

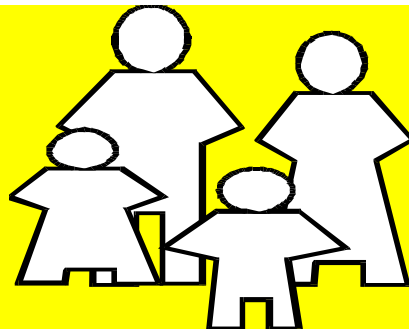
THE BLAIR SURNAME

Its Ancient Scottish Origins and the Genealogies of Three Blair Families

**The Blairs of Blair
Ayrshire
c1135 - 1978**

**The Blairs of Balthayock
Perthshire
c1205 - 1862**

**The Blairs of Ladymuir
Renfrewshire
c1597 - 1997**



Jack Richard Blair

THE BLAIR SURNAME

**Its Ancient Scottish Origins and
the Genealogies
of Three Blair Families**

Jack Richard Blair



Copyright © Jack Richard Blair 1999

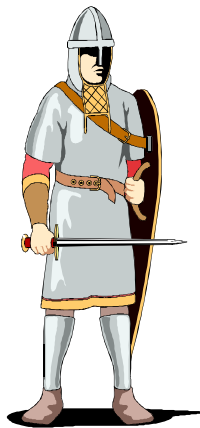
The Blair Surname: Its ancient Scottish origins and the genealogies of three Blair families

Printed by Pirion Digital Pty Ltd, Sydney, Australia, First Edition, March 1999

Reprinted March 2000, April 2006

ISBN: 0-646-36975-X

*All rights reserved. No material may be reproduced in any way
wholly or in part without written permission from the author*



C o n t e n t s

Chapter	Page
Preface	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	xiii
1. Genealogy and the Origin of Names	19
2. The Blair surname – its Etymology and Origins	23
3. Emergence of the Blairs in Scotland	25
4. The “First” Blairs	29
5. The “Early Blairs”: an evaluation	40
6. Genealogy of the Blairs of Blair	49
7. Blair House, Dalry, Scotland	65
8. The Blairs of Balthayock and their Lineage	73
9. Overview of the Blairs and their Surname	83
10. Heraldry and the Blairs	87
11. The Ayrshire and Balthayock Blairs - a common origin?	95
12. The Blairs of Ladymuir Lineage	107
13. Genealogical Lineage of Three Blair Families	147
14. Monarchs of Scotland	151
The Blair Society for Genealogical Research	160
Clan Blair Society	161
Bibliography	163



Preface

The research of this genealogical study incorporated three purposes:

1. To provide a contemporary and updated reference resource of genealogical information about the Blair of Blair and Blair of Balthayock family lineages of Scotland from their origins at the end of the 12th century to their termination in 1978 and 1862 respectively.
2. To attempt a resolution of the issue as to whether these two major Blair families of Scotland sprang from the same or separate origins - an issue that has been neglected or ignored by genealogists and historians for centuries.
3. To produce a lineage of the author's antecedents from their Blair of Blair origins in the 16th century to the New Zealand descendants of John Blair (d: 1909) until 1997.

Some people are interested in genealogy, some are not. Of those who become interested in tracing their family trees many do not become interested until some experience or the influence of some person arouses curiosity about their family and ancestral origins. It is more common for older persons to become interested in their family trees because they may wish their children and grandchildren to become acquainted with their cultural and ethnic origins and an obvious way for this to occur is through knowledge of family relatives, ascendants and descendants. What may begin with simple curiosity about near and distant relatives may develop into an engrossing pursuit to know more and more about family origins as a passion in its own right.

This project began in 1965 when Irene Blair bequeathed me a collection of family information and genealogical data that included several generations of Blairs written on sheets of paper, cardboard, the backs of envelopes and photographs, pages in school books and so on. It was an inconceivable collection of memorabilia and my first reaction was to collect it in a heap and dispose of it in the domestic dustbin. But I then experienced two further reactions which seemed more important. When sifting through the material my own curiosity was aroused by discovering relatives about whom I had never heard or knew little or nothing - yet I was blood-related to them. It became the start of a game of 'Who's Who?' - who fits in where, who is related to whom, and why? I found myself in the middle of a family jigsaw puzzle putting names and dates together and the more I succeeded the more interested and involved I became.

It was my third and final reaction which made me a genealogical convert. I realised there was such a wealth of detail and data, that to dispose of it would mean that the information it contained would be lost forever, as I was not aware of any other Blair relative who might have, or be interested in, similar material. I also realised that if I disposed of it I would be guilty of depriving succeeding generations of a wealth of information. They had as much right as I to information about their Blair heritage - and I did not have a right to deprive them of it whether they were interested or not. I also realised that my mother had spent a considerable amount of time and interest in collecting Blair family memorabilia. What right did I have to throw it away?

So I set out to organise, preserve and extend the material I had "inherited". The project has taken endless hours at the typewriter and then later at the computer keyboard. Little did I know it would be more than 30 years later before I would finish the project.

Not knowing anything, initially, about genealogy I hardly knew where or how to begin. Compiling a genealogy is both time consuming and painstakingly slow - until retirement it had to

be fitted into the busy schedule of my daily employment in the world of education. Sometimes months or several years passed while waiting to find the time to pursue the 'Family Tree' further, or to search for more or missing information. The period during which the genealogies were compiled involved a considerable amount of research and reading in libraries, correspondence and discussions with relatives, a visit to Scotland from where **John Blair (1819-1892)** migrated to New Zealand; a visit to the Great Barrier Island where he and his family settled near Auckland; as well as a visit to Blair House near Dalry, south west of Glasgow, the original manor house and castle of the Blairs and, more recently, the discovery of the Blair Society for Genealogical Research in the United States.

Like most "family historians" I regret that I did not start my research much earlier and before some of my generation had passed away. It is only now in retrospect that I can belatedly appreciate majoring in history at the University of Sydney (1970) which at the time seemed so dull and boring, but has since been of tremendous help in facilitating a positive approach to daunting genealogical material and for bringing a more historical perspective to bear on the project and bringing it finally to a conclusion: *"The Blair Surname, its Ancient Scottish Origins and the Genealogies of three Blair Families"*.



Acknowledgements

It is impossible for any genealogical research to be produced, especially in respect of ancient lineages involving many generations, without information being acquired from a variety of sources and input being contributed by many people. This study of the **Blair Surname and the inclusion of three Blair genealogies** is no exception.

I am deeply indebted to those descendants of John Blair (1819-1892) who have contributed of their time, their skills and their interest in the provision of information concerning the Blairs of Blair, the Blairs of Balthayock and the Blairs of Ladymuir, particularly the following:

- the late Irene Blair, Auckland, NZ, (granddaughter by marriage);
- the late Oliver Blair, Auckland, NZ, (grandson);
- the late Gwynneth Burgess, Auckland, NZ, (great, great-granddaughter);
- the late Robert Blair, Warkworth, NZ, (great-grandson);
- Ralph Blair, Auckland, NZ, (great-grandson);
- Phyllis Boyd, Auckland, NZ, (great-granddaughter);
- Ross Blair, Tairua, Coromandel, NZ, (great-grandson); and
- Paul Blair, Basel, Switzerland (great, great-grandson).

Without the assistance of these people and others, information concerning the Blairs would have been much the poorer.

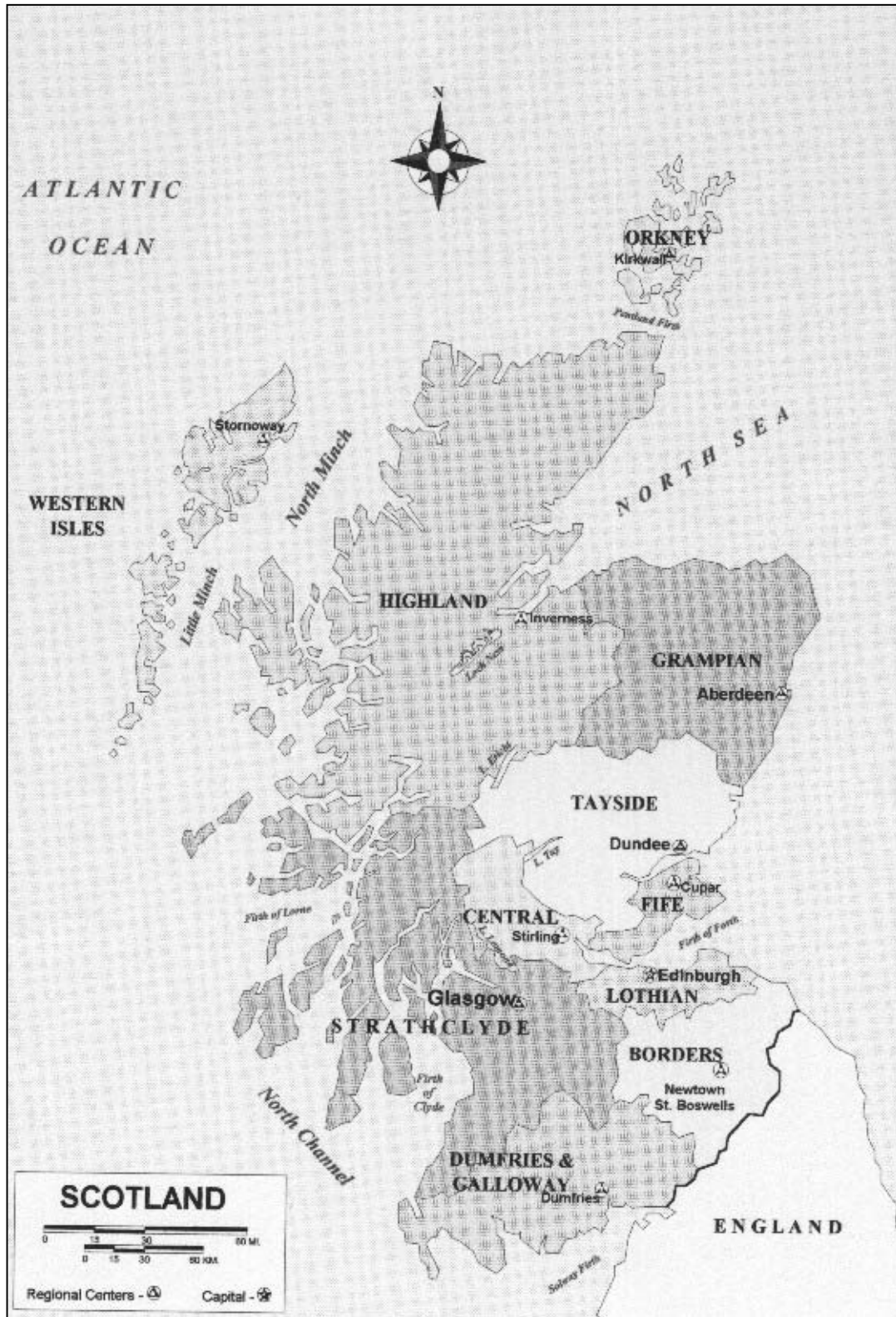
I am also grateful to Charlotte Blair Stewart of The Blair Society for Genealogical Research, Windber, PA, USA, whose valuable assistance enabled me to extend, confirm and authenticate some of the data in respect of the three Blair lineages; to Anne and Preston Groome, Convent Station, NJ, USA, for data concerning the Blairs of Balthayock; to Jared Olar of Pekin, Illinois, USA whose meticulous genealogical interest enabled data concerning the Ayrshire Blairs to be considerably refined and to Michael Blair, my son, for guiding me through the maze and mysteries of computer technology.

The interest shown and information provided have now made it possible to assemble data concerning the Blairs of Ladymuir descendants of James Blair (c1597, Scotland) to John Blair (1819-1892, New Zealand) and update the material to the 1990's so that these genealogical records will be preserved for generations to come.

Finally, I am forever grateful to my wife, Nanette, for her patience and forbearance whilst the project was "under construction" and for her invaluable help with editing.

Jack R. Blair

(Great-grandson), BA (Hons-Ed.) Dip.Soc.Welf. MAIW. MACE. MSAG. MNZFS
71 Glenhaven Road, Glenhaven, Sydney, NSW, 2156, Australia
Email: jabl@westnet.com.au
Tel: [02] 9680 2660
5 April, 2006



Introduction

A. As the general study and research of family history, genealogy involves the collection of relevant data and the collation of material into the form of a 'family tree' or a similar record which can be readily understood. The times are past, however, when the recording of family history was the prerogative of ancient uncles and aunts whose facts may have been mixed with fanciful recollections, despite which, such efforts have often stimulated, even captivated, the imagination and led others to delve deeper into genealogical sources.

It has been said that the Scottish people are the most interested in genealogy because an old Scottish adage says that: 'Heredity is a hereditary study'! The clan system of recording Scottish family history began long before civic records were maintained. Clan family links are exceptionally strong and it is true to say that where a record for a Scottish family exists, it is more often than not accurate.

It is not uncommon for some people to boast that their ancestors "came over with William the Conqueror". This is utterly misleading since many of William's followers returned to Normandy and Burke's Peerage has stated that there is not a person alive today who could trace their descent, step by step, from a follower of the Conqueror. It is hoped that Blair descendants will avoid this danger. [*Although the "first Blair" was probably a Norman it is not known how he came to Scotland*].

Those who prepare genealogies are engaged in a struggle between the need for inerrancy and the natural urge for unrestrained imagination. Both characteristics are essential since without imagination enthusiasm wanes and without accuracy the genealogy provides misleading information. There are numerous sources that can be searched for information about ancestors. Some written records, like people, are more reliable than others but these may not be easy to assess. All sources need to be critically evaluated where this is possible. In many cases various factors make this impossible since names and details may be written down without documenting the source. The researcher is also at the mercy of oral records which are so often dependent upon human memory. Nor is information in public records, *ipso facto*, guaranteed immunity from mistakes.

Genealogies can be constructed in many ways. Some are highly complex. Others are designed or limited by the amount of information available. I have tried to avoid the construction of complex patterns of recording. Some genealogies emphasise male lineal descendancies through the parent, grandparent etc., relationship whilst others endeavour to discover and include every possible descendant as well as their descendants *ad infinitum* *ad absurditatem*. The Blairs of Blair and the Blairs of Balthayock genealogies tend to follow the former pattern whilst the Blairs of Ladymuir lineage is more dispersed and inclusive since some of those listed in this lineage are living people and the lineage, unlike those of Blair and Balthayock, has not terminated. The further back one traces ancestors, however, the latter type of genealogy becomes virtually impossible to handle so that prescribed boundaries and limits are essential, not only to keep the information manageable, but even more importantly, comprehensible to the reader.

Another type of genealogy is the imaginatively narrative style written almost in anecdotal fashion. The late Robert Blair (great-grandson of John Blair 1819-1892) produced a very interesting, narrative style of genealogy in the early 1990's of John Blair, his life in Scotland, his journey to New Zealand and settlement on the Great Barrier Island in Auckland.

B. Information contained in the James Blair (c1597) and John Blair (1819-1892) genealogies is as reliable and as accurate as possible considering the records (or lack of them) available and the other sources from which details/data were able to be obtained. The purpose in compiling the New Zealand Blair genealogy was to record as much discoverable ancestral information as possible about John Blair and his ancestors so as to enable his New Zealand descendants to trace their family origins. Blair descendants can be proud of being able to trace their ancestral roots back to James Blair in the 16th century. Not many families are able to claim so many unbroken generations - an accomplishment few can rival. Such a record is worth preserving for succeeding generations.

There is, however, a tremendous disadvantage in preparing a genealogy when one lives at such a considerable distance from its ancestral source and the land of one's forebears - in this case Scotland - so that, apart from a fairly general lineal and patriarchal descendancy from James Blair there is no additional information able to be provided. Had I been a resident of Scotland, documentary records would have been more accessible and no doubt it would have been possible to produce a far more imaginative description of the lives of our Scottish ancestors, their occupations, their social and family lives and earlier aristocratic relationships. This, however, has not been possible so that the genealogies tend to represent one-dimensional descendancies.

Be that as it may, the Blairs of Ladymuir is a genealogy but not a history of a New Zealand Blair family. The genealogy traces as many descendants and their offspring as has been possible from the James Blair of 1690 until the 1990's. Little information is available from the first James Blair (c1597) to James Blair (1690).

Since I have lived in Australia from 1950 it has been exceptionally difficult to record details of more contemporary descendants so that the genealogy is in no way complete. It will be the task of current and succeeding generations to preserve the record and, hopefully, continue and expand their own family branches as time passes.

I have attempted to provide the knowledge of *who* our Blair ancestors were but, unfortunately, not a great deal of information as to *what kind of people* they were and *how they lived* their lives. If a history of John Blair (1819-1892) and his descendants is ever written it will be the responsibility of someone who is interested in the memorabilia of others and who may, with imagination, piece together the whole story of our New Zealand Blair family.

C. The most intriguing mystery associated with the Blair surname is the early existence of two contemporary 12th century Blair families in Scotland known as the Blairs of Blair in the Ayrshire Lowlands and the Blairs of Balthayock in the Perthshire Highlands. Both families have had long histories and have produced distinguished descendants.

Information concerning the Balthayock Blairs is limited but was sufficient to produce a lineage descent. Information about the Ayrshire Blairs was more available and most of the important genealogical sources were consulted: Anderson (1871); Burke (1882); Douglas (1798); Michell (1895); Paterson (1847) and Paul (1910). Contradictions were found in all and these are indicated in the relevant context.

The most intriguing fact about the little information available to link the two major Blair families is that this has led genealogists and historians to assume they were distinct and unconnected. This study scrutinises the evidence and rejects that assumption, raising difficult questions for those who adopt the "no connection" view.

A history of the two major Blair families - as distinct from a genealogical study - has yet to be written. When all Blair archival material from the Scottish Records Office, the Blair Trust and

other sources is fully available it may then be possible to produce a more accurately documented and illuminative history of the ancient “Blairs” and their descendants. Perhaps some enterprising Blair will pursue the quest?

D. The genealogist’s perspective. There are three categories of genealogists: generalists, specialists and narrative biographies. Each play different roles and employ their energies and resources in different degrees in presenting their research results.

Generalists, by accumulating information concerning selected families and dynasties may become lost in such collective research and the sheer volume of material may become so overwhelming as to impinge on the accuracy of the outcome. Some “family historians” come under this category.

The specialist genealogist, by concentrating upon a single family is less distracted than the generalist but more subject to the risk of overinterpreting data from personal incentives and presumptions. I have tried to avoid these pitfalls.

Narrative biographers, the most numerous, concentrate on accumulating details of many family links and connections and are less interested in specific pedigrees and patrilineal generations. They are less concerned with “who” antecedents were than with what they did and what they were like and, unlike other genealogists, find it difficult not to highlight and exclude sentiment from their material.

Clearly, genealogists have numerous problems. They must be dedicated to presenting the historical truth and insight into the past since the interpretation of source material lies on the borderline between critical judgement and exposition. They must be critical of their own work and the work of others. They must be prepared to destroy their own preconceptions to ensure a truthful understanding and historical perspective. A genealogical passion must be pursued with objective calculation; the genealogist must obey, not his personal predilections, but those which serve his research.

In seeking genealogical accuracy in my research of “The Blair Surname: Its Ancient Scottish Origins”, I have deferred, as one should, to genealogists in the field. To know what earlier documents meant was as much a challenge as to know whether or how much to trust them. The admissibility of a detail, a birth, a marriage, a death event, the perspective of an environment, the elimination or suspension of unconfirmed information, the certainty or vagueness of a relationship, the proper historical perspective of an occurrence as well as the ability to manage and control the accumulation of genealogical data has proved an enormous and awesome task as I have attempted to reveal something of the lives of the early Blairs.

Whilst “the only proper ambition for every genealogist”, according to G. R. Elton (*The Practice of History*, Sydney University Press, Australia, 1967), is “nothing less than the total of the historical material conceivably relevant to the genealogical research”, he is also aware that this is often impossible. Much information is missing in the three genealogies included in *The Blair Surname*, which is hardly surprising given the ancient and medieval origins of the families represented. Much Blair archival material is lodged with the Scottish Records Office in Edinburgh and elsewhere. Early Blair muniments are not easily or readily accessible and include many documents written in Latin and probably also some in Gaelic that would need careful translation and interpretation before the saga of the Blairs of Ayrshire and the Blairs of Balthayock can be fully told.

In recent years, there has been a remarkable upsurge of interest in genealogy generally and also amongst Blair descendants around the world. This may be a reflection of the social turbulence and

the instability of society and the family in the 20th century. Pride in a pedigree is no longer so important as a traceable ancestry which provides a feeling of security, of identity and a sense of personal continuity for many people, with both the past and the future.

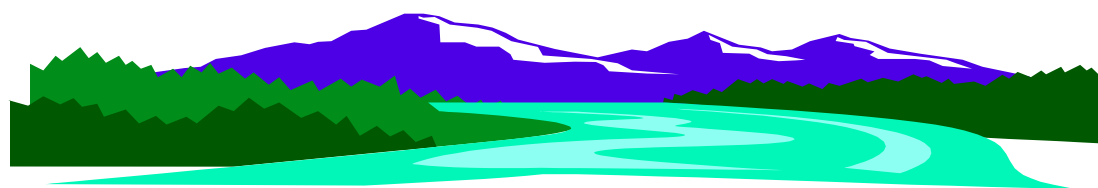
One serious detraction of *The Blair Surname* is that it does not depict the successive roles of Blair descendants in their particular historical settings which would greatly illuminate the heritage and the contribution of the Blairs to Scottish history. Even to a historian, such a task, though not impossible, would be extremely daunting since it would involve a background of 1000 years of history. The very thought of it robbed me of any ambition to pursue this path which, in any event, would probably be impossible until Blair archival material is made available to public research.

J. R. B.

Blair Castle in the Scottish Highlands

It should be clearly noted that the famous and ancient “BLAIR CASTLE” in the Scottish Highlands near the town of Blair Atholl, north of the city of Perth **has no connection with the Blairs of Blair in Ayrshire or the Blairs of Balthayock in Perthshire.**

This castle was the ancient castle and fortress of the Dukes of Atholl from the time of 1457 when King James II conferred an Earldom on Sir John Stewart of Balvenie, the ancestor of the present Atholl family.



Chapter 1

Genealogy And The Origin Of Names

A name is essential for the purpose of precise identification whether of persons or of objective phenomena. The use of personal names for individuals appeared at a very early stage in the history of mankind with single names of persons coming into use earlier than double names. Double names in the Bible are mainly confined to those who have common forenames, e.g., *Judas Barsabas* and *Mary Magdalene* to distinguish them from others with the same first name.

Most surnames have a unique history. Many can tell us something about our medieval ancestors. Fixed or descriptive surnames appear to have commenced in France about the year 1000 and according to G.F. Black (xiii, 1938) were introduced into Scotland through the Normans a little over 100 years later in the 12th century - though the custom of using surnames took a great deal longer to develop. Black quotes William Stewart as saying of Hector Boece's metrical vernacular version of the *History of Scotland* that, "at a general council held at Forfar (near Dundee) in 1061 during the reign of Malcolm Ceanmor (1057-1093) the king directed his chief subjects, after the custom of other nations, to adopt surnames from their territorial possessions", and the edict, William Stewart says, *created "The first erlis that evir was in Scotland"*. [Presumably his 'chief subjects' were the nobility, landed proprietors and the recipients of royal fiefs.]

The earliest surnames adopted were essentially descriptions identifying those who presumably represented patriarchal or allodial¹ families simultaneously with the grants of land as the first step in altering the old allodial tenures [see Note]. Information concerning this process is derived from early charters and contracts (Adams, p. 396, 1965). Normans came to be distinguished by the name of their lands because it was their fiefs which characterised them. Everyone in the king's "suit roll" was called by the name of their fief; the fief, according to Adams, "was regarded as the foundation of the *familia*"; the fief became the family name where there was no other.

Surnames do not appear in the charter of Alexander I (1106-1124) but in the reign of his brother and successor David I (1124-1153) they began coming into use. In the charter of David I for the founding of Selkirk Abbey (c1120) such names appear as Robertus de Brus, Robertus de Umfraville, Galterus de Lyndeseia etc., among the witnesses. Surnames from this time on emerge as mainly territorial, derived from the possession of lands, though Black (xix, 1938) states that some surnames were descriptive of patronymic ancestors since during the reigns of David I (1124-1153), Malcolm IV (1153-1165) and subsequently William I (1165-1214) the inhabitants of the Burgh towns were largely English (Anglians) or Normans and crafts, trades and occupations were amongst the most common contributors to the development of surnames, e.g.:

Symon le Glover	(Glovemaker)
Robert le Taillour	(Tailor)
Aleyn le Barbur	(Hairdresser)
Austin le Mercer	(Clothing items)
John le Naper	(Table software)
Thomas le Mareschal	(Military Marshal)
William le Lardyner	(Bacon and Meat Handler)

¹ **NOTE:** Allodial refers to an estate or area of property held in absolute ownership without acknowledgement to any superior.

The first people in Scotland to acquire fixed surnames were the nobles and great landowners, who called themselves, or were called by others, after the lands they possessed. Although surnames originating in this way are known as “territorial” it does not imply that every individual using the Blair surname is a descendant of the first recorded Blair surname (*Blare*). Tenants often took the names of their landlords. Towns, villages and hamlets also gave distinctive appellation to several persons unconnected by blood relationship, e.g., sometimes when someone left one of the towns or villages to reside elsewhere.

Prior to the use of surnames, lords of baronies and regalities and farmers were inclined to magnify their importance, by signing letters and documents with the names of their baronies and farms (e.g., ‘de Blare’) instead of their Christian names and surnames. This abuse went so far that eventually an Act of the Scots Parliament in 1692 forbade the practice, declaring that it was permitted only to noblemen and bishops to subscribe by their titles as legal signatures.

Names were considered to be territorial in origin when lands and/or a barony of the same name gave that name to the proprietor who had the lands given him by charter of the monarch - it was of local origin when it arose from residence in or near a village or burgh, though it should be noted that servants as well as tenants sometimes took, or were given, the name of the manor on which they resided, with, or without, the territorial “de” (of).

Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian surnames were generally formed of two words, e.g., *Hrothgar [or Roger] meaning “fame/spear”*. Surnames in the British Isles developed in the late Middle Ages [1300-1400] frequently as patronymic surnames with a prefix added to identify the holder as “the son or child of” a particular father, e.g., in Scotland (MacIntosh); Ireland (O’Reilly); Germany (Von Sturmer); the Netherlands (Van Rensburg); Spain and Italy (Di Benedetto) and Arabic countries (ibn-Saud). In England, surnames such as Jackson, Johnson and Harrison etc., indicated “son of.....” a man known colloquially as Jack, John or Harris, etc., and became fixed surnames. The French word “de” and the German word “von” when used separately to prefix a name often signified aristocracy.

A further source of surnames appears to have arisen from ecclesiastical associations. Such names as Abbott, Priest or Monk denoted that the holder was in the employ of the medieval church, not necessarily in the role implied by the word but in association with some monastic institution. Surnames such as Deacon, Dean or Sexton did not necessarily imply that such persons held those offices - they may have been sons/daughters of such ecclesiastics and the names were adopted from the descriptive role of the father.

Some surnames arose from their topographical association with a person’s place of residence such as Brook, Dale, Hill, Lake or Forrest, etc. Nicknames, which were very common, sometimes became surnames. However, some nicknames were so vulgar or vicious that either the spelling was changed to make them acceptable or they eventually ceased to be recognised.

Physical characteristics sometimes contributed to the development of surnames. Armstrong, Long, Black, Short or Stout are examples whilst in some cases it was the bearer’s personal disposition which conferred on him a surname such as Bright, Moody or Wise. Sometimes the annual calendar gave rise to a surname (e.g., March, May).

In some cultures the name of a person is of supernatural significance. Besides animistic commonplaces such as naming children after lucky persons or significant animals, there are also widespread taboo practices such as *not naming* children after living relatives or changing the name of a namesake or avoiding the name of a family totem.

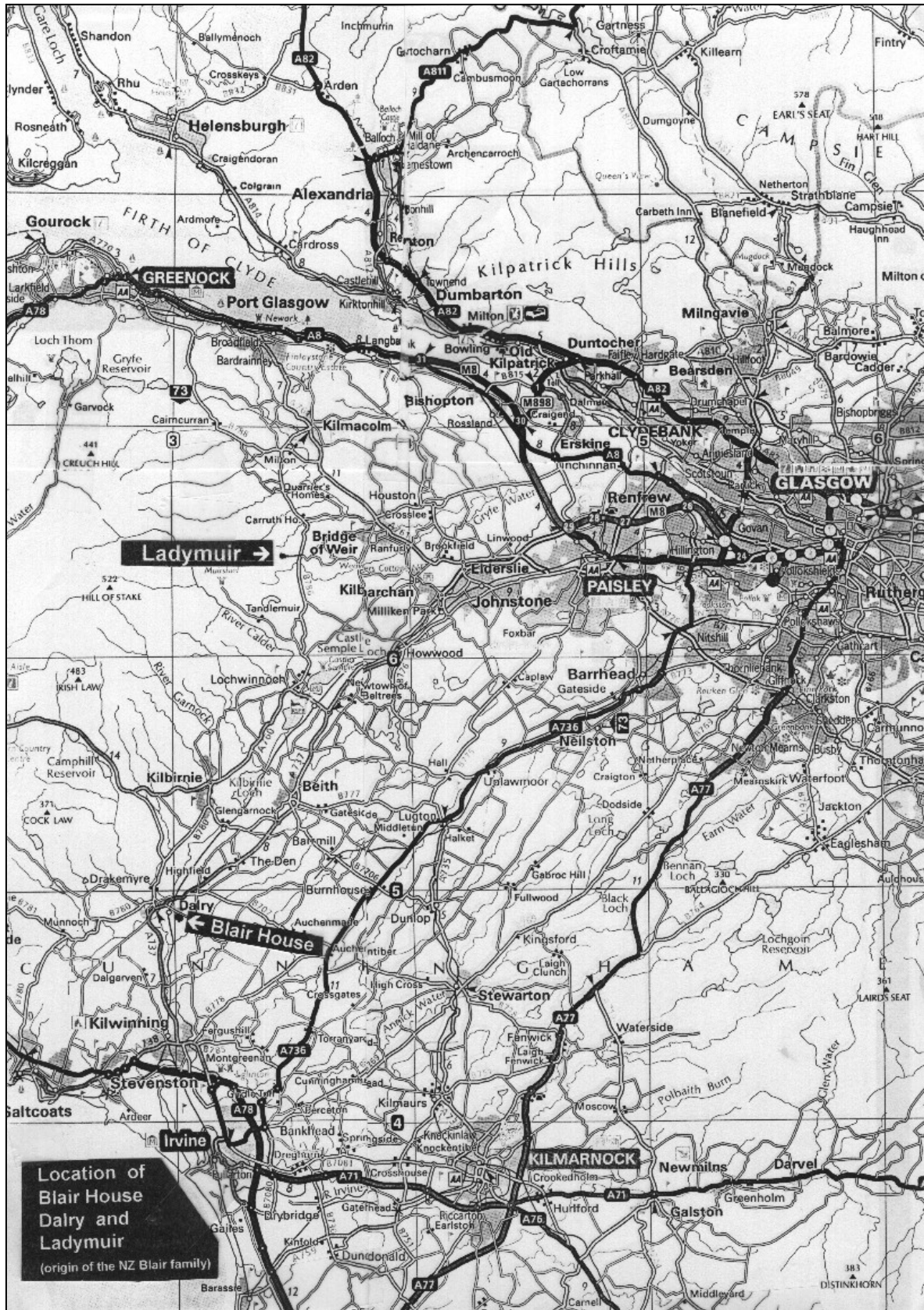
In most western cultures a woman loses her family name and adopts that of her husband at the time of her marriage, whereas non-monogamous partnerships generally avoid the merging of family names by the retention of individual surnames.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition the name has great significance especially in the case of divine names; thus the Hebrews did not utter the name of God. Christians have habitually baptised children with an appropriate Christian name, especially the name of a saint (e.g., Andrew, George), an apostle (e.g., John, Matthew), or a biblical name (e.g., Michael, Samuel). The Puritans discouraged the use of any but biblical first names .

Some surnames have no “natural origin”. When those without a surname experienced circumstances requiring one, a surname was often “borrowed”, invented or acquired from a combination of words. Many such names are purely ornamental in derivation and have no historic origins.

For those holding the **Blair** surname, the chief emphasis in this Chapter lies in the territorial derivation of surnames since the development of surnames in Scotland is closely associated with patrimony. Trade names are rare amongst the gaels of Scotland since industry was not the forte of the Scots as it was with the Norman, Flemish and English settlers in Scotland.

Since the surname of “**Blair**” is of considerable antiquity and is associated with ancient Scottish origins, how then, did the name arise?



Location of Blair House (formerly Castle), Ayrshire, south west of Glasgow.

The Blair Surname

Its Etymology And Origin

One of the difficulties in the study of genealogy is the etymology of names. During the Middle Ages (c1000 - c1400) the knowledge of the art of writing was confined largely to churchmen, scholars and scribes. When they had occasion to record a surname there was no fixed standard of orthography to guide them. Names were sometimes written down phonetically, especially unfamiliar names, in forms suggested by their sound. Consequently the spelling of some names varied greatly and even more so as a result of being written in Latin, whilst others appeared in Norman-French and still others again in the vernacular (Gaelic in Scotland).

By the end of the 15th century the spelling of names in public records of Scotland became chaotic, the same name could be spelt several different ways in the same document (e.g., Moidart might be spelt as *Mud wort*, *Midart* or *Medart*). There are a number of different spellings of the name of “Blair” (Celtic) which have been extracted from documents and records: Blar (Gaelic); Blare; Blayr, Blaer, Bllaer, Blaire and Bhlair. There may be other variations I have not discovered.

One derivation of “**blair**” other than its use as a surname is curious. Gerald-Hamilton Edwards, in a *Glossary of Terms* found in old legal and other documents states that “**blair**” described the part of flax which was used in the manufacture of products (p.194, 1983), but this seems to be a rare and probably obsolete use of the word since it is not found in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1982); *The Universal Dictionary of the English Language* (1936) or *A Critical Dictionary of the English Language* (1858).

Whilst cleared fields and plains were often referred to as “**blares**” in medieval times and it seems likely that Blair lands in Ayrshire near Dalry became identified as a particular estate of property known as the “Lands of Blare” towards the end of the 12th century, I am unaware of any evidence that supports the claim that “the name (of Blair) was given to those *who lived near fields or battlefields*” as stated by the *Encyclopedia of American Family Names* (p. 31, 1995). How close to such a “blair” would one have to live in order to be given “Blair” as a surname? And by whom? What if one already had a surname? The supposition appears to confuse a general and prescriptive term for a particular type of land and the term which was **adopted** by the original Blair family as its surname.

There is no precise or detailed information as to how or why the name of “**Blair**” originally emerged except that at least as early as the middle of the 12th century the name came to identify an area of land known as “*blare lands*” or “*lands of blare*” Ayrshire, Scotland and which, by royal fief, became associated with the *Barony of Blare* and upon which Blair Castle was subsequently built and is known today as “**Blair House**”. In the Celtic language “**Blar**” signified a plain and since the Celts often chose open places free from woods and trees for warfare it also came to mean ‘a battle’ or ‘a field of battle’ (Delquest, 1938).

It seems likely that these *blare* or *battlefield* lands were of sufficient value and importance to be conferred as a royal fief upon the person who became the progenitor of the “first” Blair [Dwelly, 1883]. According to Timothy Pont (1608) in the foundation records of the Abbey of Kilwinning in Ayrshire, Scotland, the abbey’s founder, Sir Richard Morawell, indicated that “**the ancient**

owners of the Blare Lands were surnamed **Francis and not Blare**” but also indicated that **“Blare Castle was the ancient patrinomy and heritage of the Lairds of Blare”**, [Pont, p. 80, 1608 - see Discussion in Chapter 4]. This implies that the blair lands in Ayrshire possessed by Jean Francois in the 12th century became the territorial inheritance and seat of the Blair heirs from the time the Barony of Blare was conferred by William I, (the Lion) upon Baron de Blare (John Francis), estimated to have been somewhere between the time of the king’s ascension to the throne in 1165 and before the construction of Blair Castle commenced prior to c1200.

In feudal Scotland the words Chieftain, Laird and Baron were statutory *nomen juris* (titles of authority) and recognised by the monarch. It was insulting to refer to such a person as a “territorial proprietor” or a “territorial landlord”, since, technically, such expressions meant “a publican”. The proper Scottish terms were: “The Laird of” or “The Baron of” a territorial house or *grad flaith* (territorial houses). A Scottish barony descended inevitably to the heir [Adams 407,409, 1965].

The ancient Blare Castle built near Dalry c1200 and reconstructed several times over the centuries was occupied for the next 778 years only by descendants holding the Blair surname. This is an amazing record for any family and especially for a Scottish family considering the constant conflict of wars, clan feuding and continuing social and political disruptions in Scotland throughout much of this period down the centuries.

Why was the original owner of the Lands of Blare named *Francois* and how did *Blair* and *Francois* become associated? How did the *Blairs* originate as a distinctive family? To make sense of this confusion it is necessary to retrace some history in order to set the scene for the emergence of the Blairs as a distinct and identifiable family with a history of their own.

Chapter 3

Emergence Of The Blairs In Scotland

In 1066 William the Conqueror and Duke of Normandy defeated the English King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings and was crowned King of England on 25 December of that year thus bringing many Norman warriors to England, many of whom remained to protect the king's sovereignty and later settled permanently in the British Isles.

In 1072 King William I invaded Scotland and compelled Malcolm III (Canmore), King of Scotland (1057 -1093) to do him homage at Abernethy (near Perth). Many Norman warriors accompanying the king would have remained behind in Scotland to "keep the peace". Some of these would have eventually settled where the greater proportion of the Scottish people lived - in the central and more readily accessible areas of the Scottish lowlands.

The reign of David I in Scotland from 1124 to 1153 was remarkable for enhancing the monarch's prestige, for consolidating a feudal settlement of Scotland and revitalising and transforming the Scottish Church. During his reign Scotland began to emerge as a clearly defined entity. Massive grants were made to Norman and English knights in Scotland by feudal tenure, whilst elsewhere the continuity of old custom and law was redefined and harmonised with feudal practice. Sherifdoms and Justiciars (chief political and judicial officers of the crown under Norman and early Plantagenet kings) were created and a chain of castles built in the south of Scotland to act as centres of royal and baronial authority. Such a system based primarily on land tenure involved a hierarchy of authority, rights and power that extended from the monarch, linking royalty, the nobility, lesser gentry free tenants, *villeins* (peasants) and serfs and reinforced by a complex legal system. This system began declining in the 13th century and its last vestige was officially extinguished in Russia in 1861.

Malcolm IV, successor to David I, became King of Scotland from 1153 to 1165. The king fought in France from 1159 on behalf of Henry II of England. On his return to Scotland he completed the subjection of Galloway in the south west of Scotland and continued David I's policy of replacing turbulent and disaffected Scottish chiefs with his Norman followers from England and "by the end of the 12th century the whole arable land [of Scotland] may be said to have been held by Normans", (Black, xviii, 1971)

When Henry II of England decreed in 1155 that all Flemings (Belgians) be expelled from England, doubtless many of them augmented the number of Normans already settled in Scotland. Malcolm IV may have even invited Normans to settle in Scotland since he confirmed the canons of the see of St. Andrews concerning the oblations and rents payable to the Church of the Holy Trinity from Normans, Belgians and English in addition to the Scots who lived within and without the area of St. Andrews. G.F. Black (1971) points out that by the end of the 12th century, Scotland had already a multiracially mixed population.

When William I (the title of "The Lion" was not used by his contemporaries) came to the Scottish throne in 1165, Norman warriors/settlers were also amongst those benefitting from their feudal emoluments and developing their aristocratic tenures and royal charters. The king put down several revolts during his reign in Scotland and in 1168 signed an alliance with King Louis VII which began a long period of friendship between France and Scotland and became known as the "Auld Alliance".

As a result of the Old Alliance it is again likely that more Normans came to the British Isles to

assist the king and the lairds of Scotland at a time when they sought outside help to maintain their influence and power and that these Normans were subsequently rewarded “for services rendered to the monarch” with royal charters of lands, property and the bestowal of offices.

During the 12th century, Normans were consolidating their positions of power, political aspirations and administrative skills and were involved in military exploits in both England and Scotland. Their rise to prominence, which had begun in 1066, was now reflected in knighthoods conferred for helping monarchs maintain royal power and prestige in their domains and fiefs. Amongst these were Norman “Scottish” knights who had been rewarded with royal grants of land, tenures and offices.

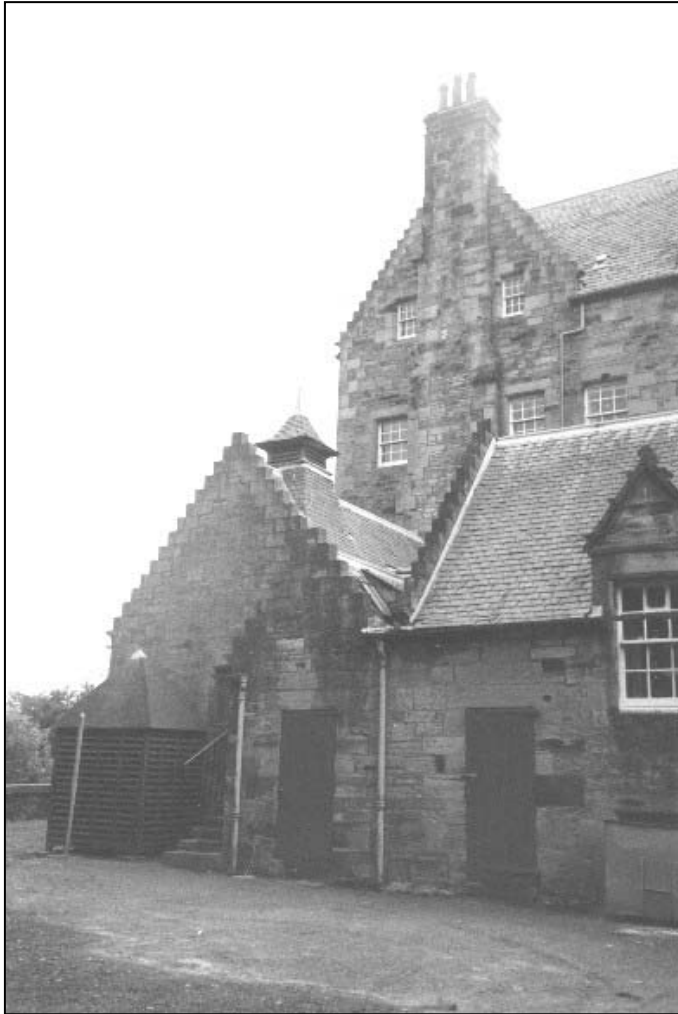
It was during this period, towards the latter part of the 12th century that the *Barony of Blare* emerged in the reign of William I (1165 - 1214) according to information published by Blair House, Dalry, Scotland, 1996: “*and granted to a Jean Francois (Francis), who was of Norman descent*”.

