

Blair of
That Ilk



The Blair Bruidhinn



Blair of
Balthayock

Honorary Member, Rt.
Honorable Robin Blair,
Former Lord Lyon, King

4th Quarter: Nov., Dec.
2025



11.25.25

CBS President Message

Fellow Scots – Happy Early Winter 2025! The late Fall/early winter brings all sorts of weather and experiences. Members are still basking in the Fall glow, while others have shoveled their first snows. The Fall colors are magnificent across the country, and Adoree and I spent 2 weeks in western Scotland enjoying colors in the homeland. She writes the story of our trip in pursuit of ancestry back to 1190 in this newsletter.

A number of our members have enjoyed Scottish festivals and competitions this Fall, and we see the stories of their

adventures in this letter. Also, we held the Annual General Meeting on October 25 where the business of CBS was discussed, and we enjoyed the entertainment of Blair members. The video recording of the AGM can be found on the [clanblair.net](https://members.clanblair.net/cbsmemb.html#AGM) website:

<https://members.clanblair.net/cbsmemb.html#AGM>

Be sure to use the username and password provided with last year's renewal. If you have problems, please let me know.

This newsletter includes reports of festivities and activities of our members. Editor Adoree has prepared reports on history and family connections. Please enjoy the stories of clan activities and families.

It is also renewal time, and if you have not yet sent in your 2025/26 dues payment of \$20, please do so, either by check or credit card via the clanblair.org website.

Please renew - NOW.

This is time to plan for winter events including Burns Supper, Happy Hogmanay, and then St. Patrick's Day. As communities announce festivals for next year, I encourage you to find these activities in your area and then send us pictures and stories of Blair attendance. We receive many questions and messages from fellow Scots via the Clan Blair Society Facebook page, and all input is welcome.

Please enjoy this newsletter and share your ideas with me at president@clanblair.org or with adoree1@outlook.com.

It is a Great Day to be a Scot!

Slaint'e!

Jim

- **Recruiting - Membership Chair and Bruidhinn Editor**

We have been in the recruiting mode to find a successor to Russ McCrary as our Membership Chair. To date we have not found a volunteer and while Russ is filling in temporarily, we would appreciate a member stepping forward to help.

Adoree is also preparing to share the editor role of the Blair Bruidhinn. After 11 years as editor, it is time to let her write a book alongside the genealogy pursuits she cherishes. Please let me know of your interest.

CBS relies on your participation, and the board so very much appreciates your support.

- **William Campbell Blair Youth Award - 2025**

Tristan Blair as the 2025 recipient of the William Campbell Blair Youth Award. Tristan is a freshman at Lees McRae College majoring in Wilderness Rescue and Medicine in North Carolina, and he is the eldest son of Scott and Vallie Blair. The Award recognizes youth who demonstrate excellence in their lives and activities. Tristan has distinguished himself in academics, athletics, Scouting, leadership, and Clan Blair Society service. He was formally recognized at the Annual General Meeting and has received a \$500 cash award.



William Campbell Blair was a founding member of CBS and served as President and a State Commissioner in California for many years. He was a pediatrician and his love for children is represented by this award in his honor. Congratulations to Tristan.

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**Fun Scottish Facts from
Scottish History: Strange
But True by John and
Noreen Hamilton**

The authors say that we need to remember that the word "Viking" is derived from meaning a sea raider or pirate, which the authors claim means that no one from Scandanavia who is not acting like a pirate should be called a "Viking."

[Do you agree?]

Also, did you know that Southern Scots frequently called Scotland's Highlanders "Irish" until the 19th century!

Did you know that the term for Englishmen, by Scottish people, a "Sassenach" comes from Saxon-ach. Scots are Albannach, and you are an Eirannach if you are Irish.

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**CALIFORNIA
COMMISSIONER REPORT**

RUSS AND ELENA MCCRARY

We headed North on CA Hwy 5 headed for the Oregon border. It was Thursday, October 2, 2025, and the McMinnville Scottish Festival was a couple of days away. I wondered if we would be passing any vendors along the way.

Set-up was Friday, October 3rd from 8am-8pm. This was our first time meeting and greeting the Clan Blair members north of CA, and we could not be more excited.

First shoutout goes to Allen James Tyler (nephew of Clan Blair Pres. Jim Blair). Allen, you saved us! Elena has a major injury to her left arm and so usual set-up was anything but usual.





