

People in Logie Blair House



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Blair House circa 1995

The earliest records of the land and ownership of **Blair House** are dated 1591, and are fully in Latin. These Latin title deeds date from the building of the first house on the site, but the first deeds known of in the Scottish/English language are from 1721, and they record a Feu Charter by **James Spittal** (Feu Superior of **Blairlogie Castle** at that time) in favour of **John Bryce**, shoemaker in **Blairlogie**. There is evidence that many of the colony of shoemakers that lived and worked in **Blairlogie** at that time had arrived from the village of **Pathfoot** when it was cleared for the policies of **Aithrey House**; and **John Bryce** may well have been one of them.

In 1726, **John Bryce** issued a conveyance in favour of his second son **William Bryce**, and again, in 1731, he issued a further conveyance in favour of **William Bryce** and his wife to be **Janet Clausone** in satisfaction of the terms of a contract of marriage between the said **William Bryce** and the said **Janet Clausone**. **Janet Clausone** was of French origin, and her parents had lived in the **Paris** region before moving to **London**.

There is no detailed record of the period of occupancy by **William Bryce** and his wife **Janet**, but it is known that the elder son of the original **John Bryce** – also known as **John Bryce** – moved to **London**, where he became a cabinet and chair maker. It is this **John Bryce** who next appears in the history when referenced in the Deed of Transfer from the

Bryce Family (occupants from 1721 to 1791) to **William Fogo**, Schoolmaster at **Logie** in 1791.

There is some evidence that **Blair House** was used as a posting house for the change of horses by the stagecoaches that travelled along the old “King’s Highway” during this part of the 18th Century, and signs of renovation work can still be seen in the inscription “1765” cut into the stone lintel beam above the porch area at the back door.

It also appears that not all of the original subjects – of which there were 71 – set out in the original Feu recognition by **James Spittal** in 1721 formed part of the sale to **William Fogo** in 1791, because subsequently, in 1825, the then Feudal Superior, **Mrs. Elizabeth Spital** or **Dundas**, granted title to other parts of the original subjects to **Catherine Bryce**, the only sister and nearest lawful heir to **John Bryce** (presumably **John Bryce** the son). Parallel histories of this period indicate that this grant to **Catherine Bryce** would have included the cottages that now form **Hillside**.

However, **Catherine Bryce**, in the period of the 1820’s and 1830’s, further disposed property at the site to **Mrs. Ann Fogo** or **Wood**, **Mrs. Catherine Fogo** or **Duncan**, and **Mrs. Isabella Fogo**, being the lawful heirs to **William Fogo**, the schoolmaster. It was around this time, also, that a dispute arose between the Feudal Superior **Mrs. Elizabeth Spittal** and **Catherine Bryce**, who, by the 1830’s had become **Mrs. Catherine Bryce** or **Bird**. **Mrs. Spittal** sought to compel **Mrs. Bird** to remove a wall that she had built enclosing a loan or road alongside the **Burn of Blairlogie**, but she failed, and the line of the confirmed Western boundary of **Blair House** ground today corresponds to the line established by this settlement.

In 1835, the properties belonging to **John Marcellus Park** and **Marcellus Marcellus Park** of **Burgen, New Jersey, U.S.A.** (The cottages now known as **Hillside**), bequeathed to them by the will of **Mrs. Catherine Bryce** or **Bird**, were sold to **Robert Bennet**. The history of the **Bennet** family – **Robert**, his daughter **Isabella** and his later Trustees – occur in many of the properties at the centre of **Blairlogie** village where they acted as landlords to a large number of tenants.

There is strong evidence, however, that the **Bennet Family** resided for many years in the centre of Blairlogie, because the 1841 Census Records commence a series of listings of the **Bennets** that lasts for many years.

The 1841 Census Records list **Robert Bennet**, then a 42 year old farmer, with his children **Helen** (4), **Isabella** (3) and **Robert Jnr**, (1) in an un-named but centrally located house, with neighbours that indicate it to be **Blair House** – although that name was applied to it much later in its life. They appear again in the 1851 Census Records, but this time, **Robert Bennet** (52) is described as a “retired farmer”, and his family has expanded to include his wife **Margaret Bennet** (28), his daughters **Helen** (14) and **Isabella** (13) and his sons **Robert Jnr**. (11) with new arrivals **James** (9) and **Adam** (2). But by the 1861 Census, **Robert Bennet** is designated as a “landed proprietor” (now 61). **Margaret Bennet**, his wife, is now 38, and daughter **Isabella** (23) is still registered as at home in **Blair House**, but daughter **Helen** and son **Robert Jnr**. have flown the nest. New arrivals at the house are **John Bennet** (10 months) and **Margaret Bennet**, a 7 year old scholar.