Who was Jean Francois [John Francis]? His name is of Norman origin. We can only speculate on how and why he found himself in Scotland. He may have settled in Scotland after arriving directly from Normandy; his antecedents may have settled in Scotland during the reigns of David I (1124-1153) or Malcolm IV (1153-1165). The Normans were a very mixed lot. Some brought the names of their castles and villages in Normandy with them; others were adventurers of different nationalities attracted to the service of William I (the Conqueror) in 1066 by the hope of plunder and possessed no family or territorial names of their own. Those who acquired lands or grants of land by royal charter in England and Scotland were called after their manors according to Black (xliv, 1971), whilst others took the name of the offices bestowed/held or the military titles given to them. Sometimes the younger son of a Norman landowner on receiving a grant of land in his new country dropped his paternal name and adopted that of his newly acquired property.

Jean Francois, then, may have arrived in Scotland directly from Normandy [see p. 29]. He may have been the son or grandson of an earlier Norman warrior who arrived with William the Conqueror, or he may have arrived at some other time between 1072 and the end of the 12th century. Whatever the case may be, it appears that **Jean Francois** is the earliest traceable ancestor of those who today claim the surname of **Blair** and their descendancy from the Barony of Blare conferred by William I between 1165 and c1200.

If Jean Francois were (or had been) a Norman warrior and subsequently a resident in Ayrshire and beneficiary of a fief he would have fitted the category of an “armigerous chief” whose families were entitled to heraldic coats of arms (Adams, p. 397, 1965). Whilst chiefs of Highland clans and tribes were simply known in their home areas as e.g. “MacLachlan” or “MacIntosh”, that is, as the sons of ‘Lachlan’ or ‘Intosh’, the custom of acquiring surnames developed differently in the Lowlands. Surnames were derived from their territorial possessions e.g., Sir Andrew de Leslie (or Laird of Leslie), the latter being the name of the fief or land grant and subsequently designated as being of a particular territory under such a title, e.g., as Dundas “of that ilk” (Dundas of the lands of Dundas), whilst cadets (descendants) were dubbed “Dundas of (name of the acquired territory)”. This practice eventually became uniform throughout the Highlands as well - probably by c1573 according to Adams (397, 1965).¹

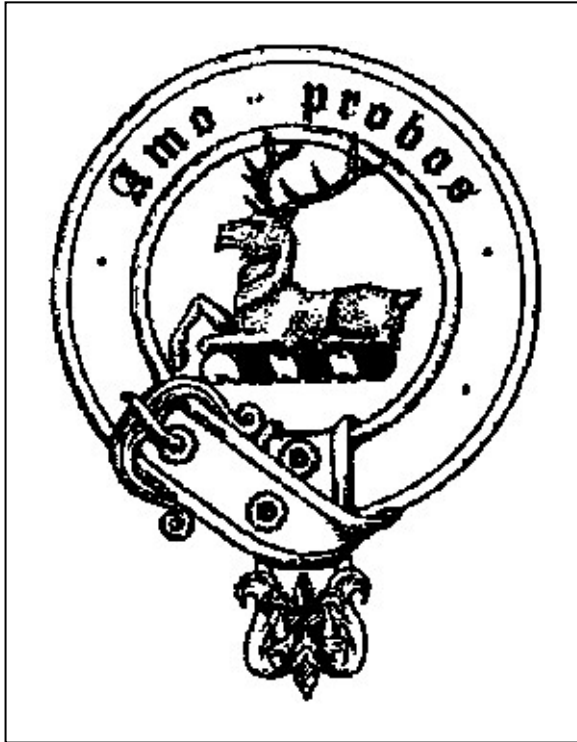
¹ **Note:** The Normans were not French but Norsemen or Vikings from the Scandinavian north of Europe who, after repeatedly raiding and devastating Normandy in the north west of France bordering the English channel, succeeded in having Normandy ceded to their first chief, Rollo, in 911 by Charles III of France. Normandy did not become part of France until 1204 under Phillip II (1165 - 1223).



Left: Rear view, facing west, Blair House, Dalry, Ayrshire. *(Photograph taken by Author, 1990).*

Below: Exterior view of Blair House showing entrance door (left). *(Courtesy of Edward P. Blair, Blair Society of Genealogical research, Brownsburg, Indiana, USA, 1997.)*





The Blair of Blair Motto:
"I love the virtuous"

View of Blair House, Dalry, Ayrshire,
facing south.
(Photograph taken by Author, 1990).



Chapter 4

The 'First' Blairs

At least seven known contenders are eligible for the honour of being known as the “first” **Blair** and as originator of “Blair” as a surname. The contenders are listed together with the sources which refer to them:

1. Jean Francois

“The Barony of Blare was granted by King William of the Scots, surnamed the Lion, in the middle of the 12th century to one, Jean Francois, a man of Norman descent. Jean’s son changed his name to Blair and he appears to have married a daughter of King John of England. He was called William and held the Barony in 1260”.

Sources : A **Blair House Information leaflet**, undated, Dalry, Ayrshire, but available in 1996 and issued to enquirers, visitors and tourists. Pont (1608) also stated that according to records of the Kilwinning monastery in Ayrshire, “the ancient owners of the Blare Lands were surnamed ‘Francis’ and not ‘Blare’, (‘Cuninghame, 1604-1608’, p. 80).

2. Stephen de Blare

“The first mention of the (Blair) surname was an entry in the “*Registrorum Abbacie de Aberbrothoc, 1178-1329*”, which recorded Stephen de Blare as witness to a charter by Dovenald, Abbe de Brechin, to the monastery of Arbroath between 1204 and 1211”.

Sources: Clan Blair Society (USA) “Blair Family Information Sheet” (1996):
RAA, 1, 74, bis, (1) pars prior, Registrum vetus munimentaue
1178--1329, G.F. Black, New York, 1971:
The Scottish Tartan Society, Comrie, Perthshire, Scotland, 3.2.1983.

3. William de Blare (Father)

4. William de Blare (Son)

“The first on record of the family of Blair was William de Blare, who in 1205, during the reign of William the Lion [1165-1214] is mentioned in a contract of agreement between Ralph de Eglington and the village of Irvine [Ayrshire]. The contract was witnessed by his son [also named] William de Blare”.

Sources: E. Dwelly, history researcher, “**The Oban Times**”, 20 October, 1883, Scotland;
Douglas vide Nisbet, Vol. 1, p. 2; Sir George McKenzie’s Precedency, p. 68)

5. Alexander de Blare

6. Brice de Blare

“Alexander de Blare and Brice de Blare were witnesses to an agreement between the burgh of Irvine [Ayrshire] and Brice de Eglunston (Eglintoun, Eglintoun or Eglinton) in 1205”.

Source: ‘Muniments of the Royal Burgh of Irvine’, ed., J.S. Dobie, Edinburgh, 1890-91, 2v. (1), p.3; G.F. Black, p. 81., RDSN., p. 263.278, 1971.

“Alexander de Blare witnessed charters by Christina Corbett and her spouse in favour of the Priory of St. Andrews in Fifeshire c1241”.

“Alexander de Blare was granted lands in the Highlands of Scotland by royal charter between c1220-1230 in the reign of Alexander II (1214-1249)”.

Source: RPSA, Liber cartarum prioratus Sanct Andree in Scotia.....Edinburgh, 1841, G.F. Black, p. 81., - RPSN., pp. 263, 278, 1971.

“Alexander de Blare was witness to a charter by Fergus, Earl of Buchan, before 1214”.

Source: Collections for a history of the shires of Aberdeen and Banff, Aberdeen, 1843, G.F. Black, 1971.

“Alexander de Blare witnessed a charter by Randulf de Strethphetham”. (Date not given but presumably in the early 1200’s).

Source: REB., ‘Registrum episcopatus Brechinensis.....’, Edinburgh, 1856, II, 3, G.F. Black, 1971.

7. William Francis de Blare

Timothy Pont in “Cuninghame, 1604-1608”, edited by Dobie, Glasgow, Scotland, 1876, claimed that Jean Francois, following the conferral of the Barony of Blare, named his son **William Francis de Blare**.

8. Sir William de Blare

Son of Alexander de Blare. Knighted during the reign of Alexander II (1214-1249). Witnessed a charter by Malcolm, 7th Earl of Fife (date unknown). Was Seneschal (Castle or Manor Steward) of Fife, 1235.

Source: G.F. Black, p. 81, 1971

An Assessment Of The Sources

My assessment of the sources of reference to early Blairs begins with information contained in the Blair House pamphlet (available 1996), issued for the benefit of visitors, tourists and those enquiring about Blair House near Dalry - the original manorial castle built on the Lands of Blare which came into possession of the Blairs during the reign of William I. My primary assumption is that such information would have been researched for authenticity prior to publication since it would seem inconceivable that Blair House and the Blair Trust Company under which the estate is managed (1994) could or would issue information about the ancient Blair family without such information having been reputedly researched, even when reduced to several sentences in a brief tourist pamphlet.

It would also seem inconceivable that inaccurate information could be published, however unwittingly, without some Scottish genealogy organisation; a heritage trust; an archival body; the Registrar of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest (Strathclyde Regional Council) or some historian or researcher, acting to correct any misinformation, particularly if such data could be responsible for contributing to historical misrepresentation.

Whilst information contained in the Blair House pamphlet may represent the starting point, other sources of information concerning early Blairs also form the substantial basis for discussion concerning the foundation of the Scottish “Blair” family. I have no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Blair House claim which states that: ‘In the middle of the 12th century, King William I granted the Barony of Blare to Jean Francois (John Francis), a Norman whose son changed his name to de Blare..... (this son) appears to have married a daughter of King John I of England and held the Barony of Blare in 1260’, though I do question the veracity of the final statement that it was the son (and not a grandson) of Jean Francois who held the Barony of Blare in 1260.

My approach does not preclude an examination and comparison of information contained in the Blair House leaflet with statements or claims in terms of historical and scholarly research material that is both relevant and available, since the origin and emergence of the Blairs as an historical family needs to be placed in a solid historical perspective so that the numerous scattered references to them may help clarify the confusion surrounding the origin of the Blair surname and Blair family origins.

Source 1: Jean Francois

The Blair House leaflet claims that the original owners of the Lands of Blare were not named Blare but Francis and that the Barony of Blare was granted by King William to a Norman, Jean Francois (or John Francis in its anglicized translation). Pont (1608) quoted by John Dobie in 1876 (p. 80) supports the claim that the ancient owners of the Lands of Blare were surnamed “Francis” and refers, “as proof of this, to the foundation records of the Monastery of Kilwinning in Ayrshire”. (Kilwinning today is a small city about 5 kilometres south of Blair House, near Dalry). Who, then, was Jean Francois?

In the 12th century, King David I (1124-1153) initiated a policy of replacing unreliable Scottish chiefs with Norman followers by rewarding them with territorial possessions to ensure their loyalty. This policy, according to G.F. Black (xviii, 1971) was continued by his successor, King Malcolm IV (1153-1165). Since John Francis was a Norman it seems highly likely that he became the owner of the Lands of Blare as a result of the royal policy and was made a Baron (a member of the

nobility and vassal of the king) in order to reinforce support for the monarch, particularly at a time when Scottish chiefs were quarrelsome and turbulent and their loyalty to the sovereign often in doubt.

It is not clear from Dobie's statement, however, whether he means Jean Francois had already had the Lands of Blare conferred upon him (as a royal fief) and an existing ownership was already established and then confirmed by the bestowal of the barony as a further royal favour for 'services rendered' and/or, 'loyalty purchased'.

If the ancient owners of the Lands of Blare were named "Francis" (Pont, 1608), it is possible that Jean Francois (or his forebears) owned and occupied the lands prior to the ascension of William I to the Scottish throne in 1165, having been "awarded" the Lands of Blare by the previous king, his brother Malcolm IV (1153-1165) under the policy Malcolm inherited from David I of rewarding loyal Normans with territorial fiefs. If this were the case then being created Baron Blare by William I would have represented a further reward as well as confirmation and consolidation of his tenure and ownership of the Lands of Blare already held in his possession.

Since Francois is a Norman name we can be certain that the owners of the Lands of Blare were of Norman extraction though it is not known how, or when, Jean Francois arrived in Scotland; how long he had owned the Blare lands; what purpose had initially brought him to Scotland; what status he held in the community - whether as a landed proprietor or vassal of the king; what service he rendered the sovereign or why the king bestowed upon him the title of Baron. There is a clear presumption, however, that Jean Francois was securely associated with the Lands of Blare either prior to, or as a consequence of, being created a baron, since a territorial barony could hardly be granted in terms of land or estates over which an individual held no fief.

Whatever the status of Jean Francois' ownership/tenure of the Lands of Blare in the 12th century, he was granted a territorial barony by the king and from this it can be inferred that the honour itself conferred status, social and political standing. The words "chieftan", "Laird" and "Baron" (in the feudal sense) are each a statutory *nomen juris* found in use both by the Kings of Scotland and in the records of Parliament (see previous chapter) so that Baron Blare and his title would have been of sufficient importance for him to adopt "de Blare" as a surname and bestow it upon his offspring. We do not know whether Jean Francois adopted the de Blare surname himself - though there is some evidence that a son, William, either had the de Blare surname bestowed upon him by his father or that he assumed the nomenclature as a surname for himself as the heir and inheritor of the Lands and Barony of Blare.

In 1061, Malcolm III had issued an edict directing his chief subjects to adopt territorial surnames as was becoming the custom in other nations at that time so there were compelling reasons for Jean Francois, having acquired the Barony and Lands of Blare sometime after c1165, to assume the title of Baron John Francis de Blare or some variation of such a title, though I have been unable to ascertain with certainty whether he did so.

At this point in history prior to 1200 the word BLARE was transformed into a surname, either from its adoption by Jean Francois (John Francis) in accord with the royal edict of 1061 or firstly by his son, William de Blare at sometime during the period after 1165.

Despite the paucity of information and the mystery surrounding Jean Francois we can establish that:

1. HE was of Norman origin and either he or his antecedents had come to Scotland and/or England from Normandy (today part of France) between 1066 and c1150, or he had been

born in Scotland c1135.

2. HE was married.
3. HE had at least one child, a son, named William, whom he made his heir.
4. HE and his son lived in Ayrshire during the reign of King William I.
5. HE bestowed the surname of “de Blare” upon his son (or his son assumed the surname for himself).
6. HE owned and occupied land known as the Lands of Blare in Ayrshire near Dalry, granted him as a royal fief.
7. HE was created Baron de Blare by William I before 1200. (Blair Castle was in process of being built c1202 so it is safe to assume he was made a Baron prior to that date).

It is possible that Dwelly’s “first Blare”, William de Blare (the father) mentioned in the 1205 contract is identical with Jean Francois whose son changed his name to de Blare. (This aspect is discussed further on). Although Source 1 states that the son of Jean Francois changed his name to William de Blare, it raises some puzzling issues since Dwelly (1883) whilst stating that the first Blair was a William de Blare who also had a son, William de Blare, makes no mention of a Jean Francois.

Though “de Blare” as a territorial surname arose *as a consequence of the conferral of the title of Baron* upon Jean Francois, this alone would not necessarily have obligated him to change his name from *Francis to Blare* - though there would have been many advantages in so doing, particularly if the conferral of the Barony had improved or secured his tenure over the Lands of Blare so as to have enhanced his status in the community. It was common for barons of the time to adopt the nomenclature of their newly acquired titles in conjunction with territorial identities in order to enhance their status by identifying themselves more closely with their manorial possessions and to elevate their social recognition and political advantage as a gesture of fealty to the monarch - but not least as a result of the forces and influences of assimilation which would, over time, transform the Normans into Scottish natives and citizens by the permanent replacement of Norman names by the names of their territorial possessions. On the other hand, if Jean Francois already enjoyed esteem, status and the privileges of nobility in owning the Lands of Blare there may have been little incentive for him to relinquish his established and recognised name of Francis in exchange for de Blare.

One can only speculate on the way in which Jean Francois identified himself after being made a Baron by King William I. It seems very likely that by whatever nomenclature he was known there would be a public expectation for him to be closely identified in some way with the new status conferred upon him by the king. So whilst he may have been disinclined to change his Norman name of Francois (or Francis) he may have been known as Jean Francois (or John Francis), Baron de Blare or perhaps Baron Francis de Blare, which would probably have satisfied Norman pride simultaneously with a salutary acknowledgement that Blare had become his new and particular identification as a “Laird of the Manor”.

Nevertheless, the most compelling incentive and perhaps a powerful precedent for Jean Francois to adopt de Blare as his surname would have been *the royal edict of 1061 directing the king’s chief subjects to adopt territorial surnames*. Whether barons counted as ‘chief subjects’ may be an open question so that we do not know whether he was ‘royally obligated’ to change his

nomenclature. He may have done so and history has failed to accord it any significance - or to record it at all. No historians appear to have noted whether any baron by the name of John Francis changed - or varied - his nomenclature. It is possible that Dwelly's William de Blare (the father) may be identical with John Francis and Dwelly either ignored or was unaware of the changed nomenclature.

If Jean Francois was not a young man when granted the Barony of Blare, this may have produced further resistance to changing his name to Blare since it is not a simple matter to change a name that has represented a specific identity for much or all of one's life as well as to one's forebears. Similar considerations, however, would not apply to a son of Jean Francois, who, in addition to complying with the king's edict of 1061 concerning surnames would experience far greater incentive to identify himself more directly with the Barony of Blare. It seems highly likely that the son, William de Blare, would have been born in Scotland so that Scotland, not Normandy was his native land. He would have been bilingual since it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for him to have made his way in life identifying only with a Norman ancestry which he may have grown away from or to whom it had become a foreign culture. There would have been even more reason for such a son, and heir, to identify himself with the Barony and Lands of Blare in terms of his inheritance and family succession to the estate and Castle. The de Blare surname, in association with the barony, would also facilitate his acceptance by, and integration with, the Scottish landed gentry and nobility of the area and of the times. If the son were a comparatively young man - as seems likely - he would have absorbed a cultural acclimatisation which would have tended to make him more Scottish than Norman - his Norman links would have been in the past and gradually becoming less influential or important in his outlook, his relationships and his daily life as he grew older. All of these factors would exert a far greater influence upon the son, William, than upon the father, Jean Francois, who would probably feel far more disposed to cling to the past and to some of his Norman attitudes and values, at least those he considered important.

Although it could be argued that Jean Francois may have been born in Scotland so that all the considerations discussed above would also have applied to him, this does not seem as likely since he was apparently using his Norman - and foreign - name in Scotland at the time he was granted the barony by the king. This implies, *at least up to this point in time*, that Jean Francois was recognised by his Norman name, or its anglicized equivalent and it also tends to suggest that he was either born in Normandy or, if born in Scotland, that insufficient time had elapsed for acclimatisation factors to have influenced him to change his name.

A further problem, however, arises. Although the son, William Francois changed his name to "de Blare" (which is implied by Sources 1 and 3/4), Pont stated in 1608, that although the period during which the proprietors of the Lands of Blare assumed "de Blare" as a surname is not precisely known, "..... Blare was used in addition to Francis for some time.....until at least c1400" and then refers to a Francis de Stane from 'a family of some importance', whom he considers may be a brother or another son of John Francis. He also refers to a charter granted to Andrew Franc in 1294 and charters granted to Magister (Master) Frauncys in 1317 and 1337. Pont (1608) ignores several historically recorded de Blares mentioned around 1205 so that the 'Francis' names he mentions could only represent descendants of a brother or brothers of Jean Francois but not of Jean Francois himself. The only other alternative would be if any sons of John Francis (excepting the heir) retained their Norman Francois (Francis) surname or perhaps used it in conjunction with Blare. Pont claims that this occurred in the case of the son and heir of John Francis who named his son *William Francis de Blare*. He also states that the name of 'Francis' frequently occurs in the *Rotuli Scottiae* about the same period.

Dwelly's "first" Blair (Source 3) was William de Blare 'mentioned in a 1205 contract in Ayrshire'. He would probably have been in his forties since his son - also named William de Blare - witnessed

the contract and would have been at least in his early twenties in order to validate a minimally mature contractual status. Dwelly does not indicate whether William de Blare (the father) had changed his name from Francis or was a son of John Francis. Since the contract was signed in 1205, the time scale implies that he would have been born no later than c1165 - though it is possible for him to have been born years earlier and also for him to have changed his name (if he were identical with Jean Francois) to William de Blare - only that Dwelly (1876) does not confirm it. It also leaves the further problem unresolved of why he would also change “John” to “William” when there would appear to have been no reason to do so.

To recapitulate the assessment up to this point:

1. Three sources state that the son and heir to the Lands of Blare changed his name to either **William de Blare** or to **William Francis de Blare**.
2. Whether this William de Blare is the first or the second William de Blare (as listed in the Blair House lineage) is uncertain.
3. The use of *Francis as a surname* could only attach to *brothers* of John Francis and **their** descendants. Such individuals could not be blood-kinsmen of the son of John Francis (William de Blare) and his descendants.
4. Any sons of John Francis other than the heir, William, may have opted to use either Francis or de Blare as a surname. Such sons would be blood-brothers of William de Blare whether or not they adopted “de Blare” as a surname.
5. The first *Blairs* to emerge then in Scotland would have been John Francis (if he assumed de Blare as a surname); followed by his son and heir William or William Francis de Blare and any other sons of John Francis (if they adopted, assumed or were given the “de Blare” surname.)
6. Between c1165 and 1205 it is highly unlikely there could have been more than a mere handful of families recognised by the name of Blair (e.g., any sons of Jean Francois named Blair and their sons) and only one Blare of Blare (William, the son and heir apparent to the barony of Blare).

Dobie (1876) pointed out that “a charter noticed in the inventory of [Blare] Family Writs was granted to a Hugh *Francis* Blare”. Although the date of this charter is not given it was sealed in the presence of Roger, Abbot of the Monastery of Kilwinning c1400. Whilst this seems to imply that some descendants of Jean Francois were still using the conjunction of “Francis” with “Blare” 200 years after the Blares emerged in Scotland it may also reflect an exaggeration since it is not uncommon for parents to give their children names of relatives and ancestors. Since the original owners of the Lands of Blare were surnamed Francis it is not at all unlikely that the given names of some descendants - perhaps for generations to come - would include ‘Francis’ in some of their offspring’s names.

Both sources 1 and 3 refer to a William de Blare as the “*son of Jean Francois*” and “*William de Blare respectively*” whilst Pont (1608) stated that Jean Francois named his son, “*William Francis de Blare*”. Though it is difficult to establish whether these three “Williams” were one and the same person, sources 1, 3, 4, and 7 seem to suggest that they were. This interpretation also fits in with the appropriate time frame that Jean Francois was born c1135 as indicated by the descendancy lineage of Blair House. However, it does not accord with the claim of the Blair House leaflet (1996) that Jean Francois’ son, William de Blare, “held the Barony of Blare in 1260”, since

he would have been minimally c96 years of age - not impossible, but extremely dubious that he would be called upon at that age to witness the royal charter of Alexander III to the Abbacy of Dunfermline c1260! If, however, Dwelly's William de Blare (the father) mentioned in the 1205 contract were identical with Jean Francois, i.e., *and if he had assumed the de Blare surname* this would then fit the Blair House leaflet (1996) data and his son would have been minimally c75 years of age around 1260 and have been more likely to have witnessed the royal charter at Dunfermline. Whilst this conjecture seems plausible it cannot be confirmed by the availability of current information.

Source 1 claims that William de Blare appears to have married a daughter of King John I (Lockland) of England [born 1167] during the king's reign from 1199 to 1216. If a daughter had been born to the king at the earliest possible date she would have reached a marital age of around 20 by 1205 to 1210. William de Blare could have been about 20 in 1205 so the time scale is appropriate. He would then have been c75 by 1260 so it is possible he could still have been in possession of the Barony of Blare at that time since no date of death is known and could have been the same William de Blare who witnessed the royal charter of Alexander III to the Abbacy of Dunfermline c1260, (although Dwelly (1883) expresses uncertainty whether the two Williams were the same person). Though this deduction again suggests that the first William de Blare (the father) and John Francis may have been identical - it cannot account for the substitution of **William** for **John** which would seem quite unnecessary.¹

Source 2: Stephen de Blare

Stephen de Blare's use of the "de Blare" surname establishes his filial relationship with those who came into possession of the Lands of Blare and later became known as "the Blairs of Blair". Since he did not succeed to the Lands and Barony of Blare he may have been a son of John Francis and therefore a brother to the heir, William de Blare (b. c1185).

His being witness to a charter concerning the monastery of Arbroath between 1204 - 1211 not only identifies him as a contemporary of the second William de Blare (see Blair House genealogy) but places his minimal age as being in the early twenties in order to validate his contractual status so that he would have been born between c1183 to c1190 or possibly earlier. However, if it is assumed that the heir, William de Blare, were the eldest son (as was customary for inheritance and succession to property), this narrows his date of birth from c1180 to c1190 (or earlier than this if William, the heir, were born earlier than c1185).

Since de Blare did not exist as a surname until conferral of the Barony of Blare after 1165 *the first and only persons entitled to use the de Blare surname would have been the offspring of John Francis*. Stephen de Blare witnessed a contract concerning the monastery of Arbroath between 1204 and 1211 so this would place his probable birth date (assuming minimum legal status) at c1186 to c1190 if he were also a younger brother of William de Blare. The contemporary time frame could also make him eligible to be a younger brother of William, the heir.

It is difficult to escape a conclusion other than that Stephen de Blare was a younger brother of William de Blare (c1185) since he could not have used, nor would he have been entitled to use, the "de Blare" surname *unless* he was a direct male descendant of the first Baron Blare (John Francis).

¹ William was originally a Norman name and had never been known in Scotland as the name of a person until Prince Henry, oldest son of David I (reigned 1124-1153) bestowed it upon his second son together with the Norman prefix "de", deferring to a characteristic of French nobility and feudal tenure. The precedent existed then, for the son of a Norman to be given a Norman instead of a Scottish first name: William.

Any brothers, excepting the heir, would have been free to settle elsewhere in Scotland and establish their own families. Stephen de Blare's witnessing the charter at Arbroath raises the question as to whether he could have been the progenitor of the Blares of Balthayock in Perthshire (now Tayside). Arbroath, a seaport town on the east coast of Scotland is no more than 50 kilometres east of Balthayock. However, as Stephen de Blare does not appear in the Balthayock Lineage he may have been a young man perhaps in his twenties between 1204-1211 and have already left Blare Castle in Dalry, Ayrshire by this time and settled elsewhere.

The capacity in which Stephen de Blare witnessed the monastic charter at Arbroath is not known but it was customary for witnesses to royal charters to be "tenants-in-chief of the Crown; nobles or ecclesiastics (bishops)" (Dwelly 1883). This implies that Stephen de Blare would have been a person of some esteemed public status - though it is not known whether the charter he witnessed was a royal fief or whether it may have been possible for him to have witnessed the charter without the customary qualifications.

In respect of Stephen de Blare we can deduce the following:

- (a) he was a contemporary of William de Blare (b. c1185) .
- (b) the use of "de Blare" at this early date places him in context as a son of Jean Francois and younger brother to his son, William the heir, since only the offspring of Francois (or the son, William) would be using "de Blare" as a surname at this early time.
- (c) in order to witness the monastic charter at Arbroath he was either eligible in terms of statutory requirements or else resided and was "well connected" in Fifeshire, between 1204-1211.
- (d) he was minimally in his twenties, possibly older.

Source 3: William de Blare

In 1883 Dwelly claimed that the first traceable Blair was a William de Blare mentioned in a contract with the village of Irvine in 1205 and that the witnesses to this contract included a son, also named William. A son of William de Blare, would have satisfied the requirements of nobility in order to witness the contract. Although the circumstances resulting in the father, **William de Blare**, being 'mentioned' in the 1205 royal charter are not known, it can be inferred that the son, (or both father and son) were, as baron and heir to a barony, associated with the nobility and aristocracy of the times.

The son, William (witness to the charter of 1205) would have been at least in his twenties in order to validate documentation, so that his father, would also minimally have been in his early forties (or older) and, therefore, have been born not later than c1160, perhaps even earlier. The son would have been born c1185 or earlier. *These estimates are the latest they could have been born whilst remaining consistent with the available documentary time-frame.*

Whilst it was possible for the son, William de Blare (b. c1185) to have held the Barony of Blare in 1260 it would have been impossible for the father (b. c1135 on the Blair of Blair House Lineage) to have done so, since his age would have been between c100 to c125! This conundrum provides serious conjecture over the identity of the first William de Blare listed in the Blairs of Blair House Lineage.

If John Francis had been one more generation removed his minimal birth date would have been c1115 or earlier, which would have made him at least 50 and possibly much older when the Barony was conferred by King William I. Under this assumption, the first William (b. c1135) would then be a son of John Francis and his son, William, a grandson, whilst Stephen, Alexander and Brice de Blare would probably also be grandsons. This conjecture, however, makes it impossible for either of the two William de Blares to have witnessed the charter of Dunfermline in 1260.

Source 4: Alexander de Blare

Alexander de Blare also uses the “de Blare” surname, revealing his filial relationship to Jean Francois and the two William de Blares discussed in the previous section. With additional information, however, Alexander de Blare, is more readily identifiable. He witnessed an agreement in Ayrshire (1205) in the Lands of Blare area; also another agreement concerning the Earl of Buchan before 1214 as well as charters in St. Andrews, Fifeshire (close to Blare of Balthayock territory) .

In “The Blairs of Balthayock and their Lineage ” (chapter 8) Alexander de Blare is stated to be the progenitor of the Balthayock branch of the Blairs. In Fifeshire he was granted the Lands of Konakin (near the Balthayock Blair’s territory) between 1220-1230 and later came into possession of part of the Lands of Nyden - possibly on the death of his wife’s father, Hugh de Nyden. As the kith and kin of Baron Blare of Blare he would have had sufficient status to have established himself amongst the nobility and landed gentry - and this is what appears to have occurred by his becoming the first recorded Blare of Balthayock according to that branch of the Blair family genealogy.

Despite this distinction, however, Alexander de Blare was not the “first” **Baron Blare of Balthayock**. This honour was not conferred until c1370 upon a Patrick de Blare. It is curious how the Blairs of Balthayock continued to describe themselves as “de Blare”, indicating their kinship with the Blairs of Blair in Ayrshire, until nearly 1400. The de Blare nomenclature only appears to have been replaced by Blair as a “fixed” surname by the Balthayock Blairs after they became securely ensconced at Balthayock and established their separate Baronial identity. As a contemporary of William de Blare, heir of Blare Castle, Alexander de Blare was probably a younger brother of William and born somewhere about 1186. Patrick de Blare was the first Balthayock Blair to identify his barony as an aristocratic tenure in its own right and from 1393, according to Douglas, all succeeding Balthayock Blairs followed this pattern and ceased to identify themselves as “Blairs of Blair” and were described as [*Patrick, Thomas, Alexander etc.*] Blairs of Balthayock thereafter [187.1798].

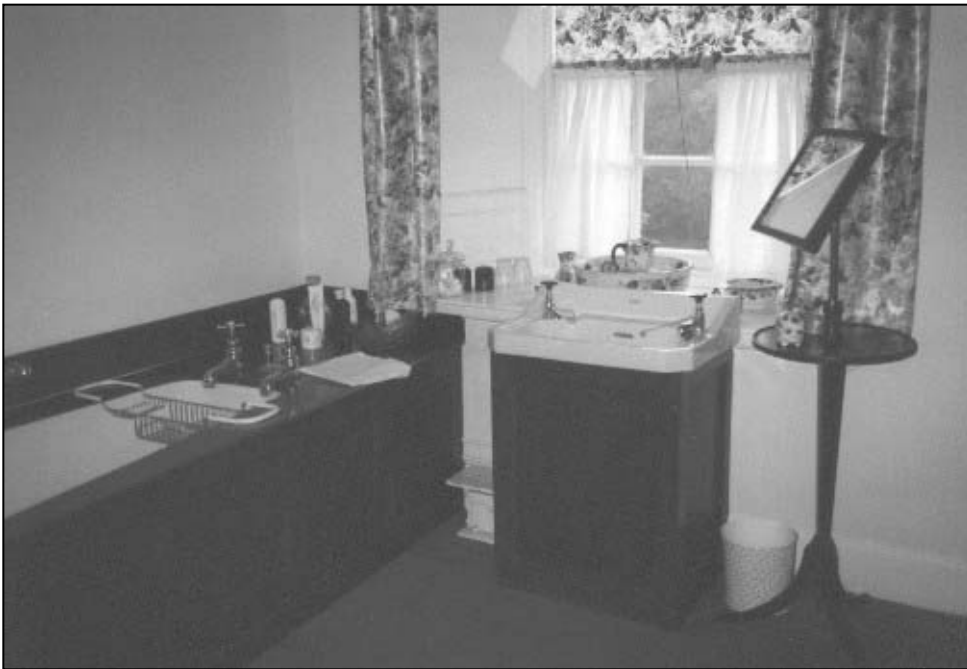
Source 5: Brice de Blare

The chief significance of Brice de Blare in being a co-witness with Alexander de Blare to a contract between the village of Irvine and Brice de Eglington in 1205 is that he was not only a contemporary of Alexander and William and Stephen de Blare, but that this event also places him within the context of a similar filial relationship so that because of the time-frame he also appears to be a brother to the other three de Blares.

Since he was a signatory to a contract between the Village of Irvine and a Ralph de Eglington (possibly a brother of Brice de Eglington) in 1205 this evidences that he was residing in Blare of Blare territory in Ayrshire at that time. Nothing further is known about Brice de Blare other than that the date of the contract reveals him as a contemporary of William de Blare and that he was probably born about the same time as the other de Blares, William, Alexander and Stephen.



Furnished bedroom
Blair House, Dalry, Ayrshire, Scotland.
(Courtesy of Paul Blair, Basle, Switzerland, 1997).



Bedroom ensuite
Blair House, Dalry, Ayrshire, Scotland.
(Courtesy of Paul Blair, Basle, Switzerland, 1997).

Chapter 5

The ‘Early Blairs’ : An Evaluation

Despite a paucity of historical documents and recorded information concerning the emergence of Blairs in the history of Scotland it has been possible, nevertheless, by cross-checking sources of information and contextualising details and references, for a surprisingly contoured picture of early Blairs to emerge from what appeared at first to be merely scattered paint on a blank canvas. From the assessment and discussion of sources in Chapter 4, seemingly disconnected, irrelevant and isolated references to rather vague, historical people have become transformed to produce a much clearer outline, revealing a more increasingly cohesive family of Blairs than was initially imagined - or even thought possible. By no means, however, does this imply that all the questions and the mystery have been solved concerning the original emergence of the Blair family - only that some of the disconnected and missing pieces of information have been fitted into some of the previously empty spaces and the picture is now more recognisable whereas previously it was very blurred and disconnected .

This chapter now recapitulates and reinforces the assessment of the previous chapter so as to provide greater clarification of the origin of the Blairs. We know that a territory known as the Lands of Blare in Ayrshire came into the possession of a family or person known as Francis (or Francois), of Norman origin, toward the latter part of the 12th century. We do not know when, how or why Jean Francois came to Scotland except that it was after 1066 and prior to 1165 when many Norman warriors came with William the Conqueror in addition to many other Normans who arrived later as a result of their help being sought by Scottish kings to assist them maintain royal power and prestige during periods of turbulence and rebellion amongst Scottish chiefs. Jean Francois may have either arrived in Scotland from England or directly from Normandy during this 100 year period or he may have been born in Britain, the son, the grandson, or even a fourth generation son, of a Norman.

The Lands of Blare in Ayrshire, Scotland, were either *confirmed as the possession of John Francis* or else *conferred upon him at the time he was created Baron of Blare after 1165*. by King William I (The Lion). Whatever the case, the lands would have been a royal fief in terms of the feudal system of vassalage of those times.

At this period in Scottish history it was a customary feudal practice for the monarch to confer an estate upon a vassal after he had sworn homage or fealty to the king. By the 11th century the specific duties of fealty were established and included financial obligations and military service. An oath of fealty was followed by an act of allegiance and homage by the vassal and was a formal process of investiture. This system of feudalism enabled monarchs to obligate the loyalty of vassals to support them in their wars and private feuds.

As a vassal of the king there may have been two investitures involving Jean Francois; the first when (and if) he obtained the Lands of Blare as a royal fief and the second when he was created a Baron. Research does not disclose whether these events were separated over time or whether they occurred simultaneously.

“Blair” as a surname arose as a direct consequence of Jean Francois becoming a Baron of the Lands of Blare and was thus “territorial” in origin. Although it is not known how Jean Francois (or John Francis) was known or described himself. He could have been known as Baron Francis de Blare since this would have complied with the edict, contingent upon barons being included within

the category of “chief subjects of the king”. Since his baronage brought him into association with the nobility (if he were not already moving within the aristocracy) it seems very likely that he would have been under an obligation to adopt his territorial name as his identifying surname though research has not revealed whether or if he did so. William, the son of John Francis and heir to the Lands of Blare is known to have adopted “de Blare” as his surname and subsequently the name appears in unbroken succession down through the Blair of Blair genealogy until the surname of the mainline Blairs expired in 1978.

From the creation of the Barony of Blare, the Blairs begin to emerge as a recognisable family with a distinctive surname of their own. “Blair” as a surname came into existence after 1165 and probably not later than c1184, the latest estimated date the son, William de Blare, could have been born (Dwelly, 1883) if he were in his early twenties (the earliest age he could have been eligible to witness a contract of the realm) when he witnessed the Eglington contract of 1205 involving the village of Irvine.

If, however, he were older and had adopted the Blare surname at the earliest possible time (1165), he could have been 40 years of age at the oldest. The younger age appears more feasible since the daughter of King John I of England whom he is said to have married would have reached marriageable age as early as 1205 to 1210 and if William held the Barony of Blare in 1260, (as stated by the Blair House leaflet, 1996) William de Blare would have been married to his princess in his early twenties and be around 75 years of age in c1260. To be able to show that William (the son of John Francis) was older than his earlier twenties begins to weaken the Blair House leaflet assumption, since he would (at 40) have been c95 years of age in 1260.

Dwelly (1883) stated that a William de Blare witnessed a charter of King Alexander III concerning the Abbacy of Dunfermline c1260. Whilst this William could be the same William de Blare who witnessed the 1205 charter, Dwelly expresses uncertainty since sufficient time would have elapsed by 1260 for other Blare descendants named William to have arisen and become eligible to witness charters.

The Blair House Lineage of the Blairs of Blair indicates that the first two Blairs and heirs of the Lands of Blare were two William de Blares, father and son. Dwelly (1883) confirms these first two William de Blares and Pont (1608) infers that the first of these was named William **Francis** de Blare whilst the Blair House leaflet (1996) is ambiguous, such that it is possible the first William de Blare (b. c1135 - Blair House Lineage) could have been identical with Jean Francois, but this cannot be confirmed.

Such a conjectural interpretation, however, cannot be completely resolved since each of the sources provided insufficiently explicit information for the issue to be determined with certainty. Whatever view is taken (or preferred) concerning the identity of the “first” Blair, further unresolved questions are raised which I believe cannot be resolved (if at all) without more extensive and earlier historical research than I have been able to devote to this intriguing mystery.

However, one issue is certain. When the “de Blare” surname arose and became established between 1165 and c1180 very few “Blairs” would have been entitled to the surname: firstly, only those who were sons or unmarried daughters of John Francis (if they adopted de Blare for their surname) and, secondly, only their sons and unmarried daughters. Even by 1210 a mere handful of people holding the “de Blare” surname would have come into existence.

At this period of history then, three Blairs (apart from William de Blare) are recorded as being associated with contracts of the realm :

Stephen de Blare

1204 - 1211

Alexander de Blare
Brice de Blare

1205
1205

Their contractual capacities imply that they were at least in their early twenties or older, so that their birth dates would have occurred no later than c1183 or, if older, then probably not earlier than c1165. Their ages could have ranged somewhere between about 20 to 40. Since they were contemporaries by age of William de Blare, the son-heir, (second in the Blair House Lineage) this would make them kin of Jean Francois and therefore brothers, probably younger brothers, of William.

There are, however, at least two objections to this conclusion.

1. If the first William de Blare listed in the Blair House genealogy of Blairs of Blair is not identical with John Francis, then John Francis would be one generation further back - this would then appear to make Stephen, Alexander and Brice de Blare, uncles instead of brothers of the second William de Blare listed and would increase their estimated ages (as well as that of the first William de Blare) and suggest c1160 or earlier to be the approximate date of their births. This does not seem plausible as the second William de Blare's age would also increase to over 100 making it difficult to associate him with the 1260 Dunfermline contract referred to by the Blair House leaflet (1996).
2. It could also be argued that Alexander, Stephen and Brice de Blare may not have been blood-Blairs at all. In the late Middle Ages it was not uncommon for servants/employees to adopt the surname of the manor with which they were associated as their personal identification - surnames were gradually coming into existence and the Laird's manor and territorial possessions sometimes provided servants with a recognisable and acceptable identity. This also sometimes occurred when a servant moved to enter the service of some other manor house or castle.

In the case of the three Blares, Alexander, Stephen and Brice, this is extremely unlikely. They could not have risen above the status of servitude (if they had been servants) in such a brief space of time and have become eligible to qualify as witnesses to important royal agreements and documents - a privilege reserved only to bishops, tenants-in-chief (of the monarch) and the nobility. For a servant of a manor house to achieve regal status within a period of 10 or so years would require some kind of extraordinary and probably miraculous intervention. It seems then that these three Blares were already members of the lower nobility **and they could only have been so as a consequence of being kin associated with John Francis and the Barony of Blare.**

The assumption that Alexander, Stephen and Brice de Blare are kin of William de Blare fits much of the puzzle in terms of:

- (a) the historical time period
- (b) the close approximation of estimated birth dates
- (c) use of "de Blare" as their territorial surname
- (d) their nobility status in terms of their eligibility to witness contracts
- (e) being contemporaries of William de Blare (the son who witnessed the 1205 agreement)
- (f) the very limited number of individuals eligible to use the de Blare surname before 1200
- (g) the residence in Ayrshire in 1205 of Alexander and Brice de Blare

These details coalesce to produce the picture of a family of Normans who emerged in Scottish history as 'Scots' and 'Blairs' between c1165 and 1200. Vassalage certainly had its rewards! It enabled the "new Blairs" to develop the Lands of Blare in Ayrshire, construct their castle (today known as Blair House), acquire a significant identity and associate with the aristocracy whilst the

family shared the distinction and associated prestige and honour from being descendants of John Francis, Baron de Blare, and made their own way in the world of Scotland, the most notable (after William de Blare) being Alexander de Blare who appeared to become the progenitor of the Blairs of Balthayock, near Perth, in the Scottish highlands.

