

About 1923, they purchased 1 Central Avenue in Kilbirnie.

About 1924 looking for better prospects, John emigrated to Canada finding work as a foreman on the construction of a roadway and bridge in the Welland - Lake Erie area. On 29 March 1927 John accompanied with his son-in-law Willie Strain made the official border crossing into USA at Niagra Falls to join his wife and family who were on their way from Scotland.

Jessie and all the children other than, John the eldest, emigrated to USA, sailing from Glasgow on the "Cameronia" and arriving in New York on 5 April 1927. Jessie and family settled at Valley Street, Philadelphia. Later they moved to Keystone Street where she remained for the rest of her life. John returned to the Buffalo area on steel erection work on bridges. There he had a son Ronald by his new partner, Gwen Marlow. He died of a heart condition in 1940 and was buried in Buffalo. The family who had emigrated all married and lived in Philadelphia. Jessie died in June 1964 and was buried in Forresthills Cemetery, Philadelphia. Her eldest son JohnBlair remained in Angus with his wife Betsy Geddes and children Betty and John (Jack) where all the previous generations in this story had lived. His life is recorded in the "Recollections of John Blair 1903-1982".

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Inver  
Heughfield Road  
Bridge of Earn

March 2018

## Blair Blacksmiths in Angus

By Jack Blair

Identifying the trades of people from early Old Parish registers frequently meets with little success due to the paucity of information recorded therein. Occasionally, smiths may be identified from the hammerman symbols and crown on their gravestones.

One such early gravestone is that for David Blair (1605 -1668) in the Churchyard of Carmyllie.

David was smith in the Milton of Carmyllie when his son, Alexander Blair had a tack (lease) on 6 January 1659 of two acres in Westerfauld with the teinds of the same in the barony of Panmure.<sup>1</sup> David died in 1668 as is recorded on his gravestone in Carmyllie Kirkyard. This shows the hammerman's symbols surmounted by a crown. The inscription also mentions Alexander

Ogilvy who likewise was smith in Milton who died aged 50 on 12 May 1724. No relationship is mentioned but perhaps he was a grandson of David.



*Figure 1: 17<sup>th</sup> century Gravestone of David Blair at Carmyllie Kirkyard*

<sup>1</sup> GD45/18/369 Panmure Papers

The abovementioned son, Alexander Blair, was thereafter smith on the Panmure estate, his Account Books for ironwork 1673 - 1675 were latterly signed also by his young sons, David and Alexander.<sup>2</sup> The birth of these sons about 1655 and 1660 is not recorded but the Old Parish Register of Monikie records a son named Henry baptised on 3 May 1646 and a daughter Elspett baptised on 10 May 1652 to an Alexander Blair. The witnesses were Hendry Gray and Henry Taylor for the son and Thomas Anderson and John Smith for the daughter. None of this confirms whether this was the same Alexander Blair and indeed it seems unlikely to be the case. However the same church records show that Alexander Blair smith at Boshans had a daughter Isobell baptised on 29 March 1663. Bolshan is reputed to have been the site on which Panmure House was built in 1666. Thus it can be assumed that the Blair family moved about that time, probably to the Cotton of Panmure to make way for the great new house of the earl.

The records show that at Panmure House on 14 January 1673, Alexander Blair, smith, received from Jean, Countess of Panmure,<sup>3</sup> the sum of £132 5s 8d Scots in payment of smithwork wrought by him for the house use, shoeing of horses and other works. He signed simply A B and the transaction was witnessed by John Maule of Auchronie and George Butterston. The 1675 account shows the various tasks that Alexander Blair undertook in the last year of his life. He made numerous quantities of nails of various sorts for slating, for flooring, for bands, great nails for driving on locks and others for driving into shields. Four great spike (*garron*) nails were supplied along with a *kalsou* hammer. Large batches of nails were supplied to Alexander Fitchie and some to William Pollock. They were probably wrights employed by the estate. Some nails were supplied for dovecots (*Dowkat*) at

<sup>2</sup> GD45/18/727 Panmure Papers

<sup>3</sup> Jean Campbell was the widow of George Maule, second Earl of Panmure who died in 1671.

marked men and he was persuaded by Jessie to resign and return to Kilbirnie in late 1910 living at Janefield Terrace.

John found work at the Basic Slag Manure Mill department of Glengarnock Steel Works tending the large electric motor used for pulverising slag. Soon he was promoted to foreman there.

Just before his marriage John had worked for the Marquis of Tillybardine and been a territorial soldier in the local regiment of the Scottish Horse. War broke out with Germany in August 1914, and in



John Gray Blair Saddler No. 5105

an act of patriotism, John contacted the Scottish Horse and enlisted on 8 September 1914 at Dunkeld. He was Saddler No 5105 serving in Company B under Major Pullar of Dunbarney, Bridge of Earn. The major selected John as his batman. They were posted to the Dardenelles and fought alongside the Gurkas and the Anzacs there. During the withdrawal, John acted as a sniper with Major Pullar as spotter with his telescope. They were among the last troops to evacuate from Suvla Bay and transferred to Kantara in Egypt where for a

period they had camels in the unit. When transferring to Salonika the troopship was torpedoed and John was among those who was taken to Crete before returning to Britain.