By 1871, **Robert** (now 72) and described as a widower, is recorded in the house with his unmarried daughters **Isabella** and **Margaret**, and his ten year old son **John**. They had also now gained the support of a full time domestic servant. In 1871, this was an 18 year

old called **Higgins Jameson**, who had replaced the 15 year old **Janet Paterson**, who had been listed in this role in 1861. These entries are the last to be found of the **Bennet Family** in **Blair House** in the Census Records, but daughter **Isabella** (now 63) and her daughter **Margaret** (47) and both still unmarried, are next recorded as living in **Croft House** in the 1901 Census.

However, this Census also tells us that the tenants in **Blair House** in 1901 were **Jean Baird**, an 83 year old widow, with her 38 year old daughter **Mary Baird**.

It was shortly after this that **Andrew Philip**, with his wife **Isabella**, first appeared at **Blair House** as tenants to the Trustees of the late **Robert Bennet**, and, in 1920, these Trustees conveyed the property known as **Blair House** to **Andrew Philip**, Coal and Potato Merchant in **Blairlogie**.

The records of over 100 years of occupancy by the **Philip (or Philp)** family and of **Blair House** during that time have been faithfully recorded by **David Philp**, and the Archive Team has drawn extensively on this record in compiling this narrative history of **Blair House**.

Andrew Philip had lived with his parents, **David** and **Annie** at **Annfield Farm, Blairfordel, Fife** until his father died in 1863. **Andrew** first moved to **Lenzie**, but came to **Blair House** in the early 1900's – although only renting the property from the Trustees of the late **Robert Bennet**. **Andrew Philip** married three times; to **Elizabeth**, who died in 1864; to **Isabella**, who died in 1912; and to another **Elizabeth**, who outlived him. With these three wives, he had seven sons, although only one, **David** by his last wife **Elizabeth**, was born at **Blair House**. It was during this period that the spelling of the family name became definitively settled at **Philp**.

With the exception of the **Blairlogie** born **David**, the **Philp** sons spread themselves around the World. First born **David** lived from 1866 to 1912, and is buried in **Portland, Oregon**; **Thomas Philp** lived from 1868 until 1891 and is buried in **Mauritius**; third born **George** lived only for five years and is buried in **Dunfermline**; **Robert Philp** was born in 1878 and died at sea off **Colombo**; **James Philp** lived from 1880 until 1938, and he also drowned and is buried in **Canada**; **George Philp** was born in 1883 and lived until 1957 and is buried in **Johannesburg, South Africa**.

Back at **Blair House**, **Andrew Philp** first engaged the services of **Elizabeth Valentine** as housekeeper and then married her in 1914. By virtue of **Andrew Philp's** will dated 1923, his estate passed to **Mrs. Elizabeth Valentine** or **Philp** when he died in 1927. In the years immediately after this death, **Elizabeth** took in other families to live in part of the house in order to share the costs and ease the financial burden of bringing up a family without a husband/breadwinner, and it is recorded that one such family was named **Russell**. It appears that a number of families shared the house during this period – one of which is reported to have been the subject of a court order to get them to leave.

Elizabeth lived at **Blair House** until her death in 1954, when she had bequeathed her entire estate to her son **David Thomas Roxburgh Fraser Valentine Philp**, and this disposition was registered in 1955. Interestingly, this disposition is the first legal document in which the property is formally entitled "**Blair House**".

Shortly after taking possession, in the late 1950's, **David Philp** with the support of his wife **Mary Stewart**, began a massive renovation project on the building – a great deal of which

he did with his own hands. He stripped back the house to its four, two feet thick stone walls, replaced the roof entirely with what is known as a “Scotch Roof”, rebuilt the front door area with traditional bricks and mortar and put on an extension to the East side of the house. There is a family memory of sleeping with direct views of the stars during this re-roofing exercise. The open fire heating and cooking was supplemented by a Rayburn coal fired cooker/heater that functioned until the early 1990’s. The old paraffin lamps that still lit parts of the house were replaced with full electric wiring.

In the grounds of the house stood the old Boiler Room and the toilets. The Boiler Room was where old **Andrew Philp** boiled the turnips and potatoes to feed his pigs, and the rear part of this building was used as the storage area for the coal business. The coal still came from the **Blairfordel Pit** in **Fife**, situated on the **Blairfordel Estate**, latterly belonging to the late **Sir Nicholas Fairburn**. The outside toilets were only replaced by **David Philp’s** renovation programme in the late 1950’s.

David and **Mary Philp** had three children – **David, Maureen** and **Alan** – all of whom grew up in **Blair House**, but, in 2001, both parents died, and the long associated history of the **Philp Family** and **Blair House** ended. The house was put up for sale, and it was bought by **Keith** and **Roseanne Neil** who are the owners and occupiers today.



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