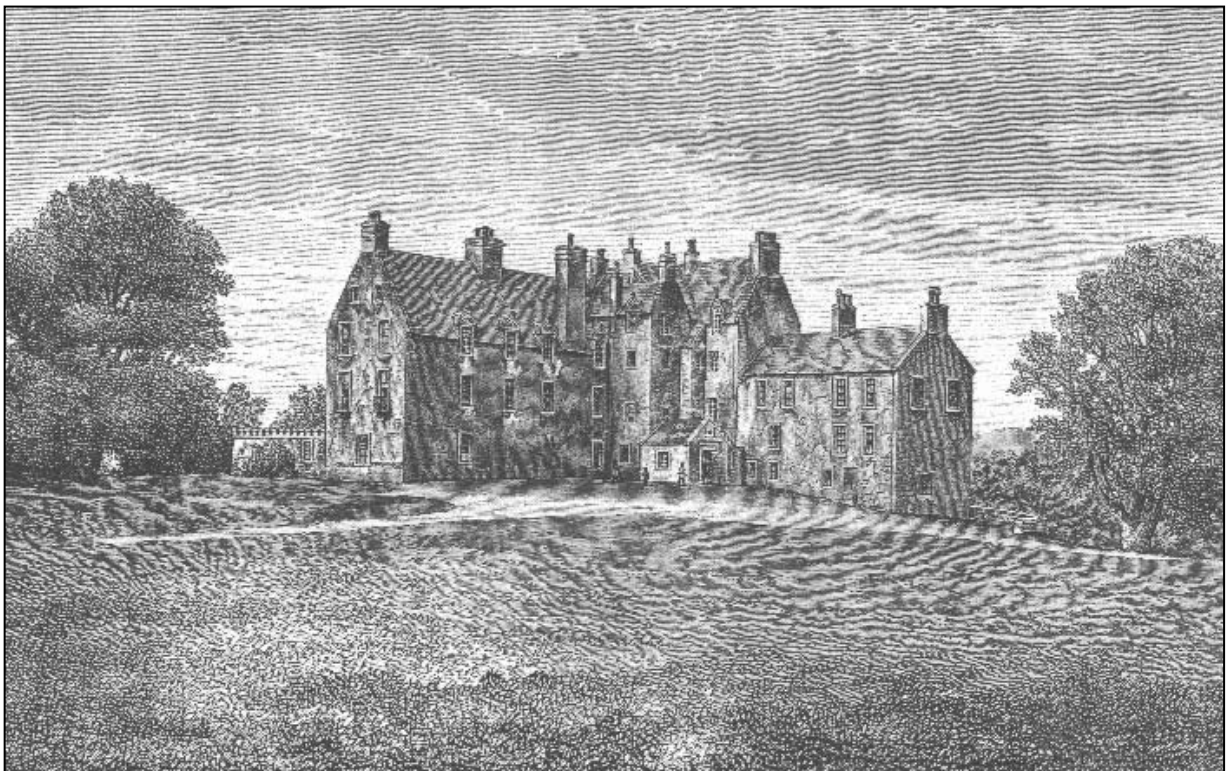
Many notable Blair individuals and Blair families arose in Scotland from the Blairs of Blair and the Blairs of Balthayock over the centuries - some were sufficiently distinguished to be granted titles and honours; others were also sufficiently distinguished to be rewarded with prison and beheading! But whatever their status - or notoriety - the Blairs shared all the traits, fortunes and misfortunes of human nature.

A.H. Millar (c1890) stated that, “there are few genealogies in Scotland to match that of the Lairds of Blair Castle, for the family he represents have dwelt there in unbroken succession since c1200. He states that the records of the house go back to William the Lion (1165-1214) and, “..... the succession from that day to this is authenticated by documentary evidence.”. Pont, (1608); Dobie (1876); Dwelly (1883); Millar (c1890); Black (1938) and other historians, researchers and sources have contributed to the piecing together of information that fascinatingly depicts the emergence of the ancient Blairs of Scotland.

Considering the turbulent history of Scotland down the centuries, its wars and its feuds, it is extremely remarkable that twenty three successive generations of Blairs of Blair or lairds of the manor lived in Blair Castle (House) near Dalry in Ayrshire until 1732, when the bloodline ended and then a further 5 successive generations to 1978 until the surname of the mainline Blairs itself came to an end.

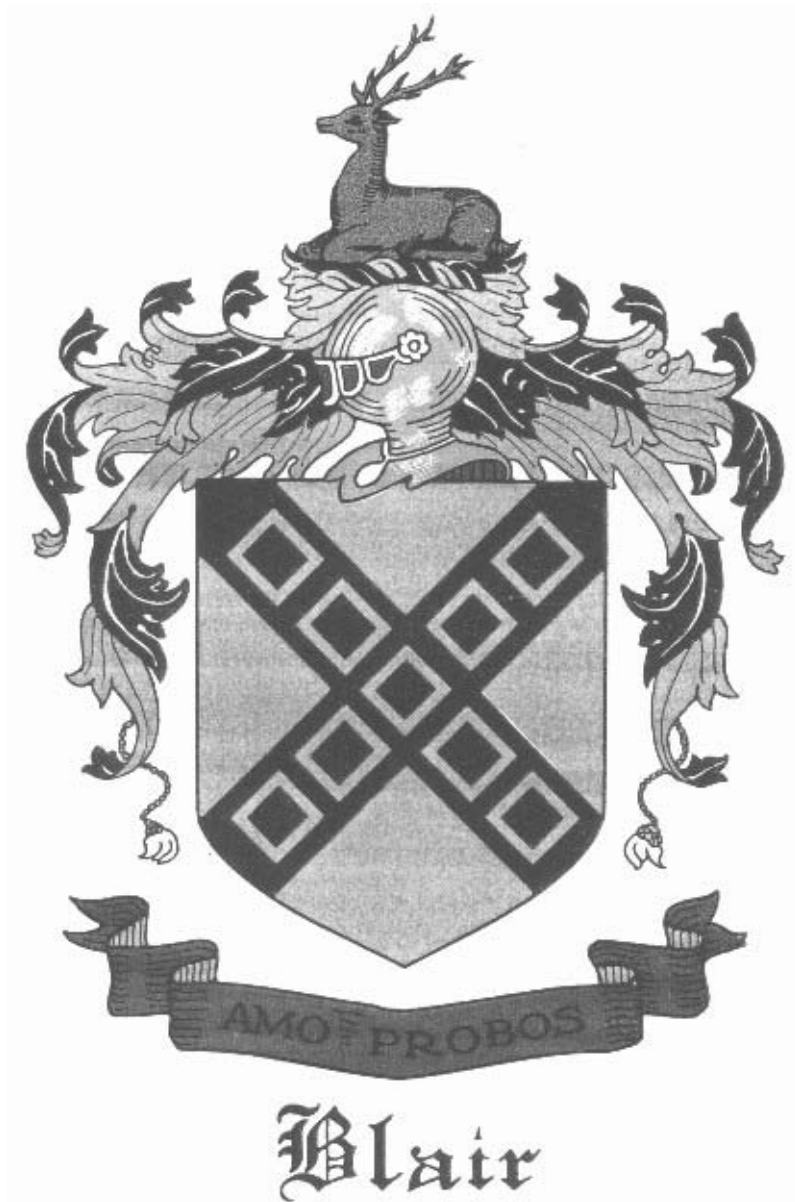
Many Blairs migrated from Scotland from the 17th century onwards (some even earlier) to countries around the world and contributed to the settlement and development of other nations and the consolidation of their own Blair families. There are many Blair descendants in the United States of America as well as in England, Wales, Eire, Northern Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Others can be found in countries of the former British Empire whilst some of the more adventurous can be found residing in non-English speaking countries. Blairs have distinguished themselves in private and public life. The Clan Blair Society (USA) and its “Southern Cross” Chapter for Australia and New Zealand Blairs and the Blair Society for Genealogical Research (USA) provide Blair members with information about Blairs and Blair related events in their publications: “**Blair Bruidhinn**” (*Blair Talk*); (USA) ; “**The Blair Family Magazine**” (USA); and “**Blair Family Downunder News**” (Canberra, Australia).

Few surnames, as Millar pointed out in 1890, can match such a long record which, “is unique in Ayrshire and rare in Scotland or anywhere else.” Those who hold the name of Blair can revere and be proud of a surname that has such a long medieval history and such an ancient origin.



**Blair Castle, Dalry, Ayrshire,
Scotland.**
(from a 19th century drawing).
Now known as Blair House.
The rear east wing has since been raised

The Blair of Blair Coat of Arms



Coat of Arms
Blairs of Blair, Ayrshire, Scotland
(Courtesy of Edward P. Blair
Blair Society for Genealogical Research
Brownsburg, Indiana, U.S.A., 1997)



Courtyard entrance view of Blair House
(Photograph taken by the Author, 1990).



Lintel of donjon doorway adjacent to main entrance door depicting the Blair shield with initials of Bryce Blair (b. c1573) at left and the shield of his spouse, Annabell Wallace of Craigie on right. 1617 represents the date of reconstruction of this section of Blair House.



Entrance to the Blair Estate, eastern approach from Dalry, Ayrshire, Scotland.
(Photograph taken by the Author, 1990).



The Lodge at entrance gate to Blair House grounds.
(Photograph taken by the Author, 1990).

Chapter 6

Genealogy of the Blairs of Blair

Blair House, Dalry, Ayrshire

Scotland

circa 1135 to 1978

Scotland had a highly developed system of naming children. The general custom was to name children as follows:

- (a) Eldest son after the paternal grandfather*
- (b) Second son after the maternal grandfather*
- (c) Third son after the father*
- (d) Eldest daughter after the maternal grandmother*
- (e) Second daughter after the paternal grandmother*
- (f) Third daughter after the mother*
- (g) from "In search of Scottish ancestry" by G. Hamilton-Edwards, p 71, 1986*

To what extent this pattern was adhered to by the Blairs of Blair is difficult to ascertain and would require research outside the scope of this work.

Blairs of Blair

Patrilineal Descendancy

After conferral of the Barony of Blare, Jean Francios is said to have named his son William Francis de Blare according to Pont (1608) but which of the first two Williams is not known. On the balance of probabilities the second appears the more likely candidate - refer to Chapter 5.

- | | |
|--|--|
| William de Blare
b. c1135
(possibly later) | Was of Norman extraction and mentioned in a contract between Ralph de Eglington and the village of Irvine, Ayrshire, 1205. The use of the "de Blare" nomenclature tends to imply that the Lands and Barony of Blare had already been conferred upon him. His son, also William de Blare, was a witness to this royal charter during the reign of William I, King of Scotland from 1165 - 1214. Died in the reign of Alexander II (1214-1249). Left one son, William. Not known whether he was an only son. [Nisbet, Vol. 1., p.224; Sir George McKenzie's Precedency, p.68; Dwelly, 1883; Douglas, 1798, p. 194] |
| William de Blare
b. c1185 | Son of above. Witness in 1205 to a royal charter between the village of Irvine and Ralph de Eglington in which his father, William de Blare was mentioned. Is said to have married a daughter of King John I of |

England. Had two sons, Bryce and David [Paterson, 1847]. In a charter of King Alexander III concerning the Abbey of Dunfermline, c1260, he is designated as ‘Willielmus de Blare, dominos de eodem’ (Laird of Blair) [Chartulary of Dunfermline; Nisbet, vol. 1., p.2, King Alexander III; Dwelly, 1883; Douglas, 1798, p.194]

Sir Bryce de Blare
b. Ante 1230
d. 1296

Eldest son of William de Blare above. Knighted by Alexander III, between 1249 and 1286. Supported Sir William Wallace in defence of Scottish liberty from the English but was taken prisoner and executed with other barons at Ayr in 1296. Died without issue. Henry, the Blind Minstrel recorded the tragedy

“Schir Bryss Blair, next, with his eyne in past;
On to the ded that haistyt him full fast;
Be he entrit, hys hed was in the swar,
Tytt to the bawk, hangyt to ded rycht thar.”*

* “eyne” : a maternal uncle

Succession then passed to his younger brother, David.[Abercrombie, vol. 3., p.525; Douglas, 1798, p. 194]

David de Blare
b. c1230

Son of William de Blare and brother of Sir Bryce de Blare. Was compelled to swear allegiance to King Edward I of England in 1296 along with most of the gentry and nobility of Scotland. Ellene Blare was probably his spouse as “..(she) is named among the ladies of Scotland who swore allegiance to the King of England in 1296, the original roll of whom is still preserved in the Tower of London (Borthwick, p. 46)” - [Quoted by Timothy Pont in “Cuninghame”, ed. J.S. Dobie (1876)]. Succeeded by his son , Roger. [He is mentioned as a progenitor of the Blares of Blare in Ragman’s Roll, p. 36 and Prynes Col. Vol. III, p. 656 and by Douglas, 1798, p. 194]

Sir Roger de Blare
b. c1265
d. After 1329

Son of David de Blare. Was a friend of King Robert I [the Bruce] (1274-1329), King of Scotland,(1306- 1329). from whom he received a royal charter under the great seal as: ‘*Rogero de Blare, dilecto et fideli nostro of four chalders of produce annually from the Lands of Bourtrees in the (adjoining) barony of Cunningham in Ayrshire to him and his heirs for ever*’ . [Charters in public archives; and Paterson, 1847]. Married Marie Mair [Muir or Mure]. It is said that he became brother-in-law of King David II when his wife’s sister married the king. Was knighted by King Robert Bruce I between 1306 and 1329 for his support and for his service at the Battle of Bannockburn, 1314. Died in the reign of King David Bruce II (1329-1371). Succeeded by son Hugh [Anderson, 1871] *or* James [Douglas, 194,1798].

Hugh de Blare
b. c1295
d. 1360-70

Said to be a son who succeeded Roger de Blare [Anderson,1871, 319] though omitted by Douglas [1798]. He is mentioned in a charter from Robert I (1306-1329) [RMS 10-50] and an undated charter associated with the Monastery of Kilwinning: “Hugone del Blare, et Johne fratre suo.....” (Hugh and his brother John as witnesses) during the reign of King David (Bruce) II (1329-1371). Paterson (1847) considers this was between 1333 and 1360 but the A&WAA (1878, 170) puts the date at c1357. There is some uncertainty concerning this generation.

James de Blare
b. c1330
d. After 1406

Was a firm supporter of King David Bruce II (1329-1371) who “*for good and faithful services rendered*” granted him several tenements of land about the town of Ayr which belonged to an Adam (surname unknown), a surgeon in Ayr, but whose properties were forfeited to the king - confirmed by a charter under the great seal of King David, dated Edinburgh, 3 February, 1368 [King David’s Book of Charters and the Douglas Baronage of Scotland, 1798, 194; Paterson, 1866, 157]. A Sir Hugh de Blare appears as witness to several charters during the 14th century but it is uncertain whether they are the same person. James de Blare had two sons, James, who succeeded him [Douglas, 1798: Anderson, 1871, Paterson 1847] and Sir John who became the progenitor of the Blairs of Adamton, Ayrshire. Sir John Blair acquired the lands of Adamton by royal charter from David II before 1363 in excambion with Sir Robert Erskine for the lands of Malerbe and others in Perthshire. Adamton was sold to an R. Reid when the Adamton Blair lineage became extinct upon the death of Catherine Blair in 1798 [Dwelly 1883, 2].

James de Blare
b.
d. ante 1437

Son of James de Blare of that ilk. Obtained a royal charter to the Lands of Corshogyll, Dumfriesshire under the great seal of King Robert II (1371-1390), dated 8 May, 1375 in the barony of Drumlanrig and another to the lands of Hartwood dated 23 July, 1375. Died in the reign of King James I (1406-1437) leaving a son called David [Douglas 1798] but Paterson 1847] vide Robertson and Crawford’s Peerage; and Anderson [1871] consider his name was Hugh.

Hugh de Blare
b. c1400 (?)

Referred to as David [Douglas 1798] but his name was more probably Hugh as a Sir Hugh Blair of Blair witnessed many charters during the early 15th century according to Paterson (1847) and Anderson (1871). Paterson refers to him as “*Hugo, son of umqll. John of Blaer, Laird of that Ilk in the Lee, in the barony of Renfrew. The charter, although undated was included with other documents dated in 1401: “Hucheon Blaer of that Ilk, 31 March, 1401, granted to William Cuninghame, Laird of Bonwall, for his help, his lands of Lee in Cathcart parish”*” - (Craigends Papers, quoted by Paterson, 1866). Paterson also says: “*Hugone Blair de eodem militibus is witness in a charter to Hugh Barclay of Kilburnie, confirmed by James I in 1431, which, from the other witnesses being known to have flourished about the commencement of the fifteenth century, may have been granted soon after 1400*”. There is a writ amongst the Blair papers: “*Charter: Hugh of Blare to John of Dunlop in 1407, which should be held as settling the point*”. [Paterson, 1847. 414]. Sir Hugh (Francis) Blare (Anderson (1871) Pont (1604), was probably knighted during the reign of James I (1406-1437) and was succeeded by his son James (Anderson, 1871). Francis Blare, possibly the “James” of Pont (1604) and then by John de Blare, grandson of Hugh and nephew of James (Anderson, 1871). Douglas (1798) refers to John as the grandson of the James prior to Hugh de Blare. The links are uncertain for this generation. Pont (1604) states that Hugh Francis Blair of Blair granted the Lands of Jamestoun by charter to his son James Francis Blair but does not imply whether he was an heir and/or successor.

administered by Robert Forman, Dean of the metropolitan Cathedral of Glasgow under authority of Pope Clement VII (1478-1534): “*Permitting John de Blare of the Glasgow diocese, son, and apparent heir of the Lands of Blare, to marry Helen Ross of St. Andrew’s diocese, Fifeshire, though they are within 3 and 4 degrees of consanguinal relationship.....*” [Blair Archives, SRO F/GD167,B9]. Though some sources (e.g., Douglas, 1798) do not show this generation it appears to belong here. On 18 May 1545, John Blair and his son Patrick were required to find security for their good behaviour after consorting with the enemies of the Queen Consort of James VI (Mary of Guise) at Ancrum near the Scottish border [Pitcairn’s “Criminal Trials of Scotland”].

John Blare
b. c1526
d. c1570

Son of above. Married Margaret Cunyngham daughter of William Cunyngham of Glengarnock Received a charter under the great seal: “*Johanni Blare, apparenti de eodem et Margareta Cunninghame, ejus sponsa, terrarum de Sunnybankhead and Blair, Ardoch etc.,...in Ayrshire,*” dated 23 November, 1546. Did not long survive his father. He died in the early part of the reign of King James VI (1567-1625). They had sons named William, and John who succeeded him [Dwelly 1883; Paterson, 1847]. May also have had two daughters and a brother, Robert (who had a son Hugh) (Peskest, 1992, see next generation). Though it is not certain, William may have become William Blare of Halie who married Katherine Hamilton who was granted by charter 6 and 10 Feb 1561/62 the Kirklands of Dalry by Archibald Crauffurd, vicar of Eglissem [SRO, F/GD167, B15]. Was left his father-in-laws horse “Brown Staig” on the eve of his ill-fated departure to the Battle of Pinkie.

John Blair
b. c1547
d. 11.11.1609

Married Grisel Sempill, 11 May, 1565 [IGI Records; Register of Deeds xx, pt. ii and RD 1/20/2, 332] daughter of Robert, Lord Sempill III (or Semple). On 8 February, 1573 he received a charter under the great seal: “*Johanni Blair de eodem et Grisellida Semple, ejus sponsa, terrarum vocat. Thornlie -Wallace etc.*” In 1575 he entered into an agreement of mutual security with Lord Robert Boyd [Charter chest of the last earl of Kilmarnock - Paterson, 1847, 414]. He also had a charter of lands of Ryscholme, Flaswood, North Blaise, South Blaise etc., in Ayrshire, dated 1 February, 1575, and two other charters, one of the “40 shilling land of Muirburn” in Renfrewshire and the other of the land of Over-Birkheid in Ayrshire, dated 3 and 4 February, 1580 and lastly in 1595 of the lands of Ramshorn and Meadowflatt &c., in the shire of Edinburgh and Lanark which formerly belonged to Sir James Foulis of Colinton, who, in exchange, got the lands of Oxcgang and half of the mill of Correy, both in the vicinity of Colinton.

On 21 May, 1577, John Blair was indicted together with his brother William, Robert Blair (brother of William Blare of Halie), and 25 other persons for the murders of Thomas Crawford and his servants. He and his brother William were found guilty, fined 5000 Pounds and 2000 Pounds respectively and imprisoned in the Castle of Blackness, or as the record states: “*They found security to enter their persons in ward within the Castle of Blackness by eight in the evening and not to escape*

therefrom until they were relieved”.

On 7 June 1594 by Crown Charter, John Blair received the 5 Marklands of Makbehill in the lordship of Kyklestewart and sherrifdom of Ayr on the resignation of James Wardlaw and his spouse Elizabeth McCalzeane [SRO F/GD 167 B14 B1 No. 10].

In 1595, John Blair of Blair and his son Bryce were witnesses in a charter by Thomas Crawford and his wife Margaret to their son-in-law John Blair of Giffordland (*This would appear to be Bryce’s older brother John?*). In a discharge granted by Blair to the burgh of Irvine dated 14 May 1600 - for parsonage teinds of some lands in the vicinity of Irvine, he identifies himself as “Blair of that Ilk, sometyne tutor testamentator to James Cuninghame of Mountgreenan, in behalf of the said James”. The witnesses to this deed which is in the Chest of the burgh of Irvine are James Mowat of Bushie; John Crauford of Craufordland; Thomas Nevein of Monkreddin and William Montgomery (the writer thereof), [Paterson, 1847, 414]. John Blair had three daughters and six sons [Douglas mentions only one son, John; Anderson states there were five sons and omits Hugh]. A charter under the great seal dated 7.2.1601 names the five younger brothers of the eldest son John, the heir apparent as sons of John and Grisel Blair in their order of birth (see 5-9) [RMS VI, 1142].

- 1580: John Blair was on the Assize at the trial of Arthur Hamiltoune of Bothwelhauche for implication in the murder of the two Regents, Murray and Lennox.
- 1581: David Stewart renounced the lands of Ower Meirburne in favour of John Blair and his son, Bryce [SRO F/GD 167 B11 B1].
- 1593: He was one of the sureties for Johne, Earl of Menteith who, together with the Earl of Bothwell were accused of a felony.
- 1602: He was one of the “preloquoutouris” for the jury (introduction spoken to the panel) at the trial of John Mure of Auchindrane, accused of murdering Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean.
- 1602: John Blair, together with his eldest son John, served on the trial of Allister M’Gregor for his being at the conflict of Glenfruine.
- 1605: 14 February. Was confirmed as John, Lord Blair by a chancery precept [SRO F/GD 167 B15].
- 1609: He was mentioned in the testament of: “.....Fairlie, laut, full sone and air to vmqle. David Fairlie of Over Mynnok, wt. in the parochin of Dalry”, as having consigned the sum of 2000 pounds money in the hands of James Hamiltoune of Wodsyde for the redemption of, “ye landis of Groitholme, wt. ye pertinentis by and wt-in the parochin and regalitie at Kilwyning”. John died in November of the same year, 1609. [Paterson 1847].

John and Grisel Blair had three daughters:

1. Jean Blair, b. c1566, married (1) Alexander Cunningham of Mountgreenan, Commendator of Kilwinning 31 Jul 1582 and

was granted a charter under the great seal, “*Jeanni Blair, filie Johanni Blair de eodem, terrarum de Hutterhill etc.*,” in Ayrshire, dated 14 Aug 1591. They had a daughter Grizel. As a widow, married (2) John Stewart of Ardmaleish ante 15.9.1595 the latter dying before 10.10.1612 [Burke 423,1970]. Paterson reverses the order of the two marriages and refers to John Stewart of Bute. Paterson is also the only source who states that John/Grizel Blair had 3 daughters and then includes a 4th daughter: ‘Anna Blair, m. John Brisbane of Bishoptoun in 1595 but died in 1608 [1847, 415 and 1866, 162 vide Wishaw, p.89]

2. Margaret Blair, married a Mr. Ker of Kersland and received a charter under the great seal to her and their son, Robert Ker of the lands of Frearn (or Treearne ?) in Ayrshire, dated 2 Jan 1594.
3. Grisel Blair, b. 1566-70, married: (1) David Blair of Adamton, 16 Dec 1591 [RMS VI, 749] and received a charter under the great seal dated 21 Jul 1598. [Charter in the public archives]. Became widow, married: (2) Sir John Maxwell of Pollok before 1615 [Burke’s Peerage; Paterson 1847].

The six sons were:

4. John Blair, eldest son, b. 1573, d. January 1604 [IGI Records; Paterson 1847], served heir apparent in 1597 and 1604 [RMS VI, 661,1552]. Married Isobel Boyd, 5.7.1589, daughter of Thomas, Lord Boyd VI of Kilmarnock [RMS VI, 853]. The marriage contract was witnessed by Robert Blair (an uncle), Burgess of Glasgow and his son Hugh. He appears to have received a charter, “*Johanni Blair de eodem, terrarum de Ramsborn, Meadow-Flat etc.,.....in the shires of Edinburgh and Lanark dated 18 Feb 1597* “. Testament dative in Commissariat of Glasgow records John Blair’s death in 1604. His widow re-married before 1613 as 3rd wife of Sir Dugald Campbell of Auchinbreck [Burke 463, 1970] who died 1641, the same year in which she was accused of practising witchcraft when: “.... in a curious process before Parliament, Francis Hamilton of Silvertonhill, a wrong-headed man, accused her of having bewitched him” [Paterson, 1847] In 1607 and 1608 she was designed ‘relict’ of John Blair. John Blair died without male issue [SRO C22/4, 371v] which probably accounts for the second oldest son, Bryce being served heir 10.4.1610 following the death of the father in 1609. Douglas (1798) claims John Blair had three sons, Brice his heir, James who married Annabel Stewart and Robert Blair of Bogtoun, the father of Sir Adam Blair of Bogtoun who was the nephew of Brice Blair of that ilk. The Blair Archives in the SRO contradict Douglas’ construction of this generation and states John Blair “had no male issue”. Douglas refers to John Blair, the younger’s brother as his son; James is another brother but who also appears to be named Gavin since they are both reported to have married the same Annabel Stewart in 1615 [Douglas 195, 1798 and RMS VII, 1256]. Robert

Blair of Bogtoun also appears to be another brother since he was the father of Sir Adam Blair of Lochwood . The certainty of some details concerning John Blair, the younger, are elusive. Douglas mentions no daughters whereas Anderson states [319, 1871] that John Blair's wife, Isobel Boyd was "the daughter of the 5th" instead of the 6th Lord Boyd and also mentions that he left three married daughters at his death in 1604. If John Blair were born c1573 no daughter would have attained marriagable age (13 or younger). If he were born earlier than 1573 despite lack of confirmation, it is still doubtful whether all three daughters would have married before age 21. In 1652, a bond was issued to John Boyd, writer of Edinburgh for 1000 merks by Isobel Boyd as principal (then relict of Sir Dougall Campbell of Auchinbreck) and John Blair of Blair as cautioner (this appears to be her nephew-in-law). John/Isobel Blair's daughters were:

- (a) Grizel m. John Maxwell of Pollock (?), no issue.
- (b) Anna (or Agnes ?) m. Lord Porterfield. Amongst others, the families of Hamilton of Holmhead and Crauford of Auchenames descended from this marriage. [Paterson, 1847].
- (c) Margaret m. John Crawford of Kilburnie. The Earl of Crawford descended from this marriage. She gave a discharge in favour of Bryce Blair, the younger (Sir Bryce Blair, d. July, 1639) for certain specified evidence and writs, 1622 [SRO F/GD167 B10/1]. She became the widow of John Crawford before 1622.

Paterson (1847) is the only source to include a fourth daughter "Isobel, which occurs 1604" and cites Wishaw, p.117. (Curiously it can be noted that 'Isobel' was the given name of John Blair's wife and 'January, 1604' was the date of John Blair's death so would not have been a daughter of the second marriage).

5. Bryce Blair of Lochwood, second son of John/Grisel Blair. b. c1573. Married Annabell Wallace 13.3.1615. Served heir to his father 10.4.1610 [C22/4, 371v]. Named 2nd son in the charter of 7.2.1601 [RMS VI, 1142]. Died 4.2.1639 [C22/14. 295r] leaving two sons, Bryce and John and five daughters [Anderson 371,1871]. Succeeded to the Barony of Blair in 1610. Minutes of the Court of the laird of Kilwinning ratified possession of the lands of Wakmyine 2 Jan 1622 by Bryce Blair from John Walker/Agnes Hammiltoun of Myinhell [SRO F/GD 167 B11 B1].
6. Robert Blair of Auldmure, Lochwood and Bogtoun. Born 1578. Named third son in charter of 7.2.1601, spouse unnamed [RMS VI, 1142]. Paterson states that the property of Bogtoun was purchased by Robert Blair "who built upon it the

mansion of Bogtown in 1580”. This is clearly wrong since he was born before 1601, probably 1578. Robert was the father of Sir Adam Blair of Lochwood and two daughters:

- (a) Sir Adam Blair: Charter of lands of Swinlies, 1648 [RMS IX, 1923]. Disposition of lands of Bogtoun from his presumed cousin John Blair, 1650 and disposed of in 1663. Married Janet Anderson and knighted before 1663. [RMS XI, 718]. Resigned other lands in 1668 in favour of his presumed cousin John Blair [RMS XI, 718]. Disposed of Lochwood and Balhill lands 23.1.1664 [SRO F/GD167, B14/2].
 - (b) Marrian Blair, m. Quinton M’Adam of Grimat [Paterson, 1847]
 - (c) Jean Blair, unmarried in 1691 [BD, 1997].
 - (d) (?) James Blair, witnessed his cousin John Blair’s contract as heir to his father Sir Bryce Blair, 1 May 1645. [Paterson, 1847; not cited by other sources].
7. Alexander Blair. Named as 4th son in charter of 7.2.1601. Married Elizabeth Cochrane 24.7.1600, only daughter and heiress of William Cochrane of Cochrane. Alexander adopted the name and arms of Cochrane in lieu of Blair and became the the ancestor of the Earls of Dundonald. He died 1641.
 8. Hugh Blair of Auldmure and Bogside. Named as 5th son in the charter of 7.2.1601 without designation. Married Barbara Hamilton (died Oct 1642) [C22/8, 100v; C22/17, 115v] [Not listed as a son by Anderson, 1871, but is a son according to the service of heirs of John/Grisel Blair, BD, 1997]. Died Jan 1617 leaving a known son, Captain Brice Blair of Bogside who served heir to his father 22.8.1622 and to his mother 4.1.1643 [C22/8, 100r; C22/17, 115v]. He married Agnes Scott before 1647, part heiress and one of three daughters of James Scott of Clonbeith, 24 May 1648. [C22/19, 57; RMS IX, 1961].
 9. Gavin Blair, named youngest and 6th son in charter of 7.2.1601 without designation. He appears to have received two charters under the great seal: “*Jacobi Blair de Malsmure, fratri germano Bricii Blair de odem, et Annabella Stewart ejus sponsa, terrarum de Nether Newark, Kirkbuddo etc.....*” in Ayrshire, dated in June 1615 [Douglas 1798, 195]. This charter proves James to be a biological brother to Bryce, (the eventual heir and successor to John and Grisel Blair) and that his spouse was Annabel Stewart. In the family charter of 7.2.1601 he is named as Gavin, the youngest son, without designation [RMS VI, 1141] and [RMS VII, 1256] refers to the same charter above dated 15.6.1615 and his spouse Annabel Stewart. Since Annabel Stewart is recorded as having married both Gavin and James in the same month and year it is assumed that Gavin/James is the same person and for reasons unspecified was either recognised by both names or

that he changed his name from Gavin to James.

The eldest son and heir, John, died in 1604 predeceasing his father and his brother Bryce succeeded to the Barony of Blair [C22/4, 371v; Anderson 1871]. In his 'Baronage of Scotland' Douglas appears to have confused generations XI and XII in his lineage wherein he states that John and Grisel Blair were succeeded by a son, John, who married and had three sons; Bryce (his heir), Gavin/James (who m. Annabel Stewart) and Robert Blair of Bogtoun. He then states that *the son, John, died in 1609 and was succeeded by his eldest son Bryce*, whereas other sources state that it was the father, John Blair, who died 11.11.1609 and that the son, John, predeceased him, dying in 1604. The succession went to his brother Bryce, son of John and Grisel Blair [Anderson 319, 1871; C22/4, 371v].

Bryce Blair
b. c1573
d. 4.2.1639

Of Lochwood and later of Blair. Second son of John and Grisel Blair. Served heir to the Barony of Blair 10.4.1610. Married Annabell Wallace of Craigie, named in a charter 13.3.1615 witnessed by son and heir Bryce Blair [RMS VII, 1252 - *presumably not a marriage agreement though there is a curious 15 years gap between the first three and last three marriages of the offspring*]. [Paterson infers he was married prior to 1610]. The Craigie arms are impaled with those of Blair over the main entrance door of Blair House, 1617. Had a disposition of the lands of Wakmyne 2.1.1622 [SRO F/GD167 B11/1]. Bryce Blair and his son John are the subject of an agreement concerning other lands: "*Bryce Blair of that Ilk, and Mr. Johnne Blair, his sone, and the tenants and possessoris of the landis of Garroche, restand vnpayit the croppis and yeiris of God 1617-1631 yeiris, ffour bollis hors-corne, as ane pt. of the few dewties of the landis of Garroche due to umquhile James (Law), Archbishop pf Glasgow, 1632*" [Paterson 1847, 415]. Bryce Blair and his son, Sir Bryce Blair, were "*inheritors of Lochwinnoch parish, in 1635.....and became superiors of the 5 merk land of Auchinbathie-Blair*" [Paterson 1847, 415 citing 'Lochwinnoch Papers']. They had five daughters and two sons [BD, 1997]:

1. Bryce Blair b. c1600 (later Sir Bryce) d. July, 1639
2. John Blair b. c1600 d. 1662 (twin brother to Bryce). Paterson asserts [1866, 164] that John Blair married a Katherine Turnbull and they were, "*...infest in 4 lib. 6s.8d. land of Garroche in the barony of Glasgow, by his father Bryce Blair of Blair, 1 Jan 1638*". Either John Blair married twice or Paterson is incorrect since he states on the next page that he married Lady Jean Cunningham [See John Blair d.1662]
3. Margaret, married Sir Archibald Stewart of Blackhall and Ardgowan, 23/24.4.1613 [BD 1997; SRO B14, B2]. Her father and her brother, Alexander Cochrane paid her dowry of 5,000 pounds. She died December, 1621.
4. Isabelle, married 1619, James Chalmers of Gadgirth. Her dowry was 800 merks.
5. Anne, married 1633 Robert Boyd of Pitcom.
6. Janet: married 28 May, 1636 Ninian Stewart of Askog with

consent of her brother, Bryce. Her dowry was 2,000 pounds.

7. Agnes: married 4 April, 1640 William Schaw, Provost of Newtown with consent of Annabell, Lady Blair, her widowed mother [SRO F/GD 167 B14 B2]. “Her husband contracted for 16,000 but got a dowry of 4,000 merks [Paterson 1847, 415]

Bryce Blair was succeeded by the “elder” twin son, Bryce, the heir. [Douglas (195, 1798) mentions only one daughter, whilst Anderson (391, 1871) and Dwelly (1883) refer to John and Bryce as twins which other sources do not mention].

Sir Bryce Blair
b. c1600
d. July 1639

Was knighted by King Charles I of England (1600-1649) at Innerwick (50km’s east of Edinburgh) 16 Jul 1633 [RMS VII, 74 and Paterson 1847]. Married Mariota (or Marian) Dundas 10.12.1618, daughter of Walter Dundas of Dundas [RMS VII, 1997], who by the marriage contract brought a dowry of 10,000 pounds. Mariota Blair received a life benefit of the Blair estates (excepting those of Barrodder and part of Bogtoun - these were held by Dame Isobel Boyd (Blair) wife of her husband Bryce’s uncle John Blair, the younger) [Paterson 1847]. Was served heir to his father, Bryce Blair of the lands and Barony of Blair, the contract being witnessed on 25 Apr 1639 by his brother John [C22/14, 295r] but he died three months later in July 1639 shortly after his father [C22/18, 230v]. In 1636, John Pirhie in Potterhall, renounced the lands of Barbourhill in favour of Sir Bryce Blair [SRO F/GD167 B2/1]. He was succeeded by his son John. They also had two daughters: Marion: m. Mr. M’Ilvain of Grimatt in 1656, and Isobel: m. Mr. Whytefuird of Blairquhan in 1660 [Paterson, 1847].

John Blair
b. c1625
d. ante 5.8.1646

Served heir to his father and grandfather on 1 May, 1645 [C22/18, 225v] and witnessed by James Blair, his cousin, son of Robert Blair of Lockwood [Paterson, 1847, 416 citing ‘Clerk Brown’s Protocol]. In 1641 he was a minor and a ward of his father’s cousin William Cochrane [Paul V.3, 345, 1906]. He did not marry and died soon after being made heir. He was then succeeded by his uncle John Blair, the twin brother of Sir Bryce Blair. [Douglas (195, 1798) refers to the uncle as the second son of Bryce Blair (d. 4.2.1639) and not as the twin of his brother John].

John Blair
b. c1600
d. April, 1662

Uncle of John Blair above and twin brother of Sir Bryce Blair and grandson of John and Grisel Blair. Designed heir 5.8.1646 and served heir to his paternal grandfather 11 Sept 1650 following the death of Bryce Blair his twin brother [RMS IX, 1701; C22/21, 305v]. Married Lady Jean Cunningham, 5 August, 1646. sister of William, 8th Earl of Glencairn [RMS IX, 1701]. Minutes of the Court of the Lands and Barony of Blair held within the tower of Blair Castle ordered James Smyth in Blyatland to deliver 20 bolls of Steilbow corn to John Blair dated 9.4.1651 [SRO F/GD167 B11/1]. Left one son, William. By the resignation of Gavin Blair of Haly and Major Robert Blair his eldest son, John Blair received the Vicar Kirklands of Dalry and 10 roods of the lands of Whythirst and others [SRO F/GD B14 B1 No11]. Also appears to have had a daughter Elizabeth, married Uchtred Knox

of Ranfurly [McFarlane, 1750-51. v.2, 279]. Their son, also Uchtred, m. Joan, d/o Sir William Mure of Rowallan, Ayrshire and having no male issue disposed of the estate to William, first Lord Cochrane, afterwards Earl of Dundonald in 1665 (see Alexander Blair s/o John Blair b. c1547).

William Blair
b. after 1640
d. after April, 1689

Served heir to his father, John Blair, 5 February, 1664 and 26 Oct 1664 of the whole lands and barony of Blair [C22/27, 235v, 264]. Married Lady Margaret, fifth daughter of William, 2nd Duke of Hamilton in March, 1666. Was a minor at his father's death. He was appointed by the Restoration government of Scotland as a member of the Covenanters, groups of Presbyterians bound by oath to sustain the defence of their faith and the National Covenant, signed 28th February, 1638. However, he joined the revolution at an early stage and became a member of the Convention of Estates, 16 March, 1689, and a member of a committee for 'settling the government' after Presbyterianism was restored in 1688. In 1689 he raised a troop of horses and men in support of King William and marched into Perthshire. However, Viscount Dundee, (John Graham of Claverhouse) a supporter of James II (James VII of Scotland from 1685) was then located in nearby Atholl and determined to surprise them. He left Atholl by night for Perth, entering the city unawares early next morning and seized the Laird of Blair and the Laird of Pollock and two of their officers while they slept. They were imprisoned in Mull in the Scottish Highlands where the Laird of Blair died shortly after. He held an important place in the Convention of Estates (1669-1690). Was also appointed in April 1689 as a Commissioner to effect a Treaty of Union between England and Scotland which, at that time, was unsuccessful. He was succeeded by his son, William.

William Blair
b. c1660
d.

Succeeded to the Blair estates on or before 1704. Married Magdalene (Douglas (1796, 1798) states her name was Margaret), daughter of James Campbell of Cargunnoch. Was among the Commissioners of Supply for the County of Ayr in the Convention Parliament of 14 March, 1689 together with his father. Had one son, John, baptised 24 Dec 1687 and one daughter. The son predeceased him without issue. The father disposed of the estate to his daughter Magdalene (or Margaret), whilst reserving an interest in Blair Castle so long as he lived. However, parish records show that they had other children, a son, William, who was baptised in 1686 and another son, Adam, baptised in 1687. A daughter, Margaret, was baptised 20 Feb 1704. (Douglas (1798) was apparently unaware of the two daughters). Magdalene appears to have been the eldest and born before records were kept in the parish. Immediately under the entry in the parish record for the baptism of Adam, ".....the Session Clerk curiously enough, has the following note: 'It is to be marked that in the February the tolleration cam, which indulged every man to his own fancy', &c. [Paterson, 1847, 416].

Magdalene Blair
b. c1680
d. ante 1715

The only surviving child of William Blair. Married William Scott, an advocate and second son of John Scott of Malleny (Malenie), Mid-Lothian, an ancient branch of the Buccleuch family. Upon marriage

he adopted the Blair name and Blair Coat of Arms. Magdalene Blair died in childbirth before 1715 leaving an only son, William, her heir. Testament in Blair Archives [SRO F/GD167 B14/2]. The husband (now William Scott Blair) re-married. His second wife, Catherine, was the daughter of Alexander Tait, a merchant of Edinburgh. They had five sons and six daughters as follows who all adopted the Blair surname:

1. Hamilton Blair became successor to the Blair estate on the death of his step-brother, William Blair.
2. Alexander Blair was Customs Surveyor of the Port of Glasgow. m. Elizabeth Hamilton daughter of John Hamilton of Grange in the county of Ayr. They had a son, William Blair and two daughters, Catherine Blair and Elisabeth Blair.
3. John Blair was captain of an infantry brigade and died of wounds in the battle of Minden, 1 Aug 1759.
4. Thomas Blair was a cornet player in the Gray Dragoons. Died of wounds in the battle of Valdt, 1747.
5. William Blair was an Infantry Lieutenant, killed at the head of a detachment against Indians at Oswego, USA in 1756.
6. Anne Blair m. David Blair of Adamton in the county of Ayr and had a daughter, Catherine Blair who became heiress of the estate and married Sir William Maxwell (junior) of Monreith.
7. Magdalene Blair m. Sir William, Baron Maxwell (senior) of Monreith and had three sons, William, Hamilton and Dunbar, and three daughters, Catherine m. John Fordyce of Ayrton in Berwickshire, land tax Receiver-General for Scotland; Jane m. Sir Alexander, Duke of Gordon, and Eglington, they had no issue.
8. Janet Blair m. Alexander Tait, a Principal Session-Clerk and had three sons, Alexander, William and John.
9. Barbara Blair m. William Fullerton of Fullerton in the county of Ayr and had a son, William.
10. Susanna.
11. Catherine.
12. Mary m. Sir John Sinclair. They had offspring.
[Douglas 1798, 196 and Paterson 1866, 168].

William Blair
b.
d. 1732

Only son of Magdalene Blair and William Scott. He died unmarried. [Burke 1882, 139 and Paterson 1866, 168]. His step-brother succeeded to the Blair estates.

William Blair made a settlement of the Blair of Blair estates upon the five sons and six daughters of his father, William (Scott) Blair and step-mother, Catherine Tait.

The senior Blair bloodline ends with this William Blair

Hamilton Blair
b. 1710 (?)
d. 1782

A half-brother to William Blair above, and eldest son of Catherine Tait and William (Scott) Blair. Succeeded to the Blair estates in 1732. Entered the army at an early age and became Major of the Scots Greys in 1760. Married Jane Williams daughter of Sydenham Williams of

Herringston, Dorset, England. They had two daughters, Agnes and Jane and a son, William.