[Allen Tyler, nephew of CBS President Jim Blair]

**Set-up & takedown
extraordinaire & local Allen
Tyler with fiancée Caitie
Craumer.**

**We also got a good location
because coming in the gate you
walk by the heavy athletics
arena, near the beer stand,
with Coos in a pen behind us
and the sheep dog exhibit
nearby.**

**We also learned that this is the
first year they have all the
clans in a main row. Exciting!!**

**What is this organization and
how did the games get here?
“In June 2018, organizers of
this group successfully brought
the Newport Celtic Festival &
Highland Games to McMinnville,
Oregon which has brought
together thousands of people
to celebrate the seven Celtic**

**Nations of Brittany, Cornwall,
Galicia, Ireland, Isle of Man,
Scotland and Wales. Check out
their site.**

<https://celticheritage.org/about-us/>

**Elena was off getting food,
when friends Ken Alborn
(Newberg, OR) showed up and
I finally got to meet Joan.**

**Blair’s have a terrific Oregon
presence, and we cannot wait
until next year to see them, as
well as any of the Blairs we
missed.**



**Welcome new members Kris
Blair Campbell and her brother**

Andrew Blair (who is sporting the Clan Blair modern tartan). Kris walked in the parade with us.

Welcome new member Miriam Couto from Woodland, WA, who shared this picture and story from the Kelso, WA Highlander Festival in September.



“She is with her grandson Henry who is holding our Dandie Dinmont Terrier, ‘Victoria.’ This terrier breed is the only one to be granted a tartan by the Duke of Buccleuch in 2015 (the Walter Scott tartan). Dandies originated in the border country and are an old piece of Scottish History. They are listed as a vulnerable breed and are close to extinction.”

Please welcome new member Chris Lynde from Albany, OR.

Sunday morning we arrived to find it had rained overnight, so we got quickly to work getting some of the build-up to greet any guests. This is one reason we take down our maps and posters.

We are looking forward to sponsoring these games next year. So, if you want a unique visit, put it on your Scottish games calendar now and come over for a chat and photo.

We close this adventure with a nod to “Caesar the No Drama Llama” Elena got to get up close and personal to - & no fooling, that llama is cool.

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We travelled home for a few days’ rest, then headed to Southern California to enjoy the 21st Annual Seaside Games in Ventura, CA (October - 2025).

Set-up was Friday, but when we arrived chaos was on the menu. Turns out the other part of the duo that started these games had passed away the day before. For us as sponsors it was a blow. Nellie Graham Lowry had been greeting us every year we attended. But we know she would be proud that we carried on the tradition.

Unfortunately, there were very few vendors. The Welsh Baker did brisk business, but there was no UK vendor.

A bright spot, Clan Young finally made it to the games for the first time and held their AGM. Russ got kudos from a Pennsylvania member (pictured below) for sharing such good maps.



We say farewell to Tom Munro and Judy Mesick from Clan Munro as this was their last event. I joined for \$10. Next year will be \$40. If you know any Munro's in CA, drop us a line so we can pass on the information. Thanks.

If you are wondering why I included Munro's, I time travelled to the original colonies to meet Mary (Munro) Blair and learn her story.

Born 16 Jan 1708 in Williamsburg City, Colony of Virginia. She married her first cousin John Blair, and had 10 children

Died 23 Sep 1768 at age 60 in Williamsburg,

Williamsburg City, Colony of Virginia and is buried in Bruton Parish churchyard.

So, if you ever venture to Williamsburg, you can see the home they lived in and visit their graves.

Finally, I noticed a group of highland dancers just across from our tent. I thought I recognized the current trophy winner in Scottish Dancing from the Pleasanton Games and went to say hello and congratulations. I shared how proud we were of Erin Blair, and everyone chimed in how nice she was. Even the mothers commented on Erin's patience and taking the time to warm up even the youngest dancers. "Blairs That Care."

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Mark Your Calendar – 2026 Events

We are listing games that may be local to your area. We encourage you to share your experience on Facebook.

The games we plan on attending have ** and are bold.

**Calaveras Celtic Faire & Concert
101 Frog Town Road
Calaveras County Fairgrounds
Angels Camp, CA**

March 6-8, 2026

**NEW Scottish Clan Gathering
and Traditional Highland Fete**

Calimesa Event Center

1300 3rd St., Calimesa, CA

March 21-22

**Kern County Scottish Society
Highland Games & Gatherings**

Bakersfield, CA

April 18-19 (more info coming)

NORCAL Celtic Festival

701 Main St, Woodland, CA

This event is FREE to attend

April 25-26

Scottish Fest

Memorial Day Weekend

**Orange County Fair & Event
Center**

Costa Mesa, CA – May 23-24

****San Diego Scottish Highland
Games**

June 22-23 (tentative)

