

THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE DISTINGUISHED SURNAME OF "MARR".

My Grand daughter Mary gave me a scroll for Christmas 1996 with the above heading, a write up of the history of the "Name". There are several such commercial enterprises dealing with historical roots of family names, tartans and such. It should be borne in mind that a family tree has as many branches in its roots as it does in its vines, therefore most research will result, in different findings depending on the branches that are followed, and then the best fruit may have been on the other branch. To go back in time far enough, most of us are related and equally must share the hero and the villains in our heritage. The main point in this is that although such research may be fun, it should not be taken too seriously.

I at one time met a man through an Air Force connection, Squadron Leader P.E.M. LEITH, DFC, U.E. etc. Address - 887 Esquimalt Avenue, West Vancouver, V7T 1J9. After a meeting in Nov. '95 he sent me the attached letter. His writing makes difficult reading and it has been reproduced. I believe that his account of the historic Mar family will be about as true as can be found. It too makes interesting reading. His family background is also interesting and I have included it in this writing. It is as follows .....

" My direct ancestor William Leith owned the estates of Barnes, Edingsrioch & Ruthrieston and was a Ballie of Aberdeen in 1343 and Provost in 1352 and 1373. He married in 1350 Christiane Mar, daughter of Donald, 12th Earl of Mar. William Lieth died on Aug 5th, 1380.

" I enclose a photostat of the reference in Burkes Peerage of 1855 (Attached) showing the descent of the Erskins from Elyne Mar the sister of Donald, 12th Earl of Mar and Lord of the Garioch (pronounced Gerry).

" My ancestress Christiane Mar, and her descendants, as the daughter of Donald 12th Earl of Mar would have precedence over his sister Elyne and her descendants. The obvious explanation that this did not occur was that my ancestress Christiane was illegitimate. However, I still am descended in blood through Christiane from the exceedingly ancient line of Mar, and I calculate I can wear the Mar tartan with pride. The Mar tartan is a hunting tartan.

.....2. Mar cont.

" I can also wear the Leith (Lord Burgh) and the Dalzell (Earls of Carnwath) tartans which are dress (ie red) tartans. My grand mother, the Lady Mary I Dalzell Leith, was the older sister of the 16th and last Earl of Carnwath and my second cousin once removed is Peter Leith, the present Lord Burgh".

The following is copied from a photostat recieved from Squadron Leader Leith DFC, ex R.A.F.

Ref:- PEERAGE & BARONETAGE of the BRITISH EMPIRE, 17th Edition.  
Sir Bernard Burke 1855. Page 659, MAR "Je Pense Pius" (sp)

Lineage:- Of the title of Mar, Lord Hailes says "This is one of the Earldoms whose origin is lost in its antiquity. It existed before our records, and before the era of genuine history". Martoeus (sp) Earl of Mar, is witness to a charter of donation by Malcolm Canmore to the Culdees of Lockleven, of the manor of Kilgod-Earnoch, in 1065. From this nobleman we pass to his descendant Gratney, 11th Earl of Mar, who succeeded his father in 1294, and befor in 1300 he married Lady Christian Bruce, daughter of Robert, Earl of Corrick and sister of Robert 1st, and by her (who married secondly, Sir Christofer Seton, of Seton; and 3rdly, Sir Andrew Moray, of Bothwell) had issue--

1. Donald, his successor.
2. Elyne, who married Sir John Menteath and had a daughter Christian, married to Sir Edward Keath, and had a daughter Janet Kieth, married to Sir Thomas Erskine, and was mother of Sir Robert Erskine who claimed the Earldom of Mar in 1435.

The Earl (Gratney) was succeeded by his son Donald 12th Earl of Mar. This nobleman,

upon the death of Randolph, Earl of Moray, Regent of Scotland was unanimously appointed to fill his place by the Parliament assembled at Perth on 2nd August 1332. His Lordship immediately assumed command of the Scottish army which by his ignorance of military discipline was totally defeated by an inferior force under Edward Baliol on the 12th of that same month. The Earl of Mar paid for his inexperience with his life being smothered in the rout.



He had married Isobel, only daughter of Sir Alexander Stewart, of Bonkill (sp), and had a daughter Margaret.

Margaret, of whom presently with an only son, his successor, Thomas, (who became) 13th Earl of Mar, a person of much political importance in the reign of David II. His Lordship was Great Chamberlain of Scotland in 1358, ambassador to England in 1362, and one of the guarantees of a truce with the English in 1369. The Earl obtained from King David a charter of confirmation of the Lordship of Garioch (sp). He d.s.p.(?) in 1377, and with him terminated the direct male line of the old Earls of Mar.

His Lordship (Thomas) was succeeded by his sister Margaret, Countess of Mar, who married first William Earl of Douglas (who in her right became 14th Earl of Mar, and was designed Earl of Douglas and Mar) and had issue.

John, Earl of Douglas and Mar, Killed at Otterburn, in 1388 and d.s.p.(?)  
Isobel.

Her Ladyship (Margaret of Isobel and Donald 12th Earl of Mar) being divorced from Lord Douglas, married secondly Sir John Swinton of Swinton, who fell at Homildon in 1402. Her Ladyship died in 1385 and was succeeded by her son (Thomas) mentioned above, who was succeeded in the Earldom of Mar by his only sister Isobel Countess of Mar.

Her Ladyship 1st married Sir Malcome Drummond of Drummond who died without issue, and secondly married Alexander Stewart, natural son of Alexander, Earl of Buchan, 4th son of Robert II.

The first appearance of this person (Alexander Stewart, a villain and a rogue), in life was at the head of a formidable band of robbers in the Highlands of Scotland. When storming the Countess of Mar's castle of Kildrummie (sp), he obtained her ladyship in marriage, either by violence or persuasion. The Countess subsequently made a free grant of all her honours and inheritance to her said husband; and dying s.p. 1419 he, Alexander Stewart, designed (sp) in the right of the deceased Countess, Earl of Mar and Lord of Garioch, Resigned those honours to the crown. When they were regranted to him, 28th May 1426, in remainder (?) to his natural son Sir Thomas Stewart, to revert in case of failure of male issue of the latter to the crown. His Lordship was ambassador to England in 1406 and again in 1407, when he engaged in a tournament with the Earl of Kent.

.....4. Mar Cont.

The following year he went to Moneland (sp) Flanders, with a noble company and eminently distinguished himself in the service of the Duke of Burgundy, who employed him in helping to assist in quelling a rebellion of the people of Luge against their Bishop, John of Bavaria. The Earl commanded a Royal army at the Battle of Harlaw, against the Lord of the Isles in 1411 and was appointed ambassador-extraordinary to England in 1416, and soon afterwards, warden of the Marches.

He died in 1435 and his natural son, mentioned above, having preceeded him, the Earldom of Mar, according to the Charter reverted to the Crown, where it was claimed in 1435 by Sir Robert Erskine, of Erskin, as lineal descendant of Lady Elyne Mar (refer to Gratney, 11th Earl), but though the descent was indisputably established, the Earldom was not conferred upon the Erskins until it had been enjoyed by four Earls of different families, the last of whom was the celebrated Regent Morey, a period of 130 years having elapsed, when at last it was resored in 1565 (?) by Queen Mary to John, 5th Lord Erskine, who should of right been the 6th Earl of Mar of the Earskin race.

From Sq.Ldr. P.M.E. LEITH D.F.C., U.E., etc.

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