William Blair
b. 10.3.1767
d. 21.10.1841

Only son of Hamilton and Jane Blair. Succeeded his father in 1782. Married 1789, Magdalene (d. Nov 1817) daughter of John Fordyce of Ayton, Berwickshire and niece of the Duchess of Gordon and Lady Wallace. William Blair was Commissioner for Land Revenue in Scotland. The third son, William Fordyce Blair, became heir when the first two sons pre-deceased their father. He contested the parliamentary seat of Ayrshire in 1832. They had five sons and seven daughters:

1. Hamilton Blair, d. 21.5.1816.
2. John-Charles Blair, d. 6.7.1836.
3. William-Fordyce Blair who became the heir.
4. Henry-Melville Blair, d. 18.7.1837.
5. Augustus Blair, d. 1.6.1857.
1. Catherine Blair, m. Matthew Fortescue. She died 17.12.1817.
2. Madalene Blair, m. Alexander Scot. She died March, 1867.
3. Louisa Blair, m. Col. Jackson. She died October, 1817.
4. Elizabeth Blair, d. 30.5.1861.
5. Charlotte Blair.
6. Jane Blair, d. June, 1829.
7. Georgina Blair, m. James Hamilton.

William Fordyce Blair
b. 10.9.1805
d. after 1884

Born at Blair House. Succeeded to the Blair estates in 1841. Married Caroline-Isabella, 23 July, 1840, youngest daughter of John Sprout of Clapham Common, London. They had three daughters and two sons: William Augustus Blair, born 24.6.1848 (d. 19.5.1861) and Frederick Gordon Blair, born 11.11.1852. He was Deputy Lieutenant for Ayrshire and made a Captain in the Royal Navy in 1858. William Fordyce Blair undertook the landscaping of the Blair House estate in the 1850's. His wife died 24 Oct 1857. The three daughters were:

1. Mary Blair, b. 24.7.1841, m. John Cuninghame of Cuninghame of Craigends 24.4.1873.
2. Caroline-Madelina Blair, b. 3.10.1842, m. Charles A. Cunningham, eldest son of Sir Percy Cunningham-Fairlie of Fairlie, Ayrshire. They had three daughters: Edith, Magdalene and Geraldine and no sons.
3. Adelaide Gordon Blair, b. 11.6.1846 d. 22.7.1848.

Frederick Gordon Blair
b. 9.1.1853
[Dwelly states:
11.11.1852]
d. 1943

The elder son predeceased his father leaving Frederick as heir to the Blair estates. Married Mary Elizabeth Baird 30 July 1880, third daughter of the late William Baird of Elie and Rosemount, Fifeshire, Scotland. She died 21 days after her husband, leaving a daughter Cecily, the heiress. Frederick Blair was Captain of the 16th Lancers; D.L. for Ayrshire; High Sheriff for Rutland, 1886; Chairman, Rutland Territorial Force Association; Hon.Col. Territorial Division of Leicestershire Yeomanry; served in the South African Boer War, 1899-1901 with the 4th Battalion of Imperial Yeomanry; later whilst commanding mounted troops of the 8th Division, was wounded, mentioned in despatches and awarded medal (four clasps, C.B.);

appointed General Staff Officer, 1914; became Assistant Military Secretary on Personal Staff, 1915-1919; ADC to His Majesty, King George V, 1914-1920; awarded the Russian Order of St. Anne.

Cecily Madalene Blair Succeeded to the Blair estates in 1943 on the death of her father.
b. 1884 Frederick Gordon Blair. Cecily Magdalene Blair died at the age of 94
d. 1978 without issue.

The inheritance of, and succession to the Blair estate and Blair House, Dalry, Scotland under the Blair surname came to an end with the death of Cecily Magdalene Blair in 1978. The buildings and estate in 1994 were under the management of a Blair Trust.

**Summary of the Patrilineal Genealogy of
Blairs of Blair House
Dalry, Ayrshire, Scotland
c1165 to c1978**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Dob</u>	<u>Spouse</u>	<u>Relationship</u>
William de Blare	c1135	?	
William de Blare	c1185	?	Son of above
Sir Bryce de Blare	ante 1230	?	“
David de Blare	c1230	Ellene (?)	Brother of above
Sir Roger de Blare	c1265	Marie Mair or (Muir)	Son of above
Hugh de Blare	c1295	?	“ (?)
James de Blare	c1330	?	“ (?)
James de Blare	13 ?	?	Son of above
Hugh de Blare	c1400	?	“
James de Blare	14?	?	“ (?)
John de Blare	c1440	Beatrice Mortoun	(Grandson or nephew of Hugh)
John de Blare	c1476	Lady Elizabeth Montgomery	Son of above
John de Blare	c1502	Helen Ross	“
John Blare	c1526	Margaret Cunyngham	“
John Blair	c1547	Grizell Semphill	“
Bryce Blair	c1573	Annabell Wallace	“
Sir Bryce Blair	c1600	Mariota Dundas	“
John Blair	c1625	Unmarried	“
John Blair	c1600	Lady Jean Cunningham	Uncle of above
William Blair	c1640	Lady Margaret Hamilton	Son of above
William Blair	c1660	Magdalene Campbell	“
Magdalene Blair	c1680	William Scott (Adopted Blair name)	D/o above
William Blair	16 ?	Died unmarried	Son of above

The Blair bloodline came to an end with the death of William Blair in 1732.

Hamilton Blair	c1710	Jane Williams	Half brother of above
William Blair	1767	Magdalene Fordyce	Son of above
William Fordyce Blair	1805	Caroline-Isabella Sprot	“
Frederick Gordon Blair	1853	Mary Elizabeth Baird	“
Cecily Blair	1884	Charles Arthur Cunningham	D/o above

The succession of the Blair Surname, Dalry, Scotland came to an end with the death of Cecily Magdalene Blair in 1978.

Chapter 7

Blair House

Dalry, Ayrshire, (now Strathclyde), SCOTLAND

BLAIR CASTLE, known today as **Blair House** is the oldest monument and inhabited baronial mansion in Scotland which has not been entirely re-built. It was the original Castle and baronial manor of the first Blairs. The exact age of Blair House is not known. The oldest part of the building is the *donjon or guardroom tower* which was probably constructed before 1200. The *pole-tower or keep* is estimated to have been built in or about 1202 so it seems likely that construction began prior to this - probably in the 1190's (or earlier). There are ancient battlements on top of the two oldest towers (or what remains of them) which now lie underneath the high pitched roof of the building which was probably put in place in the late 17th or early 18th centuries.

In 1608, Timothy Pont described the ancient Blair Castle in his topography of Cuninghame as follows:

*BLAIR-CASTLE is an ancient castell and strong dounioun veill beautified with gardens orchards and partiers featted on ye Riuer Garnock it is the ancient patrimoney and heritage of ye Lairds of Blare do eodem to quhome a grate portione ofn the parisch of Dal-ray does lykewayes belonge, the place giuing nou name to ye possefor showes it to be locall. Blair in our old Scotts language as Buchanan interpritts it signifiing **solum arboribus liberum**. Bot in former ages the auners of their lands (quhen as Sir Richard Morawell foundett the Abbay of Kil-wining) wer furnamed **Francisci** as the ancient records of ye fundatione of this abbay zet extant bears vitnes.*

According to Millar (c1890), Blair House is absolutely unique in Ayrshire. Although the external contour of the building is not particularly picturesque since it is endowed with few architectural ornaments and appears a little more modern than it really is, this is the result of the ill-judged and expedient tradesmen who, in the 19th century in the absence of the owner, washed the external walls with cement so as to take the rough-cast off.

Location of Blair House

Blair House stands on a semi-circular plateau of whinstone rock which rises from the left bank of the Bombo, a small tributary of the river Garnock and one of five streams that water the estate. The stream flows past the northern side of the house fifty feet below the foundations of the donjon (tower). The view of the house is quite impressive from the stream and is enhanced by the precipitous nature of the slope.

Blair House is approached by road 2 kilometres east of the town of Dalry, 5 kilometres north of Kilwinning in North Ayrshire but cannot be seen from the road as it is obscured by a forest of trees growing on the estate. The entrance from the road is through tall, impressive gates. Just inside, immediately to the right of the gate is the Manor Lodge House at the side of the drive. The drive winds southwards through trees and undergrowth, over an old stone bridge across a small stream

until it emerges with a stunning view of the manor house on the distant right.

Either at the end of the 18th or early in the 19th century there was a large courtyard on the eastern slopes enclosed by a high stone wall, in which tradition affirms that the Laird of Blair's cattle and his dependants were yarded up in times of trouble. The manor entrance was protected by a gateway presided over by a carved stone effigy of a "Stag, lodged proper". Tradition also asserts that the moat was filled in because it nearly caused the death of a young Laird of Blair. The moat and courtyard no longer exist.

Blair House Grounds

Much of the grounds surrounding Blair House and forming part of the estate is covered in woods, trees and undergrowth with the sealed driveway winding through the rural state of the grounds from the roadway Lodge House to Blair House itself.

A museum built in the mid-1800's contained specimens of natural history as well as archaeological curiosities - many of these were collected by Captain William Fordyce Blair (1805-1884) during his years of service in the Royal Navy, the Great War of Independence and during engagements at Navarino, the Morea and Algiers. The collection contained the original face of Thom's statue of Souter Johnny.

The arboreal treasures of the park included one of the oldest and most venerable yew trees in Scotland. In the mid- 1800's the parklike grounds of Blair House were open to the public. The gardens, orchards and partiers mentioned by Pont in 1608 no longer exist, though Blair tradition indicates that they were located on the western slope of the Blair plateau on the estate.

Towards the east of Blair House lie a ridge and a valley. There is a ridge on the left hand bank of a stream with a circular hill which bore the name of "The Gallows Hill" and was, according to Blair tradition, the indispensable "moot-hill" of the Barony of Blare. Further still to the east on a wooded ridge once stood the "Chapel-brae" which was connected to the Abbey of Kilwinning by a direct avenue of trees.

The park or grounds of the estate comprising approximately 500 acres has fine views and scenery and the Bombo stream winds through the valley within the grounds for about a mile. Deer kept in the park in the 19th century were found to be too destructive and were eventually presented to the Earl of Eglintoun by Colonel William Blair (d: 1841).

Blair House Interior

Inside the principal entrance hall is a figure clad in the armour of Sir Bryce Blair, the patriot of Wallace's time. From here we pass a massive wall into a vaulted chamber called the "Guard Room". Within the recess of its arched fireplace on the right hand side is an arrow slit commanding a view of the outer doorway and on the opposite side of the room is a stone spout terminating in an aqueduct of hewn stone which led down from a reservoir on the upper storey and was probably meant to supply the cook in his or her culinary operations and perhaps afforded that individual with a "hot" defensive measure against unwelcome intruders at the gate.

A passage from this room leads through the central wall, at this point eleven feet thick, into an oblong vaulted chamber said to have been the prison. In the prison chamber, to the right of the door, was a recess into which was built a concave niche of polished granite with a cut moulding

around its face. The purpose of the niche is not known but it seems that it could have been intended for a statue of a saint, a virgin or holy rood before it was removed during excavation and the recess built over.

At the far end of the guard room is a small window in a deep embrasure in the wall - the only light the room possesses - the window was strongly secured by iron stanchions. In the window-sill recess a flat, basin-like hollow is cut in the stone with a gutter underneath the sill leading from the window to the outside. The prison chamber had no fireplace.

During the 19th century, the entire length of the central wall was excavated in order to facilitate communication between one part of the castle and another which now forms the passageway in daily use and is 30 feet long by 4 feet wide.

The dining room on the second storey was a chapel until the occupancy of Colonel Hamilton Blair who died in 1782. The second storey contains a number of large, comfortable apartments which Dobie, in 1876, observed: "Considering the date of the building, were very handsome and airy apartments".

In the turret covering the 1617 doorway entrance is a closed-up doorway over which there is a large granite stone bearing an inscription with the name of **Roger de Blare** (the supporter of Bruce) (b: c1265; d: after 1329) **and his spouse Marie Mair** of the Rowallan family. This would date the stone and perhaps also this part of the building as somewhere between 1296 and 1350 since, according to the family pedigrees, Roger de Blare died in the early part of the reign of King David II (Bruce) which extended from 1329 to 1371.

So far as can be ascertained, Captain William Fordyce Blair (born 18.7.1805 and died after 1884) rebuilt the upper part of the staircase tower which appears to have been of greater height before it was restored.

The Drawing Room

One of the portraits in the drawing room is a charming likeness on glass of the Duchess of Gordon. The Duchess was the aunt of Captain William Fordyce Blair's mother, Magdalene Fordyce (Blair), a daughter of John Fordyce of Ayrton. The portrait of Charles I of England is a copy of the famous picture in the Duke of Manchester's collection at Kimbolton and produced by Lady Cuninghame of Fairlie, the younger daughter of Captain Blair. The daughter had particular literary and artistic talents which are illustrated by the two MS volumes, in one of which – "The Shadow of an Old House" - she has related in verse some of the more striking of the Blair family traditions. A picture of Captain Blair's ship the "Brittania" sailing out of Malta Harbour is a masterpiece by Schetky, the Queen's maritime painter.

The Armoury

The armoury of Blair House contains the richest collection of its kind in Ayrshire including a magnificent sword which formerly belonged to the Dey of Algiers in 1830. Captain William Fordyce Blair was attached to Marshal Beaumont's staff when he carried off this trophy from the Dey's palace in 1830.

The sword used by Sir Thomas Brisbane of Toulouse (France) is also displayed in the armoury.

Sir Thomas was a close friend of Colonel Blair and left the sword to the Colonel's son, Captain W.F. Blair.

Blair House - The Building Exterior

In 1876 Dobie observed that judging by the style and solidity of the walls of Blair House, an oblong building of four storeys (at the back of the old or northern side of the present house) had been the original structure and it was not unlikely that initially the building comprised about half of the existing single square tower. The great thickness of the central partition wall which divided it seems to strengthen this hypothesis. In line with the front centre, various wings and additions have been constructed from time to time - always progressing southward. The first of these constructions, a square, or oblong, of about half the dimensions on the donjon (tower), rises to the same height and is flanked at its points of juncture with contiguous square turrets, the one to the back or westward side having been of greater altitude than any other part of the building. The upper portion which was taken down in comparatively recent times (i.e., late 18th/early 19th centuries) and like its fellow on the eastern side, is now included in the same line of slope as the roof of the parent building. Subsequently a large south wing of three storeys was erected "showing considerable improvement in the style of its architecture" (Dobie, p. 81). The windows of the upper storey in this wing (as also in all other wings) rise half their height above the pediment of the side wall, giving a relief to the *fleur de lis* which is common to all the windows (see Figure 3). The initials,

L
W B M H

are carved in relief on their gables divided over each window (William Blair, b: c1640 and his wife Lady Margaret Hamilton). Further additions to the building were constructed to the east of the gables of the donjon (tower).

The oblong wing of four storeys which stands at the northern side of the manor and formerly formed a single square tower was also according to Millar (c1890) "the original structure to which additions and reconstructions have been made over the centuries, the most important occurring around the early and latter part of the 17th century".

On a shield in the scroll work over the principal entrance doorway set in the external angle on the eastern side of the edifice are carved and emblazoned the arms of "Blair" impaled with those of "Hamilton" (see Figure 1). On the dexter (viewer's left hand side) are the initials "W B" and on the sinister (viewer's right hand side) with the date 1668 divided underneath, are the initials (which are obscured):

L
M H
16 68



Figure 1:
Blair House
Entrance doorway

The initials, represent William Blair of Blair (died 1689) and his spouse, Lady Margaret Hamilton, daughter of William, 2nd Duke of Hamilton (see Figure 3).



Figure 2:
Blair House
Date on doorway in turret.

Alongside and to the right of the principal entrance door (which seems to have been erected/reconstructed in honour of Lady Margaret Hamilton) is a more ancient door in the corner conjunction of the donjon wall over which are carved in relief and emblazoned the armorial bearings of the “Blairs of Blair” impaled with those of “Wallace of Craigie” (see Figure 2) with the date “1617” on the lintel. On the dexter side are the initials

“B B” and on the sinister side “A W”

for Bryce Blair (born c1574 and died 4.2.1639) and his spouse Annabel Wallace. Bryce Blair succeeded to the Blair estate in 1610.

Inside this door is the wicket aperture from which the warrior could sight who it was that sought admission before he withdrew the bolts and let down the drawbridge.

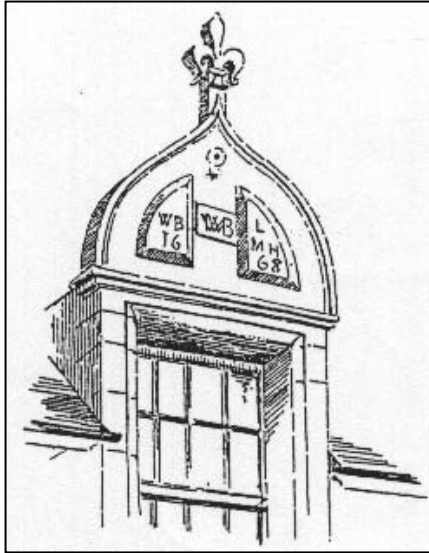
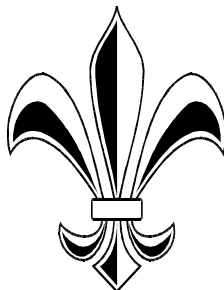


Figure 3:
Blair House
Dormer Window

When the foundations for the porch-entrance were being excavated in the 19th century a deep cavity was found to have been cut out of the rock in front of the “1617” doorway indicating the earlier existence of a deep moat which guarded the castle against marauding clans.

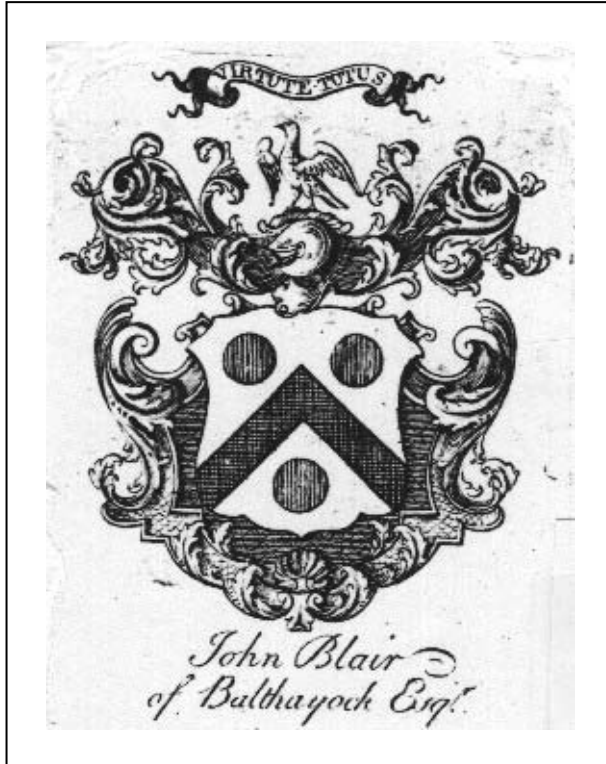
If the Blairs were Norman descendants then the significantly carved *fleur de lis* (*Lily of France*) adorning the peak of the dormer windows (see figure 3) could evidence a sense of nostalgic patriotism for retaining a symbolic association with their past native land of Normandy in France.



Fleur-de-lis (*Lily of France*)



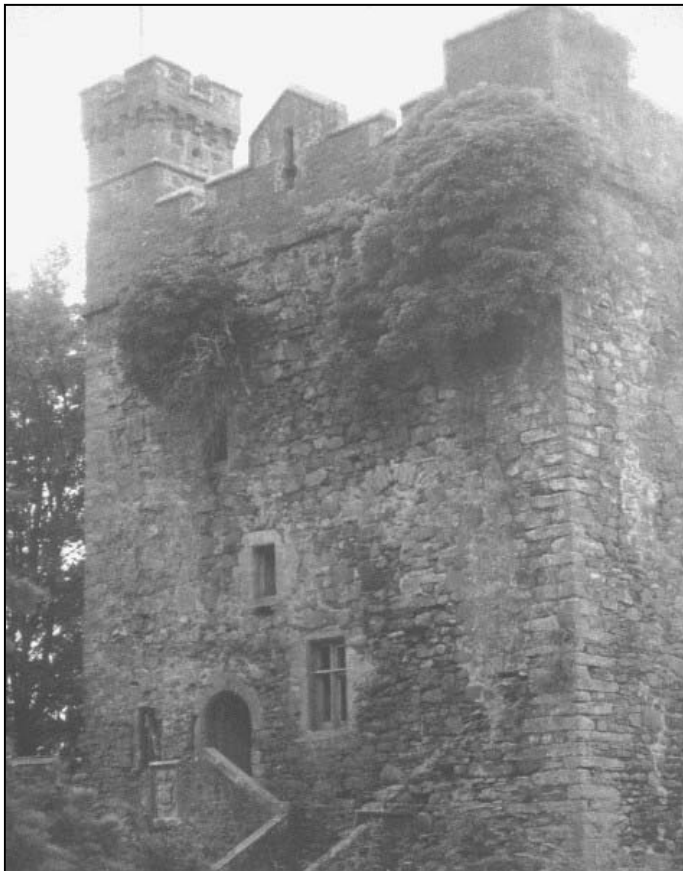
Entrance door to Blair House showing Coat of Arms of William Blair (b. after 1640) impaled with that of Hamilton (he married Lady Margaret Hamilton, March 1666) daughter of the second Duke of Hamilton. Inset in stonework above doorway is a representation of the Blair of Blair shield, possibly inserted at time of 1668 reconstruction. *(Photograph taken by Author, 1990).*



Blair of Balthayock Coat of Arms

Late 13th century

*(Courtesy of Edward P. Blair,
Blair Society for Genealogical Research,
Brownsburg, Indiana, USA, 1997)*



Ruins of Balthayock Castle tower (keep)

Near Perth, Scotland

*(Courtesy of Edward P. Blair,
Blair Society for Genealogical Research,
Brownsburg, Indiana, USA, 1997)*

Chapter 8

The Blairs of Balthayock - Perthshire

From the evaluation and discussion of early Blairs in Chapters 4 and 5 it appears well established that Alexander de Blare was the progenitor of the Blairs of Balthayock [Douglas, 1798; Anderson, 1871; Blair, 1894], as set out in the Balthayock Blair lineage. It was deduced that he would have been a brother (or possibly a son) of William de Blare and since he was not the heir to the Lands and Barony of Blare in Ayrshire, it can be assumed that he would, generally, have been free to establish his own family and identity elsewhere in Scotland according to circumstance and opportunity.

Anderson considers that Alexander de Blare was probably a son of the second William de Blare on the basis of the contemporary time comparison of information available and also notes that his son and heir was named William (Sir William de Blair, d. c1250) possibly after his grandfather (the reference is to the first William de Blare in the Blairs of Blair lineage). (Anderson 320, 1871). Nevertheless, it seems just as likely that Alexander de Blare was a son of the first William and a brother to the second William de Blare. Since Alexander de Blare was a signatory to an agreement between the village of Irvine and a Ralph de Eglington in 1205 he would have both resided in Ayrshire (at that time) and have been at least in his early twenties. The two William de Bares (father and son), the former **'mentioned'** and the latter a **'witness'** to a charter also in 1205 not only indicates that the second William and Alexander de Blare were contemporaries but increases the probability that William de Blare and Alexander de Blare could have been brothers and therefore sons of the senior William de Blare.

Anderson (318, 320, 1871) is one of the few genealogists to recognise this case for a familial connection between the Blairs of Blair and the Blairs of Balthayock. It is germane to my thesis that the inductive evidence is sufficiently strong to reduce to minimal proportions this "leap of faith" which some genealogists have avoided and others have simply ignored.

In the past some genealogists have given little consideration to scattered information concerning the early Blairs because they failed to discern any relatedness in the information which, when taken as a whole, can be seen to provide strong implications for a connection between the two Blair families. The assumption by some genealogists that there was no connection has also been a failure to appreciate the significance of the implication that to ignore the existence of historical contemporary individuals using the *"de Blair" surname*, a surname adopted by the recipient of a new barony (if not by John Francis, then certainly by his son) still demands an evaluation of early "de Bares" and *their usage of a surname not previously used in history prior to its adoption as the surname of the first Blair*. Those who adopt the view that there is no connection between the two Blair families have a 'case to answer'. (See footnote, page 75).

Alexander de Blare also witnessed a number of other charters between 1205 and 1241 - the last recorded being associated with the Priory of St. Andrews in Fifeshire, fairly close to Balthayock in Perthshire. He married Ela de Nyden and inherited part of the Lands of Nyden (date unknown but presumably following the death of his wife's father, Hugh de Nyden). Between 1220-1230 he was granted a royal charter of the Lands of Konakin in Fifeshire, an area also not greatly distant from Balthayock. The charter included the words:

*"To, and in favour of' Alexander de Blare and Ela, his spouse.
daughter of Hugh de Nyden of the Lands of Konakin in Fifeshire,*

holding of the Bishop of St. Andrews, to which Malcolm, seventh Earl of Fife, Duncan and David, his brothers, are witnesses.....”
(John C. Blair, 1894)

However, since the charter bears no date and the Earl of Fife succeeded his father in 1203 and died in 1230 it can be concluded that Alexander de Blare was granted the lands perhaps as early as 1214 (the commencement of Alexander II's reign) but certainly prior to 1230 when a witness to the charter died. Although Alexander de Blare appears to have settled in the Fife area around 1220, I have not discovered any reference to his being granted a charter to the Lands of Balthayock - though this neither implies nor precludes his coming into possession of lands in the Balthayock area.

The first recorded charter of the Lands of Balthayock was granted to Patrick de Blare by Lord Nicholas de Erskine of Kannoul on 22nd October, 1370. Patrick de Blare was the fifth succeeding de Blare generation in the Balthayock lineage after Alexander de Blare, and though it is uncertain where he resided in Scotland he was also granted charters of the Lands of Quilt in Fifeshire in 1369 and Balgilloch in Forfarshire in 1388. The “New Zealand Scotsman” (1938) stated that the Barony of Balthayock emerged c1370 during the reigns of either David Bruce II (1329-1371) or Robert Bruce II (1371-1390) and that ‘Patrick de Blare was its first Baron’ so that it is reasonable to assume that he resided at Balthayock not later than 1370 and consolidated the Barony of Balthayock and the Blairs of Balthayock became a distinct and recognised family of Blairs in Scotland with a significant identity of their own from that time if they had not already acquired this status.

From the time of Patrick Blair, the Balthayock Blairs ceased using the “de Blair” nomenclature from 1393 onwards and thereafter were known by the title of **de Balthayock**, [Douglas 187, 1798]. This change in nomenclature is significant since it provides further supporting evidence that the original progenitor, Alexander de Blare, was a kinsman of the first two Blairs of Blair in Ayrshire. Although by 1370 the Balthayock Blairs had become secure, landed gentry, they clung to their de Blare name for another 20 years - probably a reflection of their shared, nostalgic ancestry for their originating homeland and castle in Ayrshire.

It is still possible, however, on a time scale from c1200 to 1220 that the Alexander de Blare of Ayrshire and the Alexander de Blare of Balthayock may have been different persons though this seems highly unlikely since those using the “de Blare” surname at this time would have been very scarce as the name was only just beginning to emerge **as a territorial surname** in Scottish history. Very few Blairs would have been around - probably not more than two or three families at most. If Alexander de Blare (of Balthayock) were a different person then **he could only have been a son of one of the ‘first’ de Blares taking into account the time scale and that he, himself, claimed to have originated from the de Blares in consequence of his use of the territorial designation as his own nomenclature.** Alexander identifies himself as a **Blare of Blare** - as Balthayock Blairs continued to do until nearly 1400.

It seems likely the Balthayock Blairs retained the “de Blare” nomenclature until 1393 for a number of reasons: to consolidate their social identity; for nostalgic reasons; for legal purposes or for prestigious advantages until such time as they secured their separate identity as a recognisably established and defensible territorial surname. This would not have applied to the very earliest Blairs of which we have record (William, Alexander, Stephen, Brice). Wherever they moved in Scotland documentary evidence refers to them as identifying with the Barony of Blair in Ayrshire since it would have taken some time to establish separately identifiable sinecures of their own. It appears, however, that the earliest to do so was Alexander de Blare as the progenitor of the Highland Blairs of Balthayock and their descendants.

Further, if Alexander de Blare was a son of one of the ‘first Blairs of Blair’ he may have been quite young as early as 1220-1230 to have been granted a charter to lands in Fifeshire. He would have needed to satisfy both legal requirements in terms of age and service/loyalty to the monarch if the lands granted were a royal fief - both requirements possibly difficult to satisfy *if he were not the Alexander de Blare of the 1205 agreement* with the village of Irvine in Ayrshire.

It would be interesting to discover why the Highland Blairs finally settled in Balthayock. The reasons could be varied and numerous. During the reign of King William I (1165-1214), Perth was a notable Scottish burgh and famous for its dyeing industry. There were numerous opportunities of trade, business and the acquisition of land. These features may have attracted some of the early Blairs of Blair to that area rather than to some other areas of Scotland. Whatever the case, as a result of the importance and status attaching to the family clan and sept system in Scotland, friction eventually developed between the two Blair families over the insistence of the Blairs of Blair to the chieftainship of all Scottish Blairs. The Balthayock Blairs disputed the exclusive prerogative of the Blares of Blare to chieftainship. The honour of chieftainship was finally resolved very diplomatically by King James VI in 1658 when he pronounced that: *“the oldest male of either of the two Blair families should have precedency over the younger [male] to the chieftainship”*.

It has not been possible to discuss the Blair surname in a genealogical study such as this without the inclusion of the Blairs of Balthayock, since they form an important aspect of early Blair history and descendancy and were not without distinguished noble connections in the community as well as at Court and were also the recipients of knighthoods and honours. They are as old as the origins of the **de Blare** surname itself.

If Alexander de Blare were the progenitor of the Balthayock Blairs then their origin is also within the same generation or within one generation later of the Blairs of Blair in Ayrshire and reaches back to at least the second, if not the first, William de Blare in terms of Blair of Blair family history [see footnote]. If this is not conceded, then recognition certainly arises at the time Patrick de Blare was created the first Baron Blair of Balthayock (c1370). Whatever view, however, is adopted, it is clear that the two families of Blairs began establishing themselves almost simultaneously: ***the Blairs of Blair in Ayrshire in the Scottish Lowlands and the Blairs of Balthayock in the Scottish Highlands***¹.

¹ *The view that the two Blair families were never one poses a number of difficulties that require explanation: (a) De Blare is a territorial surname. It was not used in Scottish history prior to William I creating the first Barony of Blare some time after 1165. Where did those using the de Blare surname by 1205 come from if they were not sons of the first Baron de Blare? (b) Since an Alexander, a Stephen and a Brice de Blare used the de Blare surname in historical documents by 1205, how could they become entitled to use this nomenclature as a surname if they were not kin of the first Baron de Blare? (3) de Blares who became signatories and witnesses to charters around 1205 reveal ipso facto that they would have been born as late as 1185 and even earlier. If they were not bona fide kin of the first Baron de Blare, who were they?*

Genealogy of the Blairs of Balthayock

Perthshire, Scotland

c1220 - 1862

- Alexander de Blare
b. c1184 (possibly earlier)
d. 1229
- Married Ela de Nyden, daughter of Hugh de Nyden of Fifeshire. Was granted a charter of the Lands of Konakin, Fifeshire, between 1220-1230, a holding of the Bishop of St. Andrews. Witnesses to this charter were Malcolm, 7th Earl of Fife and his brothers Duncan and David. Malcolm had succeeded his father as the 7th Earl of Fife in 1203 and died in 1229 so these lands came into the possession of Alexander de Blare at sometime during this period. [Douglas 186, 1798]. He also came into possession of part of the lands of Nyden (date unknown). Lived during the reigns of King William I (1165 - 1214) and King Alexander II (1214-1249). Also witnessed with Brice de Blare an agreement between the village of Irvine and Brice de Eglington in 1205. Witnessed a charter by Fergus, Earl of Buchan before 1214. May have witnessed charters by Christian Corbett and her spouse in favour of the priory of St. Andrews c1241 and a charter by Randulf de Strethphetham (date unknown) though it is uncertain whether this was the same Alexander de Blare. At this period the Blairs of Balthayock may have born the Coat of Arms of the de Nyden family since it was usual for arms to derive from a territorial rather than a familiar association. [John C. Blair, "The Scotch and Irish Blairs", 1894].
- Sir William de Blair
b. c1190 (Probably later)
d. c1250
- Son of Alexander de Blair. Was Steward of Fife in 1235. Knighted by King Alexander II between 1214 -1249. The Chartulary of Dunfermline mentions "*Dominus Willielmus de Blair, senschallus de Fife*" in 1235. Witnessed a charter by Malcolm, 7th Earl of Fife, together with Andrew, Bishop of Moray who died in 1242. Appears to have died near the beginning of the reign of Alexander III. [Douglas, 1798, but Anderson says Alexander II]. Had two sons, Alexander, his heir and Walter, who is mentioned in a charter of Sir Friskin de Moravia, 1260.
- Sir Alexander de Blair
b.
- Son and successor to Sir William de Blair. Married Helen Ramsay, sister of Sir William Ramsay. He is mentioned in a charter of Malcolm the 8th, Earl of Fife and designated: "*Dominus Alexander de Blair, miles*", in, or before, 1266, the year in which earl Malcolm the 8th died. Had sons named John, [Douglas, 187, 1798], and Walter [Michell, 4, 1895].
- John de Blair
b. c1250
d. after 1296
- Son of Sir Alexander de Blair. He was cited in a deed of writ: "*Johanni de Blair, filius et baredi domini Alexandri de Blair, militis etc*" with the consent of Constantine Lochore his tutor, Helen Ramsay his mother and Willielmus de Ramsay his uncle whereby he gave to the Priory of St. Andrews 'liberty of a milo' (?) on the lands of Nyden, until he came of age, dated 1266.

[Michell, 7, 1895].

David de Blair
b.

Son of John de Blair. Was compelled whilst a young man, to render homage to Edward I of England when he overran Scotland in 1296. Died in the reign of David II (1329-71). Had two sons, Patrick his heir and Thomas, progenitor of the Blairs of Ardblair. [G.F. Black, 81, 1938; Douglas, 187, 1798; Bain, 204, 1881-4].

Patrick Blair
d. Soon after 1393

Married the daughter and co-heiress of John Ardler of Ardler. Was granted a number of charters:

1. Quilt in Fifeshire from Allan de Erskine, Laird of Inchmartin, 1369.
2. Balthayock in Perthshire from Nicholas de Erskine, Laird of Kannoul, 22.10.1370.
3. Charter from Robert, Earl of Fife and Menteith: “..... *dilecto consanguineo fuo Patricio de Blair*” confirming the lands of Quilt to him, dated 1376.
4. Charter from King Robert II (1371-1390) of the lands of Balgilloch in Forfarshire, 1388.
5. Charter of resignation of William de Menteith of the lands of Balgilloch in Forfarshire: “..... *to Patricio Blair de Balthayock etc.*”, dated 1393.

Patrick Blair became the first Baron de Balthayock. Douglas, in his “Baronage of Scotland” states that Patrick Blair was the first of the Balthayock lineage to be designated “*de Balthayock*” and from 1393 all Balthayock Blairs followed this title, thereafter ceasing to be designated as “*de Blair*”. [187, 1798].

Thomas Blair
b.

Son and heir of Patrick de Blair and second Baron of Balthayock. Received a charter of lands under the great seal from King Robert III (1390-1406): “*Thoma de Blair, filio et baredi Patricio Blair de Balthayock of the lands of Ardblare, Baldowry (Baldowie) and Balgilloch in Forfarshire etc.,*”, dated 1399. He also obtained a charter upon the resignation of Walter Haliburton of Haliburton and William Erskine of Kannoul of the lands of Balconally and relevant lands in Perthshire, June, 1410. Thomas Blair left two sons, David his heir and Patrick (d. before 1442) who married Christian Ogilvy. Alexander Ogeston prepared a deed in her favour of the lands of Balclunoch in Forfarshire, 25 Jul 1442. [Michell, 7, 1895].

David Blair
b.

Son of above. Disposed of his lands in the parish of Quilt in Fifeshire to William Lindsay, 1425. Had a son, Thomas [Omitted by John Blair, 1894]. Died in the reign of King James III (1460-1488).

Thomas Blair
b. c1432 (?)
d. 1490-1500

Grandson of Thomas Blair, Was involved in a legal case concerning the disputed ownership of land associated with Arbroath Abbey in 1483-84. Died at the beginning of the reign of James IV (1488 - 1513). Married Lady Margaret Lindsay, daughter of Donald, Earl of Orford. Had two sons, Alexander, his heir and

John, who became associated with the lands of Balmyle and Potento. [Chartulary of Arbroath and Douglas, 188, 1798].

Alexander Blair
b.

Served heir to his father in 1493. Married Jean (or Janet) Gray, daughter of Lord Andrew Gray III and Lady Elizabeth Stewart who was the daughter of John, Earl of Athol. They had a son, Thomas, who succeeded to Balthayock in 1509. [Anderson 320, 1871].

The saga of the Balthayock Blairs would not be complete without reference to Pitcairn's "Criminal Trials of Scotland" in which the Balthayock Blairs, various other Blair families together with other barons and lairds in the Scottish Highlands appeared in court as a result of constant feuds with each other. The following references indicate the feuding of the times:

1. Thomas Blair of Balthayock

10 Mar 1540. Deserted from the army at Solway.

2. Thomas Blare of Balthayock

7 Mar 1549. Was involved in a case of homicide with his son, Thomas, "for the slaughter of a chaplain, Sir Henry Dempster and six others and found security to underly the law".

3. John Blair of Ardblair, with his two sons, Andrew and Thomas; Also Peter Blair; Andrew Blair, half brother of John Butter of Gormack (also implicated); David Blair of Knockmaheir with his sons John and Patrick; together with a number of other persons:

3 Jun 1554. Were indicted for implication in the murder of George Drummond and his son, William Drummond, of Leidcrieff. All except two of the charged "satisfied the demands of the court" and were pardoned. However, Patrick Blair of Ardblair and Robert Smyth of Drumlochy were beheaded on 12 Dec 1554.

Thomas Blair
b.
d. c1568 (?)

Married Jean Blair, daughter of the Laird of Balmyle and Potento (d. 1575). Succeeded to the Balthayock estates in 1509 and became the 6th Baron Blair de Balthayock. Obtained a charter under the great seal: "*Thome Blair de Balthayock, terrarum de Ardblair, Berdowie (?) etc.....baronia de Ardblair, de novo unit etc.....*" in the Shires of Fife, Perth and Forfar, dated 10 Jan 1542. By a charter under the great seal dated 23 Aug 1553 he was appointed bailie upon the water of Tay (King's magistrate for river offences). Was indicted on 2 May 1562 with three sons,

Alexander, William and Patrick; a grandson Thomas and Alexander Blair a tutor of Balmyle, together with 46 others in the murder of the Burgess of Perth, Alexander Raa as well as for other crimes. Douglas, Anderson and Michell agree that he had three daughters:

1. Catherine Blair, m. Thomas Chalmers of Northeys as set out in the charter under the great seal: "*Thome Chalmers de Northeys, et Catherine Blair, et filie Thome Blair de Balthayock, ejus sponsa, terrarum de Northeys etc.....*", dated 30 May 1549.
2. Isabella Blair, married John Lindsay of Evelick. They had issue (but are unnamed).
3. Christian Blair, married Alexander Blair of Balgrey. [Charters in public archives].

However, they disagree over the identity of the sons except for the heir: Alexander Blair.

Other sons claimed are:

Douglas (188,1798):

Gilbert Blair was given by his father the lands of Inchira (Inchyra) by charter under the great seal: "*Gilberto Blair, terrarum de Inchira.....*", dated 23 Jul 1602. He died without issue and the lands returned to the Balthayock estates.

Anderson (321, 1871):

William Blair, M-l--g (?), 1573 and 1576.

Patrick Blair, M-l--g (?), 1563.

Michell (7, 1895):

Gilbert Blair, William Blair, Patrick Blair

John Blair, Laird of Balmyle and Potento (d. 1573)

Thomas Blair, M-l--g (?). (d. 1576)

Alexander Blair

b.

d. 1603

Son of Thomas Blair. Was served heir to the Balthayock estates in 1568. Married Elizabeth Mercer, daughter of Sir Laurence Mercer of Aldie. The lands of Balmyle reverted to him in 1575. [Michell 1895]. Alexander was highly esteemed by King James VI (1567-1625) who personally wrote to him 13 Sep 1579 concerning his tithes and the affairs of the region and confided that he had complete confidence in Alexander to manage the king's concerns in the area. The letter is still preserved. They had three sons, Laurence, Thomas and Patrick and one daughter (who married George, son of John Charteris). Laurence Blair, the apparent heir pre-deceased his father but left a son, Alexander, who became heir to Balthayock. Thomas Blair, the second son married into the French nobility and settled in France during the reign of King James VI (1567-1625). His posterity retained the Blair surname and became allied to a number of aristocratic families: de Gevres; de la Rochefoucauld; de Nouailles; de Agremont; de Champignelle; de Brimant; des Gilbert des Jolly; de

Fleury etc.. The third son, Patrick Blair, became progenitor of the Blairs of Pittendreich, Glasclune etc., in Scotland. Alexander Blair obtained a charter under the great seal: "*Alexandro Blair, filio et baredi Thome Blair filii et baredis Alexandro Blair de Balthayock, terrarum de Nether Balmyle et Potento, in baronia de Meigle et vicecomitat, de Perth.....*", dated 31 Jan 1574. A charter also in the public archives attests the three sons: "*Alexandro Blair de Balthayock, Elisabetha Mercer, ejus sponsa; Laurentio, Thoma et Patricio Blairs, corum filiis, terrarum de Godynes etc.,in vicecomitat de Forfar.....*", dated 28 Jul 1581.

Laurence Blair
b.
d. 1601

Eldest son and apparent heir of Alexander Blair (above). Upon his father's resignation obtained a charter under the great seal: "*Laurentio Blair de Balthayock, filio legitimo natu maximo Alexandro Blair de Balthayock, terrarum de Bauebland [?], Overtoun de Friartoun etc.....*", dated 31 Dec 1600. He pre-deceased his father leaving a son and heir, Alexander.

Alexander Blair
b. 1594 (?)
d. 1620

Grandson of Alexander Blair (d. 1603). Succeeded to the Balthayock estates in 1604 (?). Married Elizabeth Haliburton, daughter of Sir George Haliburton of Pitcur. They had a son and two daughters:

1. Thomas Blair, the heir, who was knighted by King Charles I, (1625-1649).
2. Giles Blair. Married Alexander Carnegie of Balnamoon.
3. Elisabeth Blair. married James Arbuthnot of Arrat, brother of Sir Robert Arbuthnot of Arrat.

Alexander Blair was a witness in the Gowrie Conspiracy (Pitcairn's "Criminal Trials", vol.1., p.188).

Sir Thomas Blair
b.
d. c1652

Served heir to his father in 1621. Married:

(1) Margaret Ayrton, daughter of Sir John Ayrton of Ayrton, Fifeshire. Had three sons and five daughters. The son, Alexander, became heir.