He was with the London Yeomanry for only a few weeks when he was recalled to essential civilian duties for armaments at the request of the department manager, Andrew Harris at Glengarnock Steelworks. John continued as a foreman at Glengarnock, living at Whitevale Terrace Kilbirnie where the family had moved in 1915 while he was away.

was employed in Arbroath as a furniture vanman. They moved to Fergus Square, Arbroath where another two daughters were born, Mary Jane in 1893 and Annie in 1894. The following year, Ann developed acute gastric enteritis at her sister, Margaret's 's home at the Mains of Ogil. John Blair then aged 12 moved to his grandparent's farm but kept in touch thereafter with his half sisters. David Gray gave young John a shotgun to control the rabbits on the farm but in time suggested he was using too much ammunition. John however, financed his shooting by selling rabbits to the local butcher and ensured that his aim was effective. Thus as a natural marksman he took up gamekeeping and aged 17 he was employed on the Wemyss Estate living in the bothy at West Dron, Perthshire . He appears to have returned to an estate in Angus, probably Letham Grange and there met Jessie Jamieson. They married in early 1903 prior to which time he had moved to the Boathouse, Inver by Dunkeld, as gamekeeper to the Marquis of Tillybardine who had recently establish the Scottish Horse Regiment at Dunkeld for the Boer War. John and Jessie then set up home in the substantial house of Kirkbride Lodge where John was gamekeeper on the Ayrshire estate at Kirkmichael. There their first child was born, John Jamieson Blair. A year or so later they moved to Kilbirnie, Ayrshire when John became gamekeeper at Redheugh. The next three children, Jeannie, Jessie and Wishart were born there between 1905 and 1908. That year, John had an altercation with his employer, Bryce Knox of Redheugh and resigned his post as head gamekeeper. They moved to Kilwaughter, an estate in the Glens of Antrim, Northern Ireland and there, young John and Jean started school at Lowtown about three miles from Greenpark where they lived. Another daughter appropriately named Kathleen was born in 1910. At that time the Irish separatists, Sinn Fien, were active in that area. One day while out with another of the four Scots gamekeepers on the estate, they noticed a party of Sinn Fieners drilling with firearms in a hollow. John Blair fired a warning shot over their heads but then had to take cover. Thereafter they were

the Hatton and Innerpeffer. 200 double flooring nails were made for a scaffold. The entry door lock and several other locks needed mending and keys of various sizes were made from a little key for a cabinet to keys for the hall door, barn door, the nursery (*nursse chamber*) door and the Kitchen (*kitchie*) door. Three glaff bands were supplied for the porter's lodge. The bell was mended; hooks (*cleiks*), picks and a fire shovel were made. Half a stone of iron was used for the quarry ( *quarrell*) gate. A bed rod was mended in four parts and four peiks were supplied for beds.

The estate quarry appears to have been worked during the winter for in the first two months of 1675 in the smiddy, some five-dozen picks were sharpened over five occasions and five wedges were "rowed". March saw more sharpening at lesser activity but additional making of four more picks, a heavy quarry hammer (*coral mell*), rowing of a mell and wedges and sharpening two *keaval* hammers. The activity level continued on at between two to four dozen pick sharpenings per month and a few wedges rowed. Surprisingly, in that year there is no mention of scythe making or sharpening. The farrier work was another major part of Alexander Blair's work for Panmure. The account starts at 26 January. The work comprised dozens of shoeings of various horses and also fairly regular removal of shoes to season the horses' feet. Some horses were named, others identified by type. *Trikes*, *Dragles*, *Bonny Feh*, *The Whitret* (weasel), and *Stumpie* were shod sometimes with one shoe sometimes with four at which time there could be removals of worn shoes. Other horses were identified as "The great stone horse", the van horse, the Rone, the white mare, the blue mare, the gray mare, the bay mare the gray gilder, the little pony, and two ponies, two young horses. Of significant historical interest is the 1675 account for the Panmure coach horses. In April and November the two young coach horses and the two great coach horses were shod. The other coach horses identified throughout that year are *Klavers* and *Besly*, the black mare, two young horses, the great gilder and the great stone

horse. In addition to all this, Alexander, in this his last year of life, and no doubt assisted by his two sons, made two horse combs, 100 saddle tacks, six pairs of buckles for belts to the Malicken holsterd, lockers and hinges for saddles, mended a bridle bit and made handles for the dog trough.

Alexander died in early November 1675 and thus the payment for the above works, totalling One hundred and thirty five pounds twenty shillings Scots, was made to his two sons at Panmure House on 9 November before witnesses Robert Allen smith in Carmyllie and John Erskine. . They signed the receipt as David Blair and Alexander Blear. Alexander was to use that spelling throughout his life although in records he appears as Blair.

