

Alexander DE LECELLES
from Flanders France to Fife Scotland
(Weblink De Lecelles Alexander before 1285 France)

Alexander DE LECELLES occupation Priest
B 13th Century in the village of Lecelles France
D end of 13th Century Priest-lies Kirkcaldy Fife Scotland
M before 1285 France
Wife unknown
B France
D Scotland
Children:
1. DE LECELLES later to be known as LESSELS

The family history of
Alexander DE LECELLES

According to tradition the founder of the LECELLES family in Scotland in the 13th century was a priest of royal descent, known at Paris University as Alexander de LECELLES who was born in the village of LECELLES and educated at the Benedictine School there. After becoming proficient in all the subjects taught there such as philosophy, divinity, medicine, law and council, he proceeded to Paris University to acquire more knowledge in Alchemy and astronomy.

Here he became acquainted with a Scotsman of about his own age Michael SCOT who had also been educated at a Benedictine School at Kirkcaldy and afterwards had studied for a few years at Oxford University then renowned as the second University of Europe had come to Paris University which was famous as the first University in Europe to prosecute his studies in Alchemy and astronomy &c.

These two lodged together, prosecuted the same studied together and became inseparable and congenial friends and "fratues-jurats"[sic] or sworn brothers according to a custom of that chivalrous age. Sir Walter Scot [1771-1832] of Abbotsford Roxburgh County Eastern Scotland the learned author and poet ancient of the Scot family call them "bosom friends".

On completing their studies at the University they bade an affectionate adieu to each other, and left Paris. Alexander returning to his birth place to occupy the position of the village Cure, and Michael proceeding to Spain the favorite residence of magicians to study magic which was taught at Toledo.

(Reference Source The Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, National Monuments Records of Scotland in Edinburgh 'Architects' file for John LESSELS "A Brief Account of the Ancient Family of LESSELS in Fifeshire)

The ruling dynasty in the County of Flanders during this period for Alexander de LECELLES was:

1244-1278 Margaret I (sister to Joan; abdicated; Hainault only 1278-80)

1278-1305 Guy (son of Margaret I and William Dampierre)

(Source: The Wordsworth Handbook of Kings and Queens by John E Morby 1989plus Encyclopedia)

About 1285 King Alexander III of Scotland became betrothed to Iolan (Eirik) the daughter of the Earl of Flanders, and Alexander de LECELLES who was much esteemed in Flanders for his great learning was made Chaplain and accompanied

her and her brother to Jedburgh Abbey in Scotland to assist in the marriage service which was to take place there. After the wedding the festivities continued for a week, and the only thing that marred the jollity of the marriage feast was the appearance of a vision of death which all considered foretold the speedy death of either the King or Queen, and next year this was verified, as Alexander III fell from his horse at Kinghorn and was killed on the spot on the 19th March 1286 regretted by all his subjects. After some time spent in mourning his widow decided to return to her father in Flanders where she afterwards married Arthur Duke of Brittany.

(Reference Source The Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, National Monuments Records of Scotland in Edinburgh 'Architects' file for John LESSELS "A Brief Account of the Ancient Family of LESSELS in Fifeshire)

Alexander III was born 1243 and married Margaret daughter of Henry III of England in 1251. After the death of his 1st wife he married Joleta of Dreux daughter of the Earl of Flanders. Alexander III died 19 March 1286 aged 43 near Kinghorn Fife Scotland.

(Source: Encyclopedia and Pocket Scottish History by Dr James Mackay)

The ruling dynasty in Scotland during this period for Alexander de LECELLES was:

1249-1286 Alexander III (son of Alexander II)

1286-1290 Margaret (daughter of Margaret daughter of Alexander III and Eirik II of Norway)

(Source: The Wordsworth Handbook of Kings and Queens by John E Morby and Encyclopedia)

Alexander de LECELLAS, on his arrival at Kinghorn with the King and Queen after their marriage renewed his old friendship with Michael Scot (whose Castle of Balwearie is in the adjoining parish) and had been induced by him to remain in Scotland instead of returning to Flanders with his wife and family, offering him a house and land and the position of personal chaplain if he had so, and as it would be for the mutual pleasure of both, Alexander accepted the offer.

The house and land that Michael ceded to him was a short distance from Balwearie Castle and consisted of a stone house similar to the country houses of this period, one storey high, a barn, byre (cow house) pigsty, and a shed for wood and peat. This house possessed two rooms, 'a but and a beam' the largest room being about 20 feet long and 14 ft, wide, the other being smaller. The land consisted of three acres, sufficient to pasture a cow. For this he was to pay 18 Kamed Hens (counted like the Houden breed of the present day) in perpetuity.

