

## Corrected Lineage of the Blair of Blair Line in Scotland

Submitted by William Campbell Blair, BSGR Mem. #0290

*William Campbell Blair sent the following three letters to refute the earlier lineage assigned to his line of Blairs. Supporting original sources are given. Many of those who thought they descended from Brice Blair and Esther Peden should be apprised of the flawed earlier lineage, and enlisted in the search for factual data to straighten out this line.(The "Ireland Project" relates to the BSGR project for gathering original Scottish and Irish records.)*

19 April 2000

Dear Charlotte Stewart,

I appreciated receiving the e-mail sent by BSGR regarding the Ireland project, which I found very exciting.

It indicates among other things that you extracted information from the McKay Genealogy book, *Joseph McKay-Martha Blair, Their Progenitors, Posterity and Lineal Lines – A Documented History, 1135-1967*, by Ila May Fisher Maughan.

Although in general a very well written book, it contains a significant error which I wanted to call to your attention, in case you might not be aware of it. I came upon the McKay Book for the first time while doing some Blair research at the Carnegie Library in Larne, Northern Ireland in 1992. At that time I believed it likely that I descended from Brice and Esther Peden Blair (since found to be false), and I was very badly misled by her findings. Mrs. Maughn states and presents rather compelling (but not primary evidence) that Brice Blair who married Esther Peden was son and heir to John Blair of that ilk and his wife, Isabel Boyd, contending that this Brice Blair was denied his inheritance, the Barony of Blair, by his uncle Bryce Blair who took over Blair "by force," necessitating that Brice and Esther Peden Blair "escape to Ulster in the early 1600s to save their lives."

In primary documents in the National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh), specifically, The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, I found definite evidence that John Blair (who married Isabel Boyd), predeceased his father, John Blair of that ilk (who married Grisel Sempill), and therefore could not have inherited Blair as Maughn contends. Subsequently, genealogist Hugh Peskett of Winchester, England, working in my behalf, came up with similar findings, namely that Maughan's conclusion (that Brice Blair who married Esther Peden was heir to Blair but denied his inheritance) is flawed, unsound, and "is nonsense" and fantasy. I have notes Mr. Peskett abstracted from original manuscript documents in the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, from a series of "Services of Heirs," totally refuting this conclusion of Mrs. Maughn.

The importance of this is to be sure that those who descend from Brice and Esther Peden Blair are not misled by Mrs. Maughn's false contention that this Brice was heir to the Blair of that ilk line in Scotland. (It is quite likely that he descended from a cadet branch of the Blairs of that ilk, but his exact connection to that line has yet to be identified).

I am continuing to search for my Blair ancestors in County Antrim, without success to date. My immigrant ancestor, my gt. gt. gt. grandfather, James Blair, who married Mary Harper in County Antrim, and came to America in 1772 with his wife and four sons, John, William (my gt. gt. gt. grandfather), Thomas and James, settled at Lands Ford on the Catawba River, Lancaster District, South Carolina in the Waxhaw settlement. We know from my gt. gt. gt. grandfather's tombstone in the Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church Yard that he was born in County Antrim, Ulster, 1759, but have been unable to identify the exact location. As you may know, William's son, General James Blair (my gt. gt. grandfather), who married Charlotte Rochelle, was a large Cotton Plantation owner

(called Red Oak Camp) in Kershaw County, as well as a General in the South Carolina Militia, and also U.S. Congressman from South Carolina for four terms. Their son, Lovick William Rochelle Blair (my gt. grandfather), was a Colonel in the Confederate Army at the end of the Civil War, and was assassinated while campaigning for Governor of South Carolina July 4, 1882.

William Campbell Blair, BSGR Mem. #0290; CBS Mem. #24

---

## **[Second letter]**

### **ANCESTRY OF WILLIAM CAMPBELL BLAIR, M.D. – PRELIMINARY REPORT**

#### **The American Descent 1772 – 1992**

Dr. Blair appears to be the heir male (through successive eldest or only sons) of William Blair, born in County Antrim, 24 March 1759, died in South Carolina, 1824, and apparently documented in entirely conventional American sources.