**Dates and location are being
finalized**

Website:

<https://sdhighlandgames.org/>

**Highland Games and Gathering
Labor Day weekend**

**Pleasanton, CA – September 5-
6**

****Kelso Highlander Festival**

Tam O'Shanter Park

Kelso, WA – September 12-13

**Fresno Highland Gathering &
Games**

Kearney Park – 1-day event

Fresno, CA – September 19

****McMinnville Scottish Festival**

Yamhill County Fairgrounds

McMinnville, OR – October 3-4

****Yosemite Celtic Festival &
Highland Games – Oakhurst
Community Center, 39800 Rd
425B, Oakhurst, CA - October 17-
18 (festival dates have changed
from 2025, first year).**



Elena and llama friend!

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Our Scotland Trip

Jim and Adoree Blair

In September/ October this year, we took a 15-day trip to Scotland. We based as much of the trip as we could on our Blair genealogy, which made it extra exciting.

Our first night was spent in Glasgow, where we took the hop-on, hop-off bus the next day to explore Glasgow. The old buildings there were stunning.

We began in Dalry, which is where Blair House is located, and where Jim’s ancestors lived for centuries until 2012, when the home was sold. It is owned by a Scottish family. The last relatives to own the home were Luke and Carolina (Lina) Borwick, who live in the updated (and beautiful) carriage house on the grounds. We were able to visit with them for our first 3 days in Scotland,

which was such a blessing. Between huge breakfasts and their help finding sights to explore and places to dine, we had some wonderful days.

We arrived late (caused by our own inability to find the place in the dark!) in the evening, and joined the Borwicks for a luscious dinner. The first morning, we rose into very picture-perfect scenery outside: a cobbled, gated courtyard showing us fields of dewy grass and flowers, under which cattle grazed. Coming from the dry climate of Denver, the Scottish moisture welcomed us all through the trip and was a welcome change

****** If you plan to travel to Scotland, consider joining the Scottish National Trust, which has all the info you want and gives a generous discount on all historic buildings you want to see.**







The next day, refreshed by our night's stay at the Borwicks' carriage house, we were invited out for a walk on the castle (Blair House) grounds. Think of dew-drenched green grass springing underfoot, stone roadside mossy walls, and manicured acres of gorgeous grounds, majestic trees and pristine waterways. It was magical for us to walk the grounds Jim's ancestors had enjoyed.

After breakfast, we set out to find Ladymuir, where Jim's DNA ancestor James Blair of Ladymuir (1690-1750) lived. Ladymuir farms were first brought into the Blair family by another James Blair, a merchant in Glasgow, who purchased them along with his brother William in 1620. From there, Blair families were born and grew up on the Ladymuir farmlands and in the towns of Kilmacolm and Killellan. James' son Hugh, then Hew and another Hugh, on to another James, four Johns and a Robert Blair, owned Ladymuir until 1844. Since those early days, the farm has been divided and sold and built upon so that the exact location is difficult to find. We spent a lot of time trying to locate it on maps before we left home. It is now a park and single farmlands as well as neighborhoods. This was a rainy day, which

sharpened the green of the countryside and lakes. We drove through the nearby cities and villages. Beautiful scenery.



Ladymuir Farms, land and Lake



Some of the stunning rose hedges at the carriage house



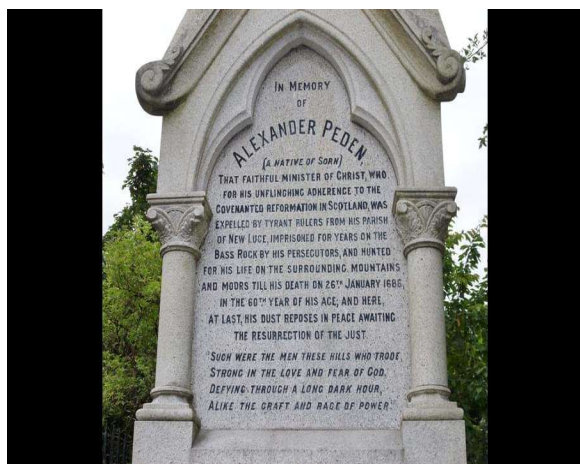
The outdoors of the carriage house here and above



Luke and Lina Borwick with us before we left Dalry

The carriage house grounds were beautiful also, and we loved watching Luke feed the birds every morning. The birds had learned to expect this feeding and their happy trills and chirps, and joyful flight were wonderful to witness each morning when the birds saw Luke and the seed bucket approach!

