

Blair of Ladymuir

DNA Testing Provides New Insight

by John A. Blair BSGR Mem. #0873

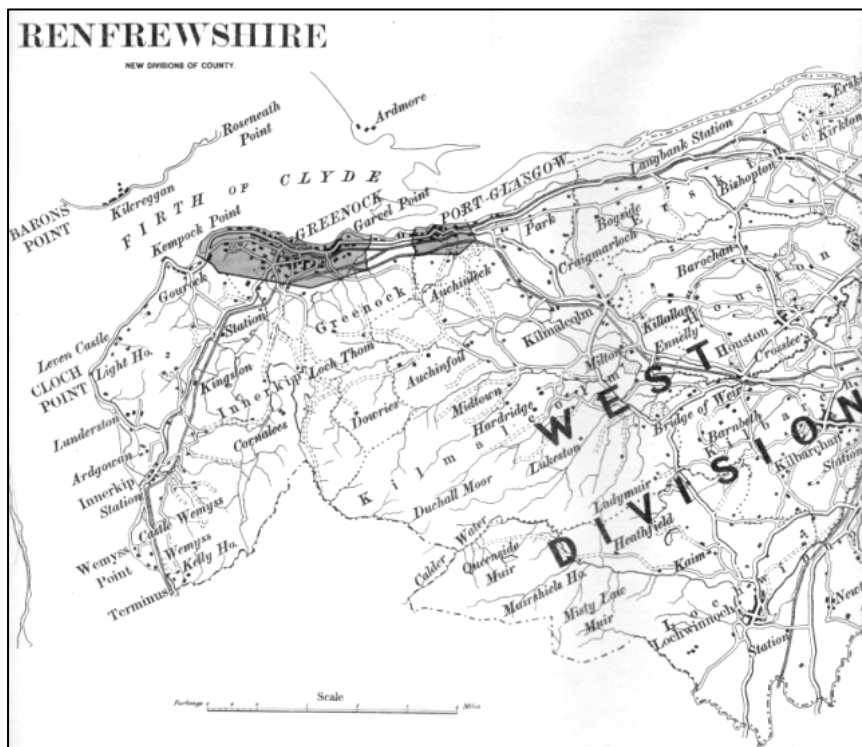
Ladymuir - Geography and History

The Lands of Ladymuir comprised an estate of rough farmlands approximately 10 kilometers north west of Castle Sempill and Sempill Loch in Renfrewshire west of Glasgow and about 10 kilometers south of the town of Kilmacolm. "Ladymuir" still exists in Renfrewshire and can be found on a detailed map of Scotland. It was these lands which were said to have come into possession of two brothers, James and William Blair of Dalry, Ayrshire, about 1620.

According to an article in the November 1930 issue of the Blair Family Magazine, *The Blairs of Ladymuir*, contributed by W. M. Blair, "The farm of Ladymuir belonged, in 1546, to Gabriel Semple, son of Lord Semple, who bought it from the Barony of Cathcart. Gabriel Semple's sister, Grizel, married John Blair of Blair, who died in 1609. Ten years later the farm belonged to James Blair of Ladymuir, who was evidently a great grandson of Lord Semple, and the grandson of John Blair of Blair."

While the timeline may very well be correct, the assumption that James Blair was the grandson of John Blair of Blair may be incorrect. There is reason to believe that sometime between 1546 and 1619 the Ladymuir estate belonged to the Spreull family. According to a manuscript, *The Ancient Spreulls*, by Robert James St. George Sproule, John Spreull purchased the lands of Ladymuir in Kilmacolm from his brother-in-law Gabriel Semple, who was married to John's sister, Janet. At his death in 1555 John passed all his property and lands to his nephew John, son of his brother Robert.

In addition to inheriting Ladymuir from his uncle, John also inherited the Spreull estate of Cowden from his father Robert. This estate in the parish of Neilston in Renfrewshire once belonged to the Stewarts, probably dating from the time of the middle of the twelfth



century. James Spreull (son of John Spreull) sold Cowden to Alexander Blair Cochrane in 1622. Alexander was the son of John Blair of Blair and Grizel Semple, who, on his marriage to Elizabeth, heiress of Cochrane assumed the name of that family. After selling Cowden, James Spreull emigrated to Ireland.