The young Alexander had shown potential, for in 1677 he made a bond with George, earl of Panmure, to enter his service on completion of his apprenticeship with Bartholomew Gibson, smith and farrier in the Abbey of Holyroodhouse.<sup>4</sup> The prestigious apprenticeship in Edinburgh must have been sponsored by the earl to bring improved skills to Panmure to their mutual benefit. It is not determined when Alexander younger took over the Panmure smiddy but probably at the conclusion of his apprenticeship in the early 1680's. His elder brother, David, also continued as smith moving to Omachie in the parish of Monifieth. His family, David (1682), John (1684) and James (1688) were born there following his marriage to Marie Mackie at Monikie in 1678. The Hearth Tax in 1691 required David and his neighbour, Andrew Stirling, to pay a sum of £2. 2shillings for their three hearths at Omachie. One of the hearths would have been for the forge. An interesting episode is recorded in the Kirk Session minutes of Monifieth on 10 December 1682:

*"This day the tongue of the bell fell out in the time of ringing and could not be found. David Blair, smith to be spoke to to make a new one and it is thought fit the bell be lookt to that nothing be rong."* This was acted

By the end of the century, John had made a career change and becoming a builder's foreman. In 1901 they resided at 36 Elizabeth Road, St Anns, Tottenham. A year later the six year old son, David died. The family moved to Slough where the youngest child, Charles Gordon Blair was born in 1904.

On 16 January 1920, John arrived at St John, New Brunswick having crossed the Atlantic from Liverpool on the Empress of Canada. He returned to England.

John became a manager presumably in the building trade and they continued in that area for many years. About 1930 he moved to Poole, Dorset as a director of a brickworks there. In 1931, their address was given as Heath Bank, Ringwood Road, Newton, Parkstone.

This is next door to the Dorset Brick Stone & Ball & Clay Co. Ltd. (brick makers.) Their son James also moved to that area living at 45 Guest Road, Eastleigh, Hants.

John McLeish Blair died of heart disease on 4 December 1932 at 530 Ringwood Road, Poole aged 68, Director of Brickworks. His widow Jemima was executrix for his will and registered the probate at London on 24 June 1933 for his estate of £4980 12s 7d Jemima survived for a further 16 years and died at Willisden in 1948.

### **John Gray Blair (1883 - 1940)**

John the natural son of John McLeish Blair and Ann Farquharson Gray was brought up in the farmhouse of Blairs of Dumbarrow by his young mother and her parents David Gray and Margaret Renny. In 1888, the same year that John Blair married, Ann married James Greig, a ploughman at Cairney Farm, Arbroath. They initially made their home with her parents as James became a farm servant there. Their first daughter Margaret was born when they were in the East Mains of Dumbarrow in 1890. Soon afterwards they moved to Arbroath and John Blair went to school there from the home at 14 Robert Street although James Greig remained as servant of Dumbarrow in the farmhouse until he

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<sup>4</sup> GD45/17/458 Panmure Papers

### John McLeish Blair (1864 - 1932)

John, the eldest son of Alexander Blair and Cecilia McLeish was born at Lumleyden Toll House on 17 July 1864. He probably started school in Forfar in 1869 and when aged about 12, his father took over the croft at South Cottage, Dumbarrow from where his latter schooldays were in the village of Letham. On leaving school he became a grocer's assistant in Letham. Ann Farquharson Gray,



daughter to farmer David Gray of the Blairs of Dumbarrow, was a year his junior and had also attended school in Letham. John aged 18 and Ann then seventeen had a romance which resulted in her falling pregnant. When their son John Gray Blair was born in November 1883, John registered the illegitimate birth as father of the child. It was reputed that David Gray who farmed over 130 acres did not consider John Blair of suitable standing perhaps as he came from a croft or being a shopman and thus the young couple did not marry and the child was brought up initially at Dumbarrow by his mother and grandparents.

John McLeish Blair left the district and moved into the city. Originally to Dundee where he was a grocer salesman living in the Overgate and then in 1888 he moved to Edinburgh to manage a grocer's shop. In July 1888, John married Jemima Pirie, a girl two years his junior from Bervie in the Mearns. They lived in Leith at 8 Pitt Street where their son Alexander was born later that year. They moved south to London and James Burness Blair was born when they were in Edmonton. They lived in Northumberland Street in Enfield and Jemima's sister joined them there. John was still in the grocer's trade. Children Lucy, was born in Enfield. Douglas was born in Edmonton and at Tottenham, Herbert and Edward followed.

upon promptly for 30 shillings was paid the following week to the smith for providing the bell with a new tongue but it was reported that "*all the bands of the bell are brokne and the gudger worn.*" Thus David Blair was instructed to carry out repair of the bell and the next week he was paid £4 6s 8d "*for banding the bell and the gudger*" and for his part William Dorrat was paid nine shillings "*for waiting upon the smith and ale at the taking down the bell.*" Ale at this time was as much a form of food and nutrition as it was a refreshment for workers.