(2) Margaret Fotheringham, daughter of Sir Alexander Gibson of Durie, relict of Sir Thomas Fotheringham of Powrie. There was no issue from the second marriage. Thomas Blair bestowed upon his second son, Andrew Blair, the lands and estate of Inchyra in Perthshire. His third son, John Blair, was destined to be associated with the lands of Balmyle. Thomas was knighted by King Charles I (1625-1649) and obtained a charter under the great seal: "*domino Thoma Blair de Balthayock, militi, terrarum de Gardrum in vicecomitat de Perth.....*", dated 13 Mar 1637.

His offspring were:

1. Alexander Blair, his heir, knighted by King James VI (1567-1625).
2. Andrew Blair. Obtained two charters under the great seal: "*Andrea Blair de Inchyra, fratre germano domini Alexandri Blair de Balthayock.....of the lands of Inchyriff, Argeith etc.....*", in Perthshire, dated 3 and 5 March, 1663.

3. John Blair. Obtained a charter under the great seal: “*Magistre Johanni Blair, fratre germano domini Alexandri Blair de Balthayock et sponsa ejus, dimi dietat, terrarum de Nether Balmyle etc.....*”, in Perthshire, dated 16 Jul 1668.

The five daughters, all married but four unnamed:

1. Elizabeth, married to Sir Gilbert Ramsay of Banff.
2. Married to ----- Butter of Gormack.
3. Married to ----- Graham of Balgowan.
4. Married to ----- Haliburton of Fotheran(s) [?]
5. Married to ----- Graham of Potento.

Sir Alexander Blair
b.
d. 1692

Served heir to his father Sir Thomas Blair, 1653. Married Elizabeth Fotheringham, only child of Sir Thomas Fotheringham of Powie. Succeeded to the Balthayock estate upon his father's death c1652. They had three sons and two daughters. Thomas, the eldest son and heir died (17--(?)) without issue and his brother John succeeded to the Balthayock estates. The third son, Andrew, became a doctor of medicine and father of John Blair who became a writer in Edinburgh. One daughter, Elisabeth Blair married James Carnegie of Newgate and the second daughter Margaret, married the Rev. Thomas Strachan.

Thomas Blair
b.
d.
John Blair
b.
d.

Served heir to his father in 1693. Married Jean Pringle, relict of ----- Buchanan of Lenie. Thomas died without issue, 1703.

Served heir to his brother Thomas Blair in 1705. Married Margaret Butter, daughter of Patrick Butter of Gormack. Had one child, a daughter, Margaret the heiress. She succeeded to the estates of Balthayock in 1723.

Margaret Blair
b.
d.

Sole heiress of John and Margaret Blair. Became mistress of Balthayock in 1723. Married David Drummond, son of an advocate, David Drummond. Upon his marriage he assumed the name and Coat of Arms of the Blairs of Balthayock. They had a son named John. David (Drummond) Blair died in 1728 and their son inherited the estate.

[Douglas 189, 1798]

John Blair
b.
d.

Married Patricia Stevens, daughter of John Stevens an Edinburgh banker. They had a son named David the apparent heir, and five daughters. The eldest daughter, Margaret, married a Major James Johnston of the East India Company. They had one daughter, Jemima Johnston who married an Adam Fergusson, 26 Nov 1811 and had six sons. Why the apparent heir, David, did not inherit the Balthayock estate, is not clear, but according to his mother's will he died in India. His niece Jemima Johnston became heir to Balthayock.

The Balthayock Blair bloodline appears to have ended with John Blair.

Jemima Johnston Blair
b. 23.8.1783
d. 1824

Married Adam Fergusson (b. 1782, d. 1862). They had six sons. The eldest son, Neil James Fergusson adopted the surname of Blair in order to inherit the Balthayock estate.

Neil James
Fergusson-Blair

Inherited the Balthayock estate. Born 1814 and died 1862 without issue.

The Blair surname associated with the lands of Balthayock appears to come to an end with the death of Neil Fergusson-Blair in 1862.



Blair of Balthayock Family Crest
(Courtesy of Edward P. Blair,
Blair Society for Genealogical Research,
Brownsburg, Indiana, USA, 1997)

Overview of the two major Blair families and their surname

A review of the “Blairs” and their surname is not an easy task since it is highly complex in terms of the wide dispersion of source material and difficulties in revision and translation. Those who have little congruence of historical factors may fail to appreciate the importance and relevance of *one-name studies* of people whose integral and common feature is their sharing of the same surname. The study of the “Blair Surname”, however, was intentionally written not only to place a particular Blair family within its histo-genealogical context but also to trace the origins of the surname and to place those upon whom it was bestowed in their rightful setting in Scottish history.

Those who appreciate historical events frequently experience a natural curiosity about their identity, which, while concealed within their surname, requires explication of what it means to be the holder of a specific name in order that they may experience some *sang-froid* concerning the reality of their personal identification. It is natural for people to think about such questions as:

- What is a name?
- Why do I have this name and not some other?
- What is the meaning of such a word which spells my surname?
- From whence did such a name derive?
- What is the origin of the name - how did it arise?

For many people it is impossible to discover answers to the above questions. If, for example, the original meaning of “Smith” was a “workman” or “craftsman” then there is no way of discovering the “first” Smith, or the geographical location where such a naming event arose.

In the case of the Blair surname we can point to a definite time, location and event where the surname emerged in history but with less certainty of information about the person responsible for the Blair surname. Despite the paucity of information and details available we know that the recipient of the Barony of Blare was a Jean Francois, that he was probably a Norman by birth (or by ancestry) and that he was the original progenitor of the Blairs of Blair in Ayrshire before 1200 AD.

Genealogical information and secondary source material concerning the “Blairs”, particularly the early Blairs, have been both difficult to access and difficult to “translate” since much of it has been written in antiquated English words, expressions and ancient idioms. Some has been difficult to identify and transpose into modern English. Additionally, at times, some historical sources and photocopied material have been almost indecipherable so that it has been necessary in several cases to make an educated guess as to what meaning was intended within a particular context. Sometimes the context itself has suggested the outcome in order to explain the obscurity of the text in terms of contemporary language.

Since this genealogy is a combination of some Blair history as well as particular Blair family

pedigrees I have attempted to assess as much information as was available concerning the origin of the Blairs but have not attempted nor intended any final resolution concerning the identity and the mystery of the “first” Blair. The reason is simple; the evidence is limited and would require considerable time, a lengthy research of primary source documents and archival material. Much of it is not readily accessible. There is also the problem of the unavailability of material outside Scotland. The genealogy, therefore, is as reliable as the dependability of the information I have used. I have no reason to believe that any of the informational sources I have consulted are unreliable. The greatest difficulty, however, experienced by anyone writing genealogical histories is not problems associated with the availability of information but with the lack of it and that genealogical data can rarely be as precise as any genealogist would wish. This genealogical work is no exception.

I have attempted to present the genealogies in a form that is readable in a contemporary English which simplifies the identification of the succeeding generations of descendants and also in a style that can be readily understood by those unfamiliar with genealogies and genealogical material. Some, very likely, would have chosen a different style and/or format.

If source material which mentions early Blairs had also revealed some of their contemporary kin, the lineage could then have been placed in a clearer genealogical perspective and this might well have identified more of the early “Blair Tree”. Generally, documentary sources do not reveal such information since they are primarily concerned with the principal parties involved in charters, contracts, tenures, etc., and their public relationships but not, unfortunately for genealogists, their family, kin, private or social relationships.

However, be all this as it may, some issues relating to the Blair surname and the Blair lineage seem well established from external as well as from inferential evidence. The following statements generally summarise what is known with reasonable certainty about three Blair families and their surname:

- [a] The Barony of Blare and the Lands of Blare represented a royal fief granted to the “first Blair” after 1165 and probably before 1195 by King William I.
- [b] The ‘original’ or ‘first’ Blair was of Norman extraction. (either Jean Francois or, his son, William Francis de Blare).
- [c] The Blair surname was of territorial origin and arose in association with blare lands in Ayrshire late in the 12th century.
- [d] Blair Castle is the earliest known monument of Blair history and is the original castle and manorial foundation of the Blairs and is known today as “Blair House”, Dalry, Ayrshire.
- [e] Early Blairs recorded in history (e.g., Alexander, Brice and Stephen de Blare), were kin of the ‘first’ Blair as sons, grandsons or brothers.
- [f] The Blairs of Balthayock emerged from the original Blairs of Blair and were separate contemporaries by, or earlier than 1220.
- [g] A succession of Blairs lived continuously in Blair Castle (House) from its foundation around 1200 until 1978 when the Blair surname of the Blairs of Blair ended.
- [h] Patrick Blair became the first Baron Blair de Balthayock c1370 and the Blairs of Balthayock ceased using the “de Blare” nomenclature from 1393 and thereafter.

- [i] A succession of Blairs resided at Balthayock from c1220 to 1862 when the Blair surname associated with that family came to an end.
- [j] Descendants of the Blairs of Ladymuir in Renfrewshire appear to be connected to the lineage of the Blairs of Blair through James Blair (c1597) and John/Grisel Blair (c1547-1609) though further research is needed to establish or disconfirm the missing link(s).
- [k] The lineage of the Ladymuir Blairs has not ended but continues from John Blair (1819-1892) who, with his wife, Jean Clark, migrated from Dumbarton, Scotland to Auckland, New Zealand in 1864. Many New Zealand Blairs living in 1998 trace their lineage to the Ladymuir Blairs of Renfrewshire.

In recent centuries Scottish Blairs have migrated to various countries around the world and now number many thousands of descendants. Comparatively few know anything concerning their ancient Scottish-Norman origins. It is hoped the present study will enable many “Blairs” and other descendants to learn something about their origins and the name they bear, which is now over 800 years old, as well as create a deeper and wider interest in genealogy and history generally and in Scotland the land of their ancestors.

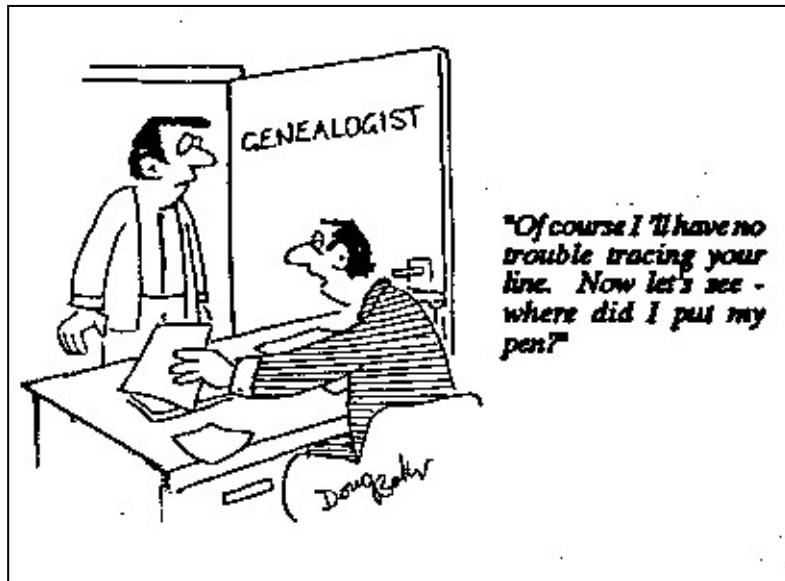
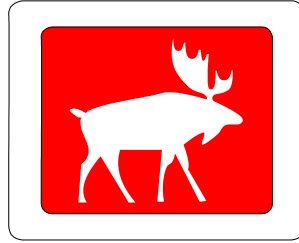
The use of “de Blare”

The use of the French “de” continued for quite some time after the Lands and Barony of Blare were granted by King William I in the 12th century. Ultimately, “Blare” or “Blair” became a permanent surname though for some time descendants were identified and known as a ‘Blare of Blare’ until such times as surnames became a commonality. In the high Middle-Ages of the 12th and 13th centuries and the later Middle-Ages of the 14th and 15th centuries it was important for the nobility under the feudal system to be identified with their lands and tenures by the use of “de” or “of”.

From “Blare” to “Blair”

The change in the spelling of Blare probably underwent a long transitional phase. It is not known when the “Blair” spelling emerged. It seems highly probable that the original spelling continued to be used by Blare descendants until the end of the Middle-Ages - at least until the early 1400’s, perhaps even contiguously with “Blair” until the mid-16th century or later. I am unaware of any Blairs still retaining the original spelling of the surname. This is an unusual feature of the “Blair” name since many surnames developed variable spelling characteristics over the centuries, e.g., the original “*Kempe*” is known in various forms today as *Kemp*, *Kempen*, *Kempster*, *Kempt*, *Kempston*, *Kemt*, *Kimpton* etc., and families around the world are known by each of these names. This process seems not to have occurred with the “Blair” surname.

In this genealogy, the written change from “de Blare” to “Blare” to “Blair” has been guided by the charters in which these variations have occurred: the “de” appears to have disappeared by the middle of the 15th century and “Blare” changed to “Blair” towards the late 15th century - **although it is possible that the early spellings and forms survived much longer and that it was subsequent genealogists who, when noting early charters, themselves changed the spelling to Blair to agree with their current usage in the 19th century!**



Chapter 10

Heraldry and the Blairs

Heraldry is the system in which inherited symbols are displayed on a shield or escutcheon for the purpose of identifying individual families. In the middle ages (c1000 - 1400) the herald¹, often a tournament² official, had to recognise knights in battle by their shields, and so became an authority on personal and family insignia. As earlier functions of the herald grew obsolete and feudalism³ declined from the 13th century, his chief duties became the devising, inscribing and granting of armorial bearings. Personal and family insignia are common to primitive tribes (e.g., totems) and are mentioned by Homer (Greek epic poet, 800 BC), however, heraldry proper is a feudal institution developed by noblemen using personal insignia on seals and shields that came to be transmitted to their families. It is thought to have originated in Germany in the 12th century and to have been adopted, extended and refined in France, Spain and Italy and imported into England by the Normans. The crusades and tournaments that drew together knights from many countries caused heraldry to flourish in western Europe.

The practice of embroidering family emblems on the surcoat,⁴ or tabard,⁵ worn over chain mail in the 13th century accounts for the term “coat of arms”. The use of armorial bearings grew rapidly thereafter through all grades of feudal rank above squire.⁶ The private assumption of arms became so common that Henry V (1387-1422) forbade it, and on the chartering of the Herald’s College in 1483 the regulations pertaining to heraldry were placed in the hands of the Garter king-of-arms. Arms were borne by families, corporations, guilds, religious houses, inns of court, colleges, boroughs, cities and kingdoms. In the United States the seals and insignia of colleges, cities and the like are examples of the persistence of the heraldic tradition into the “new world”.

John Francis, the Norman who came into possession of the barony of Blare towards the end of the 12th century would have been familiar with heraldry. Little, however, is known of Blair family insignia from the middle ages apart from the Fleur de Lis (Lily of France) symbol carved above a number of windows in Blair House, Dalry, Ayrshire. Such a symbol would remind early Blairs of their Norman identity and origins.

There is considerable confusion and much speculation concerning the status of the Blairs as a Scottish clan. Many sources dealing with the system of clans and tartans of Scotland omit the Blair name. The evolution of tartans has always been a continual process. In order to establish the “authenticity” of any tartan it may not be realistic to draw a line at a particular point in time because if this were done, “the only possible date would be 1746, the year when the clan system ‘officially’ ended”, according to the Scottish Tartan Society. This would then imply that all tartans appearing after that date were not authentic “so that most of the tartans seen today are not real and therefore do not exist.....” (Macdonald, *The Scottish Tartan Society*, 1983). Macdonald considered this was an unrealistic approach and provided by way of example, the Graham of Menteith tartan which first appeared c1820 whereas the Blair tartan appears to be of more recent (20th century) design.

¹ Herald: officer who made State proclamations and bore messages between princes or officiated at a tournament

² Tournament: pageant in which two parties of mounted and armed men contended with usually blunted weapons

³ Feudalism: the main form of social organisation in medieval Europe

⁴ Surcoat: a loose sleeveless robe worn over armour as part of a knight’s insignia.

⁵ Tabard: a knight’s short, emblazoned garment worn over armour.

⁶ Squire: chief landed proprietor in a district; a gentleman next in rank to a knight.

It is uncertain whether the Blairs were ever a clan under the old clan system of Scotland. Although Sir Iain Moncreiff, Albany Herald of Arms lists the Blairs as a clan and The Standing Council of the Scottish Chiefs and the Lord Lyon King of Arms of Scotland appear to have approved the Blair arms and tartan (as reported in “Scotland of Old” by Bartholomew the Edinburgh publisher, 1983), this does not necessarily imply that the Blairs were a clan in the historic sense of the clan system before it was ended in 1746. It seems likely that earlier Blairs were associated with one or more clans in the past, perhaps as a sept, though this is not clear. Sometimes they have been depicted as being linked to the Graham of Menteith clan - yet P.E. MacDonald, assistant Curator of the Museum of Scottish Tartans stated in correspondence with the author in 1983 that he “could not find any evidence in support of the theory”.

Many Scottish names referred to today as “clans” are according to A. Campbell (1993) modern “resurrections” or developments not necessarily associated with historical precedents but have been revived under the influence of nostalgia, romanticism and sentiment. This is not to deny clan status to any familial group - only that the adaptation and meaning of the “clan” has undergone change in the modern world.

Modern developments appear to be attempts to enable the clan system to survive. Whilst ancient purposes of the clan may no longer be relevant the clan society today has a major part to play as a social organisation with which people can identify with their past and acquire a deeper knowledge and understanding of their history which is intensely rewarding. Campbell (1993), however, offers some serious advice: “I firmly believe that although much altered, the clan system has a considerable part to play if it is developed sensibly on sound historical lines and is not allowed to develop into a travesty of the past as to lose all credibility. Long may it flourish!”.

Heraldry is a complex topic and beyond the scope of this study apart from a brief overview of the Blair Coat of Arms which is described as follows:

***“Argent, on a saltire sable, nine mascles of the first.
Crest in a wreath argent, a stag lodged proper”.***

Explanation of heraldic terms used in the Blair Coat of Arms.

Argent	silver (white)
Crest	device above a shield and helmet on a coat of arms (in this case the stag and wreath)
Helmet	metal head-covering worn by a knight in battle
Lodged proper	appearing in <i>natural</i> as opposed to <i>conventional</i> colour
Mascle	lozenge voided with lozenge-shaped aperture (a lozenge is a diamond-shaped figure or rhombus)
Saltire sable	“ <i>ordinary formed by bend and bend</i> ” (the black cross)
Stag	male red deer
Wreath	representation of woven flowers or leaves wound into a ring and in heraldry also known as a <i>torse</i>

The Blair of Blair motto: ‘*Amo probos*’ means ‘I love the virtuous’.

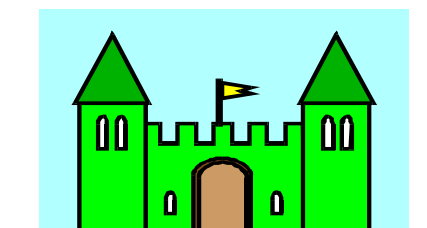
The Coat of Arms of the Blairs of Balthayock varies in some important details from that of Blair of Blair in Ayrshire. The Blair of Balthayock motto is, ‘*Virtute tutus*’, which means, ‘By virtue safe’. It has a *chevron* (inverted “V”) on the shield between three *torteous* (red-rounded discs). The crest is an argent dove with its wings spread.

The Coat of Arms used by the Clan Blair Society (USA) as its logo is a variation on the arms of Blair of Blair in Ayrshire as adopted by the original Blair Society for Genealogical Research in 1927. It is not officially registered and is a representation of the arms of various Blair families. It should be clearly noted that a Coat of Arms belongs only to the original grantees and their descendants in the male line according to The College of Arms, London, official grantor of Coats of Arms in the United Kingdom.

Heraldry

In Scotland, the Lord Lyon King of Arms is the final arbiter of all things heraldic. The Court of the Lord Lyon is in “New Register House”, Princes Street, Edinburgh. A leaflet is issued by the Court of the Lord Lyon which provides general information concerning armorial bearings and related matters and can be obtained from the above address. The “Heraldry Society of Scotland” is also a useful source for further information and also produces an annual Journal for interested members.

Details concerning **Blair heraldry** and other information can be found at the Blair Society for Genealogical Research website on the Internet.



Places named Blair

At least nineteen places or locations in Scotland incorporate “Blair” as an identifying place name. It is certain that some of the names were associated with the surname of “Blair” and an original Blair individual or family, though it is likely that others were derived from the original Celtic meaning of “Blair” (or Gaelic *Blar*) as ‘a field of battle’ and emerged as a consequence of historical and cultural influences and associations.

The following Blair place-names are located in six of the twelve counties of Scotland as shown by a grid or map reference:

Name	County	Grid Ref.. [1]		Map Ref. .[2]
Blair	Fife	NT3194	59	
Blair Atholl	Tayside	NN8765	43	87. 86/65
Blairbeg	Strathclyde	NS0231	69	
Blairburn	Fife	NS9885	65	
Blair Drummond	Central	NS7398	57	81. 73/99
Blairgowrie	Tayside	NO1745	53	88. 17/45
Blairhall	Fife	NT0089	65	
Blairhill	Strathclyde	NS7265	64	
Blairingone	Tayside	NS9896	58	82. 98/96
Blairland	Strathclyde	NS2948	63	
Blairlinn	Strathclyde	NS7572	64	
Blairlogie	Central	NS8296	57	82. 83/96
Blairmore	Highlands	NC1959	9	88. 19/59
Blairmore	Strathclyde	NS1981	63	80. 19/83
Blairmore	Strathclyde	NS1982	56	
Blairnamarrow	Grampian			
Blairninich	Highlands	NH4959	26	
Blairs Ferry	Strathclyde			
Blairskaith	Strathclyde	NS5975	64	

(1) *Landranger Sheet series grid reference.*

(2) *Big Road Atlas of Britain page reference.*

Interestingly, all of the place-names are located in counties which stretch like a pathway from Ayrshire (Blairs of Blair) to Perthshire (Blairs of Balthayock) territories and nowhere else in Scotland. This may provide the sociologist with “food for thought”.

Other Blair place-names located outside Scotland include at least twenty six in the United States, four in Canada, three in Australia and Port Blair, capital of the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean. They are listed as follows:

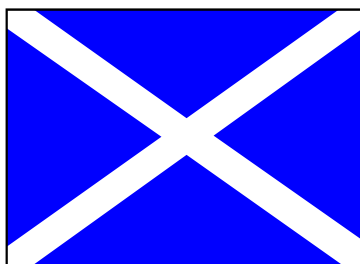
Blair	California, USA
Blair	Illinois, USA
Blair	Indiana, USA
Blair	Kansas, USA
Blair	Nebraska, USA
Blair	New Hampshire, USA
Blair	Oklahoma, USA
Blair	Ontario, Canada

Blair	West Virginia, USA
Blair	Wisconsin, USA
Blair Athol	New Brunswick, Canada
Blair Athol	Queensland, Australia
Blair County	Pennsylvania, USA
Blairgowrie	Victoria, Australia
Blairhampton	Ontario, Canada
Blair Junction	Nevada, USA
Blairmount	Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
Blair's	South Carolina, USA
Blairsburgh	Iowa, USA
Blair's Corner	Pennsylvania, USA
Blairsden	California, USA
Blair's Gap	Tennessee, USA
Blair's Mills	Kentucky, USA
Blair's Mills	Pennsylvania, USA
Blairstown	Iowa, USA
Blairstown	Missouri, USA
Blairstown	New Jersey, USA
Blairsville	Georgia, USA
Blairsville	Illinois, USA
Blairsville	Indiana, USA
Blairsville	Pennsylvania, USA
Blairsville	South Carolina, USA
Blairton	Ontario, Canada
Port Blair	Capital, Andaman Islands, Indian Ocean

Etymological research would undoubtedly reveal some fascinating information about the origin of Blair place-names and how they came to represent geographical locations. Such a study could make an interesting socio-historical project for some enterprising Blair descendant.

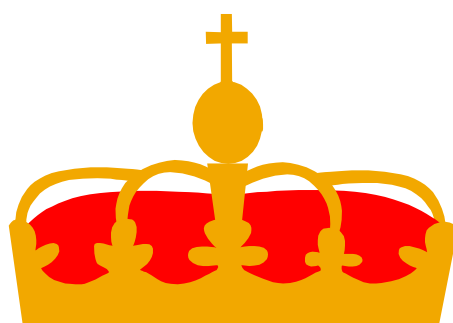


The National Emblem of Scotland



Cross of St. Andrew

St. Andrew, patron saint of Scotland (and of Russia). He is commemorated on 30 November. One of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. A fisherman and brother of Simon Peter, converted by John the Baptist. According to tradition he preached the Gospel in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Scythia and south Russia. In 69 AD he was crucified on a diagonal cross in Patras, Achaia, Greece by order of the Roman Governor and buried in that country. The belief that his cross was X-shaped dates only from about the 14th century. According to legend, Constantius, son of a Roman Emperor wanted Andrew's bones moved to Constantinople (Istanbul today) during the 4th century, but at the same time it is said that on two occasions an angel visited a monk named Regulus (St. Rule) and prompted him to take Andrew's remains to the land of the Picts. Regulus escaped to sea with Andrew's remains but during a storm the ship was wrecked in 368 AD on the rocky coast of Fife, Scotland at a place called "Kilrymont". The town and the church founded on this site to house the saint's remains is known today as the university town of St. Andrew's and has an international golfing reputation. When the Picts were absorbed by the Scots, Andrew became the Patron Saint of Scotland in 736 AD. The record of Andrew's cross as the national emblem of Scotland dates to the 13th century.



The “Blair” Population

[or how many Blairs are there?]

For several centuries, in common with other citizens of Scotland, Blairs have migrated to other countries and parts of the world and increased the numbers of people with the Blair surname, particularly in the United Kingdom, countries of the former British Empire and also the United States of America.

In 1989, Family Heritage International estimated the population of people holding the Blair surname in the world as approximately 117,000 individuals inhabiting six nations where the majority of the Blairs lived (FHI, Sec. V, 1989). Although searching was undertaken by computer resources the figure must remain a very general estimate since it is not specifically claimed to be based on official government sources and/or census records.

On the basis of a conservative 2.1% population increase since 1989 the following scenario of “Blairs” in 1997 would be represented roughly by the following estimates:

<u>Country</u>	<u>Number of Blairs</u>
Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales)	17,000
Northern Ireland	4,000
United States of America	96,000
Canada	10,000
Australia	7,000
New Zealand	3,000
Total estimated population of “Blairs”:	137,000

The estimates listed above indicate that Blairs around the world exceed those living in Britain by approximately 700%.



The Blairs of Blair and the Blairs of Balthayock:

A Common Family Origin?

The question has been raised by Blair descendants, historical researchers and genealogists over a long period as to whether the two major, oldest and most important Blair families in Scotland - the Blairs of Blair in the Lowlands of Ayrshire and the Blairs of Balthayock in the Highlands of Perthshire had a common family origin. Whilst some sources over the centuries have vaguely suggested they may have sprung from a common source, I am unaware of any genealogist or other researcher who has provided any sober review of historical indicators available and drawn any significant inferences from an appraisal of the information (with the single exception of some important comments by William Anderson, 1871). Consequently the prevailing view for a long time has been that, in the absence of confirmatory evidence, the two Blair families were distinct, separate and autonomous family entities without any known kinship connections to each other. I believe this view to be an astonishingly and poorly researched assumption.

The probability factor of a common ancestry seems never to have tempted genealogists to explore historical clues which might have resolved the issue or, at least have provided some illumination on this era of Blair history. Whilst things that are *possible* and *probable* have a legitimate function in arguments and assumptions of various kinds they have not been employed in attempts to clarify the *lacunae* that occur in the early area of Blair history - which have hitherto forestalled investigation. Because *probability* is a delicate tool, however, it must be used with a proper measure of restraint. What is *possible* must be closely woven with what *is the case* - hard fact - as its backbone. If it is allowed to float on a cloud of pure surmise or speculation and invoked too frequently - and the temptation to do this is strong - it ends by dissipating its effect, though not all readers will be aware of such an unintended result.

Most genealogical researchers do not confine their genealogical efforts to the study of a single family. Generally, it has been noted that the two Blair families shared *a common surname* and beyond stating the possibility of a common origin the issue has been left an open question since a common surname does not necessarily prove a common origin.

Alastair Campbell (1993/94), particularly, refers to a number of Scottish families sharing common surnames but were distinct and separate families without any common biological ancestry. Nor does a “vested” interest in the Blair surname by any Blair descendant justify, *ipso facto*, a presumption or wish fulfillment that the two Blair families *must* and therefore *did* spring from the one family. Such a presumption would be unwarranted in the absence of evidential support. Assumptions must be *formulated by evidence* and not themselves *formulate evidence* in order to justify assumptions.

From time to time during this study a number of aspects which appear to touch on the relationship of the two Blair families has been discussed generally so that in this chapter it is proposed to more closely explore a variety of clues and assess their evidential value.

A few early documents exist in which Blairs are involved in contracts, charters, etc., and some of these primary sources are referred to in the lineages of the Blair families. Other documentation also exists in the form of family writs, muniments and archives - some of this information is with the Scottish Records Office, Edinburgh, and other sources, but is not readily or easily accessible so

that it is difficult to authenticate some of the lineage data concerning the Blairs. Secondary sources are fairly readily available but are not always reliable and none of these has consolidated or updated the two Blair families since about 1910. One could say that a review is well overdue.

Some of the historical and circumstantial evidence which may have a bearing on revealing whether or not the two Blair families ever had a common ancestry is now discussed.

1. The Acquisition of a Surname.

Surnames can arise in a number of ways and be held by people of no biological relationship. The most frequent occurrence of a name-change is marriage, usually where the female adopts the patrilineal surname of the husband - though occasionally the male spouse may adopt the surname of the wife.

Sometimes a changed surname is adopted arbitrarily by those seeking to conceal their real name such as when a criminal chooses an alias. Surnames are sometimes changed if they can be associated with something unpleasant or with some vulgar meaning. Some names are acquired by the due process of adoption, or occasionally by imitation. The development and appropriation of surnames in the Middle Ages was still in process when the Blair surname emerged following the mandatory edict of 1061 of King Malcolm (1057-1093) that his chief subjects should adopt surnames in conjunction with their territorial possessions. Other subjects, though not obliged to adopt surnames eventually acquired them from places of domicile and other sources.

It should be kept clearly in mind that adoption of “de Blare” as a territorial surname either by Baron Francis (?) de Blare or his son, William de Blare would have initially confined the surname to their sons, thus, only a mere handful of male Blairs would have held this surname by the close of the 12th century.

The most serious objection to a common biological ancestry of the two Blair families at this time is the possibility of an “interloper” assuming “Blair” as his surname and that perhaps the progeniture of Balthayock Blair descendants could be attributed to such a person. The implication of the objection is perfectly valid, for, if the “first” Balthayock Blair acquired his Blair surname from a non-biological Blair source such as his place of domicile or origin or through some cultural process **then there would be no biological kinship link between the two Blair families.** In the high middle ages it was not uncommon for servants when leaving the employ of the manor to adopt the surname of the Master as a means of identification.

No national system of registering birthnames existed in the 12th century for the population of Scotland though limited records and charters were kept by the nobility and landed gentry in respect of property settlements, marital arrangements, endowments, inheritance benefits, legal proceedings and so on. Whether non-biological “Blairs” adopted “Blair” as a surname, and, if so, how many, during the transient period of surnaming can never be known. The descendants of any who did so might be said to be *“surname” Blairs but not biological kin and descendants of the original Blairs of Blair.* Can the question then concerning a common origin for the two families ever be resolved?

Although I have rejected the prevailing notion that the two major Blair families were separate and unconnected I also believe that it is impossible to prove in any judicial sense that the Balthayock Blairs shared a common origin with the Ayrshire Blairs since authentication would involve an examination of the earliest Blair records if such documents exist. Nevertheless, there are other historical and circumstantial clues which appear to link the two families in such a way as to extend far beyond the observation that two families share the same surname as a merely curious co-

incidence.

2. The Earliest Blairs.

Four contemporary male Blairs, William, Stephen, Alexander and Bryce are to be found as witnesses to charters by 1205, yet the de Blare surname did not exist in Scottish history before 1165 and only emerged in the later years of the 12th century. During this period only a mere handful of male de Blares could have held this surname by the beginning of the 13th century. The four early Blairs were not servants since they held noble and/or landed gentry status. One of them became progenitor of the Balthayock Blairs - Alexander. If there were two Alexanders it would seem to stretch the imagination too far to accept that out of a handful of male Blairs by 1205. two were named Alexander. (This may have been possible if Baron (Francis) de Blare and his son and heir, William de Blare, both had a son named Alexander within the appropriate time frame. It would not, however, negate a common biological origin for the Balthayock Blairs - merely move their connection to the subsequent generation).

Significantly, the charter concerning the town of Irvine, 1205, was witnessed by an Alexander and a Bryce de Blare. Because so few Blairs existed at this time it is quite possible that these two Blairs were brothers and therefore sons of either the Baron or the first William de Blare or, just possibly, Bryce was a son of Alexander *if* the de Blare surname was adopted *before* c1184. Whatever the case their status implies that both were kin of Baron de Blare. If they were not, who were they? Where did they come from? How did they emerge at such a specific and co-incidental time? Why did they use “de Blare” as their surname? Similar questions also apply to William and Stephen de Blare.

3. Spheres of Influence.

Douglas (1798) in his “Baronage of Scotland” stated that the Ayrshire Blairs were chief of all the Blairs in the south and west of Scotland and the Blairs of Balthayock, chief of the Blairs in the north of Scotland (p. 194) and the two families competed for the chiefship of the Blairs until King James VI put an end to their disputes by deciding in 1658 that:

“The oldest male of either of the two Blair families should have precedence over the younger to the chieftainship”.

Subsequent historians and genealogists appear to have misinterpreted Douglas, who, whilst implying the existence of two separate Blair families, added further confusion by indicating their discrete territorial spheres of influence - the Blairs of Blair in Ayrshire and the Blairs of Balthayock in Perthshire which may have been responsible for the notion that the two families had distinct and separate origins and gave rise to such continuing confusion. I believe this to be a misreading and a misunderstanding of the evidence.

Both Dwelly (1883) in his article, “The Blairs” (Na Blaraioh) and Anderson (1871) in his book, “The Scottish Nation”, substantially repeat information provided by Douglas (1798), although Anderson expressed uncertainty with the prevailing notion of two separate (and unlinked) Blair families when he stated, “.....though the arms of the Blairs of Blair and the Blairs of Balthayock bear no affinity.....it does not follow that they may not have descended from the same stock” (318. 1871) and then reflects upon a curious detail that seemed quite insignificant. He states, “A comparison of dates makes it possible that **Alexander de Blare of the Blairs of Balthayock**, who flourished in the reign of King William I (The Lion), 1165-1214, and his son, King Alexander II (1214-1249) may have been a son of William de Blare of Blare, in which case **he appears to have called his son William after the name of his grandfather**”. (This refers to Sir William de Blare of Balthayock, the first heir and descendant of Alexander de Blare in the Blairs of Balthayock

lineage (see page 76)). Anderson provided no hint, unfortunately, as to whether the father of Alexander de Blare was the **first** or the **second** William de Blare in the Blairs of Blair lineage, but continues: “*As this fact (the choice of the name William for Alexander’s son) has not been hitherto recognised by genealogical writers, and a contrary opinion as to the connection of the two families (that they were not connected) from the one now indicated (that they appear to be connected), has, in consequence, been held*”.

4. William, a Norman Balthayock Blair?

Anderson infers that the choice of William as a name for the son and heir of the progenitor of the Balthayock Blairs is highly significant and too coincidental to be ignored, and also that if Alexander de Blare’s father was William (Francis) de Blare then it would be a normal and natural choice of name for his son to be named after his paternal grandparent, since he would have been following the Scottish custom of naming children at that time (see page 49). In Alexander’s case, it would be even more significant since such a name would identify his son and heir with a family of the lower nobility upon which a barony had recently been conferred. Such a name would provide the familial, social and political links important at a time when such connections were necessary to build and expand influence, prestige and patronage amid the feuding and fierce loyalties and enmities displayed amongst Scottish clans and families.

A further point of significance - which Anderson missed - is that the name “William” is Norman in origin and this increases the probability that some connection to a Norman ancestry such as perhaps to that of Jean Francois of the Blairs of Blair was involved.

5. Another Territorial Origin ?

It could also be argued that the Blairs of Balthayock arrived in Scotland from Normandy separately from Jean Francois (or his ancestors) but had settled in the Highlands instead of the Lowlands of Scotland. Whilst this theory is not impossible it can be rejected on the grounds that no satisfactory explanation can be provided as to why and how their Norman name (whatever it may have been) became changed to the Gaelic “de Blare” since, although there were many blare fields or territories in Scotland, “de Blare” as a surname emerged **only in Ayrshire; was territorial in origin; no one, other than the kin of William de Blare had a legitimate right to use it and, was used by the Balthayock Blairs until the end of the 14th century**. Additionally, Alexander de Blare was known to be associated with charters in Ayrshire in 1205 simultaneously with the emergence of the Blairs at the end of the 12th century. Twenty years later he was granted lands in the Highlands so that **he was a contemporary of the first generation of the Blairs of Blair**.

6. The Scottish Family and Clan System.

Further support for a common origin of the Blairs seems to be provided by the Scottish clan system. In Scottish history, the clan consisted of the clan chief and his followers *irrespective of descent* according to Brewer (1870: 236,14,1992). At face value this implies that two unconnected clans could exist independently whilst having the same surname, though Brewer also stated that in a narrower sense the clan chief could also be *the chief of a family and his followers related by ties of kindred and bearing his name*. This latter occurrence seems to have applied in the case of the Blairs though there is uncertainty whether the Blairs were ever a clan. (This issue is discussed elsewhere in Chapter 10). If the two Blair families were biologically independent and unrelated by descent they could have exercised influence within their own traditional territorial areas **without the necessity for disputing family chiefship**. However, Douglas, as well as Anderson and Dwelly state that they long disputed the honour of family chiefship, eventually seeking a royal decision on the issue.

It would seem illogical and unnecessary for the Blairs to dispute chieftainship unless one or both families believed they had a shared common origin and saw themselves as belonging to the same broad, extended family of Blairs. Apparently it was the chagrin of the Balthayock Blairs at being relegated to “inferior familial status” that motivated them to seek a legal and enforceable royal verdict in their favour in order to gain equitable family recognition for themselves with the Ayrshire Blairs. The decree of King James VI gained the Balthayock Blairs an officially recognised status as well as the Chieftainship of the Blairs if/when the eldest male Blair happened to be a Balthayock Blair. This evidence not only implies that they saw themselves *as a connected Blair family* (particularly the Balthayock Blairs) but also sought royal, legal and heraldic protection and recognition concerning *which Blair was the authentic chief of all the Blairs of Scotland*, not simply who was to be regarded as *a chief* of two independent families. The king’s decision in 1658 eliminated their territorial independence since it conferred chieftainship on the oldest male Blair *irrespective of descendancy and territorial location*. [See also Chapter 8].

The whole issue of the king’s decree implies that the Ayrshire Blairs were exercising a dichotomous familial authority which was resented by the Balthayock Blairs as being completely unwarranted if they were of the same bloodstock. The issue was clearly one of AUTHORITY and not one of AUTONOMY where families saw themselves as separate, insular and independent social units and only sharing a common name by accident and nothing else. The reverse was the case - if the Blairs of Ayrshire were reluctant to **share** family chiefship, it was this issue that prolonged the dispute and eventually galvanised the Balthayock Blairs into redressing the situation by appealing to the king. The long dispute over the sharing of family headship authority presents very strong evidence of the **familial unity of the Blairs - not their autonomy and independence from each other** as has been held by genealogical writers for so long.

7. Alexander de Blare: progenitor of the Balthayock Blairs and kin of the Ayrshire Blairs?

A number of genealogical sources refer to Alexander de Blare as the progenitor of the Blairs of Balthayock, that is, the “first” Blair of that particular lineage. If Alexander had been a servant of the Blairs of Blair and at some time assumed “Blair” as his surname he could still be the progenitor of the Blairs of Balthayock *but they would not be blood related to the Blairs of Blair*. They would, in fact, be a separate, distinct and autonomous family with no shared common origin or family ancestry with the Ayrshire Blairs, only the sharing of a common name.

However, there are a number of significant details concerning Alexander, which have generally been overlooked or ignored by genealogists in the past:

We know that:

1. Alexander claimed to be kin of the Blairs of Blair (e.g., Alexander de **Blare**), that is, he claimed the Blairs of Dalry, Ayrshire, as his own kin, biological or otherwise.
2. He appeared to reside in or near Blair of Blair territory in Ayrshire in 1205 and witnessed a contract between the Ayrshire village of Irvine and a Brice de Eglintoun.
3. He held the status of at least that of *landed proprietor* in 1205 since *only persons of that status or a higher ranking could legally witness charters*. He was, therefore, either a member of the 5th ranking order of the nobility (barons) or a landed proprietor (an important tenant-in-chief of the king).
4. To validate a charter as an eligible and legitimate witness, Alexander would have attained his

majority so that his birth date could have been as early as 1184 (or earlier) when he witnessed the 1205 charter, that is, he would have been *minimally in his twenties, or older*.

5. Alexander was recognised by his “de Blare” surname, either from birth or, certainly prior to witnessing the charter in 1205 in order for it to be legitimately validated.
6. Alexander’s use of the “de Blare” nomenclature signifies that he identified himself as *originating from the Blairs of Blair*, though it may have been possible for a serf or a servant in the employ of the Blair barony to do this also under certain circumstances.
7. His use of the “**de**” could also signify that he was a legitimate kin, a son or brother of a Blair of Blair. This would have been a natural and typical usage of the “de” term by a Norman of the period. Such a *meaning* could not apply to anyone adopting or imitating “Blair” as a surname.

If Alexander is to be taken seriously as a candidate for the role of progenitor of the Blairs of Balthayock as well as kin of the Ayrshire Blairs then it must be shown that he did, or could have, satisfied essential prerequisites of such status, that is:

- (a) lived within the contemporary time frame associated with John Francis becoming a baron and owner/occupier of the Lands of Blare;
- (b) resided in the territory of Blare in Ayrshire or could have done so, and
- (c) was recognised by the “de Blare” surname.

These prerequisites are integral to the issue of any possible link between the two Blair families.

The deterrent argument that some non-biological Blair (such as a servant, villager or other individual) assumed “Blair” as a surname *is quite possible and will always exist*. This, however, is not the primary problem and those who stop here miss the essential point concerning the greater probability of Alexander (or other early Blair) being associated with both the Ayrshire and Balthayock Blairs. We know Alexander de Blare existed. He also appears to fit the prerequisites both as progenitor of the Balthayock Blairs and as kin of the Blairs of Blair. We do not know whether any individuals assumed “Blair” as a surname. We know that it was *possible* but have no information upon which to base any degree of *probability* at all. Whether any person did so lies in the realm of speculation.

Alexander, as a candidate representing a link between the two families, not only satisfies the basic prerequisites for such a link but strengthens the probability of his being either a son of John Francis, the first Baron de Blare, or brother to his contemporary, William de Blare. It seems to me that what little evidence we do have, favours Alexander de Blare - and only Alexander - as both kin of the Ayrshire Blairs and progenitor of the Balthayock Blairs. No other candidates (in the current state of Blair genealogy) - except perhaps Stephen de Blare or Bryce de Blare who are *possible* but not *probable* candidates - can produce a stronger case.

