

These are your people

## The Leslie

By John Mackay

*"Thick sit the Leslies on Gady side,  
At the back o' Bennachie."*

Less thick now, by those peaceful banks of the Gady Burn flowing through the parish of Leslie, passing the village of Leslie, curving north when it is met by the bulk of Bennachie, then onwards east by the lands of Garioch to join the river Urie, in its turn meeting the quiet waters of the Don. The Don, winding through the Howe of Alford to the south of Bennachie has come from the feet of the mountains marking the Highland line — from the wilder places, haunts of the clansmen — the Highlanders of old who found their marauding way barred often enough by Leslie men upholding law and order for the King. The King, Malcolm Canmore. History thus establishes the Leslies as a family of ancient origin.

"A man of vigorous intellect as well as of great bodily strength," called Bartolf founded the family. He was one of the retinue attending on the refugee princess Margaret on her way from Hungary to Scotland. She married Malcolm Canmore and Bartolf took as wife one of the King's sisters and was given extensive lands in what are now the counties of Aberdeen, Angus and Fife; and the governorship of Edinburgh Castle, where the chapel of Queen Margaret remains and can be used on request as a place of worship at the wedding of a soldier of the garrison of today.

Bartolf built his own castle at a place then called Lesselyn in the Garioch district of Aberdeenshire, and from the name Lesselyn evolved Leslie. Sir Norman, fifth in descent from Bartolf, was the first of the family to take the name Leslie. Before that, the chief had been called, simply, "Constable of Inverurie."

In the 14th century Baron David Leslie was so long gone to the Crusades that he was given up as dead and a kinsman, Sir George Leslie, by then settled at Rothes on Speyside, was made chief and came to live in the Castle by the Gady Burn. He had hardly taken possession when the crusading David reappeared. With a tolerance strange for these days, David waived his right to the chief-



The Earl of Rothes, Chief of the Clan Leslie

tainship, and Sir George's son Sir Norman in time inherited both the lands of Rothes and the original settlement under the shadow of Bennachie. In this way, the Rothes branch became the more powerful and — "gained higher rank and greater prominence in the history of Scotland than the main stem of the family."

Just as David of the Crusades had

"Quiet flows the Don." The cone marking the Bennachie hills is at the right.

shown tolerance with the problem of who should be head of the family, so an intolerance more characteristic of the times was shown following a certain marriage early in the 15th century. We have already noted that the Leslies were enemies of the men beyond the Highland line, but love, knowing no such boundaries, marriage with a Leslie and a lady of the Highland aristocracy of Ross took place. The Leslie bridegroom assumed his bride's Highland title: upon which, Donald, Lord of the isles challenged the right of the man Leslie to so assume, and came to enforce his challenge through Moray into Garioch with 10,000 men and a vandal desire to sack Aberdeen town.

Donald was met at the river Urie by — "the chivalry of Aberdeen Angus and the Mearns" and battle was long and indecisive — "Baith Highland and Lowland mournfu' be" — and it cost Sir Andrew Leslie the life of his newly wed son and of his five brothers.

Tragedy stalks through the family history again in the troubled times of Mary, Queen of Scots, when George Leslie, 4th Earl of Rothes, one of eight Commissioners representing the Scottish nation at the marriage of Mary with the Dauphin of France in Paris in 1558, died on the way home, at Dieppe, along with his colleagues the Earl of Cassillis and Bishop Reid. *All were believed poisoned* because — "they refused to settle on the Dauphin, the Crown matrimonial of Scotland."

That 4th Earl, however, had lived to some purpose since he had been married five times, one of the wives