We headed toward Old Cumnock, where ancestors Brice Blair and his wife, Esther Peden, were born in 1600 and 24 years later were married. They had to escape in the middle of the night to Ireland due to the religious wars and their fragility as 'covenanters.'



There is an Old and a New Cumnock, and finding both was problematic but we managed both and even found the Old Cumnock Graveyard where Esther's famous nephew

covenanter preacher, Alexander Peden, is buried beneath a statue to honor him. We also paid tribute to Brice's parents, Sir Knight John Blair and Isobel Boyd Blair, and searched for their graves, which we discovered only later with the cemetery map, due to gravestones that had fallen or were no longer readable. From there, we drove along the Scottish West coast road to Dundonald Castle, which Robert II built in 1307. His Grandfather, Robert the Bruce, was not alive then but Robert III also inhabited this castle.



Dundonald Castle

We visited the Dalgarnen museum, (near Blair House) which had a tea shoppe and was built in an old mill, built by Blairs in the earlier centuries.

A family named Ferguson, who used to work in the mill, restored the mill into a museum and tea shoppe. The museum uses donated

furniture, artifacts and photos to tell the mill's story. We saw a lot of the town's history with the Blairs as well as the family's devotion to its restoration and teaching local history. It was fascinating.

After our 3rd and last night in Dalry, we reluctantly left the loving hospitality of Luke and Lina and their wonderful friend Hilary and headed to Dumfries in the south. There, we were able to visit Robbie Burns' home where he was born, and the museum that had recently been built to honor him.



Robert Burns' birth home in Dumfries

We were blessed to be able to visit his farm near Dumfries where he grew up composing beautifully and then working incredibly hard in the middle of his life at his farm in Ellis. Then, in the middle of the city of Dumfries, we were able to tour the home in which he died at the young age of 37. So much toil and work and love of word and life; it was very

impressive. He is beloved in Scotland.

Before heading north again, we stopped to tour Dumfries House, which was a castle 'saved' by King Charles of England. Charles used his funds to restore and preserve this very special place. It was beautiful, and built in a rare but pure architectural style, called Palladian architecture, done by the sons of architect James Adam. The beauty and simple, graceful lines of the décor were delightful to see, and we learned a great deal about Chippendale furniture, which fills this domicile, which is situated right by the ocean in south Scotland.



Jim in Dumfries House



The home had 3 rooms, one of which held the animals! Here, we found 1700's music!



Outside, Dumfriesshire House's many gorgeous gardens



Birth home of Robert Burns



Robbie Burns fashioned out of straw, reading in his childhood back yard



Christening gowns of Robert and his brother and sisters

**Burns Farm in Ellisland near
Dumfries**



House where Burns died in Dumfries

From Dumfries, we drove south to Portpatrick, one of our favorite stops because the village was so full of historic buildings, windy paths and roads, and right at a port. Reverend James Blair of Dunskey, another of Jim's ancestors, and his family lived here in the castle that overlooks the ocean in a magnificent craggy hill. The journey to reach the castle was quite steep, muddy and rugged, but I was able to get to the castle, which we found, to our surprise, was for sale! No walls, no windows, no doors

and a startling drop to the raging sea below, it was billed a 'fixer-upper' by the realty group hoping to sell it for 100k Euros!



DUNSKEY CASTLE

Down below, in town, I was able to find the church in which Reverend James Blair preached. What was left from the 1600's was stone walls, windows and floor, but what joy to stand where he probably had his lectern to preach! Behind this building was a very old churchyard with graves going back to the 1500's. It was great to explore. Jim and I enjoyed our old inn-like room and our inn dinner before leaving in the a.m. to the Isle of Skye.

By the time we found our 'hidden' accommodations for the night, the small town was closed. Fortuitously, I had packed a small container of peanut butter and we had hotel crackers from the night before, so we ate those for dinner with

wine and scotch, and soon slept!

Skye was quite an experience. We marveled at the scenery, of course, but also, happened to visit during a time of Hurricane Amy, so the rain came down in 'sheets', as they say, and the hillsides we drove by seldom were without great, tumbling waterfalls. We stopped for tea where our umbrellas turned inside out, but the tea warmed us to continue on. Our AI route was long and very winding, and we wondered if we knew where we were going, but finally arrived at our hotel, which again was an old building with wonderful Scottish furnishings. The next day, we set off to explore Newtonmore Folk Park,



which was a highlight of our journey, taking us to buildings from village life in the middle ages to modern life in Scotland. (It was fun to look for Nessie in Loch Lomand Lake and see Inverness again from our last visit years ago.) From grass and stone huts to a store, post

office, farms, fields of animals and machinery – it told a wonderful historical tale. What could be better to top that off than a visit to a very, very old Picts village site? We hiked that site at Craig Phadrig the next day, right in the middle of the worst of Hurricane Amy. But the scenery, even with trees bending in the heavy wind, and our imaginations about the lives of the "Blue Painted Pict people" made it enjoyable, if soggy!!!