Even a cursory study of the clues available can hardly fail to note the relevant timing, the residency status and the nomenclature associated with Alexander which are essential if any connectedness is to be established. The clues may be random and scattered, but who would argue that they are merely accidental, co-incident or irrelevant? Such details cannot be ignored for to do so is to be placed in the invidious position of having to explain how Alexander, as a non-Blair, could have:

- i. lived within the appropriate time frame,
- ii. resided in the relevant territory,
- iii. represented himself as a Blair of the Ayrshire Blairs, and

- iv. risen to such rapid, equal and simultaneous prominence as the original Ayrshire Blairs

all within a short space of about 20 years if he were not an original Blair himself.

In the light of the discussion so far concerning Alexander de Blare the prevailing assumption concerning the unconnectedness of the two Blair families seems much less plausible. Alexander's admission that he was a "Blare of Blare" and the legal recognition of this claim *in terms of his witnessing eligibility in 1205* does not appear to be spurious - it is supported by historical evidence which should no longer be neglected.

If Alexander had been in servitude to the Blairs of Blair and adopted "de Blare" as his nomenclature he would have needed an apostolic miracle to have risen from the status of a nameless servant to the status of a landed and/or noble proprietor in a short period of 20 years.

Again, if the Norman custom of the times were to use "de" to signify a birthright and to identify kinship with a family it seems highly improbable that a servant could "get away with" such a rapid rise so as to become equitable in social status as the Baron of Blare, including the economic implications such a change in status would involve, in addition to residing in the same territory amongst people who would know he was not biologically-related to the Blairs of Blair.

8. Emergence of the Blair Surname

Chapter 2 indicated that de Blare as a surname was adopted by John Francis (or his son William (Francis) de Blare) as a consequence of the conferral of a barony and blare lands. "Blare", as a generic term in the 12th century referred to cleared, open fields, especially battlefields. There were many of these in Scotland so it is theoretically possible for such a field to have similarly given rise to the same territorial surname for "another Blair" family. Whilst this possibility may appear plausible, I am unaware of any historical evidence linking such a notion to the Balthayock Blairs.

Blair Castle in the Highlands near Blair Atholl is a case in point. Whilst the castle is located close to where the Balthayock Blairs resided in Perthshire, the castle, so far as I can ascertain, received its name from a nearby blair or battlefield and its original owners were the Dukes of Atholl. The Scottish Lowlanders were more prone to adopt surnames from their territorial possessions than the Highlanders. Whilst a "blair" (territory) in Perthshire gave rise to the name of a castle, no Scottish blair - other than in Ayrshire - is attributed with having provided the same *territorial surname* to any other family.

9. The usage of "de Blare" by the Balthayock Blairs

Support for a common biological ancestry of the Blairs also appears to be reflected in the nomenclature recorded for a number of early Blairs (see Chapter 4).

The Balthayock heirs in Perthshire who succeeded Alexander de Blare were recognised by their "de Blare" nomenclature until Patrick de Blare who obtained the Balthayock estate by charter on 22 October, 1370, was made a baron (date unknown) and by 1393 became Patrick Blair the first Baron de Balthayock. Thereafter, his heirs and successors were styled Blairs of Balthayock according to Douglas (187, 1798), no longer identifying themselves so closely with their distant homeland from the end of the 14th century.

By the beginning of the 15th century the Balthayock Blairs had "come into their own". With Patrick being made Baron of Balthayock and thus elevated to the 5th rank of the order of nobles, they would no longer have needed (if they ever did) the strength of family patronage from the

Blairs of Blair. This seeming assertion of independence on the part of the Balthayock Blairs may also have contributed to the belief of some researchers that this family was not connected to the Ayrshire Blairs. However, insistence on separation does not necessarily imply no common ancestral origin.

Yet there was established precedence and custom for Patrick Blair to be styled “Baron of Balthayock” - it was the king’s decree of 1061 which had insisted that his chief subjects adopt the nomenclature of their possessions in their surnames. Significantly, Patrick Blair did not style himself as Patrick Balthayock of that ilk, as he probably could have done, but continued to identify himself by his original surname of Blair. By 1393, more than 300 years after the king’s edict it is likely that surnames were so well established in Scotland there was no longer the same necessity or compulsion for the Balthayock Blairs to follow previous custom so that their response reflected an adaptation to the circumstances of the time.

What is more significant, however, is the one prominent issue over which the Balthayock Blairs remained adamant - the chieftainship of all the Blairs of Scotland. Despite their assertion of independence following the establishment of the Barony of Balthayock as well as their topographical distance from the Ayrshire Blairs, they strongly rejected any notion of ineligibility to hold chief headship of the Blair family. Although it appears that the Ayrshire Blairs attempted to exclude them from this family honour I have discovered no evidence that such exclusion was based on any notion that the Balthayock Blairs were not biologically related Blairs. It seems evident that the Balthayock Blairs saw themselves being thrust into a subservient position of inequity and being “frozen out” of their family “rights”. Whatever they felt or whatever their views over the issue were, it resulted in a long dispute between the two families - a continuously festering issue - until resolved by the decision of King James VI in 1658 which gave them an equal patrinoimial share of eligibility in the chiefship.

The persistence of the Balthayock Blairs in seeking equal family recognition attests not only to their distinctiveness and identity as a separate family but also to the **unity**, not the **autonomy**, of the two families as does their uncompromising insistence on retaining their shared family surname - important points which tend to be overlooked.

Overview

With the increasing surge of interest in family pedigrees and genealogical lineages, the absence of a clear patrilineal genealogy of the mainline Blairs of Blair has, in the past, not only presented much mystery but also insuperable difficulties for tracing ancestral connections. It was considered important in this study to explore confusion surrounding ancient Blair origins and to collate the information into a readily accessible and understandable form in order to facilitate the pursuit of genealogical links.

The most important considerations motivating the present research therefore were to examine evidence for the early origins of the Blair surname; record for posterity the completion of the Ayrshire and Perthshire Blair lineages from the 12th century to their termination in 1978 and 1862, respectively and to explore evidence for the probability of a shared biological ancestry.

Only two ancient Blair families, therefore, have been discussed in detail. This does not imply there are no other distinguished Blairs, Blair families or Blair lineages - there are. Some lineages have already flourished over the centuries whilst others are still continuing.

Whilst the prevailing assumption concerning the Blairs of Blair and the Blairs of Balthayock has

been that they were not linked as one family, a “no connection” case has never been made out. It is a surprisingly arbitrary assumption, based a great deal more on an absence of interest and reflection than upon a serious consideration of historical indicators pointing to the unity, instead of the autonomy, of the two Blair families.

The evidence discussed strongly indicates an early, shared, ancestral origin for the two families. For a long time such indicators have been unrecognised, ignored or consigned to the mysterious past without critical appraisal and evaluation.

It is not the *quantity* of the indicators associated with the two families that is important since there are, not unsurprisingly, comparatively few that can be positively associated with the Blairs at the end of the 12th century. Rather, it is the *quality* of the links discussed and their peculiar appropriateness with what our expectations would be if an established connectedness already existed between the Ayrshire and Perthshire Blairs.

The Blairs fulfil at least four functions essential for any consideration of a common origin:

- i. *Contemporarity* - simultaneous emergence in the history of Scotland
- ii. *Nomen inheritance* - same etymological origin and patrilineal succession of a name which arose at a particular time and place in Ayrshire and nowhere else in Scotland
- iii. *Familial cohesion* - a strong probability that the progenitors were biological kin
- iv. *Headship commonality* - shared chiefship representation of all Scottish Blairs

Yet there is a further significant factor: the royal recognition in 1658 of their common ancestry. King James VI may well have regarded the Blairs as having a common origin merely on the basis of their common surname - he possibly did - but the Balthayock Blairs were sufficiently convinced to risk royal, legal and public exposure if they made a false claim - their claim might have been challenged and the outcome have been very different. In the absence of a challenge to shared family origins the king's decision obligated the two families to share the family headship of all Scottish Blairs.

From an examination of historical and circumstantial evidence there emerges a much stronger probability than hitherto that the early Blairs were a single fraternal family. Only the male heir, William de Blare, would have been obliged to reside in Blair Castle near Dalry, Ayrshire. Other Blair sons could reside elsewhere and become progenitors of their own extended Blair family branches.

Whilst some of the evidence discussed is circumstantial this, in itself, is not a deterrent to examination. Many persons have been convicted (or declared innocent) on the basis of circumstantial evidence, such evidence being interpreted on its merits.

Conclusions

NOTE : The following conclusions are based wholly upon the evidence and issues raised and discussed in this work. The discussion upon which they are based should be read first so that a clear understanding may be acquired of the mystery and complexity involved. Some people are tempted to read the final chapter of a book and assume they have “got the plot” but usually acquire only a superficial understanding. It is hoped that those who have a serious interest in genealogy will avoid this mistake.

The four early Blairs, William, Stephen, Alexander and Bryce signed/witnessed contracts/charters as early as 1205 thus indicating they had achieved their majority and were born by 1184 or earlier.

Since the Barony of Blare was conferred after the King's ascension in 1165 and the Blair surname adopted subsequent to that event, this short time period of approximately 19 years (or less), probably precludes a second Blair generation emerging by this stage to accommodate any of the four historically recorded early Blairs *and simultaneously for them to have reached adulthood by 1205.*

However, at least three objections can be raised. The objection that the historically recorded Alexanders (1205, 1214 and 1220-30) may not have been the same individual is genuine but improbable. If true, however, it would merely move the additional Alexander to one generation later and he would still be a kindred Blair of Blair.

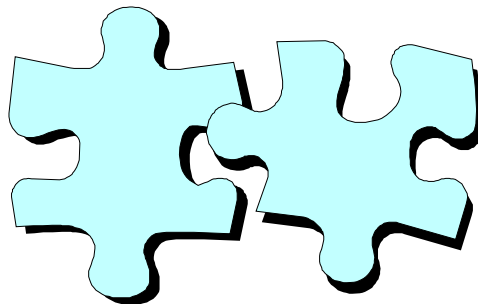
The objection that any of the four Blairs could have been "interlopers", that is, having adopted "de Blare" as their surname seems quite unwarranted, since they were all of noble or tenant-in-chief status (a charter signatory requirement). Why would a noble change his own name to that of another noble and risk association with a surname that had only just emerged in history?

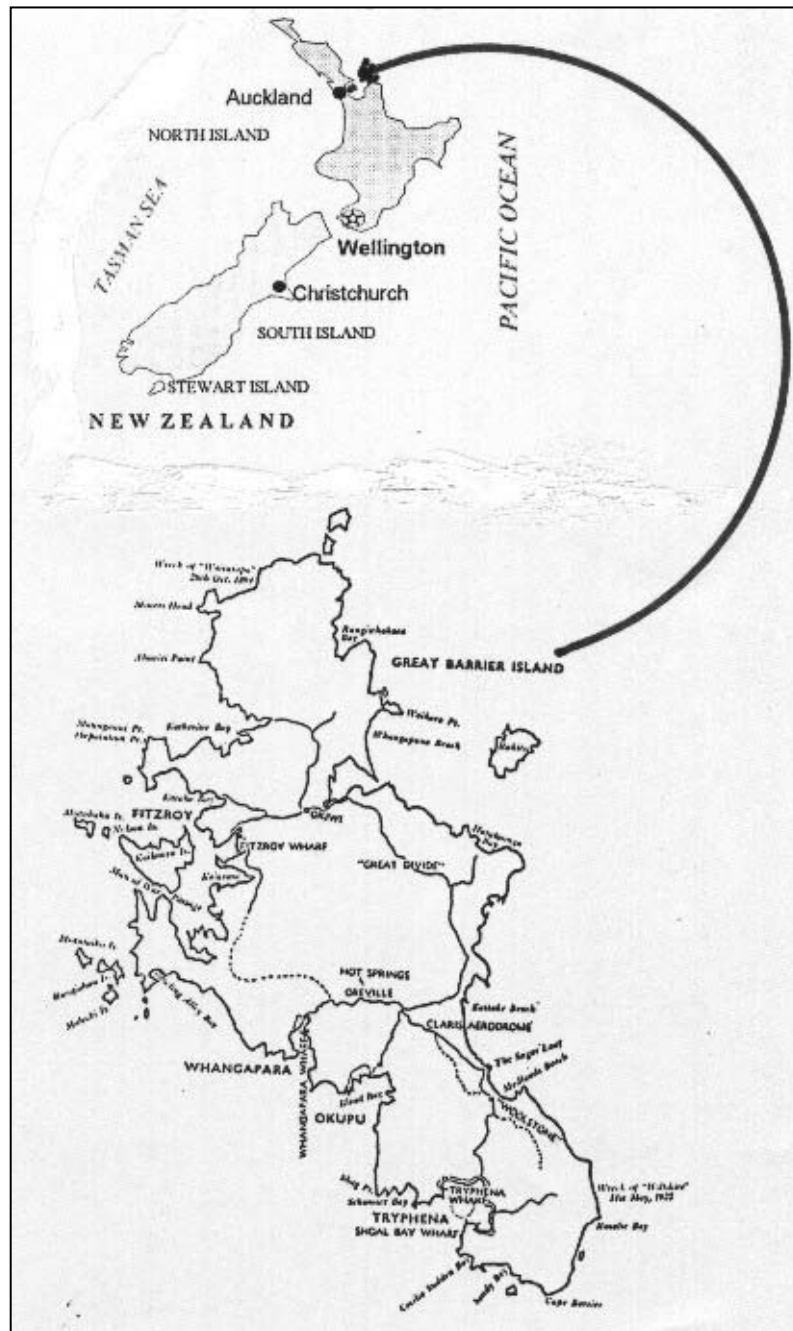
The objection that servants could have adopted "de Blare" as their identifying nomenclature does not bear close scrutiny due to the virtual impossibility of such individuals manufacturing a miracle in order to achieve nobility status within the short time frame available.

The historical indicators and evidence, taken in perspective, imply that the four Blairs were brothers to each other and sons to Baron (Francis) de Blare. They either "inherited" the "de Blare" surname at birth or certainly adopted it before 1205 along with William de Blare, the presumed eldest son, heir and successor to the Barony.

Alexander de Blare, traditional progenitor of the Balthayock Blairs emerges within this same perspective as the kindred link between the two Blair families.

Whilst the view of a common biological origin cannot be "proved" in a judicial sense, it is considered that the evidence is sufficiently significant to substantiate belief in a common biological origin of the two Blair families without any extraordinary "leap of faith". Historical indicators pointing to a common origin exist. Some may interpret them differently. What they cannot do, is explain them away.





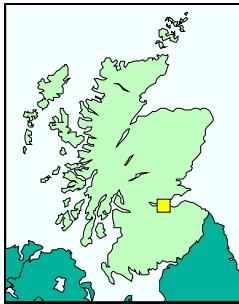
The Great Barrier Island, Auckland, New Zealand.
John and Jean Blair emigrated from Scotland on the ship
“Lord Clyde” and settled at Tryphena on the south west of
the island, 1864.

The Blairs of Ladymuir

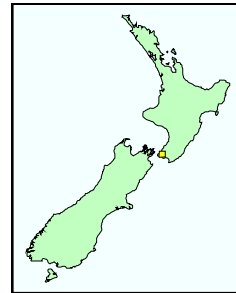
Their origins and patrilineal descendency

James Blair (c1597) to John Blair (1844-1909)

Scotland



New Zealand



Name	Date Of Birth	Birth Place	Spouse
James Blair	C1597-1620	Scotland	Not Known
John Blair	1580-1590	Scotland	Not Known
Hew Blair	Before 1613	Scotland	Not Known
Hugh Blair	C1635	Scotland	Not Known
Hugh Blair	1660	Scotland	Margaret Rodgers
James Blair	1690	Killallan, Scotland	Janet Laird
John Blair	30 May 1725	Kilmacolm, Scotland	Elizabeth Crawford
John Blair	1753	Kilmacolm, Scotland	Agnes Taylor
Robert Blair	25 Apr 1797	Scotland	Margaret Blair
John Blair	24 Mar 1819	Inchinnan, Scotland	Jean Mcintosh
John Blair	3 Feb 1844	Renfrew, Scotland	Agnes Mckay Maxwell

Origin of the Blairs of Ladymuir

Attempts to unravel one's ancestral origins are often fraught with mystery and frustration - usually much of both. Mystery surrounds the origins of the Blairs of Ladymuir (the New Zealand family of descendants of John Blair, 1819-1892) almost as much as that which is associated with attempts to discover the origins and connections of the Blairs of Blair and the Blairs of Balthayock. However, whilst some of the early Blairs of Ladymuir and their connections seem obscure the Lands of Ladymuir comprised an estate of rough farmlands approximately 10 kilometres north west of Castle Sempill and Sempill Loch in Renfrewshire west of Glasgow and about 10 kilometres south of the town of Kilmacolm.

It was these lands which were said to have come into possession of two brothers, James and William Blair of Blair, Dalry, Ayrshire, about 1620, grandsons of John and Grisel Blair (Blair Society Database, 1997), of the 15th generation of Blair descendants on the Blair of Blair lineage (see Chapter 6). "Ladymuir" still exists in Renfrewshire and can be found on a detailed map of Scotland. Further details are unknown.

John Blair and Grisel Sempill had three daughters and six sons. One son, John, had three daughters and no sons. Another son, Alexander, changed his name to that of his spouse when he married Elizabeth Cochrane, daughter and heiress of William Cochrane of Cochrane. Bryce Blair, born 1573 and twin brother of John, married Annabell Wallace 13 March, 1614 and had two sons and five daughters [Anderson, 1871]. James Blair, birth date unknown but probably by 1585, married Annabel Stewart before 1615 since they received two charters of land in Ayrshire dated June, 1615. No details of offspring are known. Robert Blair, born 1578, married Janet Anderson (date unknown) but presumably after c1596. They had at least one son, Sir Adam Blair of Bogtown [Anderson 319, 1871]. Hugh Blair, birth date unknown but probably by 1585, died Jan. 1616, married Barbara Hamilton. They had at least one son, Brice, born before 1616 who married Agnes Scott before 1647.

At this stage of research, the genealogical links for the Ladymuir Blairs are uncertain. Whilst Robert Blair of Lochwood (b. 1578) may have had a son named James (Paterson 1847, but not cited by other sources), no link of a William has been discovered. However, Gavin Blair (named in a charter under the Great Seal of Scotland 7 Feb 1601 [RMS VI, 1142]) and later as James Blair (in a charter of June, 1615 (Douglas 1798, 195) and married to Annabel Stewart, may have had offspring of the marriage but, if so, they are unnamed. Only further research may resolve this mystery.

Since John and Grisel Blair are said to have been the grandparents of James and William Blair it is interesting to look at the colourful background from which the Ladymuir Blairs arose. John Blair's background is shown in the Blair of Blair lineage (pp. 53-58). Little is known of his wife, Grisel, except that, "she was probably a daughter of Elizabeth Carlile" and though, "not mentioned in the precept of legitimation of her other children....." appears to have been raised as one of Robert, Lord Sempill the 3rd's sixteen children. She married John Blair, 11 May, 1565 and, ".....they had children of their own" (Paul, 550, 1910).

The Blairs of Ladymuir and the Sempill Connection

Grisel Sempill came from a very turbulent and somewhat notorious family background. I am indebted to *The Scots Peerage* (1910) for the details from which the following history has been transcribed into contemporary English (this was essential since the original material contains antiquated language and expressions for which there are no longer exact or precise translations (e.g., "put to the horn", etc.) so that the precise meaning of a term or expression may be either

obscure or lost in attempts at explanation.¹

Grisel Sempill was a “legitimated” daughter of Lord Robert Sempill III of Renfrewshire. Lord Sempill was a man of considerable notoriety. Born about 1505, he became involved in social and political intrigue from the time he was a young man until he died about 1573. By the age of 20 he and his father (Lord William Sempill the second) were feuding with John Mure of Caldwell in 1526. As heir-apparent, Robert Sempill III received a charter on 23 Feb 1532/33 of the island of Little Cumray, but, on 23 Dec 1534 this was revoked. He also received a charter of the lands of Hardrig and others in the lordship of Douglas and a grant of the office of Governor and Constable in the King’s Castle of Douglas on 20 Oct 1533.

By the end of the decade Robert Sempill had begun indulging in criminal activities and on 2 March 1539: “.....*being furth of the realme, fugitive fra the lawis and at the horne for certane grete crymes.....*” was outlawed and only granted a reprieve by the king, conditional upon his father, Lord Sempill II, providing bail and surety of 5,000 pounds (a huge sum in those days) guaranteeing his son would keep the peace in Scotland and France.

By the 24 Jan 1543/44 his father granted him a charter of the office of Sheriff of Renfrew, barony of Sempill, lands of Southannan, Previk, Glasfurd and others. He sat in the Scottish parliament from 1544 to 1546. Many assemblies were also held in Stirling Castle Parliament House, which was built by James III. Lord Sempill attended the Convention assembly held there in 1545. On 16 April, 1545 he was granted the lands of Paisley Abbey as a reward for his military defence of the Abbot and the Convent “from the influence of the Protestant heretics”.

Lord Sempill was an early supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots and for his allegiance was granted various estates of property on 20 May, 1546 which had been forfeited by Matthew, the Earl of Lennox. However, at the Battle of Pinkie, near Musselburgh, Lothian (the Scottish midlands) he was taken prisoner on 10 September, 1547 when the Scots were defeated by the English under the Duke of Somerset.

On 9 April, 1549, as the result of a quarrel an unsuccessful attempt was made by John Mure of Caldwell and others to murder Robert Sempill. In another quarrel on 11 June, 1549, Lord Sempill killed Lord William Crichton of Sanquhar in the hall of the residence of the Lord Governor in Edinburgh and for this crime he was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle and sentenced to death by beheading. His head was saved from the block by the influence of John Hamilton, Archbishop of St. Andrews whose brother was the Regent of the infant Queen Mary (b. 1542). The Archbishop’s concubine was none other than Grisel, Lord Sempill’s eldest daughter (an older sister of the Grisel who married John Blair).

His reprieve from the axe was subject to two conditions to which Lord Sempill was forced to agree in 1550; (1) Margaret, the youngest daughter of the murdered Lord Crichton became engaged to marry Lord Sempill’s second son, Andrew Sempill and (2) Lord Sempill’s ward, Lord Alan Cathcart IV, was to marry Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Lord Crichton.

In June, 1552, Robert Sempill and his mother (now a widow) came to an agreement regarding their respective rights in the Sempill estate and he obtained possession of Castle Sempill and all the lands of Southannan.

On 7 April, 1554, Lord Sempill was again in serious trouble, having had the death penalty imposed upon him a second time, this time for treason as the result of instigating physical violence against

¹ To “put to the horn” in Scotland was to pronounce a person an outlaw and denounce as a rebel for failing to answer a legal summons. This was effected by the Messenger-at-Arms going to the Cross in Edinburgh and giving three blasts with his horn when proclaiming someone an outlaw.

the life of the Earl of Glencairn. For reasons unknown (or unstated) the death penalty was postponed and then apparently retracted by March, 1557/58 though Lord Sempill was still curiously designated, “a deadly enemy of the Earl of Glencairn”.

For the next twenty years until 1576 Lord Sempill was involved in spasmodic feuding between the Montgomeries of Eglinton and the Cunninghams of Glencairn. Robert Sempill took the side of the Montgomeries.

After the death of his father, Lord Sempill II in the 1550's, Lord Sempill III again re-entered Parliament in 1558.

As a supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots, he was deputed in 1559 to meet the Protestants at Perth and was described by the Protestant reformer, John Knox as, “.....a man sold under sin, an enemy to God and all Godliness”. In December, 1559 Castle Sempill was besieged by the Lairds of the West and the following October, 1560, Lord Sempill was forced to flee, taking refuge in Dunbar Castle where he came under the protection of Lord Dunbar who refused to surrender him to the lairds of the West. By March 1561, he again exercised his seemingly magical influence and was granted a reprieve from arrest and by 1564 became a Commissioned Justiciary for Renfrewshire.

On 5 September, 1565, he signed an agreement with other nobles and barons of the West of Scotland to support Mary, Queen of Scots (now aged 23) and her husband/cousin, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, son of the Earl of Lennox in opposition to the Earl of Moray and others who were conspiring against the Queen. Lord Darnley, the Queen's husband became a figure of abhorrence and contempt for betraying both sides in the politico-religious dispute of the times. After Darnley's murder, Lord Sempill, although a Roman Catholic, joined the association for the Defence of the infant Prince James VI (b. 1566 and declared king 1567) in opposition to the Queen and the Earl of Bothwell (the assumed murderer of Darnley) and saved the life of the Earl of Lennox when he was attacked in Glasgow. On 12 April, 1567, Lord Sempill was a member of the Assizes (Court passing laws by the king and the nobles - abolished as late as 1971) at the mock trial of the Earl of Bothwell for the murder of Lord Darnley.

On 12 June, 1567 Lord Semple signed a document designed to “.....*deliever Mary Queen of Scots, from.....being bound to preserve the infant Prince James VI as king and to have the murderers of Darnley tried.....*”. Two days later he appeared at Carberry Hill in the army which opposed the Queen and was amongst those who signed the Act of Regent and Council authorising the “detention” of the Queen in Lochleven Castle.

In 1568 he again appeared in the Scottish Parliament and was commissioner for its opening in 1568.

After Queen Mary escaped from the Lochleven Castle in 1568, Lord Sempill took her opposing side at the Battle of Langside on 13 May, 1568, and on 19 May, 1568, together with the Earl of Glencairn was appointed by the Lord Regent and Lords of Secret Council to be Lieutenant of the West of Scotland for the purpose of suppressing supporters of the Queen and other conspirators who were opposed to the infant James VI (now aged two) and the king's Regent, the Earl of Moray.

Lord Semple now appeared implacably opposed to Queen Mary and voted against her divorce from Lord Bothwell when he appeared at the Convention of Estates in Perth on 20 July, 1569. The Regent of the infant King James VI, instructed Lord Sempill and the Earl of Glencairn to lay seige to Dumbarton Castle and to destroy the House of Boghall and for these services Lord Sempill was rewarded by being given Paisley Abbey near Glasgow in Renfrewshire in 1569 which had been forfeited by Lord Claud Hamilton.

In 1570, Lord Sempill together with other nobles signed a document insisting that Queen Elizabeth I of England return Mary, Queen of Scots (now 28) to Scotland from whence she had taken refuge in England after her timely escape from imprisonment.

By 1570 Lord Sempill had a military command in the army which destroyed Hamilton Castle by setting fire to it together with the royal palace and other properties owned by supporters of Queen Mary. Whilst returning one day in 1570 from the army which had demolished Hamilton Castle he was captured by a number of Hamilton relatives and supporters and taken prisoner to Draffen and then later to Argyll. However, by July, 1571, with his usual aplomb he appears to have regained his liberty and was appointed a Privy Councillor on 7 September, 1571. He returned once more to Parliament in 1571 and was appointed Lieutenant Governor and Justiciar of the Lanark and Renfrew sherifdoms on 2 July 1572.

In 1573, Lord Sempill and the Earl of Eglinton were ordered by the sovereign authority to “disband their followers”, but this does not appear to have dampened his enthusiasm for intrigue and treachery. In the same year he was sued by the Rev. Thomas Jack, the lawfully appointed vicar of Eastwood parish for the non-payment of parish dues. Lord Sempill responded by infiltrating the Rev. Sir John Hamilton, a Roman catholic priest into the vicarage and threatened the appointed vicar that, “*his days would be shortly numbered should he be careless enough to attempt to enforce his rights.....*”. As a consequence Lord Sempill was charged on 6 May, 1573 and ordered to forfeit his estate to the Protestant Regent of Scotland on 1 June, 1573 and the Earl of Argyll was appointed to proceed against him should he fail to do so. Before the end of June he was ex-communicated by papal authority and appeared in court on 12 August, 1573. This appears to have brought Lord Sempill’s rampant political intriguing to a final conclusion for “after a full and eventful life” he died about the age of 70 somewhere between August, 1573 and 17 January, 1575/76.

With such a turbulent life and a career of eventful opportunism it is difficult to imagine Lord Sempill finding time for family life - yet he has been recorded as fathering at least sixteen children in his own name. He married Isobell Hamilton, daughter of Sir William Hamilton of Sanquhar, though the date is not known. They appear to have had ten children though the records do not claim that his wife parented them all. He also appears to have fathered a son and two daughters by Elizabeth Carlile and the records indicate that another daughter, Grisel (who married John Blair of Blair 11 May, 1565) was also probably the daughter of the same Elizabeth Carlile. Lord Sempill also had another daughter, Helen Sempill, by a Janet Leslie and there is conflicting evidence that he was also the father of William Sempill, born 1546, but whose mother is not recorded.

Lord Sempill granted a charter of his estates to a grandson, Robert Sempill, dated 8 November, 1572 as his heir-apparent, but should this fail then the estate was to be inherited by his legitimate second son, Andrew Sempill, or, failing him then another son, John Sempill of Brintscheillis; or failing him then another son, John Sempill of Beltries; or failing him then to his own legitimate nearest male heirs provided they bore the Sempill name and Coat of Arms. He appointed James, the Earl of Merton as his executor and tutor of his heir-grandson, Robert, until he attained the age of fourteen.

With such a colourful background it is not difficult to wonder when reading the life history of Lord Robert Sempill III how, amongst all his passionate intrigues, feuds, assassinations, imprisonments, political, social and religious disagreements, he ever found the time to sire sixteen children recorded in his name. There is no doubt that Lord Sempill was a reasonably educated man - the official appointments and offices he held attest to this - so that although he may not have known how many children he really had or how many were his own, arithmetic was not his chief problem - his invisible enemy was memory - he could not remember who all their mothers were. As a result,

two of his daughters were named Grisel Sempill and two of his sons were named John Sempill, which must have made life difficult at times for the children as well as for everyone else, though probably not for Lord Sempill since he seemed so rarely to be at home and, even when he was, no doubt the children were cared for by servants.

It was from this background of intrigue, treason, treachery and murder that Grisel Sempill somehow met and married John Blair of Blair (1565) when her father was about 60 and around a decade before he died. History does not appear to have recorded what John Blair thought of his father-in-law or how he regarded him but the little that is known of Grisel's husband seems to indicate that he was also infected with the Sempill love for feuding and killing - or, perhaps it was simply the tempo of the times in Scotland of the 16th century.

Grisel Sempill (the older daughter) who had saved her father's head from the block as a consequence of her liaison with the Archbishop of St. Andrew's in the Fifeshire diocese, also appears to have been a scheming character. Three of her children by the Archbishop were legitimated 9 October, 1551 (William Hamilton of Drumry, John Hamilton of Blair and Margaret Hamilton) whilst one researcher claims that another son, James Hamilton, was also an offspring though apparently not legitimated. By her legal husband, James Hamilton, Grisel (the elder) had two sons, Robert and John Hamilton and also two daughters Elizabeth and Grisel Hamilton. Her legal husband had previously been married and it appears that he brought another three sons to the marriage - James, Archibald and Thomas Hamilton.

By an order from the Earl of Lennox the Regent of 30 January, 1572, Grisel Sempill (Hamilton) was declared "outcast" and forced to "vacate the Middle and Craig Fuddis estates and the House of Blair for non-payment of rents". Whilst it is clear there is some connection between Grisel, the older daughter of Lord Robert Sempill III (sister of the younger Grisel married to John Blair (c1547-1609) **and the Blairs of Blair - one of her legitimate sons was designated John Hamilton of Blair** - and that **rent was unpaid in respect of property owned by the Blairs of Blair**, no details of the connection are provided though it would be interesting to speculate that John Blair and Grisel Sempill (the younger sister) may have come into possession of Ladymuir through some connection with the older sister and sister-in-law, Grisel Sempill who died October, 1575. Apart from this tenuous Blair-Sempill connection it is not impossible that Ladymuir could have been a marital inheritance of some kind and, if so, the lands could have come into possession of James Blair ten years after the death of John Blair (1609) as stated by the Clan Blair Database (USA, 1997). It is also said that the Lands of Ladymuir were owned by Lord Robert Sempill II in the early 1500's, having been purchased from the Baron of Cathcart in Renfrewshire so that these lands would have formed part of the nearby Sempill Castle lands. The foregoing is highly speculative since essential details have not yet been discovered concerning the possession of the Ladymuir lands by James Blair.

The New Zealand Blair descendants of John Blair/Jean Clark trace their ancestry to this conjunction with James Blair of the Blairs of Blair whose birth date is uncertain but was somewhere c1597. Further research may, or may not, reveal information concerning the generation of John Blair/Grisel Sempill since the accuracy of records of the 16th century is difficult to authenticate. Whilst James Blair of Ladymuir appears to be the progenitor of the New Zealand Blair descendants of John Blair (1819-92) more research is needed to establish the final links in the Ladymuir Blair lineage and the New Zealand Blairs' connection to the mainline Blairs of Blair and a heritage reaching back to c1135.



Auckland, principal city of New Zealand.

The Blairs of Ladymuir

Renfrewshire, Scotland

There is some uncertainty concerning the offspring of James Blair. One source refers to three generations between James Blair and Hugh Blair/Margaret Rodgers, whilst other sources name this Hugh (b. 1660) as *the son of James Blair*. However, if James Blair died prior to 16 January, 1627 as one record states, he could not have been the father of Hugh Blair, born 1660. Additionally, the charter of 20 June, 1648 assigning Ladymuir farmlands to Hew Blair would need to have been signed by his grandfather James Blair, thus implying that the grandfather was either still alive in 1648 or, that he had already assigned Ladymuir to a member of his family and that that family member became the signatory to the charter of 1648. A further source refers to James and William Blair as brothers of John Blair of Blair (c1547-1609).

Whatever the case may be, it seems very unlikely that the Hugh Blair of 1660 was his son since James Blair “came into possession of Ladymuir by about 1620” (BS Database, 1997). If he were a young man at this time he would have been a little old at 60 to be fathering children - on the other hand, if he had been a young child it raises questions concerning the assignation of the Ladymuir estate to him and not to his brother William or possibly other family kin. Because the dates associated with James Blair and John Blair/Grisel Sempill and the stated dates associated with James’ kin are difficult to reconcile current information is insufficient to determine precisely the lineage of the Blairs of Ladymuir at this point apart from information that James Blair appeared to be a grandson (even possibly a son or brother) of John Blair/Grisel Sempill (c1547-1609) of the Blairs of Blair lineage, Dalry, Ayrshire and was probably born after c1585 and before c1620,

James Blair b. after c1585 (?) d. Before 16.1.1627	Became a merchant in Glasgow. Came into possession of the “Ladymuir” estate about 1620 in Renfrewshire south of the town of Kilmacolm. Had a son, also a brother, William Blair of Blair.
John Blair b. c1590 (?) d. Before 1627	Unconfirmed whether he was a son of James Blair. Predeceased his father. Had a son, Hew.
Hew Blair b. Before 1613	Inherited five grants of land near Kilmacolm from his grandfather, James Blair, probably part of the Ladymuir farmlands. Was granted the lands of “Ladymuir” by royal charter dated 20.6.1648. Had a son named Hugh.
Hugh Blair b. c1635	Son of Hew Blair. Had a son, Hugh and a daughter, Margaret.
Hugh Blair b. 1660 m. 22.8.1677	Married at Kilbarchan to Margaret Rodgers, daughter of William Rodgers of Nether Pennell [near the town of Kilbarchan, 10km south east of Kilmacolm] and his wife Isobel Adam of Lochwinnoch [7 km south west of Kilbarchan and 10km north of Dalry]. Hugh Blair was taken prisoner by Covenanters, held at Dunottar castle and tortured with lighted matches to his fingers to induce him to take the Scottish Covenant but he refused. The damage to his hands made it impossible for him to tie string or

fasten buttons so that dressing was difficult. However, he managed to sign Church Session Minutes and attend to other matters. His first son, Hugh, was conceived whilst he was held prisoner and was subsequently nicknamed “Dunottar”. The New Zealand descendency was through his second son, James. Hugh Blair paid the poll-tax with his wife in 1695. He was an Elder in the Kilmacolm parish church in 1708. His offspring were:

Hugh (“Dunottar”) Blair,
b. 1686 at Ladymuir
m. Mary Blackburn 17.6.1715 ?
Had a son, Hugh Blair, b. 21.5.1721
in Renfrewshire

James Blair
b. c1690

John Blair
b. c1689/90

James Blair
b. c1690
m. 1.8.1722
d.

Sometimes referred to as John Blair (LDS Records, USA). Born at Corslie Hill, Killallan, near the town of Kilmacolm. Married Janet Laird of Townside, daughter of John Laird (deceased) of Auchinfoil. Died at Killallan, a rural area east of Kilmacolm and 3km south west of the locality of Corslie Hill about 30km west of Glasgow.

Had at least two sons and three daughters:

Isobel Blair
b. 27.10.1723 at Corslie Hill
Married in 1750/51 at Kilmacolm to Alexander Laird.

John Blair
b. 30.5.1725 . Eldest son.

Hugh Blair
b. 7.4.1728 at Ladymuir, Kilmacolm

Margaret Blair
b. 17.6.1730 at Killallan.

Janet Blair
b. 1732 at Johnstone or Killallan.

James Blair
[There is some uncertainty whether this James Blair belongs here].
b. 7.5.1738 at Killallan.
m. Mary Stevenson of Wardwell (1734-25.1.1803) –
sometimes referred to as Margaret.
James was an Elder of the Kilmacolm parish church in 1788.

d. 9.6.1803

Was believed to be a farmer in Slades and had 7 children (including):

1. Hugh Blair b. 8.5.1756 at Kilbarchan
2. John Blair b. 27.7.1757 (or 24.3.1776?) at Kilbarchan
m. Margaret Calder 2.12.1786(96?) at Paisley Abbey,
nr. Glasgow
3. Mary Blair
4. Isabella Blair
5. James Blair
6. Margaret Blair

John Blair
b. 30.5.1725
m. Before 1750

Born at Corslie Hill, Killallan, near Kilmacolm. Married before 1750 to Elizabeth Crawford, daughter of a Mr. Whitemoss of Erskine, near Paisley. Marriages were not recorded from 1743 to 1749 due to the Jacobite uprisings which culminated in the battles at Prestonpans (1745) near Edinburgh and Culloden Moor (1746) near Inverness. John and Elizabeth Blair had eight sons and 3 daughters:

James Blair	b. c1749
Hugh Blair	b. 16.3.1750 at Killallan Migrated to the USA.
John Blair	b. 25.3.1753 at Kilmacolm
Mathew Blair	b. 16.5.1755 at Erskine
Robert Blair	b. 12.3.1758 at Erskine
Patrick Blair	b. 15.5.1761 at Erskine May have died young.
Thomas Blair	b. 19.5.1765 at Erskine Died young.
Peter Blair	b. ? A weaver in Paisley
Margaret Blair	b. ?
Agnes Blair	b. ?
Elizabeth Blair	b. ?

Five sons, including Hugh Blair, migrated to the USA – probably James, Matthew, Robert and one other son.

John Blair
b. 25.3.1753
m. 16.12.1788
d. 1841 at Erskine

Born at Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire. Married Agnes Taylor (b. 18.12.1759 in Kilmarnock) on 16.12.1788 at Kilmacolm, daughter of Thomas Taylor, Laird and farmer of Kilmacolm, and his wife, Margaret. Thomas and Margaret Taylor (m. 28.7.1753) had 6 additional children:

John Taylor	14.11.1754
Hellen Taylor	30.2.1757
Margaret Taylor	8.3.1762

Janet Taylor 13.10.1767
Gabriel Taylor 5.5.1769

John Blair died at Erskine, a town about 15km west of Glasgow. John and Agnes Blair had seven sons and three daughters, including twin sons:

John Blair b. 21.10.1779 at Renfrew
Thomas Blair b. 20.11.1781 at Renfrew
Agnes Blair b. 21.6.1783 at Renfrew
James Blair b. 6.10.1785 at Renfrew
Margaret Blair b. 5.8.1788 at Renfrew
Elizabeth Blair b. 22.7.1790 at Renfrew
Hugh Blair b. 17.2.1793.
 Twin of Mathew.
Mathew Blair b. 17.2.1793, twin of Hugh
 both born at Renfrew
Robert Blair b. 23.4.1797 at Renfrew
Patrick Blair b. 24.9.1799 at Renfrew
 (BSGR has 16.3.1799)

Robert Blair
b. 25.4.1797
m. 20.6.1816
d.

Born at Erskine. Married Margaret Blair, at Erskine, a cousin (b. ? m. 2.10.1802 (BSGR) has 25.3.1798) at Inchinnan, daughter of Robert Blair and Isobel Reid of Inchinnan, a town adjoining Renfrew near Paisley, c8 km west of Glasgow. Robert Blair was manager of gasworks in the towns of Johnstone and Renfrew. They had eleven children, eight boys and three girls:

Isabella Blair b. 24.10.1817 at Inchinnan
John Blair b. 24.3.1819 Eldest son
Robert Blair b. 16.3.1821 at Johnstone
Thomas Blair b. 30.5.1823 at Johnstone
Peter Blair b. 7.6.1825 at Renfrew
James Martin Blair b. 2.8.1827 at Paisley
Matthew Blair b. 22.9.1831 at Renfrew
Margaret Blair b. 6.9.1835 at Renfrew.

Daughter of a Mr. Christian Pettigrew. Believed to have been adopted.

Hugh Blair b. 14.2.1836 at Paisley

Agnes Blair b. 27.3.1838 at Renfrew

Robert Blair b. 3.9.1840
It seems likely that the first son, Robert (1821) died prior to 1840 and the second Robert became his namesake.

John Blair
b. 24.3.1819
m. 31.10.1839
d. 28.5.1892

Born at Inchinnan, near Paisley. Married Jean Clark 31.10.1839 at the Presbyterian Abbey Church, Paisley. Jean Clark was born 24.4.1817 at Johnston and died 25.9.1900 at Auckland, New Zealand, daughter of shoemaker John Clark [b. 28.2.1790 at Middle Greenock. Married Jean McIntosh 10.6.1816 at Johnston - she died 1906]. Migrated to New Zealand from Dumbarton, 1864 on the ship "Lord Clyde".
John and Jean Blair had five sons, including one adopted son, and five daughters:

Robert Blair b. 17.9.1840 at Greenock
d. April, 1897 [1907 (?), Ross Blair] at Manchester, UK. Why he did not migrate to New Zealand with the family is unknown. Since he was 24 at the time he may have been self-supporting and/or living away from home. Married and had six children: Jack, Robert and four others, names unknown.

