

Clan BALFOUR



ARMS	Argent, on a chevron Sable, an otter's head erased of the field
CREST	A dexter arm in armor erect the hand holding a baton in bend Gules tipped Argent
MOTTO	Fordward (Forward)
SUPPORTERS	Two otters rampant Proper

The lands of Balfour, or Bal-orr, lie in the parish of Markinch in Fife. The Orr is a tributary of the River Leven. According to tradition, the lands were given to Siward, a Northumbrian, during the reign of Duncan I. The earliest dependable record of the name is a charter of William the Lion in favor of Michael de Balfour around 1196. Sir Duncan de Balfour supported the cause of Sir William Wallace and was killed at the Battle of Blackironside in 1298, although the engagement was a great victory for the Scots. Sir John Balfour died in 1675 and his estates passed to his only daughter, Margaret, wife of Sir Robert de Bethune. The Bethunes of Balfour were to flourish and figure prominently in Scottish history through such personalities as Cardinal Bethune and Mary Beaton, celebrated as one of the 'four Maries', the ladies-in-waiting of Mary, Queen of Scots. The Balfours continued through the descendants of Adam, the brother of Sir John Balfour, who married into the powerful Madcuff Earls of Fife. Adam died of wounds sustained at the Battle of Durham in 1246 and his son was brought up in the household of the earl. He prospered greatly by his family connections and from him descends the Balforus of Denmylne, Forret, Torry and Kinloch. James Galforu of Denmylne was killed at the siege of Roxburgh in 1460 and his son John died, along with the greater part of the Scottish nobility, at the Battle of Flodden in 1513. Sir Michael Balfour was Comptroller of the Household to Charles I and fought for the king's cause during the civil war. Sir James Balfour, son of Sir Michael Balfour of Denmylne, was created Lord Lyon, King of Arms, in June 1630. He was a distinguished heraldic scholar and antiquary who wrote a number of important treatises on heraldry. He was also a chronicler of the Scottish monarchy, and his *Annals and Short Passages of State* was published in book form almost two centuries later, in 1824. Sir Andrew Balfour, Baronet, also of the house of Denmylne, was a distinguished botanist and founder of the Botanic Garden of Edinburgh (which now flourishes as the Royal Scottish Botanical Garden). He was a noted physician and the first president of the Royal College of Physicians in Scotland. He died in 1694. Sir James Balfour of Forret was knighted in 1674 and elevated to the Supreme Court in Edinburgh taking the judicial title, 'Lord Forrest'. He was subsequently appointed judge of the High Court of Justiciary. Another branch of the family, the Balfours of Burleigh, were raised to the peerage with the title of 'Lord Balfour of Burleigh', in 1606. The fifth Lord Balfour of Burleigh brought the family's fortunes to low ebb at the start of the eighteenth century. He formed a strong romantic attachment to a girl considered to be of 'unsuitable' family, and his father sent him abroad, hoping that time and distance would cool his ardor. The infatuated Master of Burleigh swore his undying love to the girl and promised that if she married anyone else in his absence he would kill him. Time passed and the girl put aside Balfour's threat and married Henry Stenhouse, a local schoolmaster. On his eventual return the Master of Burleigh made immediate inquiry after his love, and on learning the truth, sought out the schoolmaster and shot him in the shoulder. Stenhouse died of his wounds some days later. Balfour was tried before the High Court in August 1709 and despite a most ingenious defense he was sentenced to death. He escaped from prison by changing clothes with his sister, and he went into hiding. He succeeded to the title on the death of his father in 1716. He joined the cause of the 'Old Pretender' in the rebellion of 1715, for which he was declared a traitor. His title and estates were forfeited by

an Act of Attainder in November 1715. He died unmarried in 1757. The attainder was reversed in 1869 in favor of Mary, the heir of Lord Balfour's sister, who had bravely taken his place in the condemned cell. Alexander, sixth Lord Balfour of Burleigh, was a Knight of the Thistle and Secretary of State for Scotland from 1895 to 1903. Arthur Balfours of Balbirnie, was Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905, and was created Earl of Balfour in May 1922. In 1843, William Balfour of Trenabie in Orkney proved his descent from the principal family, and received a grant of supporters from the Lord Lyon, King of Arms, as representor and head of the house. The arms were rematriculated in 1936.

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

This Clan information sheet has been prepared by
The Scottish Society of Louisville
PO Box 32248
Louisville, KY 40232-2248

www.scotsoflou.com