There is no mention of what became of Ladymuir, but given the fact the James Spreull sold Cowden in 1622 and moved to Ireland, and that Ladymuir came into the possession of James and William Blair of Dalry, Ayrshire, about 1620, it is not unreasonable to believe that James Spreull sold Ladymuir to James and William Blair.

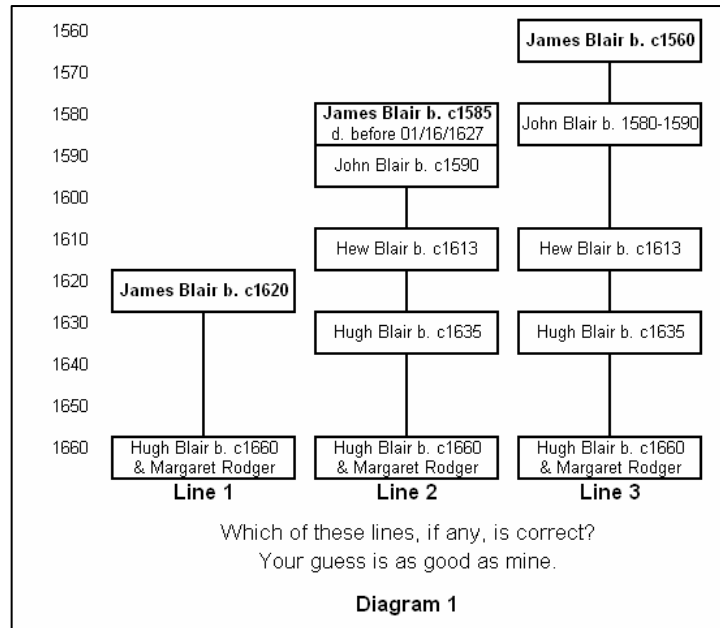
Conventional Research – The Mystery of Blair of Ladymuir

There are two major mysteries surrounding the Blairs of Ladymuir. One is the ancestry of James and William Blair (it is believed that they were grandsons of John and Grisel Blair, the 15th generation of the Blair of Blair). The other is the line of descent from James to Hugh Blair (b. c1660) who married Margaret Rodger.

Before we get into a discussion of a Ladymuir connection to the Blair of Blair, let's first look at the line of descent from James to Hugh Blair. We know that James became the Blair of Ladymuir about 1620. We also know that Hugh Blair, born about 1660 and married Margaret Rodger was in possession of Ladymuir at the end of the 1600s. What is not known is the line of descent from James to Hugh.

Diagram 1 shows three possible lines of descent that various pedigree charts put forward.

The first line showing Hugh Blair as the son of James has several problems. It is highly unlikely that James could be born in 1620 if he came into possession of Ladymuir about 1620. An even bigger problem is that at least one record indicates that James died prior to January 16, 1627.



The second line shows Hugh as the gr-gr-gr grandson of James. This line shows James b. about 1585 and his son John born about 1590, which is quite impossible. Either James would have to be born around 1570 or John and Hew would have to be born later than established.

The third line is actually the same as line 1 except it places James' birth as about 1560. This would mean James was between 30 and 40 when he had John and that about 60 when he took possession of Ladymuir.

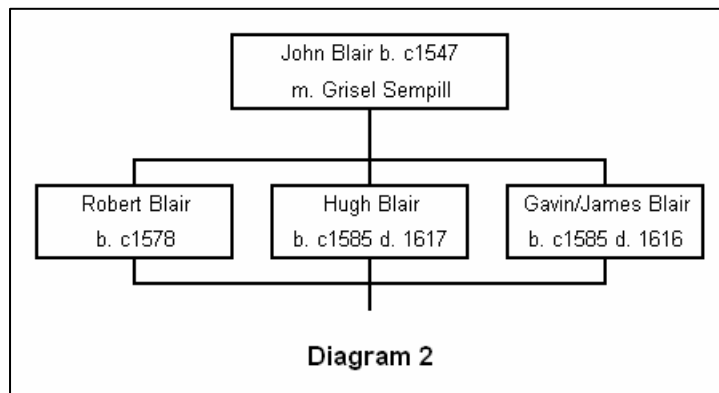
Are James and William Descendants of the Blair of Blair?

While it is commonly speculated that James and William Blair were the grandsons of John Blair (of Blair) and Grisel Sempill, no documented connection has ever been made. This speculation appears to be based on the belief that James and William acquired Ladymuir from Gabriel Semple, son of Lord Semple and brother of Grisel Sempill.