Jean Blair b. 14.2.1842 at Renfrew, Scotland.
Married William Cato, Auckland, April, 1866 [b. 1831, Hertfordshire, England. d. 15.8.1924]. Jean Blair d. 1918, Auckland. They had five children:

William Cato
b. 15.7.1867

George Cato
b. 25.6.1870

Hannah Cato
b. 28.1.1877 at Thames, m. 16.10.1903? to John Kennerly b. 28.10.1875 at Nantwich, England. Had a daughter, Annie Letitia Kennerly b. 16.7.1906; m. 27.12.1926 to Eric Burgess. They had a daughter, Gwenyth Burgess b. 2.5.1928, d. Oct. 1996

Robert Cato
b. 22.4.1879

Thomas Cato
b. 13.1.1881

John Blair b. 3.2.1844 - see continuing lineage

Margaret Blair
b. 15.12.1845 at Renfrew
m. Captain Buick
d. 22.4.1938

James Rushalee Blair
b. 3.11.1847 at Renfrew, near Paisley. Adopted son. The use of the “Blair” patronymic by James Rushalee is conclusive evidence of his adoption, whether formally or informally, according to the times. Married October, 1882 to Mary Jane (Polly) Moor of Nagle Cove, Port Abercrombie, Great Barrier Island. James Rushalee Blair had five children:

Ethel Blair	1883
Edith Blair	1885
Susan Blair	1888
Margaret Blair	1891
Thomas	1894

In 1894, James purchased the Moor property of Woodthorpe, Dome Valley on the mainland and left Tryphena Bay on the Great Barrier Island.
d. 1929

Thomas Blair
b. 12.5.1850 at Renfrew, near Paisley.
d. 5.7.1880 by drowning, body never found.
A cutter, “The Three Brothers” of 26 tons, 47 ft 8 in long, 15 ft 4 in in beam, draught of 6 ft 3 in and built 1862 was purchased by his father John Blair in 1875. On 3rd December, 1877, Thomas was Master Certificated (Cert. No. 5122) and also as an only Mate (Foreign) (Cert. No. 142). On 2.7.1880 he set sail for Auckland with a crew of three but the boat failed to arrive and no trace of boat and crew were ever found.

Peter Blair b. 19.3.1852 at Alexandria, Scotland
d. 28.4.1853

Isabella Blair b. 19.4.1854 at Alexandria, Scotland
m. 20.5.1879 to George Henry Bolous
d. 30.1.1947

Agnes Blair b. 20.2.1857 at Dumbarton, Scotland
d. 11.3.1859

Mary Blair b. 6.9.1859 at Dumbarton, Scotland
 d. 13.10.1860

John Blair migrated to New Zealand from Dumbarton, Scotland in 1864.



Residence of John and Jean Blair and John and Agnes McKay Blair, early pioneers and settlers, Great Barrier Island, Auckland, New Zealand. *(Photo late 19th century. Courtesy of Phyllis Boyd (nee Eyre), Auckland, New Zealand).*

John Blair (1819-1892) and Jean Clark (1817-1900)

Settlers and pioneers on the Great Barrier Island, Auckland, New Zealand

John Blair was born at Inchinnan, near Paisley. He was sent to London as a youth to learn the bakery trade. He then lived in Renfrew, near Paisley for 9 years from c1842. In 1851 he moved to Alexandria where he set up business as a gasmaker with one employee. He lived at 12 Gas Street, Alexandria, off North Street in a row of cottages with small doors and windows. The house was built of light, grey stone and had low ceilings. Their home was small, cramped and overcrowded. Eventually the gasmaking business was sold to his brother Thomas Blair, who took over the house and the business. John Blair moved to Dumbarton about 1856, to a combined bakery/grocery business at 27 High Street, the main centre of the city. He emigrated to New Zealand from London on 2.2.1864 with son, John (20) and daughters Jean (22) and Isabella (9) on the ship “Lord Clyde”, a barque of 531 tons, built 1860 under the command of Captain Withers. His reasons for migrating to New Zealand are not known but whilst his business appeared profitable in Dumbarton, the times were difficult with crofters being evicted from the land by powerful land-owning lairds. Freehold land was being offered in New Zealand, 40 acres per adult and 20 acres for each dependant child giving him an entitlement of some 200 acres or more. The “Lord Clyde” carried only 21 passengers so though the Blairs travelled ‘steerage’ they were not crowded into rows of pipe berths or cramped in the forecabin with the crew as occurred on many immigrant-carrying ships. The journey took 93 days arriving in Auckland Harbour on 5 May, 1864. Blocks of land were allocated to settlers in various areas near Auckland including Aotea Island (Great Barrier Island). John Blair and son John, inspected land at Tryphena Bay on the Great Barrier Island over a three day period, searching for survey pegs in desired areas near deep water access, fresh water and land with timber. They returned to Auckland and found the land allocation scheme more complicated than expected but eventually, over a period of time, the Blairs owned 440 acres of land in Tryphena Bay. John Blair’s wife, Jean, departed from Scotland with their remaining children, daughter Margaret and sons James Rushalee and Thomas (Peter, Agnes and Mary died prior to 1864) on 26 July 1865 on the ship “Alequis”, a boat of 1121 tons skippered by Captain Davidson and carrying 125 passengers, mostly settlers under the 40 acres land scheme travelling steerage. The “Alequis” arrived in Auckland on 25 October, 1865 after an uncomfortable journey with cramped conditions below decks for the passengers.

The Great Barrier Island

The Great Barrier Island is situated 50 miles (84 kms) north east of the city of Auckland. The island takes its name from the fact that it forms a somewhat distant barrier to the Hauraki Gulf and Auckland Harbour and is approximately 25 miles long by 4 to 11 miles wide and though mostly hilly and rugged also displays areas suited to living and cultivation. The island has many safe bathing beaches and picturesque scenic attractions in its valleys, streams, hills and bays studded with crimson flowered pohutukawa trees.

The Great Barrier Island was inhabited by the Maori people before white settlement and the first purchase of Maori land was made in 1838, but following the resolution of a dispute, the transfer was not effected until 1854 by the signature of Queen Victoria of England which may be seen in the Record of Deeds for that year.

Considerable areas of land, particularly in the south of the island, were surveyed into 40 acre lots as grants to entice immigrants from the United Kingdom to the early colony after 1855. Many lots

were practically worthless since they had been surveyed regardless of the nature and contour of the country so that some settlers found themselves with rough areas of land they could hardly use. Some pioneers settled on the more suitable lots and then purchased additional land from their unfortunate neighbours who could not extract a livelihood from adjoining land.

Times were hard in the early days of settlement. Some became settlers after a copper mine was abandoned in the north of the island and some after a cattle-ranch venture failed at Tryphena in the south. A number of shipbuilding and milling ventures were begun and then abandoned and many of the would-be farmers had to resort to chopping wood or digging for kauri gum in order to survive.

To these conditions came John Blair and his wife, Jean in 1864 to pioneer and settle 200 acres of land at Tryphena in the south of the island. John Blair was appointed Postmaster at Tryphena Bay in 1883 at a salary of \$12 per annum. In the "Weekly News" of 1883, the Rev. Hazeldean reported that: "The finest honey available in Auckland is to be found on John Blair's farm at Tryphena, Great Barrier Island".

Until 1913 the Great Barrier Island was prohibited from having any form of self-government until the Medland family agitated for repeal of the legislation. In 1913 the island was declared an independent county and divided into three separate ridings officially gazetted as: Tapuwai (north); Hirakimata (central) and Oruawhara (south). The first county council meeting was held 13 August, 1913. Councillor Allan Blair, a grandson of John and Jean Blair, was elected the first chairman. He proposed that a rate of *one penny in the pound* be struck on the capital value of properties on the Great Barrier Island which was approved.

Today, there are rural villages on the island and the inhabitants are connected by air service to Auckland on the mainland. Dairy produce, honey, fish and fruit are transported by sea to the markets in Auckland. Many people have discovered the pleasures of the Great Barrier Island - camping, tramping, swimming, sightseeing and enjoying the scenery of an idyllic rural atmosphere. Private and hired vehicles are the most common form of transportation on the island. The two main towns of Tryphena and Fitzroy have stores and banking facilities.²

² Further historical information concerning the Great Barrier Island may be obtained from the following publications: "Great Barrier Calls", by Grace Medland, The Institute Printing and Publishing Society, Auckland, New Zealand, 1969
"Great Barrier Island", Ed. Bill McLaren, Mulberry Grove School Committee (Tryphena), Orama Print, 1980
"Gulf", by Barry Metcalfe, Coromandel Press, undated, (published after 1980).

John Blair
b. 3.2.1844
m. 1.8.1875
d. 12.11.1909

Born at Renfrew, near Paisley and migrated to New Zealand with his father on the “Lord Clyde” in 1864 at the age of 22. Married Agnes McKay Maxwell (b. c1853, d. 18.7.1913) daughter of James Maxwell and Mary Stevenson, at Bishop’s Court chapel, Parnell, Auckland. Her parents emigrated to New Zealand on the ship “Aurora”, in 1823, landing at Petone on Wellington harbour. Their names are engraved on a plaque in the settlers’ Museum on the beach front at Petone. John Blair was appointed Postmaster at Tryphena Bay, Great Barrier Island, Auckland on 1.7.1892 after the decease of his father and paid the same annual salary of \$12 p.a. John and Agnes Blair had 9 sons and 3 daughters (all born, so far as is known, on the Great Barrier Island):

1. John Maxwell Blair
b. 10.5.1876
d. 23.12.1900
No issue
2. Robert James Blair
b. 14.2.1878
d. 1.5.1910
No issue
3. Kenneth Blair
b. 17.8.1879
m. 26.4.1905
d. 9.6.1933
4. Allan William Blair
b. 6.6.1881
m. 22.5.1918
d. 15.12.1935
5. Colin Blair
b. 6.3.1883
m. 20.6.1917
d. 19.8.1944
6. Oliver Sextus Blair
b. 18.3.1885
m. 17.10.1931
d. 15.10.1950
7. Jean Clark Blair
b. 7.11.1886
d. 3.6.1959
No issue
8. Stevenson Septimus Blair
b. 29.5.1888
d. 31.5.1888

No issue

9. Hugh Matthew Blair
b. 20.6.1889
d. 19.10.1916 (Wounded World War II,
15.9.1916 and died four days later in Birmingham Hospital,
England)
No issue
10. Mary Isabella Blair
b. 10.3.1891
d. 23.5.1969
No issue
11. Agnes Hellen Blair
b. 24.2.1895
m. 1917
d. 7.9.1981

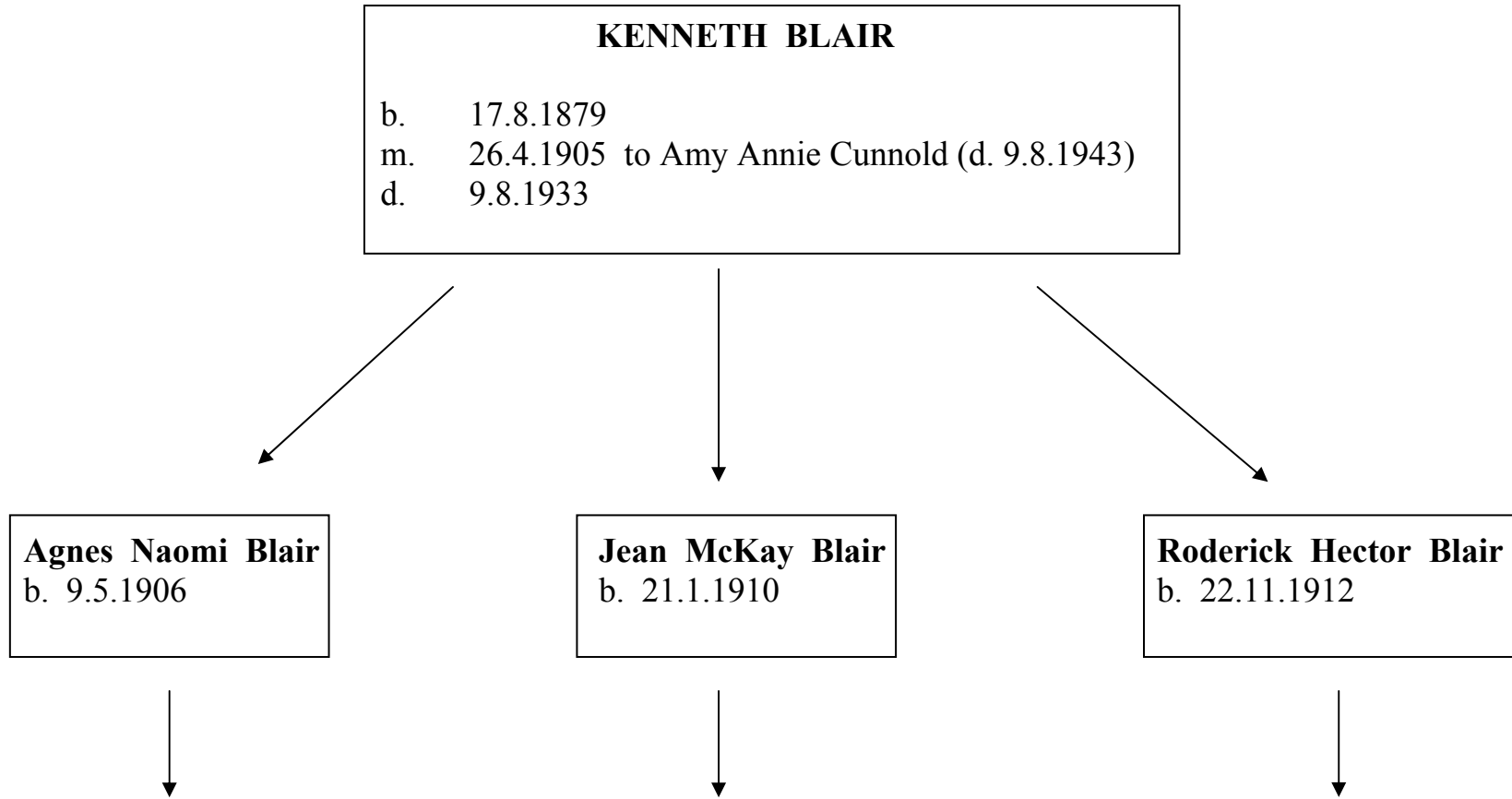
A New Zealand Blair Family

John Blair

1844 - 1909

Descendancy Lineages

John Maxwell Blair	1876 - 1900
Robert James Blair	1878 - 1910
Kenneth Blair	1879 - 1933
Allan William Blair	1881 - 1935
Colin Blair	1883 - 1944
Oliver Sextus Blair	1885 - 1950
Jean Clark Blair	1886 - 1959
Stevenson Septimus Blair	1888 - 1888
Hugh Matthew Blair	1889 - 1916
Mary Isabella Blair	1891 - 1969
Agnes Hellen Blair	1895 - 1981



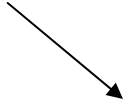
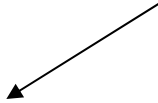
AGNES NAOMI BLAIR

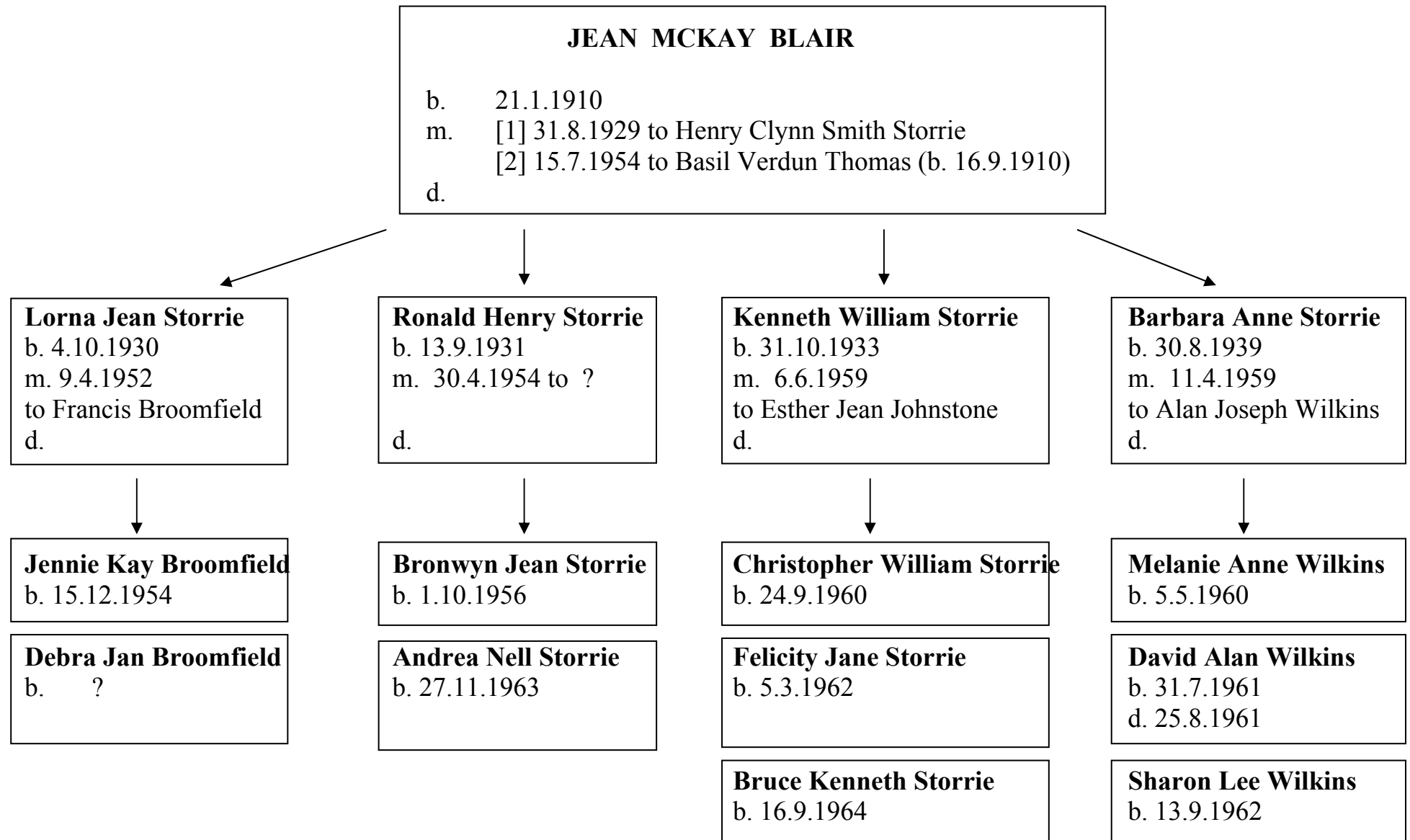
b. 9.5.1906
m. 24.10.1934 to Harold Joseph Roseman (d. 15.4.1955)
d.

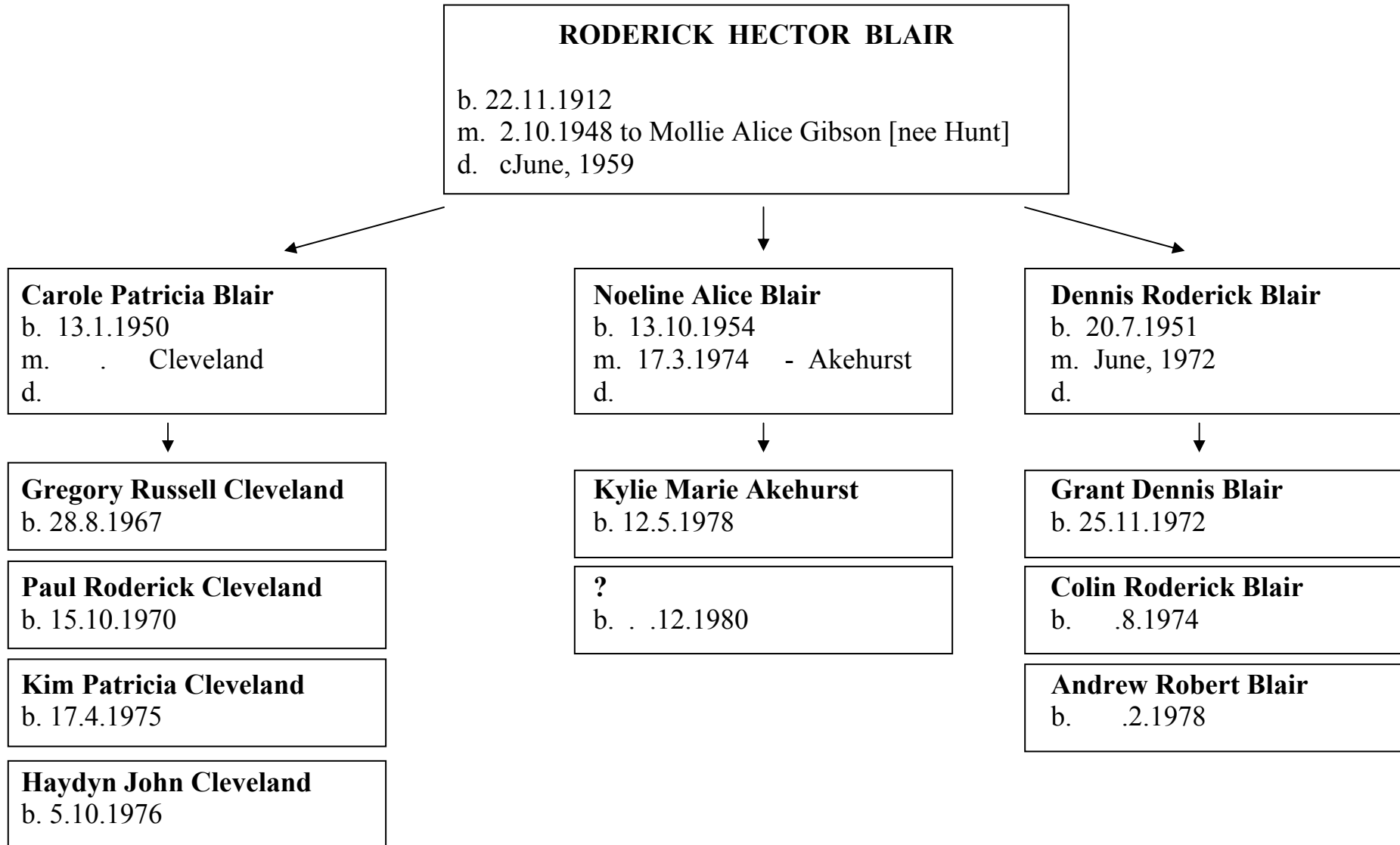
Bryan Harold Roseman
b. 23.6.1937
d. 5.3.1945
No issue

Lola Agnes Roseman
b. 7.9.1940
m. 24.11.1960 to Brian Neilson
d.

Judith Claire Neilson
b. 5.3.1964







ALLAN WILLIAM BLAIR

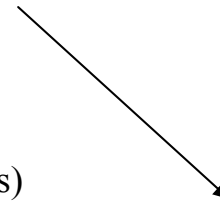
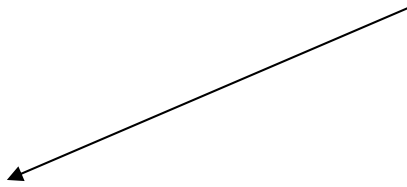
b. 6.6.1881

m. 22.5.1918 at Auckland to Irene Adeline Kemp

(b. 10.3.1888)

(d. 23.5.1965)

d. 15.12.1935 at Auckland



(Twin sons)

Ralph Hugh Blair

b. 23.4.1920

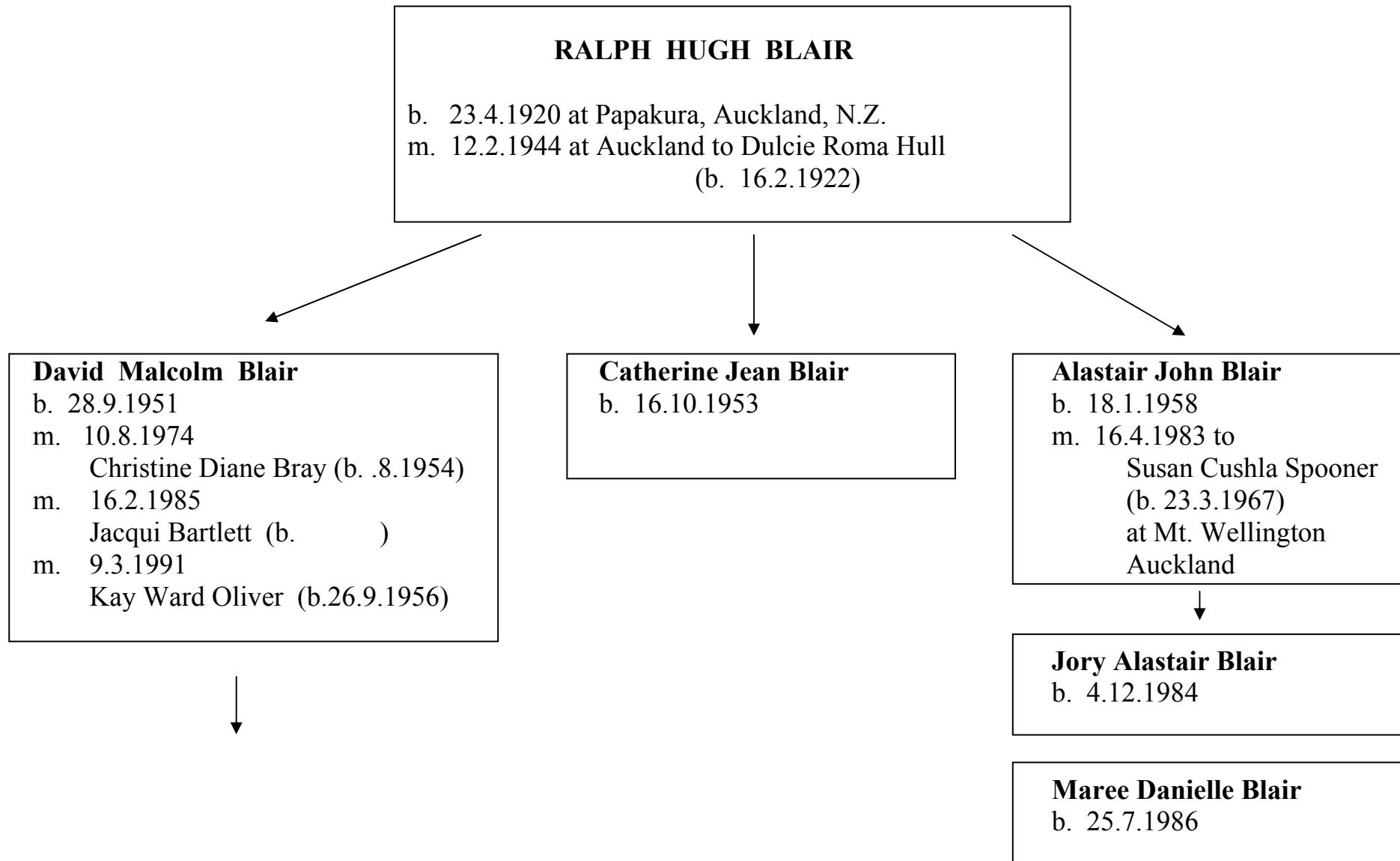
Jack Richard Blair

b. 19.1.1927

Robert William Blair

b. 19.1.1927





DAVID MALCOLM BLAIR

b. 28.9.1951

m. [1] 10.8.1974 Christine Diane Bray (b. 6.8.1954)

m. [2] 16.2.1985 Jacqui Bartlett (b.)

m. [3] 9.3.1991 Kay Ward Oliver (b.26.9.1956)

[1]

Esme Sarah Blair

b. 14.10.1979

Bronwyn Maree Blair

b. 20.9.1981

[3]

Cindy Ward

b. 6.7.1976

Jennifer Blair

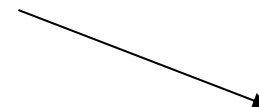
b. 16.1.1980

Robert Maurice Daniel Blair

b. 28.1.1986

JACK RICHARD BLAIR

b. 19.1.1927 at Papakura, Auckland, N.Z.
Twin brother of Robert William Blair
Became resident of Australia 18.9.1950
m. 31.1.1969 at Burwood, Sydney, NSW, Australia
to Nanette Faye Scott (b. 8.11.1934)



Elissa Meryll Blair

b. 25.3.1971 at Sydney, NSW

Michael Hugh Kemp Blair

b. 18.4.1973 at Sydney, NSW

Nicholas Richard Blair

b. 9.10.1973 at Bangkok, Thailand
Became permanent resident and
citizen of Australia, 14.1.1979

ROBERT WILLIAM BLAIR

b. 19.1.1927 at Papakura, Auckland, N.Z.
Twin brother of Jack Richard Blair
m. 1.3.1952 at Auckland to Joan Elsie Powdrill
(b. 6.8.1928)

Heather Joy Blair

b. 11.8.1955
m. 29.9.1976 to Welton Browne
(b.)

Peter Walton Browne

b. 23.4.1978

Jason Roydon Browne

b. 22.1.1982

Selena Heather Browne

b. 5.9.1983

Margaret Joan Blair

b. 26.12.1959
m. 20.6.1981 to Eric Smeith
(b. 24.8.1954)

Bevan Smeith

b. 8.4.1983

Katrina Smeith

b. 10.5.1985

Sharleen Smeith

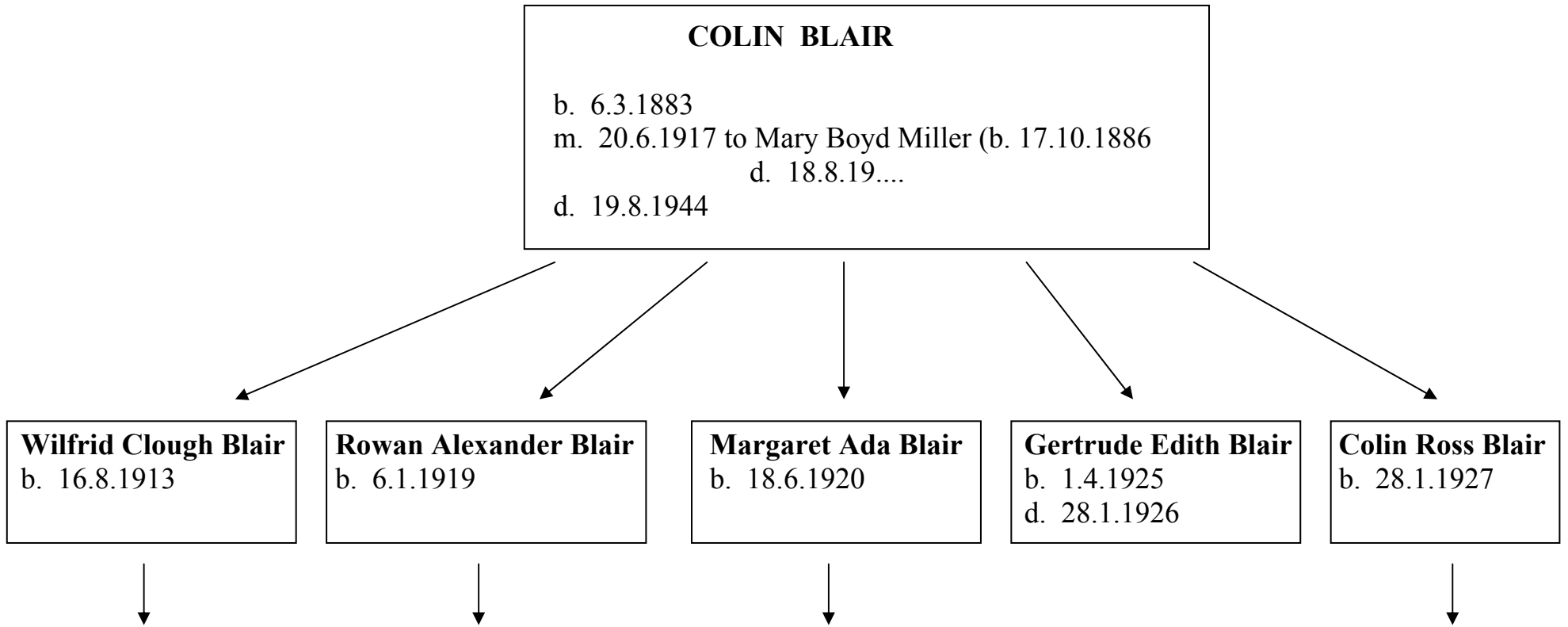
b. 30.3.1990

Luke William Smeith

b. 3.12.1993

Judith Gay Blair

b. 2.4.1963



WILFRID CLOUGH BLAIR

b. 16.8.1913
m. [1] 3.2.1934 to Margaret Johnson
[2] 28.5.1946 to Edna Agnes Brown
d. 4.1.1972

(1)

Margaret Dawn Blair

b. 4.3.1935
m. (A) 20.2.1953
to Raymond Callahan
(B) 21.10.1966
to Russell Enden
Cornwall

(1)

Pamela Boyd Blair

b. 17.2.1940
m. 14.1.1961
to Daniel Graham
Riddiford

(2)

David Colin Blair

b. 15.2.1947

(2)

Derek Anthony Blair

b. 19.12.1948
m. 6.10.1971
to Susan Coote
Turner

(2)

Robert Clough Blair

b. 13.5.1951
m. 3.8.1974
to Christine
Barbara Jones

(2)

Paul Frank Blair

b. 2.10.1954
m. 24.9.1988
to Annagret
Suter

(A) Sue Yvonne Callahan
b. 30.8.1956

Scott Martin Riddiford
b. 4.2.1963

(A) Kenneth David Callahan
b. 13.4.1954

Amanda Gail Riddiford
b. 30.3.1966

(B) Jonathan Edgar Cornwall
b. 6.5.1970

Diane Lesley Riddiford
b. 10.2.1969

Thiana Gillian Blair
b. 28.12.1972

James Robert Blair
b. 2.6.1978

Clough Ashley Blair
b. 4.6.1974

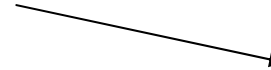
Daniel Clough Blair
b. 26.1.1980

Rachel Anne Blair
b. 15.12.1981

Alicia Anne Blair
b. 17.11.1996

ROWAN ALEXANDER BLAIR

b. 6.1.1919
m. 26.9.1944 to Aileen Isobel Simmonds
d. 27.11.1950



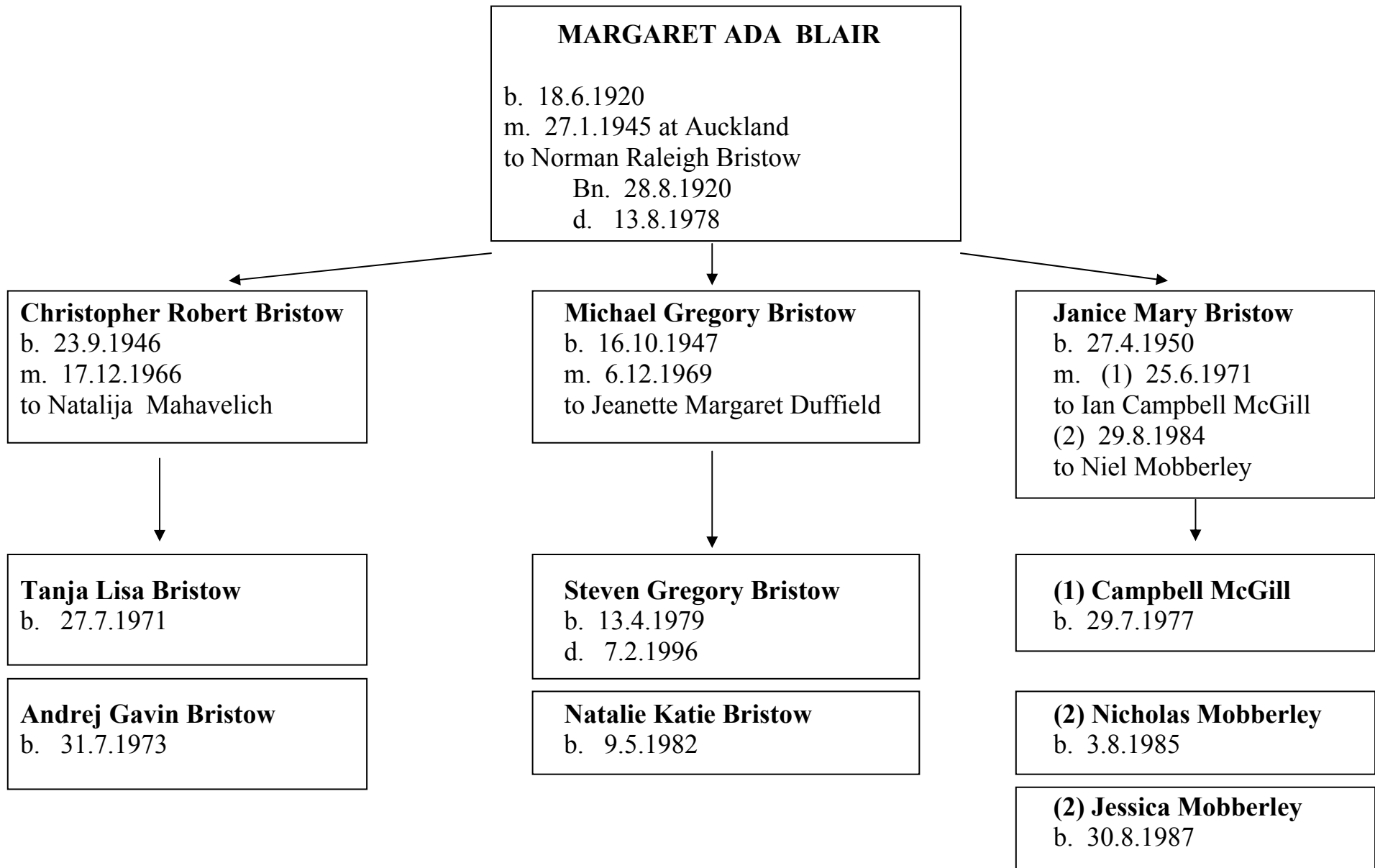
Jennifer Kay Blair
b. 31.5.1947 (1946?)
m. 20.10.1967
to David Lloyd Redford
d. 31.1.1974

Yvonne Marie Blair
b. 3.10.1951
m. 15.2.1972 to John Lindsay

Paulette Rowan Blair
b. 2.1.1958 (1955?)



Blair David Redford
b. 29.3.1971
d. 31.1.1974



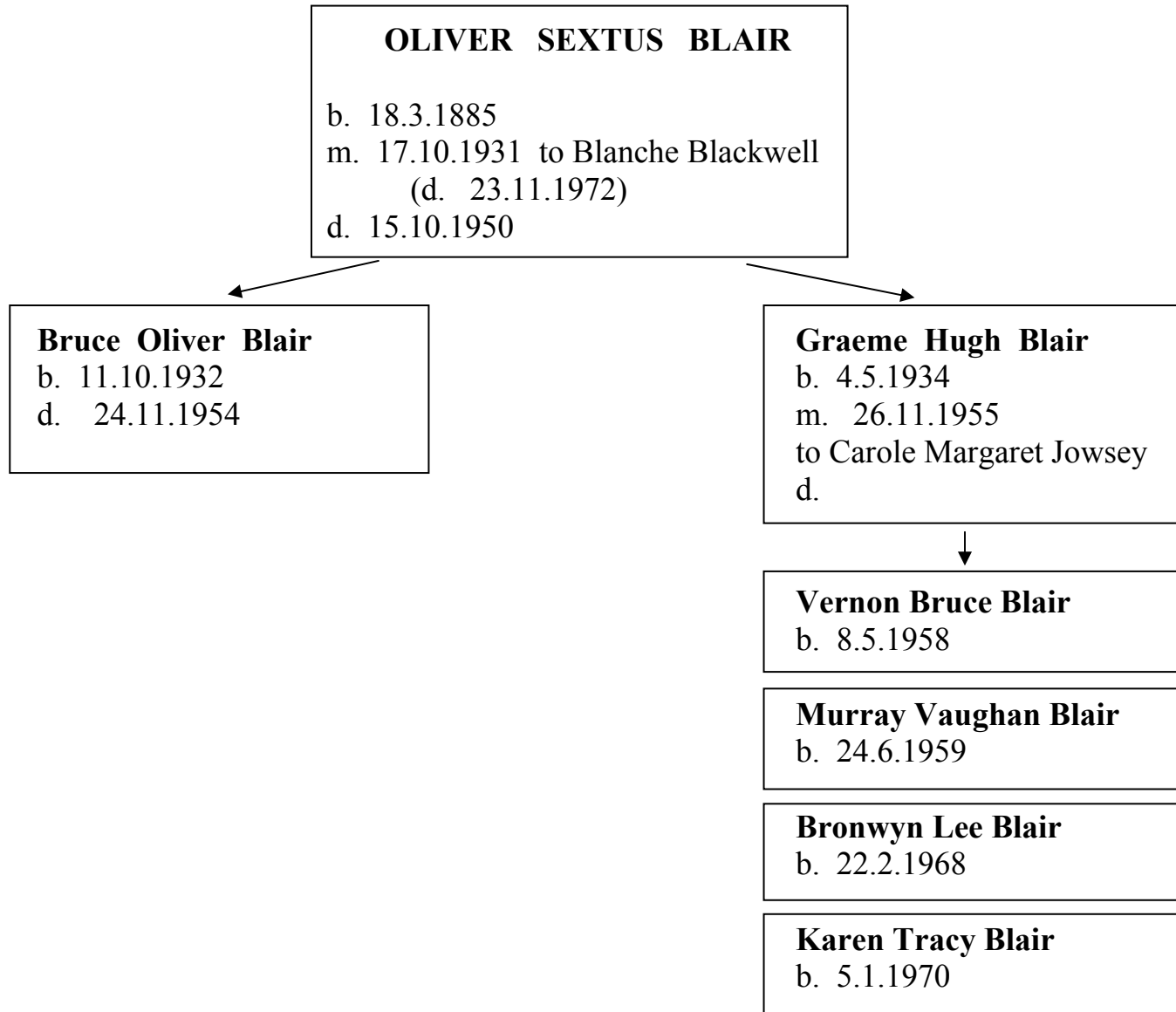
COLIN ROSS BLAIR

b. 28.1.1927
m. 26.10.1955 to Lois Olga Esther Hames
d.

Allen Ross Blair
b. 31.8.1956

Karen Jayne Blair
b. 24.6.1958
m. 21.2.1976
to John Charles Ciardelli

Robyn Annette Blair
b. 26.10.1962
m.



