

Clan BISSET

ARMS	Azure, a bend Argent
CREST	The trunk of an oak tree sprouting afresh Proper
MOTTO	Abscisa virescit (That torn down re-grows)



A name said to be of Norman origin and brought to Scotland when William the Lion returned from captivity in England in 1174, accompanied by young noblemen seeking fortune in Scotland; among these were the Bisseys. They appear, along with other Norman families, to have been successful in establishing themselves, and they gained land in Morayshire. The power of the family spread, and persons bearing the name were witnesses to several charters in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Thomas de Bissat witnessed a charter of Alexander III to Paisley Abbey. However, the rising fortunes of the family were eclipsed by an act of personal vengeance; in 1242 at a tournament held in Haddington, Walter Bysset, Lord of Aboyne, was defeated by the youthful Earl of Atholl. Bysset, in a fit of anger, is alleged to have murdered the earl while he slept and set fire to his house to conceal the crime. Walter and his nephew John fled to Ireland and later to England. The feud apparently followed the fugitives, as a pardon was later granted to the son of the Earl of Atholl for slaying some Byssets in Ireland. The principal line is now held to be that of Lessendrum, who are among the oldest families in Aberdeenshire. The name still flourishes there and in Moray. There have been several prominent lawyers of the name, including the exotically named Habakkuk Bisset, writer to the Signet during the reign of James IV, and Peter Bisset, Professor of Canon Law at the University of Bologna in Italy.

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