Alexander Blair (younger) married Margaret Sturrock and lived in the parish of Panbride at the Cotton of Bolshan. They had issue: Jean, John, Elspet and Christian. He may also have had a son James although the records are silent on this. James Burnlaw and Alexander Blair are shown as sharing three hearths subject to a payment of £2. 2 shillings by Candlemas (2 February) 1691 in the Panbride Hearth Tax records.<sup>5</sup> One of the hearths was probably that in the smiddy. Alexander was smith in the Cotton of Panmure in 1700, just two miles south of the Milton of Carmyllie where his grandfather had forged iron. He agreed a contract to make iron gates for Panmure House in 1700 with his account being submitted in 1701.<sup>6</sup> This was during the time when James, the fourth earl was remodelling the house, one of the finest mansions in Scotland. Its iron gates became famous. The Earl James was an ardent Jacobite, to the extent that his estate was forfeited to the Government. In the 1715 Jacobite Rising, the Pretender, James son of King James VII, slept in the state bed at Panmure and on his departure, Earl James declared that the gates of Panmure through which the Pretender departed would not be opened until the Stuarts were restored to the throne. The gates still standing, have outlasted the great house and are reputed to

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<sup>5</sup> E69.11.1

<sup>6</sup> GD45/18/618 Panmure Papers

have remained closed since then, although they were bypassed closely with a more modern western approach.

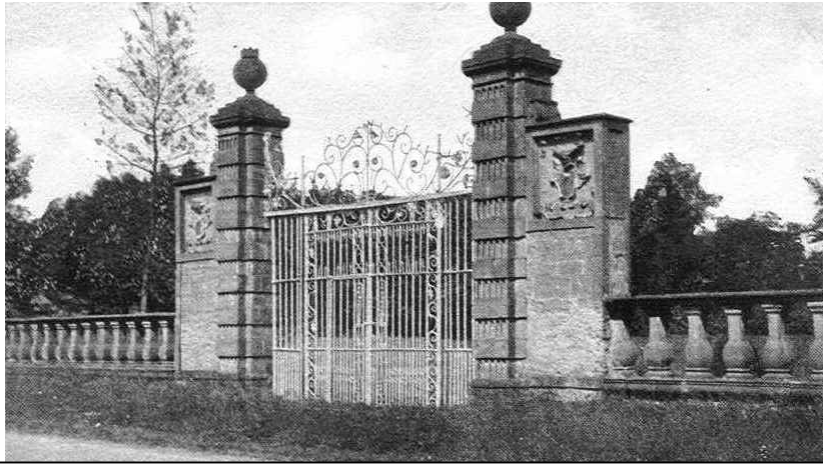


Figure 2: *The Barred Gates at Panmure House wrought by Alexander Blair*

After the defeat of the Jacobite army, The Earl's estate was taken over by the Government and as a result many transactions on the forfeited estate were carefully accounted. Among the records of Panmure at this time is a payment made out of the rents of the estate by the Countess of Panmure, Lady Margaret Hamilton, on 22 March 1716, in settlement of an account due to Alexander Blair, smith, for shoeing horses and other work. The horses were named: *Garnkirk, the falconer's pony, the Star, Mill, Tome [?Tommy], Lyon, Jack, Punch, Captain, Delape and Thom.*<sup>7</sup>

Alexander Blair's four account books for ironwork cover the period 1704 to 1732.<sup>8</sup>

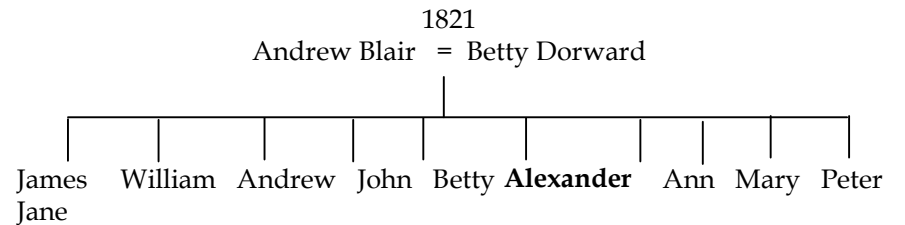
<sup>7</sup> E650/53  
<sup>8</sup> GD45/18/764 Panmure Papers  
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**Peter Blair (1843 -?)**

Peter the youngest son was born at Dumbarrow in 1843. He appears to have died as a child.

**Jane Blair (1849 - 1931)**

The youngest of the family, Jane, was born in 1849 at Dumbarrow. She moved with her parents to live in the toll house in and near Forfar when he was a toll keeper. When her father returned to Dumbarrow to farm South Cottage, she met local joiner, William Inverarity who was about ten years her senior. They married at Dunnichen on 3 December 1869 and lived with her parents at South Cottage. Their daughter Elizabeth was born there in 1870 and then Margaret and William in 1872 and 1873. William died aged 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in March 1876 at Dunnichen. That year they moved to Balmuir of Gardyne and Jane's parents moved to live with them. William and Jane had daughters Divina, Mary, Dorothy and Joan and son James born at Kirkden. Jane died on 25 January 1931 at Woodville Fues, Arbroath.



family had moved out to Newford Tollhouse when Alexander was a worker on the roads. It appears that he may not have gained a toll franchise that year, perhaps as the living was becoming unprofitable and very soon thereafter the turnpike roads were taken over from the Trustees by the local council.