I do have to make the reservation that the descent from William Blair the immigrant does rely to a great extent on secondary sources (although they appear to be reliable ones), and this would need to be properly documented with copies of the original documents, for the Lyon Court. The present documentation is quite inadequate.

#### **The Immigrant Generation ca. 1772**

William Blair, born 1759, is documented by a very informative tombstone, and an obituary in a local newspaper at his death 1824, which is the primary source of his having been born in co. Antrim, and coming to America 1772. (The gravestone states his date of birth 24 March 1759 and his age 13 on coming to America, which gives the year 1772.)

A series of deeds in Lancaster District, South Carolina, identify William as second son; his elder brother, John, was heir at law of their intestate father, James Blair (primogeniture still applied then in South (but not North) Carolina). John had certainly two sons and one daughter who were living into the 1870s. I have seen no proof of their extinction, so we certainly cannot prove William (born 1759) to be heir of his father, unless we can prove extinction of heirs male of the body of John (the Blair chiefship was destined to heirs male – see below).

The date 1772 for immigration points to this family being part of the group of emigrants organised by Rev. William Martin, Presbyterian Minister at Ballymoney, who chartered five ships to take his congregation to South Carolina. This group is well listed and included both a James Blair and a Brice Blair; they landed in Charleston 20 December 1772. Most of these people came from the Ballymoney area of North Antrim. This source is well-known to me from other research into emigration from Northern Ireland to America (including as a matter of interest, Rev. Dr. Billy Graham, whose ancestors followed a similar path).

This points to the search in Ireland being for a James Blair of an age to have a second son born 1759, and quite reasonably James was son of a John; it also points to Ballymoney, in North Antrim, rather than (as has been suggested) Larne in South Antrim, and probably a kinsman named Brice Blair, since a man of that name was on the ship with James Blair.

#### **The Blairs in Ballymoney**

The Will of Dr. James Blair, physician of Ballymoney, County Antrim, 1747, refers to his lands of Tobertony (now Toberdoney) and Islandrose in the parish of Dunluce, County Antrim (actually Islandrose is in the adjoining parish of Billy) and his brother Brice Blair of Bushfoot (also in the parish of Dunluce). He left money to the poor of Portpatrick in Scotland (a valuable clue – such legacies almost always identify the testator's birthplace, which is

confirmed by the next item), and importantly his nephew James Blair (then under age 14), son of John Blair of Dunskey.

This gives us an immediate link to landed Scottish Blairs, the Blairs of Dunskey, an estate in the parish of Portpatrick. This is in the Rhinns of Galloway, and the closest part of Scotland to Ireland.

James Blair, the nephew, must have died young, for John Blair of Dunskey (who married 1738, Anne, daughter of Sir John Kennedy of Culzean, Baronet, and sister of two Earls of Cassillis) in fact left an only surviving daughter and heiress who married Sir James Hunter, afterwards Hunter-Blair, Baronet.

Dr. James Blair, of Ballymoney, County Antrim, and his brother Brice Blair, of Bushfoot nearby, were clearly younger brothers of John Blair of Dunskey, in Scotland. Dr. James had no issue; given that the emigrants 1772 were from the Ballymoney area, i.e. precisely this area, and that the heads of families were named James Blair and Brice Blair, it seems very likely that they were the sons of Brice Blair, of Bushfoot in 1747. However, this needs research to confirm it.

### **Earlier Genealogy in Scotland**

If this last suggestion does prove to be the case, then there should not be great difficulty in taking the genealogy further back.

I am afraid that what does have to be said is that the genealogy produced by Ila May Fisher Maughan is quite unsound, and the part which relates to young Brice Blair being cheated out of his inheritance by his uncle and fleeing to Ireland has to be dismissed as romantic nonsense.

The facts of these generations of the Blairs of that Ilk are very clearly and precisely established by a series of "Services of Heirs," which returned the verdicts of local men at the time. These are from original manuscript documents in the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, and the following are my abstract notes translating from the Latin of the original record. It must be accepted, I stress, that these are original contemporary court records of the time, and recording the finding of local juries. They totally refute Mrs. Maughan's report. The man who Mrs. Maughan states fled to Ireland deprived of his inheritance, in fact inherited the lands on his father's death 15 November 1609, was found to be the next heir male and put in possession by the findings of the jury 10 April 1610, and possessed the lands until his death in Ayrshire, Scotland, on 4 February 1639, leaving two sons, both of whom inherited the lands in their turn.

