

**A Brief History of the BRUCE Family**  
**Variants: Brus, Bruas**

The Bruces come from Normandy and Adam de Brus is said to have arrived in England with William the Conqueror in 1066. William rewarded him for his services with the grant of much land in Yorkshire, in North-East England, where he became Lord of Skelton and of Cleveland.

His son Robert was a great English Baron, holding no less than ninety four lordships in Yorkshire. In 1124 or thereabouts he received a grant of Annandale in Scotland from David, Earl of Huntingdon, brother of the Scottish King.

Robert had two sons; Adam the elder who stayed in Yorkshire and became head of the English Bruces, and Robert the younger who inherited Annandale, that strategic valley that forms one of the gateways to Scotland from the South. Young Robert fought on the Scottish side at the Battle of the Standard in 1138 and was captured by his father!

Robert's grandson Robert, 4th Bruce Lord of Annandale, married David, Earl of Huntingdon's daughter Isabel and, because of this link, their son, another Robert, was a Competitor for the Scottish Throne when it became vacant on the death of Alexander III's grand-daughter The Maid of Norway.

The task of adjudication was given to King Edward I of England who (probably correctly) found in favour of one of the other competitors--Balliol.

But it was Robert Bruce the Competitor's grandson--yet another Robert- who was to win immortal fame as Robert the Bruce, King of Scots. Born in 1274 he inherited the Earldom of Carrick from his mother. He succeeded in making good his claim to the throne and in 1306 he was crowned at Scone. The story of his struggles against his rivals and the English who backed them is too long to be told here. The climax of his success came with the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 when the

Scottish Army defeated a much larger English one. His fame remains unrivalled in Scotland's history and still resounds in song and story to this day.

He was succeeded by his only son, King David, who had, however, no heir, and the crown passed through the marriage of King Robert's daughter Marjory to Walter Stewart, to David's nephew who became King Robert II and the first of the famous Stewart dynasty.

The Chief of the family of Bruce today is the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine. He descends from one Thomas Bruce who received the lands of Clackmannan from King David in 1334 when the king addressed him as 'cousin'. The exact relationship is not known. Thomas Bruce's line was to produce a remarkable number of distinguished Scottish families.

The line of Bruce of Clackmannan continued in direct descent from father to son until it died with a daughter, Mrs. Bruce of Clackmannan in 1791 when the representation of the family passed to the Earl of Elgin. With the representation came Bruce's sword, a mighty two handed "Claymore" which Mrs. Bruce had employed to 'knight' the poet Robert Burns and which Lord Elgin still wields today on ceremonial occasions!

Two scions of this family were both raised to the Peerage as Earls in the 17th century, Thomas Bruce was created Earl of Elgin in 1633 and his cousin Edward, Earl of Kincardine in 1647. Lord Elgin's son, the 2nd Earl, was further granted an English title as Earl of Ailesbury by Charles II to whom he was a Privy Councillor and member of the Court.

The titles merged with Charles Bruce, 9th Earl of Kincardine who also became 5th Earl of Elgin; the Ailesbury title, due to the terms of its grant became extinct, although it was later resurrected by the Brudenell family to whom the title of Baron Bruce of Tottenham passed by special remainder on the death of the 4th Earl of Elgin without a direct male heir. The family name of today's Marquess of Ailesbury is Brudenell-Bruce and he quarters Bruce in his Coat-of-arms.

The 7th Earl of Elgin and 11th Earl of Kincardine was an Army General who during a tour of duty as Ambassador-Extraordinary to Turkey bought the magnificent classical Grecian antiquities known as "The Elgin Marbles". Nearly all of these are now in the British Museum in London where they form the bone of relatively amicable contention between the Greek and the British Governments as to their rightful home.

James, 8th Earl of Elgin and 12th Earl of Kincardine, was Governor General of Canada and later Viceroy of India, two of the greatest offices the British Empire could offer; he was made a Knight of the Thistle, Scotland's greatest honour, and was given a UK peerage in 1849 as Baron Elgin. (Until recently, only a limited number of Scottish Peers were allowed seats in the House of Lords, this restriction did not apply to the holders of English or United Kingdom Peerages.

His son the 9th and 13th Earl was made a Knight of the Garter, the only Order to outrank the Thistle, and was also Viceroy of India and Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The 10th Earl after a lifetime of public service was made a Knight of the Thistle, as has been the 11th and present Earl of Elgin.

Like his father and grandfather the present chief has also been promoted to be an Officer of the Queen's Body Guard for Scotland, the Royal Company of Archers and has represented the Queen as Her Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. A former officer of The Scots Guards he was wounded in Normandy during the invasion of 1944. He is Honorary Colonel of the Elgin Regiment in Canada where his forebear's title is perpetuated. He lives at the family home of Broomhall near Dunfermline in the country inhabited by the Bruces for some six hundred and fifty years.

Lord Balfour of Burleigh is also a Bruce; his family having inherited the title in the female line. The title was originally granted to Sir Michael Balfour in 1607 for his

services as an Ambassador for King James VI. The 4th Lord Balfour's daughter married Alexander Bruce of Kennet, an army officer in the time of Queen Anne. Descended from another branch of the Bruces of Clackmannan, his great grandson claimed the Balfour title in respect of this marriage. An officer in Wellington's army who served both in the Peninsula and at Waterloo, he died before his claim could be made good but his son Alexander Bruce was recognized as Lord Balfour of Burleigh in 1869. A most distinguished politician and public servant, he too received that most distinguished accolade and became a Knight of the Thistle.

Two further sprigs off the Clackmannan branch have been made Baronets, the families of Bruce of Stenhouse and Bruce of Downhill.

And in 1947 Stanley Bruce, the former Prime Minister of Australia from 1923-29 and as High Commissioner, Representative of Australia to the British Government in London throughout the Second World War, was raised to the Peerage as Viscount Bruce of Melbourne.

The Bruces are really a family rather than a clan. They have never operated as the latter, with the chief calling great ranks of clansmen out to war behind him. But right down to the present day they have provided Scotland with distinguished service of the highest degree and, as the motto carried on the buckled strap of the Bruces' badge reminds us, *Fuimus*--"We have been"--they can boast in the person of Robert the Bruce himself the very embodiment of Scotland's pride, bravery and its greatest glory.

**Chief:**

The Rt. Hon The Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, KT.

**Crest/Badge:**

A lion statant within a buckled strap thereon the Motto "*FUIMUS*," which means, "We Have Been." ("Statant" means the lion is standing still on all fours looking straight ahead.)

**Plant Badge:**

Rosemary

**Tartan:**

The Bruce tartan is first on record in the work published by the Sobieski Stuart brothers in 1842 and is as follows:

White/Yellow	Red	Green	Red	Green	Red
2	16	4	4	12	2

A Bruce of Kinnsaird tartan is recorded for the family of the famous explorer.

**Septs:**

Although one source lists a few names as Bruce Septs, as explained above, the family never really operated as a clan and this list really does not apply.

**Bibliography:**

See articles in Balfour-Paul's Scots Peerage and Burke's Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage. For a wide list of articles and books on the family consult "Scottish Family Histories" by Joan P.S. Ferguson and Scottish Family History by Margaret Stuart.

**USA Society:**

Bruce International, USA Branch  
880 Western Drive  
Bloomington, Indiana 47401