



Clan SOMERVILLE

ARMS CREST MOTTO

Azure, seven cross crosslets fitchée between three mullets Or
A wheel Argent, surmounted of a dragon Vert
Fear God in Lyfe

This name is derived from Somerville, a town near Caen in Normandy. Sir Gaulter de Somerville accompanied the Duke of Normandy, William the conqueror, to England in 1066. One of his descendents, Philip of Which now, in Staffordshire, instituted the gift of a side of bacon called the 'Dunmow flitch', which is still given today to husbands and wives who have lived together a year and a day without strife or disagreement. William de Somerville, Gaulter's second son, came to Scotland with David I and received lands near Carnwath in Clydesdale. William died around 1142 and was buried at Melrose Abbey. William de Somerville, who, according to tradition, killed the last serpent in Scotland obtained the lands of Linton around 1174 from Malcolm IV. He later became chief falconer to the king and sheriff of Roxburgh. Sir William de Somerville, fifth of that name, fought for Alexander II, driving back the Norse invasion at Largs in 1263. His son, Sir Thomas appears on the Ragman Roll of nobles forced to swear fealty to Edward I of England in 1296, but the following year he joined Sir William Wallace in the fight for Scottish freedom. Sir Walter Somerville commanded a brigade of cavalry under Wallace at the Battle of Biggar, and was later a steady supporter of Robert the Bruce. His great-grandson, Sir Thomas, was created Lord Somerville around 1430. He was justiciar of Scotland south of the Forth. John, the third Lord, was wounded fighting against the English at the Battle of Snark in 1448 and was present at the siege of Roxburgh in 1460, when James II was killed by an exploding cannon. John, fourth Lord Somerville, died without issue and was succeeded by his brother, Hugh, who was taken prisoner after the rout at Solway Moss in 1542. He was ransomed for 1,000 merks and the promise of his support for the proposed marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots to Edward, Prince of Wales, son of Henry VIII of England. He was later arrested for treason but was pardoned. He supported Mary of Guise, the Queen Mother, as Regent of Scotland. Like many nobles who had been secretly intriguing with England, he was an early adherent to the reformed doctrines. However, his son – later the sixth Lord Somerville – opposed the Reformation and voted against the Confession of Faith proposed in Parliament of 1560. He supported also Mary, Queen of Scots, and fought at the Battle of Langside where he was severely wounded. Hugh Somerville, the seventh Lord, was also a supporter of the queen, but in the shifting politics of the time he later supported her son, James VI, becoming a Privy Councillor. James was entertained by the Somervilles in such splendor that they had to sell their estates at Carnwath. When the Scots nobility was ranked in 1606 after the union of the Crowns, the name of Somerville did not appear. James Somerville, titular tenth Lord Somerville, served on the Continent, where he gained a considerable reputation as a soldier commanding his own regiment. His grandson, James Somerville of Drum, died from wounds received in a duel with Thomas Learmonth in 1682. In 1723 the Somerville peerage was acknowledged by the House of Lords and John, now thirteenth Lord Somerville, stood for election as a representative peer of Scotland. He built the elegant House of Drum which still stands on the outskirts of Edinburgh. Mary Somerville who died in 1872 was a noted mathematician and scientific writer as well as a great pioneer of women's education and Somerville College in Oxford, founded in 1879, is named after her.

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