It has to be accepted that Mrs. Maughan's genealogy is nonsense.

C22/4.371v

At Edinburgh 10 April 1610: The deceased John Blair of that Ilk, father of Brice Blair now of that Ilk, died last vest etc.. in the Blair estates [listed]; the lands are in the possession of the mesne superiors by reason of non-entry, from the death of the said John Blair who died 15 November last past, by default of the said Brice Blair his son and true heir male aforesaid. [See next letter of 23 August 1992.]

C22/14.295r

At Irvine 25 April 1639: Brice Blair of that Ilk, father of Sir Brice Blair, now of that Ilk, knight, died seised of [long list of lands]. Brice Blair of that Ilk, father of Sir Brice Blair Kt now of that Ilk, died on 4 February last past, and Sir Brice Blair is his son and undoubted next heir male.

C22/18.225v

At Irvine 1 May 1645: Brice Blair of that Ilk grandfather of John Blair now of that Ilk bearer of these presents, died last seised etc. in the barony of Blair etc. John Blair now of that Ilk is the next heir male of the same Brice Blair of that Ilk his grandfather. Brice Blair died in February 1639. [long list of non-entries]

C22/18.230v

Sir Brice Blair died July 1639: John Blair now of that Ilk is his son and next heir male.

C22/21.305v

At Kilwynning 11 September 1650: The deceast John Blair of that Ilk grandfather of John Blair now of that Ilk, died seised on [long list of lands including the barony of Blair]. John Blair of that Ilk grandsir of John Blair now of that Ilk died November 1609.

C22/27.235v

At Irvine 5 February 1664

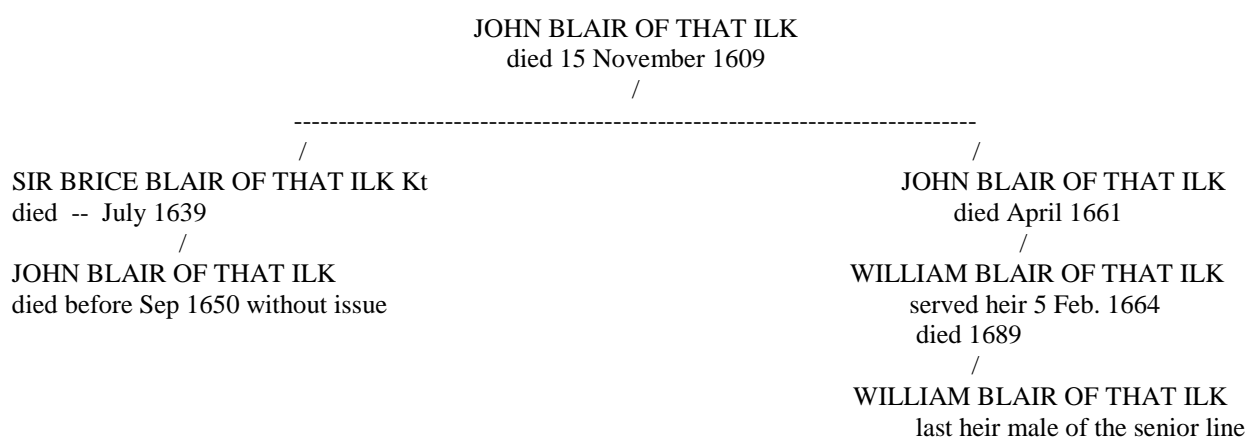
William Blair of that Ilk served heir male of John Blair of that Ilk his father. John Blair of that Ilk died April 1661. William was then a minor.

C22/27.264r

At Kilwinning 26 October 1664

John Blair of that Ilk father of William Blair now of that Ilk died seised in [long list of lands] substantially repeats the last, dealing with minority and non-entry.

This can be summarised in pedigree form:



In fact these documents prove that Douglas's account of the Blairs of that Ilk, at that period, in *Baronage of Scotland* is quite correct.

