

Clan BLAIR

ARMS Argent, on a saltire nine mascles of the First
CREST A stag lodged Proper
MOTTO Amo probos (I love the virtuous)



The word 'blair', or 'blar', means 'open plain', and is found commonly throughout Celtic Scotland; for example, Blair Atholl and Blairgowrie. Nisbet records Blair of that Ilk, an ancient family in Ayrshire, receiving land as early as 1205 near Irvine. William de Blar was a witness to a charter of Alexander III to Dunfermline Abbey. Anderson asserts that the family was probably of Norman origin and certainly their martial prowess brought them considerable lands and influence. Sir Byrce Blair of Blair was executed by the English at Ayr in 1296. His nephew and heir, Roger de Blair, was a comrade-in-arms of Robert the Bruce and received royal favor after the victory of Bannockburn in 1314. The family continued to grow in prominence and made alliances by marriage with the powerful families of Kennedy, Montgomery and Cochrane. Pitcairn's *Criminal Trails of Scotland* notes that on 18 May 1545, John Blair and his son Patrick were required to find security for their good behavior after consorting with the enemies of the queen (Mary of guise) at Ancrum. Madeleine Blair of Blair married William Scot, second son of John Scot of Malleny, who assumed the surname of Blair, and continued to reside at Blair in Ayrshire. Colonel Frederick Blair of Blair was decorated for bravery during the First World War, and was an aide-de-camp to George V. The Blairs also flourished in Perthshire where the Blairs of Balthyock may descend from a younger son of the Ayrshire knights. Thomas Blair, the second of Balthyock, received a charter of the lands of Ardblair, Baldowie and Balgillo in Forfarshire in 1399. The direct line of Balthyock ended in an heiress in the eighteenth century, but the family of Blair-Oliphant still reside in Ardblair Castle near Blairgowrie.

Taken from *Scottish Clan and Family Encyclopedia*, by Collins. HarperCollins Publishers 1994.

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