Before his father died in 1876, Alexander took over his croft to farm the 17 acres of South Cottage, Dumbarrow and it was there that the five youngest daughters and Robert, the youngest son, were born between 1877 and 1891. Cecilia's father, John McLeish also died in 1876 and she and Alexander inherited his house in Atholl Street in Coupar Angus. However, shortly afterwards they sold that. They remained at Dumbarrow until 1900 when they moved into Arbroath where other members of the family had migrated. With the younger children, James, Jessie, Robert and Kate, they moved into Kinnaird Street, Arbroath and Alexander became a foundry worker at age 65.

Alexander remained in Kinnaird Street working as a labourer in Arbroath up to his death aged 79 on 24 September 1917. Cecilia moved to live with her daughter Alice at Cardean Kennels, Airlie. She died there aged 72 on 16 December 1918, only a few miles from her birthplace at Coupar Angus. She was buried beside her husband in Newmonthill Cemetery, Forfar.

#### **Ann Blair (1838 - 1859)**

Ann entered domestic service employed at the Cross, Forfar by Dr James Edward. She contracted Scarlet Fever and died on 8 December 1859 in her twenty-second year. The doctor arranged her burial in his family grave at St John's Episcopal Church in Forfar.

#### **Mary Fraser Blair (1840 - ?)**

Mary, like so many other girls of her time, entered domestic service. She was employed by David Clark, at 53 East High Street, Forfar in 1861 but nothing is discovered of her life thereafter.

Alexander was a witness at the baptism of George Wright's daughter in January 1716 at Panbride.

It is probable that David, the eldest son of David Blair the smith in Monifieth and Marie Mackie, moved to Panbride from Monifieth. David Blair married Janet Mackie about 1715. He lived for some years in Panbride where they had sons William, David and John between 1718 and 1723. He returned to Monifieth in the mid-1720's for in 1728 David Blair in Omachie had a daughter baptised Grizel before the congregation at Monifieth. He died at the Shank of Omachie in June 1746 and was survived by his wife Janet Mackie. There are several movements of Blair generations back and forth between the neighbouring parishes around Monikie. It is quite likely that a son of one family would take his apprenticeship with an uncle so broadening their knowledge and techniques of the hammerman's trade. It seems that it was James Blair, a younger son of David, born in Monifieth parish in 1788 who settled in Monikie and married Barbara Ritchie<sup>9</sup> in 1718. He too followed that trade. On 22 April 1723, the sum of £6. 17s. was paid to his account for smith work to the porches of the local parish church.<sup>10</sup> It was probably his son, Alexander, born in 1721, who married Janet Anderson and had family in Monikie between 1759 and 1767. Thereafter they moved into Arbroath where their second son of the name Alexander was born in 1771. On 30 July 1783, Alexander Blair, smith in Arbroath sold a tenement of land with a back yard in the Abbey of Aberbrothock.

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<sup>9</sup> It is probable that Barbara was the daughter of a blacksmith as a Ritchie family were smiths at Loanhead of Affleck. Indeed John Ritchie (1710-1760) smith there married Janet Blair. He was "a most expert artificer in iron and in brass."

<sup>10</sup> Monikie OPR 311/4 page 112 of the Kirk Session Minutes.

John Blair, the son of Alexander the smith in the Cotton of Panmure seems to have married Margaret Williamson about 1730. Their first son, John was baptised in April 1731 at Panbride where James Blair was a witness. They lived in the parish of Monikie where the remainder of their children were baptised including Andrew in 1748.

It is not ascertained whether it was this Andrew Blair who was latterly a blacksmith in St.Vigeans just outside Arbroath. Circumstantial evidence supports this however, there being no other recorded Andrew at this period in this family. What is of interest is the continuity of the Blair blacksmiths in this area..

Andrew Blair is first encountered in the Parish of Aberlemno where he was a smith at Balnacake. In 1789, he married Margaret Annat, (or Annand) there. Margaret was born in Aberlemno in 1764, the eldest child to William Annat and Isabel Farquharson. What is intriguing is this Blair link to Aberlemno. The family name does not appear there until the 1760's. At that time an Alexander Blair resident in the parish started to receive aid from the church funds. It would appear that he was sick and that the payments being made to him were much greater than the normal aid to the poor. Later the payments are made to Margaret Blair, presumably his wife, and again they are at a substantial level. There is nothing to link Andrew Blair to that Alexander other than the name and proximity in time. Andrew Blair continued as blacksmith at Balnacake into the 1790's and three children were born to him by Margaret Annand. They moved into the Burgh of Forfar near the close of the century and there, Andrew, their son was born. Later they moved to Kirkden where their son James was born. Afterwards, they settled in St.Vigeans where they remained. Andrew was said to be a master blacksmith by his family. His smiddy was at Woodside (now within HMS Condor