If James and William Blair were the grandsons of John Blair and Grisel Sempill, one of the three sons of John shown in Diagram 2 would most likely be James' father. Although John had three other sons (John, Alexander, and Bryce) it is unlikely that they were the father.

If the birth dates of Robert, Hugh, and Garvin/James are even somewhat accurate it is highly unlikely that James of Ladymuir would be born before 1595 (and this assumes Robert was his father and had James when he was 17). If his father were Hugh or Garvin/James he would have been born after 1600.

Conventional research still leaves the 2 questions unanswered. Does James Blair of Ladymuir descend from the Blair of Blair? What is the line of descent from James Blair to Hugh Blair? Current records do not provide the answers. Maybe in time new records will be uncovered which will answer these questions, but what if no new records are discovered?



DNA Testing

There is probably no way that DNA testing will help sort out the lineage from James Blair to Hugh Blair. To do this we would need to find known descendants from those Blairs believed to be part of the line, and since we are not even sure who is part of the line from James to Hugh it is unlikely we will know who their descendants are.

However, it may be possible to use DNA testing to determine if the Blair of Ladymuir line descends from the Blair of Blair. To do so we must accept the assumption that Hugh Blair (b. c1660) who married Margaret Rodger is a direct descendant of the original James Blair of Ladymuir. Given the fact Hugh had possession of Ladymuir this seems like a reasonable assumption.

We now have test results for three individuals who descend from Hugh Blair and Margaret Rodger through the James Blair/Janet Laird, John Blair/Elizabeth Crawford line.

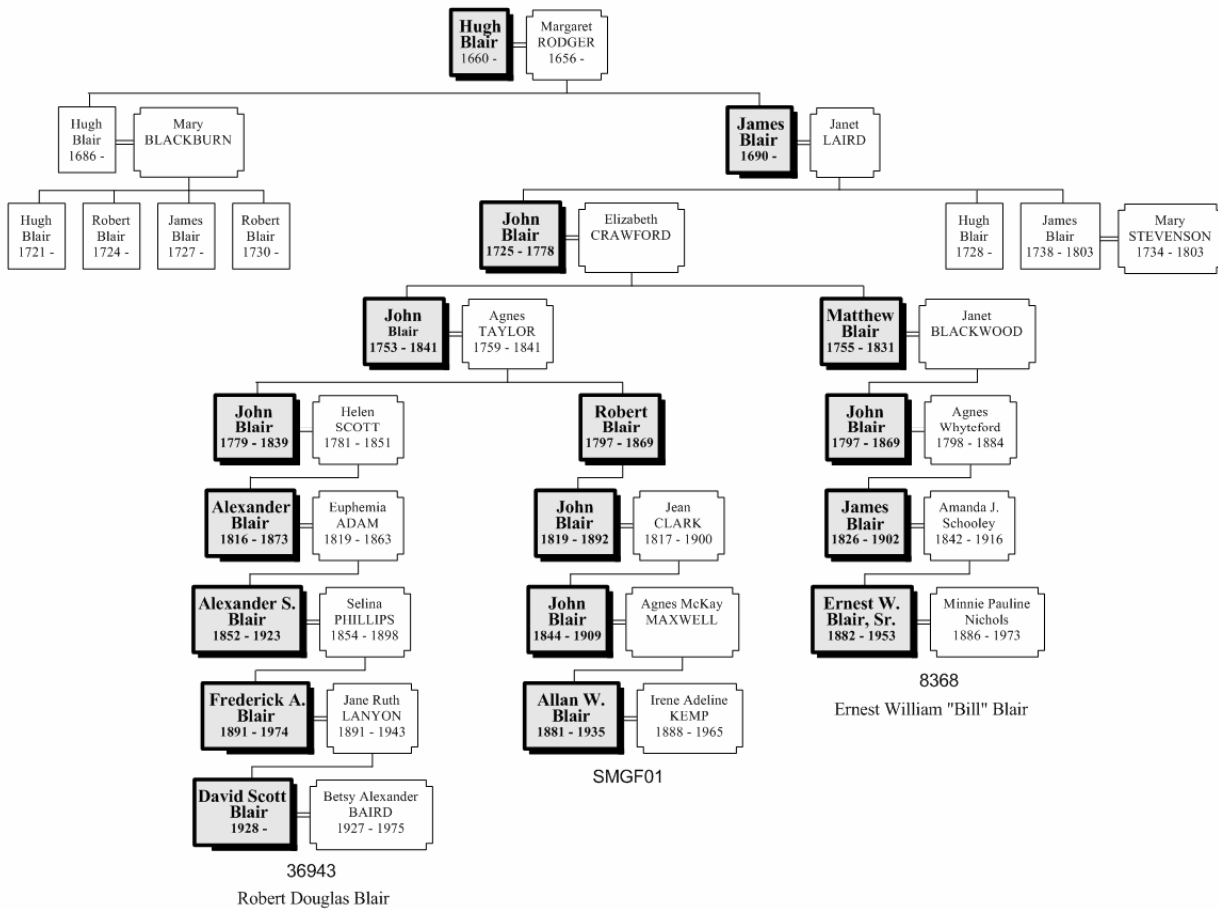
Participant #8368 (Ernest William "Bill" Blair) descends through Matthew Blair (son of John Blair/Elizabeth Crawford) and Janet Blackwood. Bill has tested on 25 markers.

