

Sir Michael Naesmith (1518)

Notes on Michael Naesmyth compiled by Catherine NeSmith from Lucy Aurora Nesmith in Ancestry.com

Sir Michael was the Chamberlain of the Archbishop of St. Andrews. We can only assume that Michael was titled "Sir" because he was a laird/landowner. The Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood in London have conducted some research and have found no occasion on which a Naesmyth was knighted.

It is believed that Sir Michael worked under Cardinal David Beaton (1494 - 1548). Beaton was the last Archbishop of St. Andrews and was murdered by Protestants during the reformation.

As Chamberlain, Sir Michael handled the finances and properties of the Church. Founded in the 10th Century, St. Andrews was the center of religion in Scotland and its bishop the most important figure. The bishop was often appointed by the king and sometimes this role was played by a family member. The church facilities themselves were the site for many important meetings. Scottish Parliament gathered there under King James and major public rituals were carried out - such as burning Protestants at the stake in the mid to late 1500's.

During this time in Scotland, the official Church was Catholic. Most of the inhabitants were illiterate, church officials receiving the only type of education (mostly in Latin). Later, this would change during the Protestant Revolution and the family would be split.

Sir Michael was born around 1525. When in 1544 he married Elizabeth Baird, he obtained the lands of Posso and Glenarth. Being a government/church official, Michael would have been granted church lands in addition to those he held for hereditary reasons. Most land owners of those days employed farmers who paid heavy duties to their laird and worked his lands in return for protection.

As a laird, Sir Michael would have been obligated to defend the honor of any of his subjects/workers. This would prove to be a sad state, as he would lose his two eldest sons and a son-in-law whilst fighting the forces of the Scott clan.

Just as his workers were indebted to him for protection, the landowners were indebted to the Church and Crown and were required to give their military service in exchange for their position.

During the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots, Sir Michael was engaged to service of the Catholic Crown. He fought under her banner at Langside in 1568 against Regent Morey. After a terrible defeat, only a handful of survivors fled with the Queen. Sir Michael's estates were confiscated by Morey, but were later restored, as were the family lands. Sir Michael had seven children and died in 1609.