Rescobie where his father was tollkeeper. In that same year, while still brewer in Coupar Angus, he took a step that was to lead to a career change. He made a successful bid for the franchise of Burnside Toll on the Strathmore Turnpike road at the Perth end of the town. He then applied to the Justices of the Peace for a license to sell spirits from the tollhouse. It was not uncommon for a tollhouse to have a public bar – one for the road!. However, the local ministers raised an objection that there was more than sufficient outlets for this and he was permitted only to sell ale. The following year he gained the Tarbrax Toll on the Dundee-Forfar Turnpike Road and thus he and Cecilia moved there leaving Coupar Angus and the brewing trade to become a toll-keeper. There was a considerable element of risk in this business for one had to bid at a public roup annually about March for the franchise of the toll from the coming Whitsunday for a year's occupation. A quarterly terms down-payment was required with guarantee of cautioners for security to the Road Trustees. The tollkeeper then retained all due payments from road users but had to be available at all times and keep the turnpike at the toll lit during hours of darkness at his expense. There at Tarbrax, Cecilia bore the first of their thirteen children. She was named Betty after his mother, Betty Dorward. The following year they moved only a few miles to take occupation of Lumley Den Toll Bar on the Dundee-Kiriemuir branch road. There the first son, John, was born on 17 July 1864. He was named after his maternal grandfather. Yet another move came when in 1865 Alexander took the Gateside Toll two miles north of Glamis also on the Dundee-Kirriemuir road. Sons Andrew and David were born at Gateside. Andrew was named after his paternal uncle and grandfather but he died about one year old. David was named after Cecilia's maternal uncle, David Smart, a veteran of Waterloo.

At the end of the '60's they moved into the county town of Forfar to the Dundee Toll House at No1 Dundee Road. Here Jessie was born in July 1870 and three months later their firstborn, Betsy died aged seven. When their son James was born in 1873, the

### Betty Blair (1833 - ?)

Betty born at South Muir in 1833 probably went to Forfar in service. Shown there in 1851. As an unmarried general domestic servant, Betsy lived in her brother's household at the Dundee Toll House in Forfar in 1871. She moved to Arbroath where she was a cook at 28 High Street. There she met a local man, David Littlejohn, a widower ship's carpenter who lived in the West Port. They married on 3 February 1876 at Balmuir, Kirkden where her aged parents lived with her sister's family. Her brother, Alexander who then farmed the family croft at Dumbarrow was present as a witness. Betsy and David lived on in the West Port, Arbroath where he became a confectioner. Betsy died in Arbroath in 1909.

### Alexander Blair (1835 -1917)

Alexander was born in the parish of Kirkden in 1835 but was not recorded in the register. The family may have been in Friockheim at that time where an extension church had been opened in 1825. A parish school was established there in 1839 but it was about that time the family moved to a cottage at Dumbarrow. Thus Alexander probably attended school at Letham. Aged about 15, Alexander became a stable boy at Pitmuies living in the bothy there where his eldest brother, James, had lived ten years earlier. It is not known whether Alexander took a trade but he may have followed the same path as his brother, Andrew, and worked in a local brewery. In 1860 on the sudden death of that brother, Alexander, aged 24, stepped into his place as brewer in Coupar Angus Brewery. There he lodged across the road from the brewery with his widowed sister-in-law, Agnes. The next-door neighbour in Atholl Street was John McLeish, a merchant grocer who had formerly traded from there as the Coupar Angus-Perth Carrier but the coming of the railway had curtailed that part of his business to some extent. John was a widower, with a teenage daughter, Cecilia. A romance developed and in 1862 Alexander married seventeen year-old Cecilia McLeish. The wedding ceremony was carried out at the Heatherstacks Tollhouse,

Airfield).<sup>11</sup> After Margaret Annand's death, the elderly Andrew married a much younger woman, Anne Walker at St.Vigeans at the end of 1816. Andrew died around 1820 perhaps aged about 70. There was no family of this second marriage although Anne had an illegitimate child by William Ogg during her widowhood in 1823. That it was begotten buried on her way into Arbroath near Little Cairnie suggests that she has still lived at or near the Woodside smiddy.<sup>12</sup>

Of Andrew's sons, the younger two followed the hammerman's trade. Andrew born in Forfar on 7 February 1797 moved to the



Figure 3: O.S. Map of Arbroath / St. Vigeans 1927 shows Woodside to north-west of Arbroath

See Thomson's 1825 Map for the actual locations of the old buildings.

11 Death cert of his daughter Margaret Blair Sharp 1865 at Arbroath records him as blacksmith at Woodside.

12 Arbroath Kirk Session Minutes

neighbouring parish of Kirkden where he became smith at Gardyne, Kirkden. James, who was born in Kirkden in 1799 when the elder Andrew had been smith there, followed his father to be smith in Woodside, St.Vigeans. However, his health declined and he died in August 1830 and was at St.Vigeans.

