

Clan ABERCROMBY



ARMS	Argent, a chevron Gules between three boars' heads erased Argent
CREST	A flacon rising belled Proper
MOTTO	Petit Alta (He seeks high deeds)
On compartment	Mercy is my desire
SUPPORTERS	Two greyhounds Argent collared Gules

The lands of Abercromby lie in the parish of the same name in the ancient kingdom of Fife. The earliest record of the name is found in the Ragman Roll in 1296, when William de Abercromby did homage to Edward I of England for his lands in Fife. The senior line of this family died out in the early seventeenth century and the representation of the line passed to the house of Abercromby of Birkenbog in Banffshire. The Abercrombys were to be no strangers to religious discord over the centuries. The lands of Birkenbog were originally church lands, and in 1362 the Earl of Mar confirmed to Alexander Abercromby his grant of lands by the Bishop of Aberdeen. Robert Abercromby, born in 1534, was a Jesuit priest who was violently opposed to the Reformation and to reform of the Scottish church and is credited with the conversion to Catholicism of Queen Anne, wife of James VI, before her death. He was ultimately driven into exile when a substantial reward was offered for his capture. In 1637 Alexander Abercromby of Birkenbog was created a Baronet of Nova Scotia, but despite this royal favor he was to become a fervent Covenanter, strongly opposed to the attempts of Charles I to impose an Episcopal church in Scotland. He expressed his royal master's displeasure by quartering his troops on Birkenbog. David Abercromby was another Jesuit who studied abroad and returned to his native land to oppose the Protestant faith. He was instead converted to it and published an important tract against papal power in 1682. Patrick Abercromby, third son of the Laird of Fetterneir, a branch of the House of Birkenbog, became a distinguished doctor, having graduated from the University of St Andrews in 1685. He traveled extensively abroad and on his return established a high reputation in his chosen field, being appointed personal physician to James VII. His brother, Francis, also enjoyed royal favor, being raised to the peerage under the title, 'Lord Glassford', a title limited to his own lifetime. A younger son of the first Baronet of Birkenbog had succeeded to the estates at Tullibody in Clackmannanshire. This branch of the family was to prove most distinguished, producing two generals and a judge of the High Court. Sir Ralph Abercromby, born in 1734, was considered to be one of the greatest military reformers and has been credited with the restructuring of the army, which was ultimately to defeat the threat of Napoleon. He was a professional soldier, entering the army in 1756 as a colonel in the 3rd Regiment of Dragoon Guards. By 1781 he had risen to the rank of colonel in the King's Irish Infantry. He served throughout the Seven Year's War and acquired considerable experience in that service. In 1795 he was appointed commander-in-chief of the British forces fighting against the French in the West Indies. His campaign met with great success and several new possessions fell to the British Crown, including the Spanish island of Trinidad. His most famous campaign, however, was to be in Egypt, where he commanded the troops who captured the strategic fortress of Aboukir and defeated the French in the decisive Battle of Alexandria. The general himself died of wounds he suffered during the engagement. His contribution to the ultimate defeat of Napoleon was recognized by his country when his widow was created a peeress in her own right, as Baroness Abercromby of Aboukir and Tullibody. Sir Ralph's younger brother, Sir Robert Abercromby, was also a general who was created a Knight of the Order of the Bath and commander-in-chief of the British forces in India. He was later to hold the post of governor of Edinburgh Castle for almost thirty years. Three sons of Sir Ralph also rose to high rank. His eldest son succeeded to the title of 'Lord Abercromby', while his second son became a general. James Abercromby became speaker of the House of Commons and was raised to the peerage as Lord Dunfermline. The various peerage titles are now all extinct but the house of Birkenbog still flourishes.

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