Turning from the negative of dismissing Mrs. Maughan's legends to the positive, the Blair of that Ilk estates were specifically destined to heirs male, which by normal practice means that the chiefship of the name should also be held to be destined to heirs male.

The last William Blair of that Ilk shown above had surviving issue an only daughter Magdalen, who married a William Scott, Advocate. William Scott took the name Blair; they had issue one son, William, after which Magdalen died, and William Scott Blair then remarried and had other issue, also surnamed Blair. William Blair the son of Magdalen died without issue, having disposed his lands to his eldest step-brother, Hamilton Blair, from whom the later Blairs of Blair descend. Thereby the later Blairs of Blair were not heirs male of the Blairs of that Ilk, and were in fact also strangers in blood.

It would seem that the Blairs of Blair should not be chiefs; they are in fact probably by now extinct in the male line, appearing in Burke's landed Gentry for the last time in 1952, represented by an elderly unmarried lady.

The nearest heirs male are presumably to be found among the descendants of James Blair of Maismure and Robert Blair of Bogtoun, two brothers of John Blair of that Ilk who died 1609. Whether one of these was the ancestor of the Blairs of Dunskey I am uncertain, without more research. The Blairs of Dunskey did not acquire that property until the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

What does appear to be the case is that the heirs male of the Blairs of Dunskey were the two brothers, Dr. James and Brice Blair in Ireland, and Dr. James was childless. This all needs a lot more research to confirm, but there is a clear possibility that the South Carolina Blairs were the heirs male of the Blairs of Dunskey. At the moment I am unable

to say where the Blairs of Dunskey fit into the genealogy of the Blairs of that Ilk, but they were using the name Brice, which is a popular first name in that family, so it is very probable that they are a branch of that family.

### **Summary and Proposals for Future Research:**

This research has been misled by the quite erroneous genealogy produced by Mrs. Maughan, and this has to be discarded.

The Blairs of that Ilk, Chiefs of Blair (which was apparently destined to heirs male) were extinct in the senior line in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the later Blairs of Blair were not heirs male and were in fact strangers in blood to the original line; they are probably also extinct in the male line. Thereby the Chief of Blair should presumably be sought by tracing the present heir male of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Blairs of that Ilk.

If this is a correct analysis, then presumably the next heir male of Blair of that Ilk will be found among the cadet stirpes of the family. This needs research and at this stage all that can be said is that a clearly possible candidate for that could well be the Blairs of Dunskey.

We know the senior stirps of the Blairs of Dunskey ended with the heiress daughter of John Blair of Dunskey who married James Hunter, now represented by the Hunter-Blair baronets; the Irish evidence points to Brice Blair of Bushfoot in Antrim (*floreat* 1747) being the brother and next heir-male of John Blair of Dunskey, and apparently (this also needs more research to confirm it) the Blairs who emigrated to South Carolina in 1772 were the sons of Brice Blair of Bushfoot.

Quite apart from the general need to improve the quality of the American evidence, there is need to:

- (a) Establish whether or not the heirs male of John Blair, the elder brother of William Blair who died 1824, are extinct.
- (b) Prove that James Blair who emigrated with his family in 1772 was the son of Brice Blair of Bushfoot, County Antrim, and that Brice Blair of Bushfoot was heir male of John Blair of Dunskey in Wigtownshire, already proved to be his brother.
- (c) Prove must where the Blairs of Dunskey fit into the pedigree of the Blairs of that Ilk; are they the heirs male?

It must be emphasized that this is a project of which the outcome cannot be guaranteed with any certainty, although there are sufficient *prima facie* indications to show that it is certainly a reasonable possibility.

It is unfortunate that some of the past research has been misleading, and some of my present research has been spent in disproving and unraveling past errors.

21 August 1992

Hugh Peskett, Winchester, U.K.