As a child, the young Andrew Blair had lived in the parish of Kirkden. He returned there to hammer his trade in a smiddy at Balmuir of Gardyne perhaps as an apprentice and certainly by 1819, when aged 22. There he met Betty Dorward, and they married in October 1821. Andrew continued as smith at Balmuir of Gardyne for several more years; their first two sons being born there. About 1828, Andrew left the hammerman's work to become an agricultural labourer. The next chapter will deal more fully with his later life and his family.

In 1876, he ended his days in his son-in-law's home at Balmuir of Gardyne, where, some 50 years before, he had been the smith. This place was only five miles due north of the Milton of Carmyllie where David Blair was smith about 250 years earlier.<sup>13</sup> Thus after a recorded period of around 250 years, the Blair family in this area closed their association with the hammerman's ancient trade. The ring of their hammer on anvil was heard no more.

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<sup>13</sup> The author's parents John Blair and Betsy Geddes married in 1927 and set up home at Cononsyth, only two miles south of Balmuir of Gardyne and three miles east of the Milton of Carmyllie.

### **Andrew Blair (1829 -1860)**

Andrew was the first of the family to be born at Southmuir of Gardyne when his father became a farm servant. Andrew however, left the land and became a brewer in Arbroath. There he met his future wife but he move down to a brewery in Newcastle. He returned to Arbroath in August 1857 to marry Agnes Ogilvie an Inn Keeper's daughter. They started married life in Newcastle upon Tyne where their only child, Isabella, was born in 1859. When the Newcastle company purchased the Coupar Angus Brewery, Andrew was appointed brewer. They moved into Atholl Street in Coupar Angus but Andrew died very soon afterwards in 1860. His brother Alexander was appointed brewer there and lodged with Andrew's widow. Andrew's daughter Isabella married George Stewart who had a tailor's business in the High Street, Dundee. They had issue.

### **John Blair (1830 - 1900c)**

Born at South Muir on 17 November 1830, Given the growing family at home the two eldest were out working by 1841. Then aged ten John lived next door to his parents in the household of David Alexander and probably attended school at that time. John served an apprenticeship to become a journeyman wright in Arbroath. He married Grace Boyle in 1857 and they lived in Helen Street and then Gravesend in Arbroath. They moved to the parish of St.Vigeans about 1860. There, John Blair was, for some years, wright at Woodside Feus only a short distance from or perhaps even the same place where his grandfather, Andrew Blair, had been master blacksmith at Woodside. By the 1880's John had given up the wright's trade in favour of working his small farm in the same area, on Grange of Conon until his death in the early 1900's.

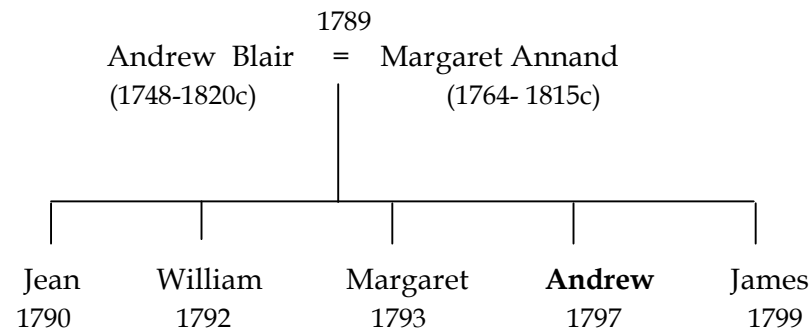
## The Family of Andrew Blair and Betty Dorward

### James Blair (1822 - 1864)

The eldest child of Andrew and Betty born at Balmuir in 1822 was named after his maternal grandfather, James Dorward. When aged about five years, his father left the smiddy and became a farm servant thus it was to agricultural labour that James followed working on farms in the neighbourhood. In 1841 he was in the bothy at Pitmuies sharing with two other single men. At Kirkden on 15 June 1844 he married a St Vigeans girl, Isabel Ritchie Bell, the same age as himself. They had a large family of nine sons and three daughters. The first three born at Dunnichen and the next three in the parish of Carmyllie. When their seventh son, Peter was born in 1855 at Dunnichen all others were still alive. Thereafter Two more sons and two daughters were born at Dunnichen. In the early 1860's the family moved to Kinnell where his third daughter was born but James died a month before she was born. This family had been reared in the heart of the area occupied by their earlier generations but as with their contemporaries mobility and new opportunities led to dispersal. One of the sons, David Staples Blair (1856 -1934) went to sea and then in 1881 enlisted in the Royal Northumbrian Fusiliers serving in India, Singapore and West Africa. He rose to the rank of Colour Sergeant and was awarded the DCM for action in the Ashanti Wars.