For centuries this small property was known as Priestleys i.e. Priest Meadows and is alluded to in the old ballad of "Ye ladye of Balwearie" which appears to have been written about the time of the Deformation. Others call at Priest-lies as according to tradition. Alexander de LECELLES was looked upon as a magician (like his bosom [sic] friend Michael Scot) and in consequence the Abbot of Dunfermline (in whose diocese this land was included) would not permit the priest to be buried in the Benediction Cemetery at Kirkcaldy, as he was buried in his own land, and this may be the reason for the uncertainty of the burial place of Michael Scot also. This land is still known as Priestleys.

(Reference Source The Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, National Monuments Records of Scotland in Edinburgh 'Architects' file for John LESSELS "A Brief Account of the Ancient Family of LESSELS in Fifeshire)

The Property of Robert Ferguson Esq. Surveyed Map June 1757. A plan of Raith, Ballbarton, Ballwiera & Garden as presently set out & possessed by Tenants. To the left of Ballweiry Miln is the Priest leys Terbane [sic].

(Reference Archives of Scotland the map is located in the images link)

For some years Priestley formed the Rifle Range of the Kirkcaldy Rifle Volunteers but since 1906 it has formed a portion of the golf links of the Kirkcaldy Gold Club. When the Club House was opened by Mr Munro Ferguson M.P. he mentioned in his speech that although the approaches left something to be desired it was an old characteristic of the Balwearie Road for six hundred years or thereabouts when Michael Scot was bothered by his families demon, he gave him the Balwearie Road to set in order, which would be as interminable as making ropes out of sea sand "They tied off on some whinstone height at the pentacles of Balwearie the home of the LESSELS family for years, and also the ancestors of Count Ferdinand de LESSEPS.

As this property has been occupied by the family of LACELLES or LESSELS for over 500 years during which time it has descended from father to son in the direct line, it is a record that very few landed proprietors can boast of considering the disturbed state of Scotland in the 13th century, and afterwards. It is also interesting and unusual fact that the heirs have been called John.

Between the years 1288 - 1290 Sir Michael Scot of Balwearie with his chaplain (Alexander de LECELLES) and Sir David Wamys all from Fifeshire, were sent on an Embassy to Norway, to bring over the heir to the Scottish throne "Margaret of Norway" but she sickened and died at Orkney to the great grief of the Scottish nation. (Reference Source The Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, National Monuments Records of Scotland in Edinburgh 'Architects' file for John LESSELS "A Brief Account of the Ancient Family of LESSELS in Fifeshire)

The ruling dynasty in Scotland during this period for Alexander de LECELLES was:
1286-1290 Margaret (daughter of Margaret, daughter of Alexander III and Eirik II of Norway)
(Source: *The Wordsworth Handbook of Kings and Queens* by John E Morby and *New Encyclopedia*)

Sir Michael Scot and Alexander de LECELLES are said to have been sent to France on a mission to King Louis IX respecting a quarrel between the Scot and French rights of fishing, and were royally entertained by King Louis. (Reference Source The Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, National Monuments Records of Scotland in Edinburgh 'Architects' file for John LESSELS "A Brief Account of the Ancient Family of LESSELS in Fifeshire)

The ruling dynasty in France during this period for Alexander de LECELLES was:
1226-1270 St Louis IX (son of Louis VIII)
(Source: *The Wordsworth Handbook of Kings and Queens* by John E Morby and *New Encyclopedia*)

In the Court Rolls of 1295-96 containing the list of nobles in Scotland who did homage to Edward I of England appears "Sir Michael Scot of Fife". (Reference Source The Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, National Monuments Records of Scotland in Edinburgh 'Architects' file for John LESSELS "A Brief Account of the Ancient Family of LESSELS in Fifeshire)

The ruling dynasty in England during this period for Alexander de LECELLES was:
1272-1307 Edward I (son of Henry III)
(Source: *The Wordsworth Handbook of Kings and Queens* by John E Morby and *New Encyclopedia*)

From the death of Alexander de LECELLES at the end of the 13th century until 1770 nothing positive has yet been discovered as regards the owners of Priestleys. (Reference Source The Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland, National Monuments Records of Scotland in Edinburgh 'Architects' file for John LESSELS "A Brief Account of the Ancient Family of LESSELS in Fifeshire)

Please Note: William de RAMSAY Earl of Fife made out a Deed in 1340 stating that his daughter Elizabeth de LASSELL married John de LASSELL. He also recorded that the mother of John de LASSELL was Margaret de LASSELL.

Conclusion: Margaret may have been the daughter or daughter-in-law of Alexander de LECELLES and John may have been his grandson. A lot of research will have to be done to confirm this but there has to be a connection as the names are similar and they were all living in the same area Fife.