

Bell

Bell was accepted by CDSNA as a sept of Clan Douglas in 1984 based on the research and historical evidence provided by Col. William H. Bell. After the creation of Clan Bell Society in the 1990s, Bell was removed from the list of Douglas septs recognized by CDSNA at the insistence of Col. William H. Bell. Based on the historical evidence, Bell was returned to the CDSNA list of Douglas septs and allied families in July 2012.

Clan Bell is an armigerous (arms-bearing) Scottish clan without a standing chief and is not recognized by *The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs*. After the death in 1628 of William Bell, called *Redcloak* and *Chief of the Clan*, the chiefship of Bell became dormant. In 2012, Mr. Benjamin Bell is the *Chief Apparent* of the Clan.

In *The Scottish Nation* [3,683], Anderson writes,

Bell, a surname of considerable antiquity both in Scotland and England, supposed to be derived from the French word Belle, Fair or Beautiful. A numerous clan of Bells settled from an early period in Annandale, believed to have come there among the other Norman followers of Robert de Bros, to whom a charter of Annandale was granted by David I.

In the Ragman Roll, "Rotuli Scotiss, and other ancient national records, are frequent notices of persons of the name of Bell, not merely as landed proprietors, but also as holding important benefices in the church.

The principal families of the name of Bell were located in Annandale from at least the beginning of the last century; for, above the outer door of the Tower of Blacket-house are the initials W. B., with the date 1404—and in 1426 there appears in the "Regis Diplomata" (Lib. ii. c 77 and 84), a charter of the estate of Kirkconnell, in the parish of Kirkpatrick Fleming, and separated from Blacket-house, parish of Middlebie, by the river Kirtle, granted by Archibald Earl of Douglas, in favour of William Bell. On the lands of Kirkconnell was a stronghold called the "Bellis Tour" or "Bell Castle," mentioned in an Act of Parliament of date 1481, providing for the safety of the borders—and where in 1483 Earl James of Douglas, accompanied by the banished duke of Albany, is said by Pennant to have passed the night before their defeat near Lochmaben the following day. The arms of Belt of Kirkconnell were "azure three bells, Or," which was also the crest of Bell of Provost-haugh, with the addition of a fesse of the same metal between the bells.

There is an interesting connection between the Douglas sept name Blacket and that of Bell. *Scotland - Crossing the Borders in Quest of the Bell Clan* states,

Today, Blacket House is recognized as the Bell family seat because it was the home of the clan's last recognized chief, William (Redcloak) Bell. Near the village of Eaglesfield, the tower is all that remains of the original L-shaped Blacket House.

In an article describing the Bells and the relationship of *William Bell and Flora McCorquodal*,

".....This old West Marche Clan, one of the eight great riding families of the Scottish Border since the early 1100s, were retainers of the Great House of Douglas and also allied with the

best border families through blood and friendship. Their land holdings were extensive, and to survive, they engaged in the "rieving" of the period and participated in many battles against the English."

James and Frances Bell, in *Sir Robert Bell and his early Virginia Colony descendants...*(page 102) claim

Charles Davidson Bell's Memorial of the Clan of the Bells tells of the relationship of the Bells and the Douglas on Scotland's border in those early days. The Bells were never a Sept but retainers of and allied with the Great House of Douglas by blood as well as friendship. They generally accompanied any of the Douglas in their expeditions and invasions into England and the Bells of Kirkconnel, being valiant men, were always sent upon the most hazardous enterprises.

When William, 8th Earl of Douglas, set out for London in 1451 to foment a rebellion against the Scottish Crown, Thomas Bell of Kirkconnel went with him and his name was included in the Letter of Safe Passage. After the murder of William, his brother James, 9th Earl of Douglas, attempted to avenge his death by armed opposition to King James II. Betrayed by almost all his allies, but not the Bells, the 9th Earl lost at Arkinholme on 1 May 1455. The Earl escaped to France, but his possessions went to the victors and the Bell Family, it is said, forfeited Kirkconnel to the Maxwells. The Bells of Blackethouse did not lose their lands. After the fall from power of the Black Douglasses, records how that the Bells of Dumfriesshire were ever more turbulent. In 1484, the forfeited 9th Earl of Douglas returned to Scotland with a small Army of 500 men. He rested at Bell's Castle on the eve of the Battle of Kirtle.

In a letter to the editor of *Dubh Ghlas* [X, 4&5] in 1985, Col. William H. Bell wrote...

"As the Bells have been approved as a Sept of Clan Douglas and I have been appointed Sept Commissioner and Co-Regent for Southern California, respectfully request that your mast for the Septs [tent banners] be redone so as to list us."

May I provide you some data concerning the Bells. As a 'new' Sept of the Douglas, there might come a time when you would like to print a little 'color' about us. I have always felt that the Bells of the Border had no business being classed with the MacMillan-Bells, so it was a great personal satisfaction when Arthur Douglas recommended that Clan Douglas take us for a Sept, and Gilbert Douglas was so very kind to patiently answer my questions and give me good advice.

Here are some selected data that might make good reading and also educate the total membership as to who are the Bells. The name Bell, in that spelling, can be traced back in the Border area to 1187... The bells of the Scottish West march were retainers of the Great House of Douglas, as were many Border names of the time. It is written in the *Rammerscales Memorial* that the 'first charter that appears from records and vouchers relating to the Bells is a charter granted by Archibald, Earl of Douglas, to William Bell, of the lands of Kirkconnel, which is ratified by a charter under the great Seal of in the reign of King James the First, anno mcccxxiv."

“It is a fact uncontroverted, the Bells of Kirkconnel were a very brave and warlike race of men, and upon all occasions they stuck firm to the House of Douglas, with whom they were allied in blood as well as their vassals...”

It is wonderful to have Bell once again listed on our septs and allied families list. Bell members can learn more about the Bell surname and clan from the *Clan Bell International* website.

Sources:

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Clan Bell International website. <http://www.clanbell.org/>

Scotland - Crossing the Borders in Quest of the Bell

Clan. <http://ezinearticles.com/?Scotland---Crossing-the-Borders-in-Quest-of-the-Bell-Clan&id=4473744>

William Bell and Flora McCorquodale.

<http://www.angelfire.com/space/kellysworld/genealogy/people/BellMcCorquodale.html>

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