### William Blair (1825 - 1869?)

William was also born at Balmuir and like his brother became an agricultural labourer. He was in the bothy at Cononsyth Farm at age 15 in 1841, a little more than a mile from his parents' home at South Muir. Ten years later he was with his parents at Dumbarrow as a farm servant but little else is discovered of William.



## The Family Find New Trades

Andrew Blair born in Forfar on 7 February 1797, son to Andrew Blair blacksmith in the burgh and his spouse Margaret Annand (*Arnott*) was baptised a week later on the fourteenth. While a baby the family moved to Kirkden. His father then took a smiddy near Arbroath as a master blacksmith. The Woodside smiddy was in the parish of St Vigeans close to the Arbroath parish boundary. Young Andrew probably attended the school in St Vigeans village about two miles distance.

Andrew followed into the family tradition as a blacksmith no doubt learning the trade assisting his father. His younger brother James remained at the Woodside smiddy but Andrew moved to the parish of Kirkden to work as smith at Balmuir of Gardyne. It was there in 1821 that he married Betty Dorward whose father was a salmon fisher and also had served as a militiaman in the Forfarshire East Division during the Napoleonic Wars. Betty was born at the Links of Arduthie, Stonehaven in 1801 and her younger sister, Margaret, who came with her to Kirkden was born at St Cyrus. Their younger siblings were born at Craig.

Andrew was smith at Gardyne for around ten years and during that time Betty had two sons. Andrew broke with the long tradition of family hammermen and became an agricultural labourer, employed in the same district at Southmuir of Gardyne by the farmer Thomas Martin. Their sons Andrew and John and daughter Betty were born there between 1829 and 1833.<sup>14</sup>

By 1834, Andrew ventured into a new occupation, when he entered the Carrier's business. He and Andrew Meffen were the Friockheim-Dundee Carriers conveying goods twice weekly between these locations. Friockheim, also in the parish of Kirkden, was then a fast growing village where many weavers and tradesmen had taken up the opportunity to own their house and a plot of land. It is not known whether the family moved into Friockheim but this is probable as the children, Alexander (b. 1835) and Ann (b.1838) were not registered in the Kirkden baptismal records. The Dundee Directories of 1834 and 1837 show that the Andrews Blair and Methven traded every Tuesday and Thursday from Friockheim and their trading post of Mrs Mudie's in the Murraygate, Dundee. A threat to the carrier business soon appeared, for The Dundee - Arbroath Railway was constructed and in operation by the close of the 1830's.

Andrew returned to work on the land at South Muir of Gardyne, where daughter Mary was born at the beginning of 1840. In 1841 he and Betty lived in the cottage there with children Andrew, Betty, Alexander Ann and Mary. By this time the two eldest sons were feed to local farms and lived in the bothies at Pitmuies and Cononsyth. Peter the youngest son was born there in 1843. He however died as a child. About 1845 Andrew moved home to a Cottage at Dumbarrow and William returned to live with them and his two youngest sisters Ann and Mary. Both Andrew and his son were agricultural labourers there. The youngest child Jane

was born at Dunbarrow in 1849. The next move in the 1850's took them into the County town of Forfar. There daughter Ann entered domestic service in the household of Dr James Edward at the cross the Cross. She developed a fever and died in December 1859. The doctor buried her in his family grave at the Episcopalian Church of St Johns near the Cross of Forfar. This move to Forfar brought them into association with the turnpike roads. Andrew, Betty and their youngest daughter lived in the Dundee Toll House 1, Dundee Road in Forfar in 1861. Andrew was still a labourer but probably worked some time on farm and other times on the turnpike road. Janet attended school in Forfar and daughter Mary was a domestic servant nearby at 53 East High Street. By the following year, Andrew had moved to be Tollkeeper at Heatherstacks Toll just north of Forfar on the Brechin Turnpike road. This was a well-built cottage of ashlar with local grey slate roof but had a bowed end protruding into the road.<sup>15</sup>

In his latter days, Andrew took a croft of 17 acres at South Cottage, next to Hillkirk at Dumbarrow. To supplement the crofting Andrew also worked on the roads. His daughter Jane married a local joiner, William Inverarity and they came to live with them at South Cottage. His son, Alexander took over the croft at South Cottage when Andrew and Betty moved to Kirkden with their daughter Jane. In 1876, he ended his days in his son-in-law's home at Balmuir of Gardyne, where some 60 years before he had hammered the anvil and a place only five miles due north of the Milton of Carmyllie where David Blair was smith about 250 years earlier.<sup>16</sup> Betty Dorward survived her husband by 11 years living with the Inverarity family at Kirkden. She died there in the summer of 1887 aged 84 and was buried beside her husband in Kirkden kirkyard.

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<sup>15</sup> Heatherstacks Toll house was demolished in 1948.

<sup>16</sup> The author's parents John Blair and Betsy Geddes married in 1927 and set up home at Cononsyth, only two miles south of Balmuir of Gardyne and three miles east of the Milton of Carmyllie.

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<sup>14</sup> Southmuir lies close to the Den Burn between the West Mains of Gardyne and Summerhill .