---

[Third letter]

## **CHIEFSHIP OF BLAIR**

For reasons known only to my computer, a section was omitted from what I sent you yesterday, which I did not notice until it had been mailed. This is important, as it is a definitive list of the sons of John Blair who married Grizel Sempill, with dates. This is taken from original contemporary documents of record, all primary sources which I cite: in particular the five younger sons are all listed in a Charter under the great Seal 7 February 1601 [RMS VI.1142] which has substantial differences from the compilation drawing upon several secondary authors which Mrs. Maughan has relied upon, and you will note also that a number of her dates are wildly wrong. One of her many

difficulties is she has guessed birth dates from what she thought were marriage dates. As one example, John Blair younger of that Ilk actually married Isobel Boyd by contract 5 July 1589, which throws out by ten years Mrs. Maughan's theory of the birth date of their supposed son Brice.

**John Blair of that Ilk** married **Grizel Sempill** daughter of **Robert 3d Lord Sempill** by contract 11 May 1565 [RD1/20/2.332] and died 15 November 16009 [C22/4.371v] see also RMS VI,661, 749, 853. They had issue:

1. **John Blair Younger of that Ilk** married by contract 5 July 1589 **Isabel Boyd** daughter of **Thomas 6<sup>th</sup> Lord Kilmarnock** [RMS VI.853] [*note that the charter was witnessed by Robert Blair, Burgess of Glasgow, and Hugh Blair; these are almost certainly the Robert Blair, brother german of John Blair elder of that Ilk, a hitherto unreported member of the family witness to a charter 1584 [RMS V.653] and Hugh his son*]. John Blair younger of that Ilk was named in charters as son and heir apparent 1597, 1604 [RMS VI 661, 1552] and his Testament Dative recorded in the Commissariat of Glasgow records his death, also in 1604. Isobel Boyd his relict remarried Sir Dugald Campbell of Auchinbreck 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet, and was living 1641 when accused of practicing witchcraft in the years 1607 and 1608, designed "relict" of John Blair [A.P.S]. The return of the jury on 10 April 1610 that the next heir male was Brice Blair the next brother is conclusive proof that John Blair younger of that Ilk died 1604 without male issue [C22/4.371v].
2. **Brice Blair of that Ilk** was served heir male of his father 10 April 1610 [C22/4.371v]; he is one of the five younger sons named in their order of birth 7 Feb. 1601 [RMS VI.1142], then designed Brice Blair of Lochwood; married **Annabell Wallace**, named in a charter 13 March 1615, also witnessed by their son Brice Blair designed son and heir apparent of his father [RMS VII.1252]. He died 4 Feb. 1639 [C22/14.295r], leaving issue two sons.
  - 2.1 **Sir Brice Blair of that Ilk, Kt.**, named as heir apparent of his father 1615 (see above) and also 10 Dec. 1618 in a charter implementing his marriage contract with **Mariota Dundas**, daughter of **Sir Walter Dundas of that Ilk, Kt.** [RMS VII.1997], knighted by 1634 [RMS IX.74] served heir to his father 25 April 1639 [C22/14.295r] and died shortly afterwards July 1639 (C22/18.230v) leaving issue:
    - 2.1.1 **John Blair of that Ilk:** in 1641 was a minor in the ward of his father's cousin William Cochrane (later Lord Cochrane o f Dundonald) [SP III.345]; served heir 1 May 1645 [C22/18.225v]; died unmarried without issue by 5 Aug 1646, when his uncle John was designed "Blair of that Ilk" (see below).
    - 2.2 **John Blair of that Ilk**, so designed 5 August 1646 in his ante-nuptial charter naming his spouse **Lady Jean Cunningham**, sister of **William Earl of Glencairn** [RMS IX.1701]; served heir 11 Sep. 1650 to his paternal grandfather John Blair of that Ilk who died 1609 [C22/21.305v]; died April 1661 [C22/27.235v, 264r] leaving issue an only son:
      - 2.2.1 **William Blair of that Ilk:** served heir of his father 5 February and 26 October 1664 [C22/27.235v, 264r], the retour narrating that he was a minor at his father's death, and consequent non-entry; had a charter confirming his succession to certain lands, to him and his heirs male 7 February 1665; married **Lady Margaret Hamilton**, fifth daughter of **William 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Hamilton**, by contract March 1666 [HMC Rep. Hamilton 59, C22/22.221]; had issue an only son:
        - 2.2.1.1 **William Blair of that Ilk**, last heir male of the senior stirps.
  3. **Robert Blair of Auldmure**(1601), later of **Lochwood**, named with his brothers 1601 [RMS VI.1142]; a witness 1615 [RMS VII.1315] *presumed by the succession of the designation to be father of:*
    - 3.1 **Sir Adam Blair of Lochwood, Kt.**, had a charter of the lands of Swinlies 1648 [RMS IX.1923]; had a disposition of the lands of Bogtoun from [*his presumed cousin*] John Blair of that Ilk 1650 which he deponed 1663 (by that date knighted and married to **Janet Anderson**) [RMS XI.529] and resigned other lands in favour of [*his presumed cousin*] John Blair of that Ilk 1668 [RMS XI.718].