Our next day, we had planned to visit Jack Richard Blair, author of The Blair Surname book which is a 'bible' of Blair history for Blairs world-wide. We were mortified that we'd mixed up the day of our appointment to visit Jack, who had other appointments he needed to keep. So, we visited Blair Castle in Blair, (this Castle does not belong to Blairs, but to the Earl of Atholl, the family Murray) heading south again on our way to Edinburgh.



Blair Castle

Being so near to Blair, we naturally had to stop at the distillery for Blair Atholl Scotch, which had a stunning display of Virginia creeper on its walls.



Blair Athol Distillery

We carved out some time to visit Stirling Castle, which was quite full of tourists and continued rainy. But the vivid history shown throughout this castle is excellent, and we enjoyed it with the help of hand-held guides we rented.



Stirling Castle

Then on to Edinburgh, where we finally dried out a bit, as Amy left the country, and decided what better way to see Edinburgh again than on the hop-on, hop-off bus? We enjoyed two days of this exploration of old and new places in and around Edinburgh before heading back to Glasgow to catch our flight home. We loved this trip and highly recommend it to all!

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COLORADO CLAN BLAIR



At our tent in September at the Long's Peak Festival in Estes Park, Colorado:
 Front l to r: Dyani Blair Galligan, Lochlann Vincent Blair Shryack, Saoirse Blair Galligan, Conor Joss Blair, Miren Skye Blair, 2nd row: Cordylia Shryack, Erynn Blair Shryack, Leslie Blair Gallagher, Elise Corinne Blair, Adoree Blair, Jim Blair 3rd row: Tiernan James Blair Galligan, Nick Shryack, Torin Blair and Kip Baker.

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A Scottish Hero: She saw a need and she...



You know that great excitement when you meet an 'everyday hero' and realize that she's changing the world? We 'got that vibe' in Scotland in September when we met Hilary Storm at Luke and Lina Borwick's carriage house at Blair Estate. Self-effacing and soft-spoken, Hilary shared her life's work with us. After the death of her husband, when traveling in Uganda, Hilary was aware of the effect of peoples' poverty. She decided to do something about it. The result? The Hilary Storm School in Atatur, Uganda. Look at these faces. If you are donating this season, please think about this very important need and how it is changing our world for the better. DONATE!!!



Look at more sweet faces online!!!

<https://friendsofhsschooluganda.org/school-news-update/>

address: The Carriage House, Blair Estate, Dalry, North Ayrshire, Scotland, KA24 4ER

Telephone: +44 (0)1294 834663, +44 (0)7969 131090

Email: fohssu@gmail.com

CLAN BLAIR SOCIETY CHAIRS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

November/December 2025

Jim Blair, President
8861 Eagles Nest Lane
Highlands Ranch, CO 80126
303 886 8450
President@clanblair.org

Leslie Blair Gallagher, Vice President
5102 Galley Road, Lot 302A
Colorado Springs, CO 80915
720 201 3128
lvblairgallagher@gmail.com

Maggie Blair, Secretary
8 Seaward Ct.
Greer, SC 29650
803 292 7915
margaretblair@gmail.com

Vallie Blair, Treasurer
2801 Colony Woods Rd.
Gastonia, NC 28054
704 996 0734
Treasurer@clanblair.org

Scott Blair, High Commissioner
2801 Colony Woods Road
Gastonia, NC 28054
704 943 6232
clantent@clanblair.org

Nick Shryack, Web Administrator
8870 Goosander Lane
Littleton, CO 80126
207 619 0494
Nickshryack@gmail.com

Adoree Blair, Bruidhinn Editor
8861 Eagles Nest Lane
Highlands Ranch, CO 80126
303 798 3881
adoree1@outlook.com

Jim Blair, Clan Store
Information above

Elena McCrary, Librarian
29 Haven Place
San Ramon, CA 94583
925 719 0324
CBSlibrary@clanblair.org

Blair Genealogy – Vacant

Nominating Committee:
Curtis Blair, Chair
Helen Blair, OK
(3rd position vacant)

Russ McCrary
29 Haven Place
San Ramon, CA 94583