



Clan FRASER OF LOVAT

ARMS	Quarterly, 1 st & 4 th , Azure, three fraises two and one Argent (Fraser); 2 nd & 3 rd , Argent, three antique crowns two and one Gules (Bisset)
CREST	A buck's head erased Proper
MOTTO	Je suis prest (I am ready)
SUPPORTERS	Two bucks rampant Proper

The Frasers of Lovat descended from Sir Simon Fraser, brother of Sir Alexander, chamberlain of Robert the Bruce. It is thought that Sir Simon Fraser married the heiress to the Bisset lands around Beaully, and this is how the family of Lovat came to be settled there. The first certain record linking the lands of Lovat to the Frasers is in 1367 when Hugh Fraser is styled 'dominus de Loveth et portionarius de Ard' (lord of Lovat and portioner of Ard). The Gaelic patronymic of the Lovat Frasers is 'MacShimi', meaning 'son of Simon', and it was in use at least at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Around 1422, the Frasers acquired lands at Stratherrick by Loch Ness, together with part of Glenelg. Although the exact date of creation is uncertain, some time between 146 and 1464, Hugh Fraser was raised to the peerage as Lord Lovat or Lord Fraser of Lovat. Around 1511, the chiefs established their seat at Beaufort Castle, which is still inhabited by them. The present castle is relatively modern, but occupies roughly the same site as previous strongholds which were destroyed in the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Lovat Frasers had their fair share of clan feuds and battles but among the most memorable, and bloody, was with the Macdonalds of Clanranald in 1544. The chiefship of Clanranald was in dispute and Lord Lovat was the uncle of one of the warring claimants, Ranald 'Galda' (the stranger), whose cause he took up. Lovat, with over four hundred of his best men, joined forces with the Earl of Huntly, the Lieutenant of the North, to crush the Macdonalds and make Ranald chief. The combined force marched to Inverlochy in Lochaber from where they successfully established Ranald's control of Moidart by taking Castle Tirrim. Huntly then decided to split his force from the Frasers and returned to his own territory. The expedition was cut short and Lovat led his men up the Great Glen towards Glenmoriston. The decision to divide their forces for the return journey may indicate that Lovat and Huntly though the Macdonalds were no longer a threat, but this was to prove a fatal miscalculation for the Frasers. The Macdonalds had been stalking the invaders but held back so long as they were numerically inferior – a position which reversed once Huntly's men were gone. They moved swiftly to outflank Lovat and fell upon the unsuspecting Frasers on a stretch of wild marshland to the north of Loch Lochy. The battle became known as Blar-na-leine – 'the field of shirts', when the heat of day compelled the Highlanders to throw off their heavy plaids or 'feileadh mor' to fight in their shirts. (Some modern scholars dispute this translation, asserting that it really refers to the marshy ground). Lovat was outnumbered and could have fought a rearguard action to try and cover his escape, but instead he bravely led his men forward into a pitched battle. Lovat, his son and heir, along with hundreds of his men, were killed in the fierce fighting with victory falling to the Macdonalds. Lovat and his son were buried in the priory at Beaully. The defeat was a setback but the real power of the clan was largely undiminished.

The family multiplied rapidly and established many cadet branches, including the Frasers of Reelig with their castle at Moniack, Inverallochy, Fingask, and many others. The ninth Lord Lovat had four daughters but no son, and his widow arranged a marriage for Amelia, the eldest daughter and heiress, with the Master of Saltoun, later twelfth Lord Saltoun. When his father was travelling to Castle Counie to discuss the marriage details with Lady Lovat, Amelia's uncle, Thomas Fraser of Beaufort, and his son, Simon, later eleventh Lord Lovat, kidnapped him. He was held prisoner and threatened with death if he did not agree to abandon the proposed marriage, which he promptly did. Simon, the kidnapper, when eleventh Lord Lovat, was famous as the 'old fox' of the Forty-five, plotting with both government and Jacobite forces, depending upon his assessment of where he thought his present advantage lay. He mustered the Frasers to support Prince Charles Edward Stuart in the autumn of 1745. At least one battalion (and some authorities say two) of Frasers fought at Culloden Moor in April 1746/ They suffered heavy losses, and the whole Fraser country was ravaged by the troops of the Duke of Cumberland. Charles Fraser, younger of Inverallochy, although grievously wounded was summarily executed. MacShimi was captured at Loch Morar and taken to London, where he was beheaded on Tower Hill on 9 April 1747. His title and estates were declared forfeit.

His son, Simon, was pardoned, and when George II began raising Highland regiments, Lovat formed first in 1757, the 78th Fraser Highlanders, who later fought with Wolfe at Quebec and later the 71st Fraser Highlanders who served faithfully in the American War of Independence. His brother, Archibald, later raised the 'Fraser Fencibles' during the Napoleonic War. He left no legitimate heirs, and in 1837 the peerage, which had been attained, was restored to a cousin, Thomas Fraser of Strichen, a Descendent of the fourth Lord Lovat. In 1899 Lord Lovat raised the Lovat Scouts to fight in the Boer War. The Scouts saw service in the First World War and in the Second, where MacShimi became a distinguished commando leader, being awarded both the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross. He died in 1995 shortly after tragically losing two of his sons in accidents within a matter of months of each other. He has been succeeded by his 18-year-old grandson, Simon Fraser, but the great Lovat estates, including Beaufort Castle, have had to be sold.

Taken from "Scottish Clan & Family Encyclopedia", by Collins, HarperCollins Publishers 1994

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