4. **Alexander Blair** afterwards **Cochrane**: married **Elizabeth Cochrane** heiress of **William Cochrane of Cochrane** by marriage contract 24 July 1600, whereby he adopted the name and arms of Cochrane, confirmed by charter under the Great Seal 7 February 1601 [RMS VI.1142]. [*This is the charter which names all of the five younger sons of John Blair of that Ilk who died 1609, and narrates their order of birth*] [*Descendants of this stirps having adopted the name and arms of Cochrane need not be considered further in the search for the heirs of Blair of that Ilk*].
5. **Hugh Blair of Auldmure and Bogside** named with no designation 1601 [RMS VI.1142], but afterwards of Auldmure and Bogside, died January 1617, having married **Barbara Hamilton** who died October 1642 [C22/8.100r, C22/17.115v], leaving issue a known son:
  - 5.1 **Captain Brice Blair of Auldmure and Bogside** served heir to his father 22 August 1622, and to his mother 4 January 1643 [C22/8.100r, C22/17.115v]; married to **Agnes Scott**, one of three daughters and heirs portioner of **James Scott of Clonbeith**, so narrated 1647, 1648 [C22/19.57; RMS IX.1961].
6. **Mr. Gavin Blair of Manismure**, named as youngest son, with no designation, 1601 [RMS VI.1141] designed both "Mr." and of Manismure, brother german of Brice Blair of that Ilk in a charter in favour of himself and his spouse **Annabell Stewart**, 15 June 1615 [RMS VII.1256]

[Note: *there is reference to **Gavin Blair of Haly** (deceased by 1648) who had lands in Dalry, held of the Earl of Eglinton, which succeeded to his son, **Captain William Blair** in a charter of William Blair of that Ilk 1665 in a context where they are clearly kin of the Blairs of that Ilk [RMS XI.718]. It is not clear at this stage if this is the same Gavin Blair.*]

**Jean Blair**, daughter of John Blair of that Ilk who died 1609, is identified as spouse of **Alexander Cunningham, Commendator of Kilwinning** by contract 31 July 1582 [RMS v.526,1918].

**Grizel Blair**, daughter of John Blair of that Ilk who died 1609, is identified as spouse of **David Blair of Adamtoun**, by contract 16 December 1691. [RMS VI.749].

[Note: Another Gavin Blair is identifiable who is clearly (from the names of his brothers) not a son of John Blair of that Ilk died 1609, but is some other relation, is **Gavin Blair of Braxfield and Corslaw**, Writer to the Signet, who had a charter of lands of Braxfield, County Lanark, 3 August 1613 [RMS VII.905], part of which lands he sold 26 November 1631 [RMS VIII.1875] and disposed the rest to his brother german **Mr. James Blair**, Minister at Port Montgomery, 16 June and 10 December 1632 [RMS VIII.1992, 2107]. Another brother german of this Gavin is named as William Blair *floreat* 1620 [RMS VIII.11]. Mr. James Blair, Minister at Port Montgomery [= Portpatrick], purchased lands in the adjoining parish of Stanykirk in 1639 and in 1650 [RMS IX.901,2156]. These lands were close to Dunskey Castle, so this may be the link we are seeking with the Blairs of Dunskey.]

I look forward to discussing this with you.

Hugh Peskett

22 August 1992

[Address comments or questions regarding the above to Charlotte Blair Stewart, BSGR Genealogist, at [char@stewart.net](mailto:char@stewart.net). Pertinent discussion may also be published in *Blair Family Magazine*.]