



CLAN CRICHTON

ARMS

Argent, a lion rampant Azure, armed and langued Gules

CREST

A dragon spouting out fire Proper.

MOTTO

God send grace

SUPPORTERS

Two lions Azure, armed and crowned Or

The lands of Kreitton formed one of the earliest baronies around Edinburgh, and are mentioned in charters of the early twelfth century. Thurstan de Crechtune was a witness to the foundation of the Abby of Holyrood House by David I in 11285. Thomas de Crichton, who is believed to have been Thurstan's son, was one of the Scottish nobility who swore fealty to Edward I of England and is listed in the Ragman roll of 1296. Thomas had three sons, each of whom extended the family's holdings. William, his second son, married Isabel de Ross, heiress to the barony of Sanquhar in Dumfriesshire.

A descendent of this line, Sir Robert Crichton of Sanquhar, was sheriff to the county of Dumfries in 1464 and Coroner of Nithsdale from 1468 to 1469. His eldest son, Robert, was created a peer with the title of 'Lord Crichton of Sanquhar' by James III in 1487. The title does not appear to have brought the family great happiness. William, third Lord of Sanquhar, was killed in the house of the Regent of Arran around 1552 by Lord Semple. The sixth Lord Sanquhar died in disgrace, being accused of complicity in the murder of a fencing master who, years before, had accidentally blinded Crichton in one eye. The title passed through a younger line, and thereafter to the family of Crichton-Stuart, the present Marquesses of Bute.

Sir William Crichton, another descendent of Thomas de Crichton, was Chancellor of Scotland during the minority of James II, being appointed to this high office in 1439. Following the death of his rival, the Earl of Douglas, Sir William organized the infamous 'black dinner' at Edinburgh Castle, of which he was at the time the governor. The young King James was in residence at the castle, and the new Earl of Douglas and his brother were invited to be guests of honor at a royal banquet. After dinner, the two Douglasses were dragged from the boy king's presence and executed on the Castle Hill. The Douglas clan never slow to make revenge, laid siege to Edinburgh Castle and Crichton, perceiving the dangers, surrendered the castle to the king and an uneasy truce was declared. The Douglasses made at least one further unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the chancellor. He was sent in 1448 to arrange the marriage of the king with Mary, daughter of the Duke of Gueldres, having been raised to the peerage with the title of 'Lord Crichton'. The second Lord Crichton obtained through marriage the baron of Frendaught in Banffshire. The third Lord joined the Duke of Albany in his rebellion against his royal brother, James III, and garrisoned the Castle of Crichton against the king. The rebellion failed, and as a consequence the Crichton estates were forfeited for treason. The Castle of Crichton, the ruins of which still form a prominent landmark south of Edinburgh, passed through various hands, including the celebrated Earl of Bothwell, ill-fated third husband of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Perhaps the most celebrated Crichton was James, the son of the Lord Advocate of Scotland during the reigns of both Queen Mary and her son, James VI. He has passed into history as 'the Admirable Crichton' on account of his superb mental and physical prowess. He is reputed, by the age of twenty to have mastered all the knowledge of his time, and could speak and write at least ten languages. He was also a superb equestrian, a feared swordsman and accomplished in all social graces. On leaving university at St Andrews, he traveled to Paris, where he challenged professors of the city to dispute with him on any branch of science or literature, offering to answer them in any one of his ten languages. It is claimed that fifty doctors appeared to put to him questions of mind-bending complexity which he disposed of with ease. The next day he attended a public joust and was declared champion of the field. He is said to have displayed his skills to the pope on a visit to Rome and so impressed the Duke of Mantua that he asked him to be tutor to his son, Vincenzo. It seems that the young man did not take to his new mentor. At a carnival in July 1582 Crichton was set upon by a gang of masked bandits, who discovered that his reputation was not mere vanity. He promptly killed five of his attackers and turned to dispatch the sixth and obvious leader of the pack. On

discovering that opponent was none other than his young pupil, he dropped his guard, whereupon Vincenzo stabbed Crichton in the heart. The people of Mantua were shocked, and nine months of court mourning was to follow.

Another James Crichton was raised to the peerage of Scotland a Viscount Frendraught in 1642. He accompanied the great Marquess of Montrose on his disastrous expedition in March 1650. At Invercarron, when Covenant forces under Colonel Strachan defeated the royalist army, Lord Frendraught is said to have given his horse to Montrose to enable him to escape from the field. Frendraught was severely wounded and taken prisoner, but he died before he could suffer public justice. The present chiefly line descends from the Crichtons of Frendraught, and the family now make their home at the splendid Castle of Monzie near Crieff. The father of the present chief did much to unite his scattered kinsmen and was a prominent member of the Council of Chiefs.

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