Participant #36943 (Robert Douglas Blair) descends through John Blair (son of John Blair/Elizabeth Crawford) and Agnes Taylor. Robert has tested on 37 markers.

The third individual (SGMF01) is not part of the Blair DNA Project, but tested with the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation (SMGF). SGMF01 descends from John Blair/Agnes Taylor, just like Robert. However Robert comes down through son John while SGMF01 comes down through son Robert.

The chart below shows the lines tested as shaded.

Descendants of Hugh Blair



The test results for the three participants are shown below. The lab that SMGF01 tested with does not test all of the markers that FTDNA tests. Markers not tested are shown with a dark gray box. A review of these results shows two things quite clearly.

First, there is no doubt that all three participants are in fact descendants of John Blair and Elizabeth Crawford. All three participants match exactly on all the markers they tested in common. #8368 and #36943 are a 25/25 match. #8368 and SMGF01 match 17/17. #36943 and SMGF01 match 24/24.

Second, there is no doubt that John Blair (and Elizabeth Crawford) does not descend from the Blair of Blair. The best match #36943 has with anyone in Group 1 who tested on 37 markers is 22 for 37, indicating less than a 0.5% probability of sharing a common ancestor with 24 generations. At the 25 marker level the best match #8368 and #36943 have with anyone in Group 1 is 15 for 25, also indicating less a than 0.5% probability of sharing a common ancestor with 24 generations.

DNA test results so far provide compelling evidence that John Blair (who married Elizabeth Crawford) does not descend from the Blair of Blair.

The results also provide strong, but not compelling evidence, that Hugh Blair of Ladymuir does not descend from the Blair of Blair. Although unlikely, it is possible that John is not a descendant of Hugh. Further testing is required.

The best possible candidate for testing would be a Blair who descends from Hugh Blair and Mary Blackburn. Unfortunately I have no information on this line other than Hugh possibly had four sons shown on the previous page. It appears that one of these sons (Robert) died at an early age since there are two Roberts listed.

The next best candidate would be a descendant of Hugh Blair (1728) or James Blair who married Mary Stevenson, both who descend from James Blair and Janet Laird. Although little is known of Hugh, we do know that the James Blair/ Mary Stevenson line survived at least to the mid 1900s and possibly even today. A match from a descendant of this line would at least bring us back to James Blair, son of Hugh Blair of Ladymuir.

For more information on the Blair DNA Project visit <http://blairgenealogy.com/dna/> or contact me at dna@blairgenealogy.com.

Marker	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37		
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	9	9	9	9	8	8	2	8	3	8	9	8	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	4	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	A	C	C	5	0	7	7	D	D	4	3	
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					a	b			i		ii		a	b							a	b	c	d			A	H	a	b			a	b					
B of B	12	24	14	11	11	15	12	12	12	13	13	29	15	10	10	11	11	26	15	19	30	14	15	17	18	12	11	19	23	15	16	18	17	35	38	12	12		
8368	13	24	13	11	11	14	12	12	12	13	13	29	18	9	9	11	11	25	15	19	29	15	15	17	17														
36943	13	24	13	11	11	14	12	12	12	13	13	29	18	9	9	11	11	25	15	19	29	15	15	17	17	10	11	19	23	15	14	18	17	36	37	11	12		
SMGF01		24	13	11	11	14	12	12	12	13	13	29		9	9		11	25	15	19						10	11	19	23	15								11	12

B of B Blair of Blair test results