherd or cowherd. It had nothing to do with keys, locks and hearts, royal or otherwise.

The first Lockharts were Flemish or German in origin. They had probably settled in Saxon England before the Norman Conquest. Either the families were driven out of their lands by the Normans, or they migrated freely across the Border into southern Scotland. Of course, there was no 'Border' in those days, and no 'Scotland' either in the sense we use the word today. If borders were needed, there were already two built by the Romans; Hadrian's Wall ran from Carlisle to Newcastle and Antonine's Wall from the Forth to the Clyde. The land between was inhabited by a mix of Northumbrian Angles and Strathclyde Britons.

According to Simon MacDonald Lockhart in his book *Seven Centuries*, Lockharts had settled in Cumbria by the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. They had certainly settled in the Border Counties, Lanarkshire and Ayrshire by late mediaeval times. Later descendants of Sir Simon held not only Lee Castle and its lands but also owned estates on the outskirts of Edinburgh. Other members of the family, without benefit of the title, farmed the surrounding country either as freeholders or as tenants of their noble cousins.<sup>(1)</sup>

The name *Lockhart* appeared in its several variations throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. The Scottish parish records contain several references to *Locards*, the latest dating from 1770, but there are also *Lochards*, *Locharts* and *Lockarts*. There are *Lockhearts* too, but very few. Variations in more recent times are probably due to accidental or deliberate misspelling. It seems that no matter how often, or how slowly one spells one's name out letter by letter, there are always people who do not listen - or who think they know better!

Significantly perhaps, modern pronunciation of the name - clearly *Lock-hart* south of Hadrian's Wall and in North America - is, in southern Scotland, more in tune with the original spelling. I make no judgement, but this practice seems to weaken the Sir Simon story rather than reinforce it. The author of *Seven Centuries* remarks at one point that different spellings '*...are interesting but whether or not this indicates two different families is impossible to say.*'

Sir Walter Scott was not one to let history get in the way of a good romance and, in *The Talisman*, he adapted the Lockhart myth cleverly to suit his purpose. He had personal as well as

professional reasons for immersing himself in Lockhart history. In 1820, five years before the novel was published, his daughter Sophia had married John Gibson Lockhart, who later wrote the biography of his famous father-in-law.

John and Sir Simon are not the only Lockharts to make a mark on the pages of history. Sir William Lockhart (1621-1675), eldest son of Sir James, Lord Lee (1596-1674), vacillated between the royalist cause and that of Oliver Cromwell during the Civil War, and ended by marrying the Lord Protector's niece. Cromwell clearly valued Sir William's qualities because he sent him as ambassador to the court of Louis XIV of France. Sir William responded to the honour by naming one of his sons *Cromwell*.

Cromwell Lockhart commanded government forces during the covenanting wars of 1685, and hunted and prosecuted Covenanters with great vigour. Several Lockharts, notably Robert and Walter of Birkhill, were prominent on the other side and indeed lost their lives defending their beliefs in an independent church.

George Lockhart, the second son of Lord Lee, and a member of parliament, bought the family's Carnwath estate in 1681. George was assassinated in 1689 as he walked home from church in Edinburgh.

*His* son, also George (1673-1732), was an ardent Jacobite who strongly opposed the Union of 1707. He was fortunate to escape death for his part in the 1715 rebellion. George's marriage to Euphemia Montgomery, daughter of the Earl of Eglinton, produced 14 children.

The most colourful and dashing member of the Lee Lockhart family was perhaps Sir James (1727-1790), grandson of this couple, who became a mercenary soldier in Persia. In 1780, he was created Count of the Holy Roman Empire for his services to Austria. The Empress Maria Theresa presented him personally with a valuable snuffbox that - it is said - became the repository of the famous Lockhart amulet.

Less well known perhaps, and then mainly because of the influence of popular television, was Lockhart the Spy. He was R.H. (Robin) Bruce Lockhart, who played a prominent role with Sidney Reilly in the attempt to bring down the Bolsheviks in 1918. Robin also worked for the British Government during the Second World War and died only in 1970.

Detailed biographies of these people are beyond the scope of this history. Though not on the best-selling shelves of bookshops and supermarkets, works about them - and by them - can be found easily by anyone interested in the families of lowland Scotland.

This book is about another family. It is a story worth telling, not because the men and women whose lives it describes were especially famous, or brave, or artistic, but because it says something about the times in which they lived and about the human condition.

Fate decreed that I should bear - for better or worse - the name of these soldiers, diplomats and writers of old. But how had I come to bear it? Was there some forgotten link between my family and that of the Lockharts of Lee Castle, and could I uncover it?

These were the questions I asked myself when I began my journey into the past. However, as I journeyed, the questions - and the single surname - came to matter less and less. I realised that the names we bear are a paradox. They may give us identity, but that very identity is an absurdity.

Customs are changing. However, it is still the practice in the West - and in much of the rest of the world - for children to take the surname of their father. There can be few living Britons who know what they would have been called had that custom been changed as recently as 1800.

Bryan Sykes, in *The Seven Daughters of Eve*, puts it this way: *'Even the family trees of more modest households are built up around a scaffold of paternal inheritance ... Wealth and status were the only things considered to be worth inheriting, and they passed down the male line.'*

We inherit, on average, half of the genes of each of our parents. Thus, after five generations, we possess only one thirty-second of the genetic material of the man whose name we bear. After six, it is one sixty-fourth; the rest of our 'blood' belongs to 63 other people whose names we may not even know.

Of course, I still wanted to discover my Lockhart ancestors, but I wanted more - to tell the greater story, that of a dozen or so other families who have given me their genes.

This book is about them and for them.