AGNES HELLEN BLAIR

b. 24.2.1895

m. 1917 to Thomas Edwardes Eyre
(b. 14.8.1884/d. 10.9.1964)

d. 7.9.1981

Maurice Hugh Eyre

b. 7.8.1923

d. About 1942 in USA

Trevor Thomas (Ted) Eyre

b. 29.1.1925

Anne Isobel Eyre

b. 30.6.1920

Phyllis Lillian Eyre

b. 7.7.1918

TREVOR THOMAS (TED) EYRE

b. 29.1.1925
m. 1946 to Lola Inez Hayward
(b. 17.3.1926/d. 17.3.1996)

Richard Thomas Eyre
b. 7.11.1947
m. to Dianne Thomson

Sherryl Kaye Eyre
b. 13.12.1948
m. to Serwind
Oswood Banks Netzler

Graeme Phillip Eyre
b. 9.3.1952
m. to Carmel
Irene Roberts

Ailsa Jillian Eyre
b. 30.11.1954
m. 1978
to Michael Elliott

Kate Cherie Eyre
b. 10.9.1977

Heidi Lola Netzler
b. 22.9.1978

Joseph Xavier Eyre
b. 8.8.1980

Sharon Kaye Elliott
b. 21.4.1980

Simon Thomas Eyre
b. 23.8.1979

Carl Eyre Netzler
b. 7.4.1981

Nicholas Phillip Eyre
b. 15.9.1982

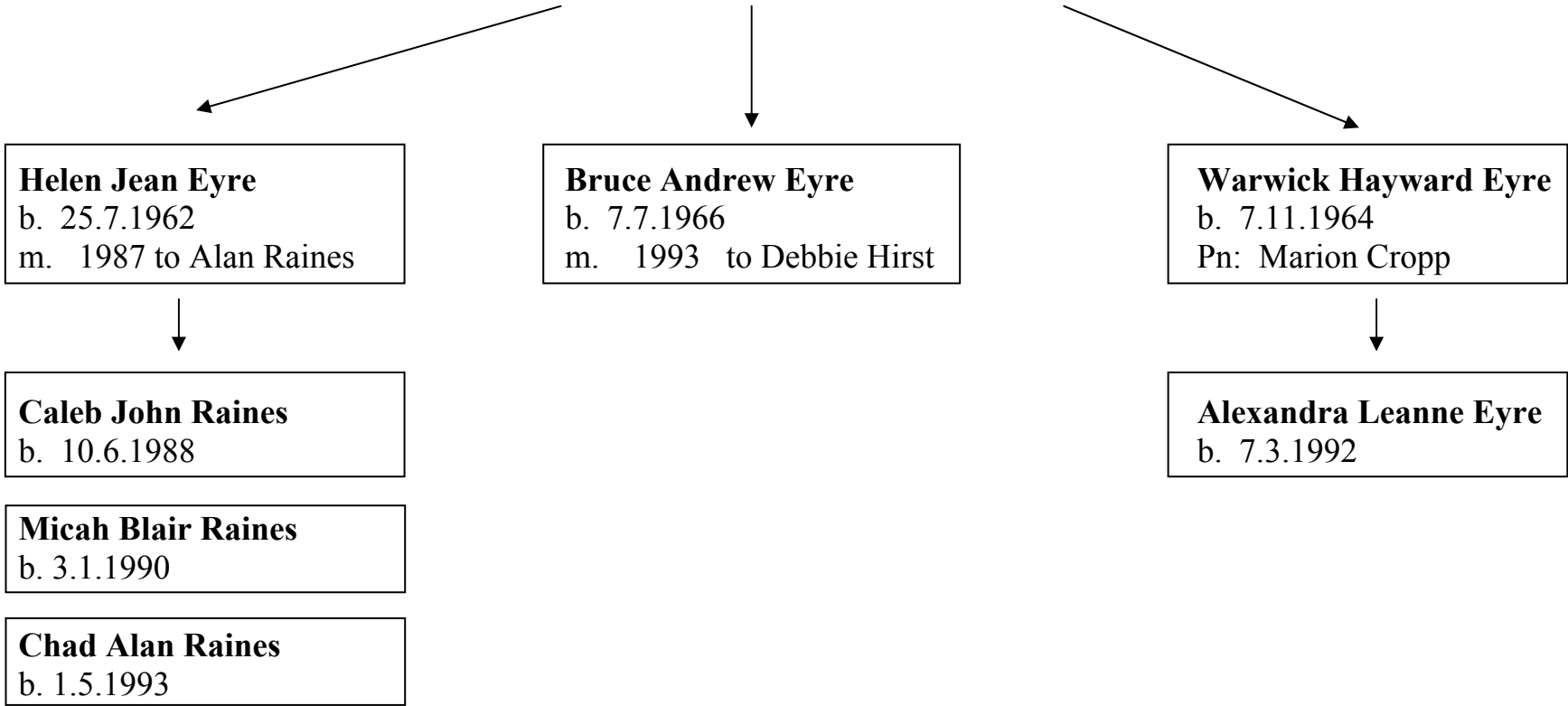
Edward Ross Elliott
b. 16.9.1982

**Joshua Andrew Eyre
Elliott**
b. 7.8.1983

Catherine Elizabeth Eyre
b. 4.9.1984

Thomas Michael
b. 27.11.1985

Cameron John Eyre
b. 28.11.1986



ANNE ISOBEL EYRE

b. 30.6.1920

m. c1948 to Walter W. Worboys

Caroline Lee Worboys

b. 27.5.1949 Sydney, Australia

m. [1] Arthur Panayotis Fitzwilliams
(b. 1948 Athens, Greece)

[2] Derek William Methven Pretty
at Stanmore, Middlesex, England

Robin Gillian Worboys

b. 3.9.1950 Sydney, Australia

m. Donald Norchi

Angus Pretty

b. 1979

James Pretty

b. 1981

George Pretty

b. 1990

PHYLLIS LILLIAN EYRE
 b. 7.7.1918
 m. 1939 to Alexander Lackaduff Boyd
 (b. 13.3.1906/d. 5.4.1988)

Terrence Eric Boyd
 b. 26.4.1940
 m. 1965 to Roberta Nash

Geoffrey Denne Boyd
 b. 5.2.1966
 m. 1990 Julie Symons
 (b. 7.7.1970)

Lisa Claire Boyd
 b. 28.8.1967
 m. 1995 to Dean Andrew
 Houston

Justine Anne Boyd
 b. 20.3.1971
 m. 1993 to Lyndon Owen

Chloe Anne-Louise Boyd
 b. 2.7.1992

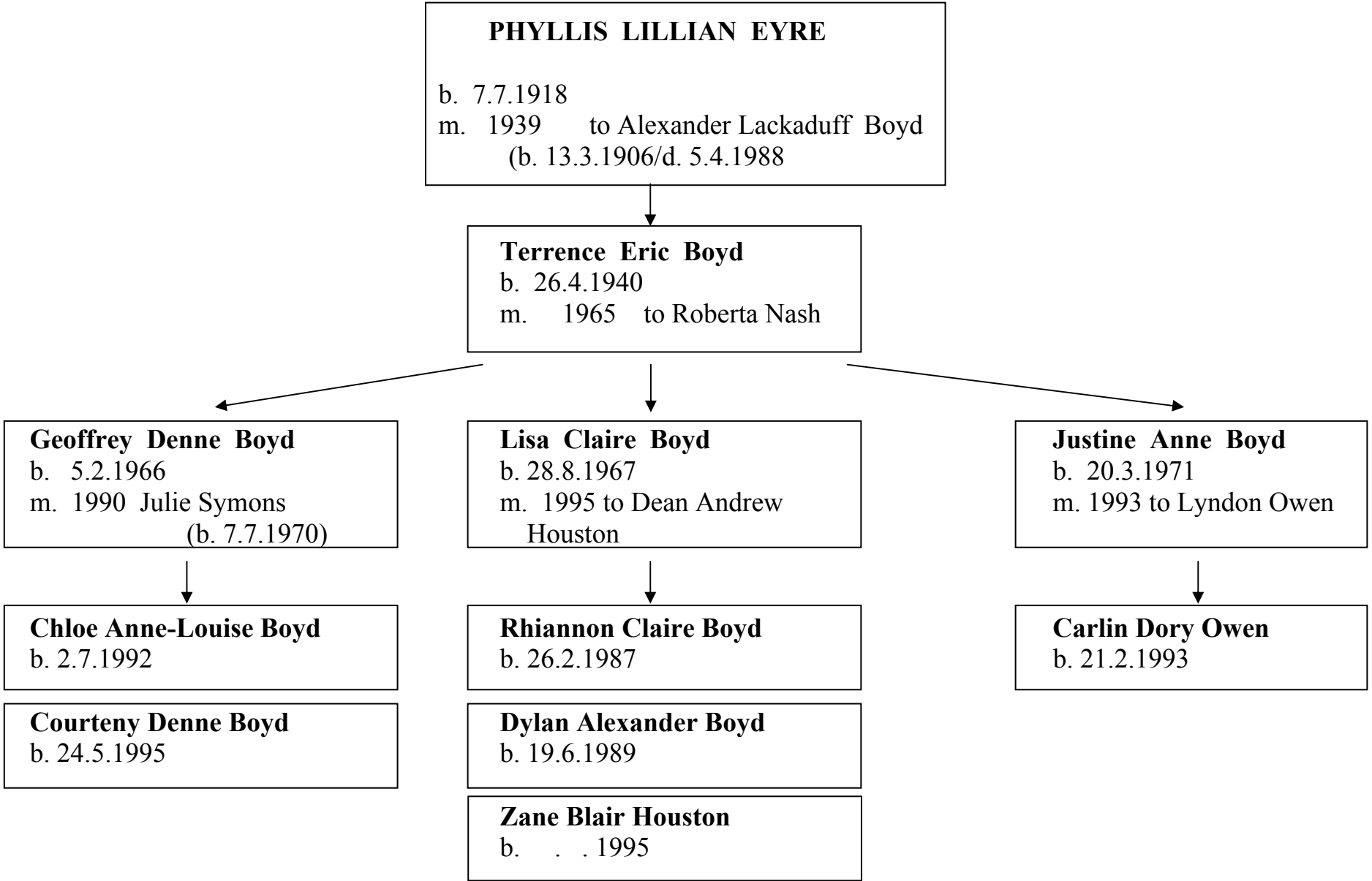
Rhiannon Claire Boyd
 b. 26.2.1987

Carlin Dory Owen
 b. 21.2.1993

Courteny Denne Boyd
 b. 24.5.1995

Dylan Alexander Boyd
 b. 19.6.1989

Zane Blair Houston
 b. . . 1995



Chapter 13

The Genalogical Lineage

of

Three Blair Families

c1135 to 1998

The Blairs of Blair, Ayrshire

The Blairs of Balthayock, Perthshire

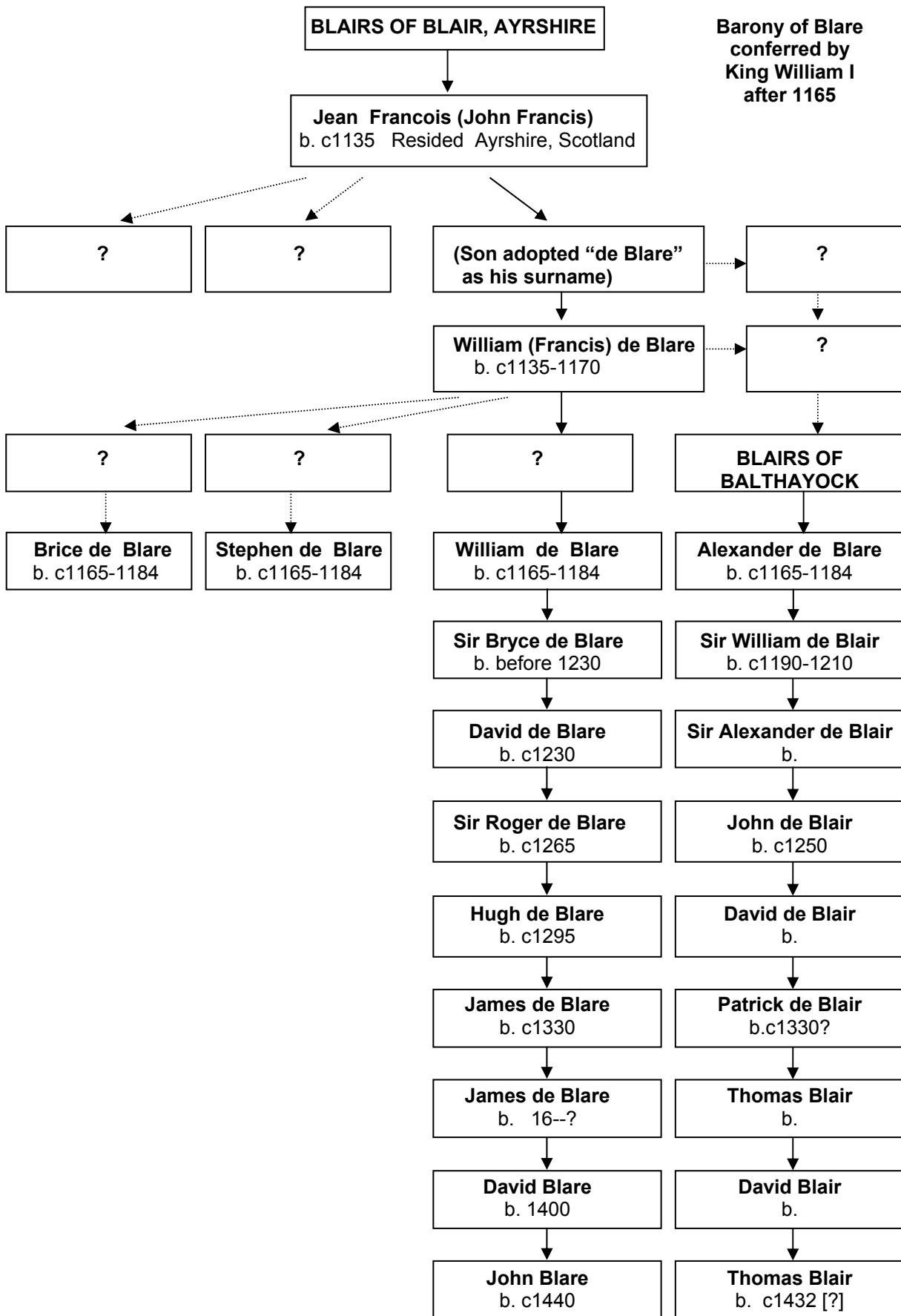
The Blairs of Ladymuir, Renfrewshire

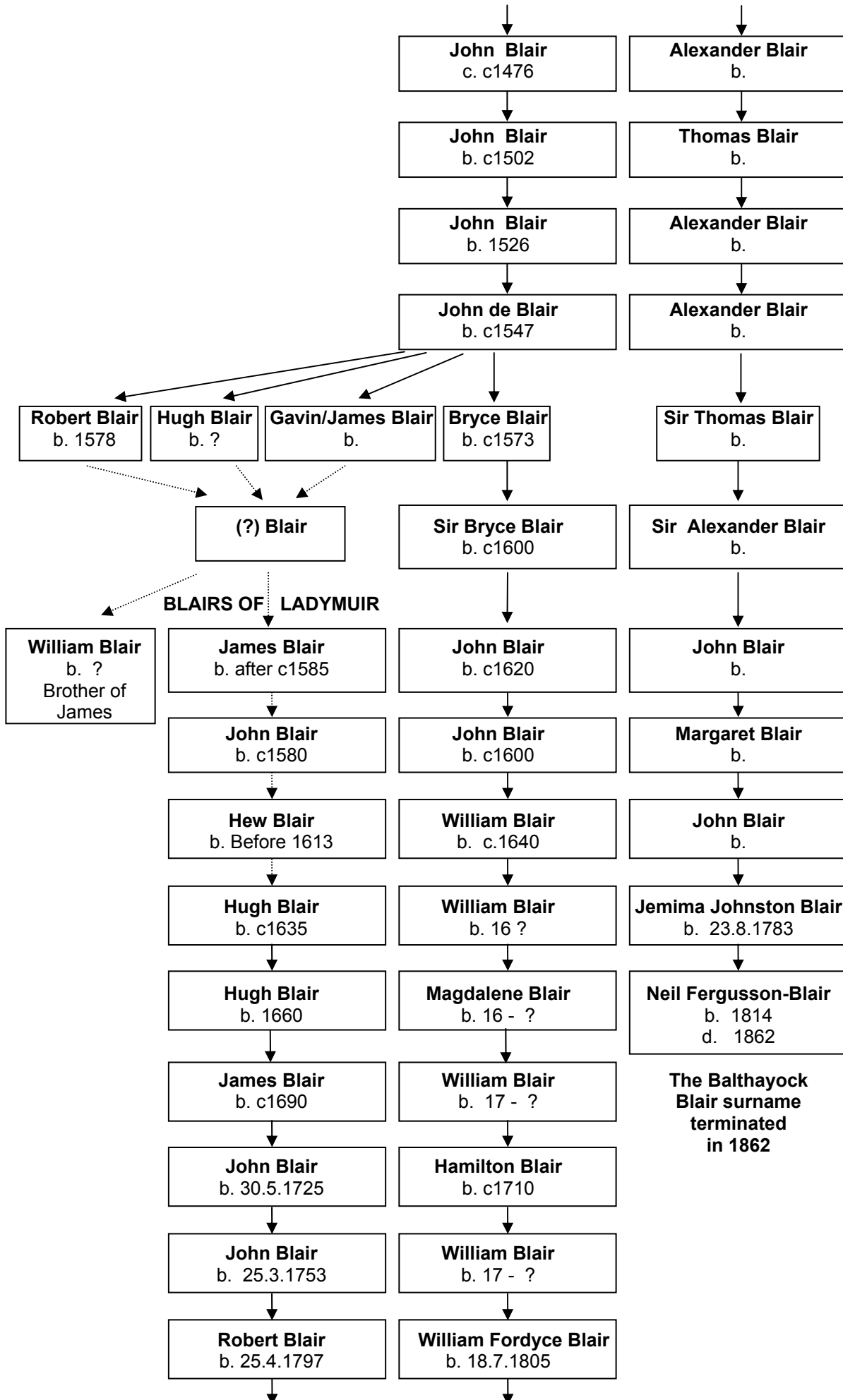
Historians have always found it difficult to establish with precision the accuracy of genealogical material in earlier centuries. Such records as may exist are scarce and scattered, sometimes written in Latin or a local/regional language or else so fragmented that research comes to resemble the assembling of a jig-saw puzzle. The lineage of the three Blair families is no exception. Nevertheless, much early information can be extracted from analysing dated references in respect of people and places in relation to genealogical connections such as in charters, contracts, genealogical research material, historical records and events, etc.

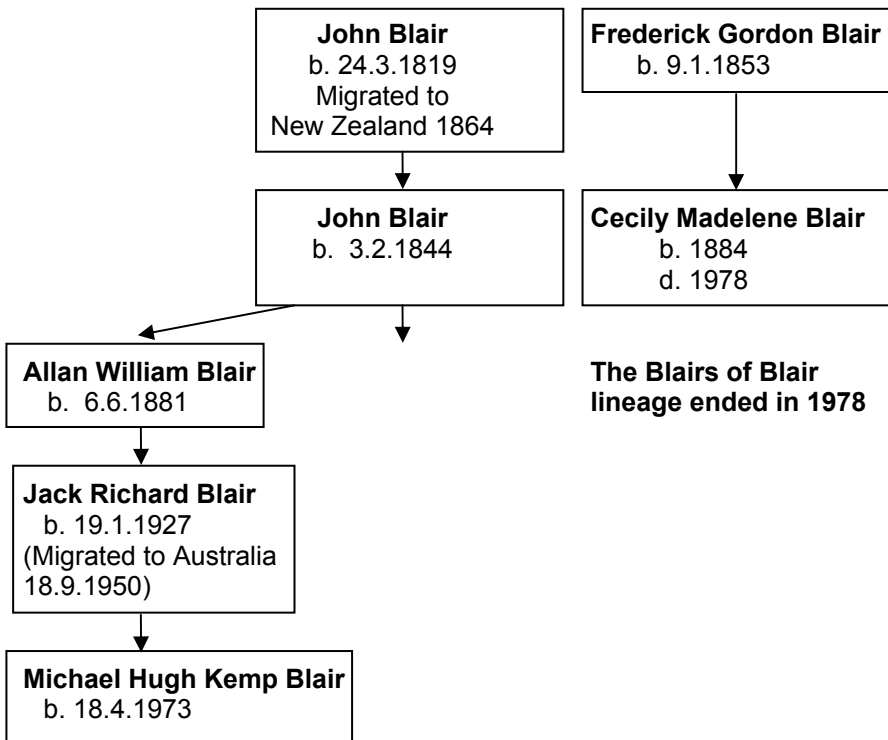
It should always be kept in mind that genealogical information derived under the circumstances outlined above is always capable of revision should sources, manuscripts or other material be discovered which clarify any detail of a genealogy. All ancient lineages, including the lineages of the three Blair families should be viewed under the notion that the last word has not been spoken.

NOTE: In the following chart it should be noted that the descending generations of Blairs are not parallel generations and should not be read horizontally. Each Blair descendant is listed in order of historical and vertical succession.

Patrilineal succession of three Blair Families







Chapter 14

Monarchs of Scotland

The Scottish Monarchy originated over 1000 years ago from the Irish people. It can be said to have begun with the House of Alpin, whose harsh rule forged the path which became Scotland. At this early period of history exact dates concerning births, deaths and periods of rule have been taken from the historical record where this information is given but some details and events may have arisen from legend and folklore. Tribal wars, civil turbulence and the failure to keep accurate records all raise difficult problems for historians and researchers so that some events are still being argued amongst professional historians.

The House of Alpin 841 AD - 1034 AD

Kenneth I 841 – 859

Was called MacAlpin. Born before 832. Died: 859 from cancer, leaving his Scottish kingdom to his brother Donald. He was a descendant of the Pictish royal family and is traditionally regarded as the founder and first king of Scotland. Had five offspring, three daughters and two sons, Constantine and Aed. About 834 he succeeded his father, Alpin (832-834) as king of the Gaelic Scots in Galloway. In a series of battles (841-846) he conquered the Pictish Kingdom and, uniting it with his own, called his expanded domains Scotland (officially known as Alban). The kingdom was sometimes called Scone, after Kenneth's capital. In later years the king led six invasions into Lothian, southern Scotland, then part of Saxon Northumbria.

What happened to the Pictish Kingdom is a mystery but legend would have it that Kenneth spent many evenings inviting the Pict rulers to lavish feasts of wine and meat and then killing them off as they ate. However, historians may argue otherwise that the demise of the Picts was due to the warring nature of the Scots and that the Gaelic language of the Scots became dominant and the Picts gradually became part of what is now Scotland.

Donald I 859 - 863

Died: 863. Had at least one child named Giric.

It was the custom for a king to name his successor since the right of birth had not been established so that sometimes bloody, jealous wars would decide who next came to the throne. Before his suspicious death in 863, Donald supported Kenneth's attempts to establish law and help secure further rule across the land. However, no less than 10 of the 14 Alba kings were murdered during the period 943-1097. Only then was the birth right of rule accepted in Scotland.

Constantine I

Died: 877. Had at least one son, Donald.

Constantine was a waring king. During his reign he spent a considerable amount of his time fighting off the Vikings and trying to expand his kingdom into the south. In 872, his assassination of the 'Run' King of Strathclyde (and his brother-in-law), meant that the southern regions of what is now Scotland became part of his own domain of Alban.

In 864 Constantine quickly defeated the rampage of the Norsemen led by 'Olaf the White' from Dublin until 'Thorsten the Red' also attempted to defeat Constantine. However, he was successfully defeated.

Although usually confident in battle, Constantine often resorted to bribery and payoffs to his rivals in order to keep the peace. Norsemen, however, finally took their revenge with a raiding party known as 'The Black Strangers' from Dublin and made a base for themselves in Fife where they launched their attacks and defeated Constantine.

Aed **877 - 878**

Died: 878. Had at least two sons, Constantine and Donald.
Aed succeeded his father Constantine I but held the throne for only a short time before being killed by his cousin Giric at Strathallan.

Eochaid and Giric **878 - 889**

Giric assumed the throne alongside Eochaid after he killed Aed and the two appeared to rule as one. Very little detail is known about the two kings and nothing is known of their personal lives. In 889 they were both deposed and Giric was killed at Dundurn in Perthshire.

Donald II **889 - 900**

Died: 900. Had at least one child, a son, Malcolm.

Donald II (son of Constantine I) claimed the throne and ruled through a time of unrest. The Danish had conquered the whole of the north of Scotland led by 'Sigurd the Mighty' who claimed the lands and killed his adversary 'Melbrigda Tonn' by cutting off his head and ceremoniously hanging it from his saddle. Apparently this was not such a good idea because as legend has it the head bounced around and banged against Sigurd's legs; a tooth punctured a leg and he quickly died from blood poisoning. After his death he was renamed 'The Tooth'! He died near Forres in 900.

Constantine II **900 - 943**

Died: 943. Offspring: Indulf, Cellach and a daughter. He was the eldest son of Aed and had one of the longest reigns in early history.

Constantine II managed to keep the Danish invaders at bay, secured his hold on Alba and also managed to break through the Clyde border into southern Scotland and come face to face with the English Anglo-Saxons which precipitated English/Scottish rivalry continued over many centuries.

The Norsemen finally ceased their marauding of northern Scotland after their defeat by Constantine II in 904. In the south of Scotland he was unsuccessful and retreated to the north in 915. Fighting ceased in 927 as the English united all those defending themselves against the Danes who were driven out. Constantine II now had a recognised border between Scotland and England. Peace reigned between the two kingdoms until King Athelstan of England invaded Scotland and took Constantine's son hostage. Three years passed and Constantine II then struck back with a vengeance but failed and in 937 the Scots were defeated and slaughtered in Brunanburgh although Constantine himself managed to survive.

He continued to defend himself against marauding Danes who kept driving further north into Scotland. With his armies defeated and his kingdom becoming smaller, Constantine II abdicated in 943 and spent his remaining years in a monastery.

Malcolm I

943 - 954

Died: 954. Offspring: Dubh and Kenneth.

Constantine named his second cousin, Malcolm I, as his successor. At this point in history a new king needed to show his authority by waging war and claiming its spoils to display his strength.

Allied with the English King, Malcolm I stamped out the Scandinavian threat from Ireland but in 950, with some encouragement from his father-monk, Constantine II, he invaded the northern territories of England. However, on his return in 954, he found that his northern region of Scotland had revolted and was killed in a brief conflict against them at Fordoun in the Mearns.

Indulf

954 – 962

Was the son of Constantine II. Died: 962. Offspring: Culen, Olaf and Eochaid.

Indulf's main claim to fame is the capture of the fortress at Edinburgh – Dun Edin, and his defeat of Edwin the Anglian. The manner of his demise is unknown though by 962 he was no longer King.

Dubh

962 – 967

Died: 967. Offspring: Kenneth and Malcolm.

Culen fought his cousin, King Dubh, son of Malcolm I, on two occasions for the right to the throne. He failed the first time in the town of Blair Atholl but succeeded the second time in the town of Forres where his cousin was killed in 967.

Culen

967 – 971

Died: 971. Son of Indulf. Offspring: Constantine and Malcolm.

During his short reign he attempted to recapture Strathclyde from the English and make it Scottish territory again. He killed King Rhiderch's brother, absconding with the dead man's daughter and claimed Strathclyde. However, the avenging king overthrew Culen in Lothian.

Kenneth II

971 – 995

Died: 995. Had at least two sons, Dungal and Malcolm.

Son of Malcolm I. He also tried to regain the Strathclyde region but he was unsuccessful. About 973 he murdered Culen's brother, Olaf, thus eliminating at least one claimant to the throne.

Attempts to extend his territory in the south were a failure and Kenneth II returned home to face a revolt which had broken out during his absence.

Kenneth II's death was particularly gruesome. When trying to keep the peace in one of his regions he slew the son of Finella, the wife of the region's controller. Finella's bitterness drove her to revenge and she set an elaborate trap for the king. She had a special room constructed within a tower and lined it with beautiful tapestries. Behind the tapestries were hidden loaded crossbows whose arrows pointed to a statue placed in the centre of the room. The hand of the statue held a golden apple and was set so that when the apple was picked up the crossbows would fire their arrows. One night whilst entertaining the king at a feast she lead him to the room and offered the golden apple as a symbol of their lasting friendship. When the unsuspecting King took the apple he was killed instantly by a hail of arrows.

Constantine III

995 – 997

Died: 997.

This son of Culen reigned for a very short time. He died at a place known as Rathinveramon but nothing certain is known as to the cause of his death.

Kenneth III

997 – 1005

Died: 1005. Offspring: Gillacomean, Giric and Bodhe.

He fought and lost against the English at Lothian so that England ruled over the lands south of the Clyde. Kenneth III was assassinated at Monzievairst, near the river Fearn and his son Giric with him.

Malcolm II

1005 – 1034

Born: 954. Died: 1034. Offspring: Bethoc, Donada and another daughter.

Malcolm II was the last of the House of Alpin rulers. He gained the throne by murdering Kenneth III and his son.

He was unsuccessful in attempts to regain southern areas of Scotland as well as efforts to oust the Scandinavians based in the Moray region. He again turned his attention to the south regions and this time was successful. A deal was struck with the English that he would hold Lothian as well as south of the Clyde on condition that he didn't change the peoples' traditions and language. This is the borderland which today runs between England and Scotland.

Malcolm II had no sons so he named Duncan, the son of his eldest daughter Bethoc to become king after him and then slaughtered the remaining male descendants of Kenneth III.

Malcolm II finally died in 1035 at the age of 80, an amazing age for a king at that period in history. Duncan I was then proclaimed King of Alba and inherited the lands from the Tweed in the south, to Moray in the north.

The House of Dunkeld

1034 AD - 1290 AD

Duncan I

1034 – 1040

Died: 1040. Offspring: Malcolm and Donald Ban.

Grandson of King Malcolm II Mackenneth whom he succeeded.

Duncan was defeated and killed by Macbeth and his two sons driven into exile.

Macbeth

1040 – 1057

Born: c1005. Died: 1057.

Grandson of Malcolm II. He married Gruoch, granddaughter of Kenneth II. He was military commander for King Duncan I and a chieftain of the Moray district. After murdering Duncan in 1040 Macbeth claimed the kingdom and ruled for 17 prosperous years. He was killed in battle at Lumphanan on 15 August, 1057 by Malcolm Canmore, a son of Duncan I who later became Malcolm II of Scotland.

“**Macbeth**”, a tragedy in five acts written by Shakespeare, is based on the career of King Macbeth. Possibly performed as early as 1606, the play was first printed in the edition of Shakespeare’s works that was published in 1623 and is known as the First Folio. The principal source used by the author for this work was “Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland” (1577) by the English chronicler Raphael Holinshed. The tragedy is a penetrating, concentrated, and harrowing study of ambition. In the characters of Macbeth and his wife, Lady Macbeth, the play provides two strong roles long regarded as attractive vehicles for the leading actors of the world. Shakespeare’s tragedy also provided the basis for the libretto of the opera “**Macbeth**” (1847) by the Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi.

Malcolm III called Canmore

1057 – 1093

Born: c1031. Died: 1093.

He spent his youth in Northumbria, England with his uncle, Earl Siward, who in 1054 established him in Cumbria and Lothian. In 1057 after Macbeth was killed he became king of all Scotland. After his first wife, Ingibjorg, widow of Thorfinn, Earl of Orkney died, Malcolm, in 1069, married Margaret, the sister of King Edgar the Aetheling of England. Malcolm invaded England five times between 1061 and 1093, when he was killed at Alnwick. He left five sons, four of whom succeeded him, Duncan, Edgar, Alexander and David.

Duncan

1093 – 1097

Apparently succeeded to the throne on the death of his father but little is known of him.

Edgar

1097 – 1107

Came to the throne in 1097 with the support of the English Prince Edgar the Aetheling. Little is known about him.

Alexander I

1107 – 1124

Son of Malcolm III and his mother St. Margaret of Scotland. He was called Alexander the Fierce for his stern suppression of an insurrection in northern Scotland. Succeeded his brother Edgar, but only to the kingdoms north of the Forth. Married Sibilla, natural daughter of King Henry I of England. He worked for the independence of the Scottish Church and founded a number of bishoprics as well as the Abbeys of Scone in Perthshire and Inchcolm on an island in the Firth of Forth. He initiated a shift to a more diocesan based episcopacy.

David I

1124 – 1153

Born: 1084. Youngest son of Malcolm III. He was sent to England in 1093 with his sister Matilda (who in 1100 married Henry I of England) and remained for several years at the English court.

During the reign of his brother Alexander I he was Earl of Cumbria, ruling south of the Clyde and Forth rivers. By his marriage in 1113 to Matilda, widow and the heiress of the earldom of Northumbria, he also became Earl of Huntingdon and acquired a claim to Northumbria. In the long struggle for the English crown between Matilda (his niece) and King Stephen of England, David I fought for Matilda (1136-1138) but his main object was to secure Northumbria for himself. Although David I was defeated by Stephen in the Battle of the Standard (1138) Stephen conceded him the earldom. David's internal rule was wise and a momentous one for Scotland. He made land grants to many Anglo-Norman families thus replacing the traditional Scottish tribal organisation and providing the kingdom with a new feudal aristocracy, modelled after Norman England. He was noted for the castles he built and the monasteries he founded. He also encouraged the commercial development of the Scottish burghs and strengthened the church by new foundations and endowments. David I was succeeded by his grandson, Malcolm IV.

Malcolm IV

1153 – 1165

Was popularly known as 'Malcolm the Maiden'. On his accession to the throne the young King (12 years old) was faced with a rebellion of the western Gaels, supported by the Norsemen who he succeeded in putting down.

Henry II of England insisted he give up his claim to Northumbria in 1157 in return for a re-grant of the earldom of Huntingdon which was largely useless to Scottish kings because of its distance from Scotland. Malcolm fought on Henry's behalf in France (1159) when he was 18 and, upon his return to Scotland, completed the subjection of Galloway. Malcolm IV was succeeded by his brother, William the Lion.

William I (The Lion)

1165 – 1214

Born: 1143. Grandson of King David I and brother of Malcolm IV whom he succeeded. William the Lion was determined to recover Northumbria (lost to the English in 1157). He supported the rebellion of the sons of Henry II of England (1173-1174) with King Louis VII of France but William was captured by Henry who forced him to sign the Treaty of Falaise (1174) making Scotland a feudal possession of England. Released in 1175 he immediately asked the Pope to declare the Scottish church free of English domination. A quarrel with the Pope delayed the decision but eventually in 1188, Pope Clement III declared the church in Scotland subject only to Rome. In 1189, William was able to buy an annulment of the Treaty of Falaise from Richard I of England for 10,000 marks.

After the succession of King John in England in 1199 William once more demanded the restoration of Northumbria but he was finally forced by a show of arms (1209) to abandon the claim. William put down several revolts in Scotland and furthered the process of feudalism in the kingdom. His alliance with Louis VII of France in 1168 began a long friendship between Scotland and France, later to be known as the “Auld Alliance”. William I was succeeded by his son Alexander II.

Abbreviated List of Scottish Monarchs From Malcolm IV, 1153

	<i>Born - Died</i>	<i>Enthroned</i>
Malcolm IV	1141 – 1165	1153 – 1165
William I (The Lion)	1143 - 1214	1165 – 1214
Alexander II	1198 – 1249	1214 – 1249
Alexander III	1241 – 1286	1249 – 1286
Margaret, Maid of Norway	1283 – 1290	1286 – 1290
<i>Succession to the Scottish throne was disputed after 1290 until Edward I seized power</i>		
Edward I of England	1239 – 1307	1296 – 1307
Robert (Bruce) I	1274 – 1329	1306 – 1329
David (Bruce) II	1324 – 1371	1329 – 1371
Robert II	1316 – 1390	1371 – 1390
Robert III	1340 – 1406	1390 – 1406
James I	1394 – 1437	1406 – 1437
James II	1430 – 1460	1437 – 1460
James III	1452 – 1488	1460 – 1488
James IV	1473 – 1513	1488 – 1513
James V	1512 – 1542	1513 – 1542
Mary, Queen of Scots	1542 – 1587	1542 – 1567
James VI of Scotland	1566 – 1625	1567 – 1625
Charles I of England	1600 – 1649	1625 – 1649
<i>Council of State</i>		<i>1649 – 1653</i>
<i>Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector</i>		<i>1653 – 1658</i>
<i>Richard Cromwell, Lord Protector</i>		<i>1658 – 1659</i>
Charles II of England (In exile from 1651-1660)	1630 – 1685	1660 – 1685
James VII of Scotland	1633 – 1701	1685 – 1688
William III	1650 – 1792	1689 – 1702
Anne	1665 – 1714	1702 – 1714
Act of Union between England and Scotland	1707	

The Blair Society for Genealogical Research



The Blair Society for Genealogical Research (BSGR) was founded in 1925 and reorganised in 1983. The BSGR is dedicated to the collection, preservation and the dissemination of genealogical information to its members in a variety of forms concerning the **BLAIR** surname in order to assist *Blair* descendants who are seeking to trace their ancestry and early family connections.

The BSGR offers members resource facilities in terms of historical books, documents, artifacts and a sophisticated computer database as well as personal contacts to help *Blair* descendants discover their place and identity in the worldwide family of Blairs.

The BSGR remains one of the oldest of any American family society and is a member society of the National Genealogical Society, The Federation of Genealogical Societies and the Association of One Name Studies and promotes a standard of excellence and a code of ethical research.

The BSGR can be accessed on the Internet, by e-mail, by telephone or by postal mail. Contact:

Edward P. Blair
20 Parkwood Drive
BROWNSBURG IN. 46112-1922
U.S.A.

Telephone: (317) 852-5078
E-mail: epblair2@aol.com
Internet Web Site: www.blairsociety.org



Clan Blair Society



The Clan Blair Society was founded in 1987 and operates a Blair Family Genealogical Library and a computerised Blair Lineage Matching System for those searching their Blair Family Trees.

The Clan Blair Society is dedicated to:

- Preserving the customs, traditions and heritage of the Scottish people
- Promoting genealogical interest amongst Blairs and Blair descendants, their family links and ancestral connections
- Showing the Blair tartan at Scottish events, games and parades where appropriate
- Participating in historical trips to Scotland and visiting Blair sites
- Producing a quarterly publication of interest to Blairs and Blair descendants entitled: "Blair Bruidhinn" (Blair Talk).

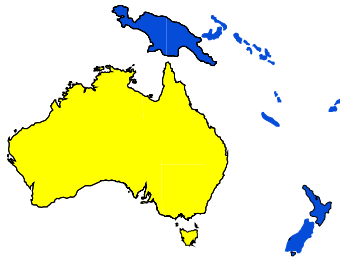
The CBS can be accessed on the Internet, by E-mail, by telephone and by postal mail.

Blairs, Blair descendants regardless of surname and interested non-Blairs are eligible to apply for membership.

Enquiries should be addressed to:

Donald L. Blair
1st Vice President (Membership)
Clan Blair Society
1410 Tudor Street
PHILADELPHIA PA 19111
U.S.A.

**Australian and New Zealand Chapter
of the Blair Society
for Genealogical Research**



The Australian and New Zealand Chapter was established in 1996 and operates in conjunction with the *Blair Society for Genealogical Research* and the *Clan Blair Society* in the United States of America.

It aims to facilitate accessibility to genealogical information by Blairs and Blair descendants in the South Pacific region who are searching their family trees.

A Newsletter is sent to regional members on a quarterly basis to keep members updated on what is happening in the “world of the Blairs”.

The A/NZBS can be accessed on the Internet, by E-mail, telephone or postal mail.

Enquiries should be addressed to:

Ken Blair
57 Mount Vernon Drive
Kambah
CANBERRA ACT 2902
AUSTRALIA

Tel: (06) 231 0115

E-mail: kenblair@pcug.org.au

Bibliography

1. Adams, Frank “The Clans, Septs and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands”. 7th ed., Johnston and Bacon, Edinburgh. Revised by Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, Lord Lyon, King of Arms, Scotland, 1965.
2. Anderson, William “The Scottish Nation”. H. Fullerton, Edinburgh, 1871.
3. Black, George F. “The Surnames of Scotland - their Origin, Meaning and History”, Third Reprinting, New York Public Library, 1971.
4. Blair, John C. “Scotch - Irish Blairs”, Reprint, Huntingoden, PA., U.S.A., 1894.
5. Burke, Sir Bernard “Landed Gentry - Genealogical and heraldic history of, in Great Britain and Ireland”, various editions, London.
6. Delquest, A.W. “These names of ours - a book of Surnames”, Crowell, New York, 1938.
7. Douglas, Sir Robert “Baronage of Scotland”, (a genealogical account of the gentry of Scotland). Bell and Bradfute, Edinburgh, 1798.
8. Dwelly, E. “The Oban Times”, genealogy article: The Blairs of Blair, researched and updated by Andras Mac-Gille-Chriosd, 12 December, 1925.
9. Evans, Ivor H. Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable”, 14th revised ed., Cassell, London, 1992
10. Hamilton-Edwards, “In Search of Scottish Ancestry”, 2nd ed., Gerald K.S Phillimore, Chichester, U.K., 1983.
11. Macfarlane, Walter Genealogical Collections Concerning Families in Scotland, ed. from original MSS, Advocates’ Library. James T. Clark, Keeper of the Library, Edinburgh; UP Edinburgh, 1900.
12. Michell, Arthur Tompson “Five generations of the family of Blair”, (from the counties of Perth and Forfar), William Pollard & co., Exeter, U.K., 1895.
13. Millar, A.H. “The Castles and Mansions of Ayrshire”, published about 1890, Scotland.
14. Paul, Sir James Balfour “The Scots Peerage”, Lord Lyon, King of Arms, David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1910.
15. Pont, Timothy “Cuninghame, 1604-1608”, a descriptive survey of prominent Ayrshire sites, ed. by John Shedden Dobie, published by John Tweed, Glasgow, 1876.
16. Puttock, A.G. “Tracing your Family Tree”, Ref. ed., Lothian Publishers,

Melbourne, 1981.

Blair of Blair Muniments Index by Cecile Magdalene Blair of Blair, Historical Search Room, Scottish Records Office, H.M. General Register House, Princes Street, Edinburgh, Scotland, as extracted by William Campbell Blair MD, 1989.

Blair House, Dalry, Scotland, "*Information Leaflet*" for visitors and tourists, 1996.

Blair Society for Genealogical Research, Brownsburg, Indiana, U.S.A., "*Blair Family History Information Sheet*", 1996.

Campbell, Alastair, "Names and Clans - A Closer Look", in *The Highlander*, 1993-1994.

Clan Blair Society, U.S.A., *Database Information*, 1997.

"*The New Zealand Scotsman*", Journal Publication, Auckland, New Zealand, 1938.

The Scottish Tartan Society, Comrie, Perthshire, Scotland, issue 3.2.1983.

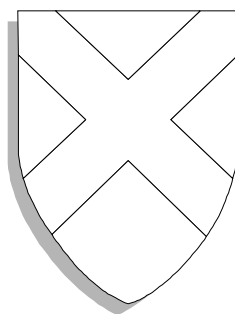
Encyclopedia of American Family Names, Harper-Collins, New York, 1995.

The Hutchinson Dictionary of World History, Helicon Publishing, Oxford, U.K., 1993.

Chambers Biographical Dictionary, ed., by Magnus Magnusson and W. and R. Chambers, Edinburgh, 1992.

Bain's Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland. ed. Joseph Bain. Edinburgh, v. 4., 1881-1884.

Peskett, H., Correspondence with Dr. William C. Blair re John/Grisel Blair and their offspring, 23 August, 1992.



“The Dash ----- ”

I read of a man who stood to speak
at the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
from the beginning...to the end.

-

He noted that first came the date of her birth
and spoke of the following date with tears,
but he said what mattered most of all
was the dash between those years.

-

For that dash represents all the time
that she spent alive on earth...
and now only those who loved her
know what that little line is worth.

-

For it matters not, how much we own;
the cars....the house...the cash.
What matters is how we live and love
and how we spend our dash.

-

So think about this long and hard...
are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left.
(You could be at "dash midrange.")

-

If we could just slow down enough
to consider what's true and real,
and always try to understand
the way other people feel.

-

And be less quick to anger,
and show appreciation more
and love the people in our lives
like we've never loved before.

-

If we treat each other with respect,
and more often wear a smile...
remembering that this special dash
might only last a little while.

-

So, when your eulogy's being read
with your life's actions to rehash...
would you be proud of the things they say
about how you spend your dash?

-

Author Linda Ellis (USA)

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes