

Chapter 83

Dunrobin Castle, Lord William Moray, and Some of My Scottish Ancestors¹

[Originally written on 26 August 2021]

Introduction

I am using the Geni.com website to expand my knowledge of my family tree. A key feature of this website is its “World Family Tree”. Unlike Ancestry.com, where everyone has their own complete (or incomplete) family tree, Geni.com is having its users collaboratively build just a single family tree. On Ancestry.com, there can be one thousand or more duplicate entries for the same person – and these entries often have conflicting information. On Geni.com, there should only be one entry on the entire website for any given person. Individual users on Geni.com can add their ancestral lines until they connect with people already in the World Family Tree. And then their lines immediately become part of this enormous family tree. As of late August 2021, there are almost 160 million individuals in the World Family Tree – see:

<https://www.geni.com/worldfamilytree>

A number of my ancestral lines in the World Family Tree on Geni.com go back twenty or thirty generations into the past.

In the past year, I have used Geni.com to learn about my ancestors from England, Wales, and Scotland who lived during the Middle Ages. I was amazed to see that several of them were nobility who owned large castles – for example, see:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/70-William-de-Tyson-AlnwickCastle.pdf>

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/75-LeedsCastle.pdf>

In this research, I first identified one of my ancestors in the World Family Tree on Geni.com, and subsequently learned that he (yes, always a he) owned a castle. I wondered if I could approach this in the opposite direction – that is, first find a castle and then see if I had an ancestor who owned it. And that, my dear reader, is how this chapter begins. Read on to see the circuitous course I took in this chapter, and how the story eventually ends.

It Started with a Google Search

I did a Google search on “english castles” (without the quotes). One of the top hits was from the hotels.com website:

¹ Including Robert the Bruce, King of Scots, and other Scottish kings.



english castles



All Images Maps Videos Shopping More

Tools

About 78,000,000 results (0.93 seconds)



English castles

Windsor Castle in Berkshire, England. Dunrobin Castle in Sutherland, Scotland. Caernarfon Castle in Gwynedd, Wales. Conwy Castle in Conwy, Wales. Edinburgh Castle in Edinburgh, Scotland.

<https://www.hotels.com> > most-beautiful-castles-uk

[12 Most Beautiful Castles in the UK United Kingdom - Hotels ...](https://www.hotels.com/go/uk/most-beautiful-castles-uk)

This hit was for a site entitled “12 Most Beautiful Castles in the United Kingdom”:

<https://www.hotels.com/go/uk/most-beautiful-castles-uk>

When I went to this site, I learned that castle #1 was Windsor Castle, while castle #2 was Dunrobin Castle in Sutherland, Scotland. I hadn't previously heard of Dunrobin Castle, and I wondered if I had any Scottish ancestors who lived there – and even owned the place. [Remember, I'm doing this one the opposite way.]

Here is the entry for Dunrobin Castle from the hotels.com website:

2 Dunrobin Castle in Sutherland, Scotland

Found in the magical Highland area



Dunrobin Castle dates back to the 1300s and is home to the Earl of Sutherland and the Clan Sutherland. Overlooking Dornoch Firth, views from the castle are remarkable as sunlight glimmers off the waters of the estuary. The architecture of the castle and its gardens are highly influenced by the French; the gardens are immaculately manicured and draws many similarities to the Gardens of Versailles with its quaint fountains circled by hedges. The castle is adorned with turret roofs, reminding one of the typical castles illustrating your favorite fairytales. A wander around the gardens is particularly picturesque, with the glittering firth in view and the castle positioned at higher ground. There are even trained falcons and owls - it is Scotland after all.

Here is another photo of Dunrobin Castle:



Obviously, this isn't a medieval castle. I looked at the Wikipedia entry for Dunrobin Castle (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunrobin_Castle):

Dunrobin Castle is a stately home in Sutherland, in the Highland area of Scotland, and the family seat of the Earl of Sutherland and the Clan Sutherland. It is located 1 mile north of Golspie, overlooking the Dornoch Firth.

Dunrobin's origins lie in the Middle Ages, but most of the present building and the gardens were added by Sir Charles Barry between 1835 and 1850. Some of the original building is visible in the interior courtyard, despite a number of expansions and alterations that made it the largest house in the north of Scotland.

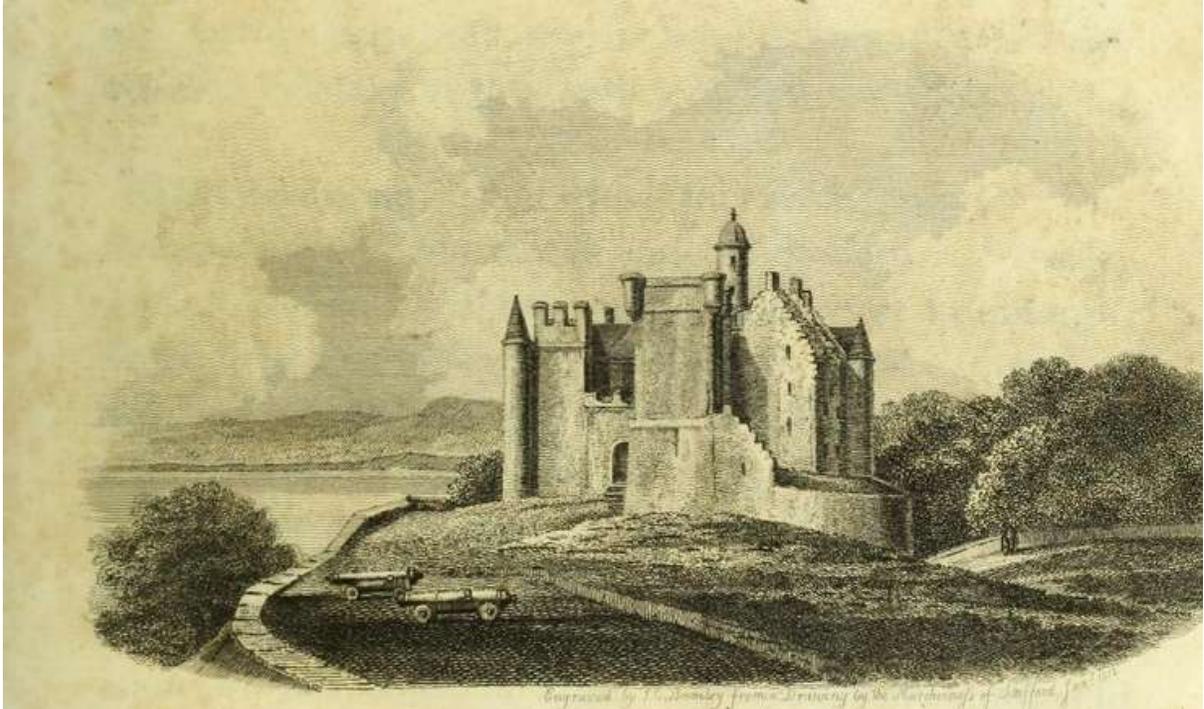
The Wikipedia article continues:

The lands of Sutherland were acquired before 1211, by Hugh, Lord of Duffus, grandson of the Flemish nobleman Freskin. The Earldom of Sutherland was created around 1235 for Hugh's son, William, surmised to have descended from the House of Moray by the female line. The castle may have been built on the site of an early medieval fort, but the oldest surviving portion, with an iron yett², is first mentioned in 1401. The earliest castle was a square keep with walls over 6 feet thick.

Here is a drawing of what the castle looked like in earlier times:

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yett>

A yett (from the Old English and Scots language word for "gate") is a gate or grille of latticed wrought iron bars used for defensive purposes in castles and tower houses. Unlike a portcullis, which is raised and lowered vertically using mechanical means, yetts are hinged in the manner of a traditional gate or door, and secured by bolts attached to the yett, or by long bars drawn out from the wall or gateway. ... Yetts are predominantly found in Scotland - where most towers, particularly the later ones, were equipped with them rather than portcullises.



I next Googled “geni.com dunrobin castle” (without the quotes), to see if anyone in the World Family Tree on geni.com was associated with Dunrobin Castle:

Google × 🔍

[🔍 All](#) [🖼 Images](#) [📍 Maps](#) [📰 News](#) [🛒 Shopping](#) [⋮ More](#) [Tools](#)

About 5,750 results (0.54 seconds)

[https://www.geni.com > people > Lord-William-Moray](https://www.geni.com/people/Lord-William-Moray)

Lord William Moray (c.1210 - 1248) - Genealogy - Geni

Apr 6, 2021 — **Dunrobin Castle**, Golspie, Sutherland, Scotland. Place of Burial: St Gilberts Cath, Dornoch. Immediate Family:..

Immediate Family: Son of [Hugh \(Freskin\) de...](#) **Death:** 1248 (33-42); Dunrobin Castle, Gol...

One of the top hits for this search was Lord William Moray (1210-1248), who was mentioned in the Wikipedia article about the castle (on the previous page). Wouldn't it be cool if William was one of my ancestors!?? I followed the link to his profile on the Geni.com website:



Plate 11 - 7 Sutherland <http://...>

Lord William Moray

Gender:	Male
Birth:	circa 1210 Duffus, Moray, Scotland
Death:	1248 (33-42) Dunrobin Castle, Golspie, Sutherland, Scotland
Place of Burial:	St Gilberts Cath, Dornoch
Immediate Family:	Son of Hugh (Freskin) de Moravia, of Duffus and Strabrock and Joan Jónsdóttir, of Orkney Husband of Lady Sutherland (1st) Father of William Moray, 2nd Earl of Sutherland Brother of William de Moravia; Freskyn of Moravia; Earl William 2nd Earl of Sutherland; Walter de Moravia, 2nd Lord of Duffus and Andrew de Moravia

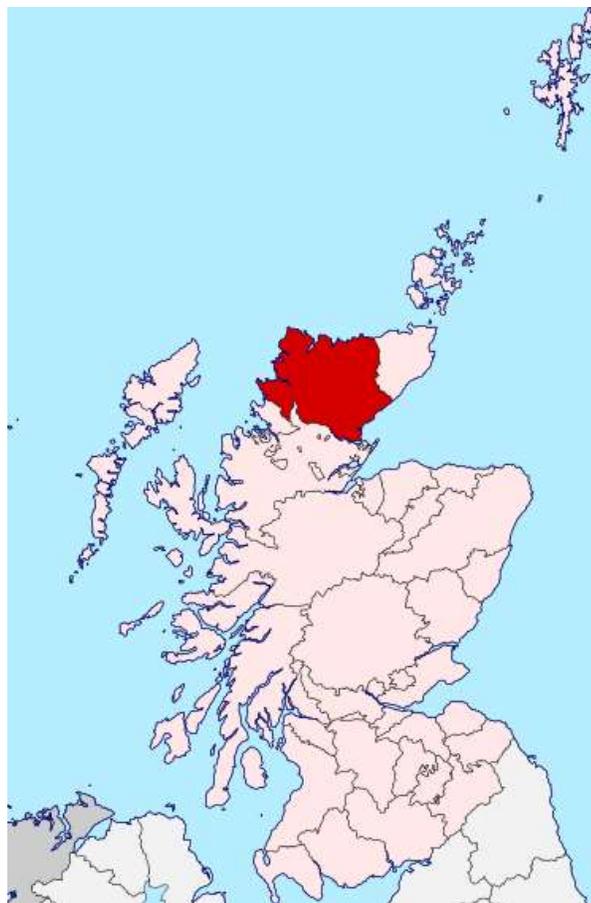
<https://www.geni.com/people/Lord-William-Moray/6000000017986426608>

William Moray was the Earl of Sutherland, and subsequently Lord of Sutherland.

From Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutherland>):

Sutherland is a historic county, registration county and lieutenancy area in the Highlands of Scotland. Sutherland has some of the most dramatic scenery in the whole of Europe, especially on its western fringe where the mountains meet the sea.

The name Sutherland dates from the era of Norwegian Viking rule and settlement over much of the Highlands and Islands, under the rule of the jarl of Orkney. Although it contains some of the northernmost land in the island of Great Britain, it was called Suðrland ("southern land") from the standpoint of Orkney and Caithness.



Map from Wikipedia showing Sutherland, in the far north of Scotland.

Burks! Will you get on with it? Was Lord William Moray your ancestor or not???

Scroll down....

The suspense is killing me.....



Oh my! Lord William Moray was my 22nd-great grandfather! This ancestral line goes back through my paternal grandmother, Kate Cameron Burks, and then her paternal grandmother, Amy Griffey. It continues back through Rev. William Robertson (my 9th-great grandfather), who immigrated to Virginia from England in the 1660's. Rev. Robertson quickly became well respected in the Tidewater area. He was appointed one of the directors to plan and establish the town of Williamsburg in October 1705.

OK – this is pretty cool! I picked a famous English castle at random and found that I had an ancestor who lived there (and owned the place). So this “reverse” approach of finding a castle and then an ancestor seems to have worked.

Robert de Moravia

My ancestral line back to Lord William Moray (shown above) goes through a number of men with the title “Earl of Sutherland”. One of them was Robert de Moravia, 6th Earl of Sutherland:



Plate 11 - 7 Sutherland htt...

Robert de Moravia, 6th Earl of Sutherland

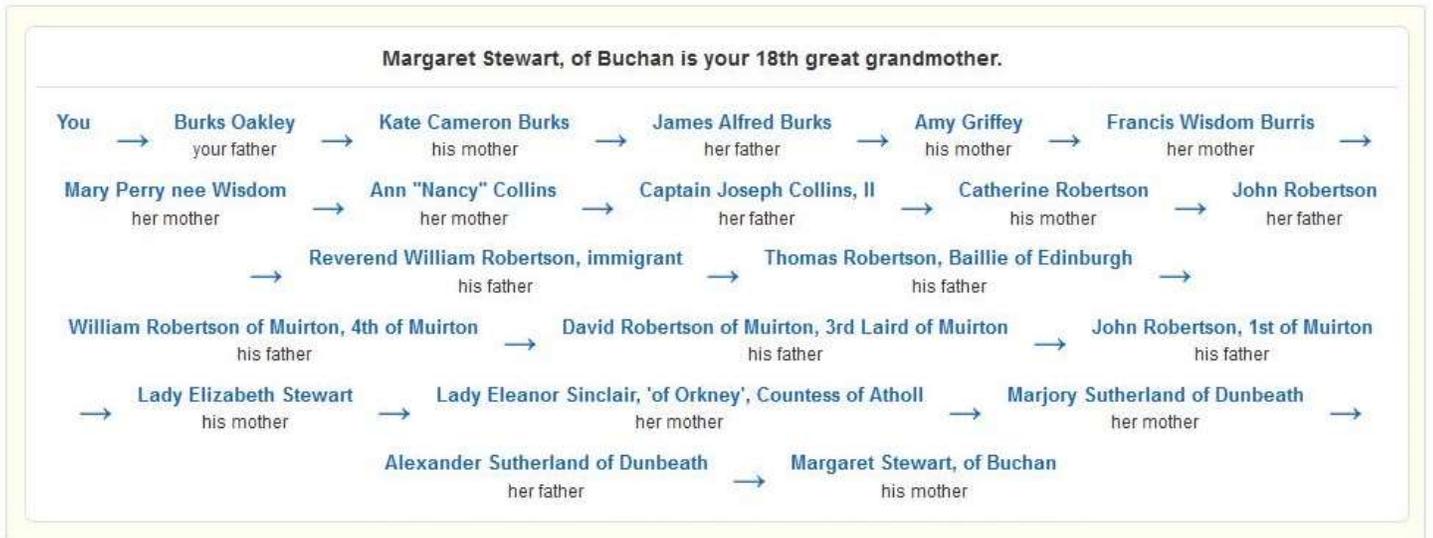
Gender:	Male
Birth:	1347 Sutherland, Scotland
Death:	1427 (79-81) Dunrobin Castle, Golspie, Sutherland, Scotland
Immediate Family:	Son of William Sutherland, Sr., 5th Earl of Sutherland and Joan Menteith Husband of Margaret Stewart, of Buchan Father of Sir John de Moravia, 7th Earl of Sutherland ; Alexander Sutherland of Dunbeath and Robert, Master of Sutherland Brother of William VII Sutherland ; Isabel Sutherland and Kenneth Sutherland of Forse Half brother of John de Moravia, Master of Sutherland ; William Sutherland, Jr. ; Christian Murray ; Helen de Strathearn ; Malise de Strathearn, 8th Earl of Strathearn, Earl of Caithness and Orkney and 1 other

Robert de Moravia was my 18th-great grandfather.

The profile for Robert de Moravia on the Geni.com website includes “Robert Sutherland, 6th Earl of Sutherland; born c. 1347; married 1389 Margaret Stewart, illegitimate daughter of Sir Alexander Stewart (The Wolf of Badenoch).”

So was this Margaret Stewart my ancestor? If so, that would connect me to “The Wolf of Badenoch”, whoever he was....

I looked at Margaret Stewart in the World Family Tree:



Yes, she was my 18th-great grandmother on the same line I showed earlier.

Margaret’s father was Sir Alexander Stewart:



Alexander Stewart

Scots Gaelic: Alasdair Mór mac an Rìgh

Gender: Male

Birth: 1343
Dundonald, Ayrshire , Scotland (United Kingdom)

Death: between July 24, 1394 and June 20, 1405 (50-62)
Dundonald, Ayrshire, Scotland (United Kingdom)

Place of Burial: Dunkeld Cathedral, Dunkeld, Perthshire, Scotland

Immediate Family: Son of Robert II, King of Scots and Elizabeth Mure of Rowallan
Husband of NN NN, Many Mistresses; Mairead inghean Eachann and Euphemia I, Countess of Ross
Father of Margaret Stewart, of Buchan; Alexander Stewart, Earl of Mar; Walter "The Red Knight" Stewart, 1st Baron of Kincardine; Robert Stewart; James Stewart, 1st of Fothergill and 1 other

Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan, known as “the Wolf of Badenoch”, was buried in the Dunkeld Cathedral in Perthshire, Scotland, following his death in 1405. Here is a photo of his tomb, surmounted by his armored effigy:

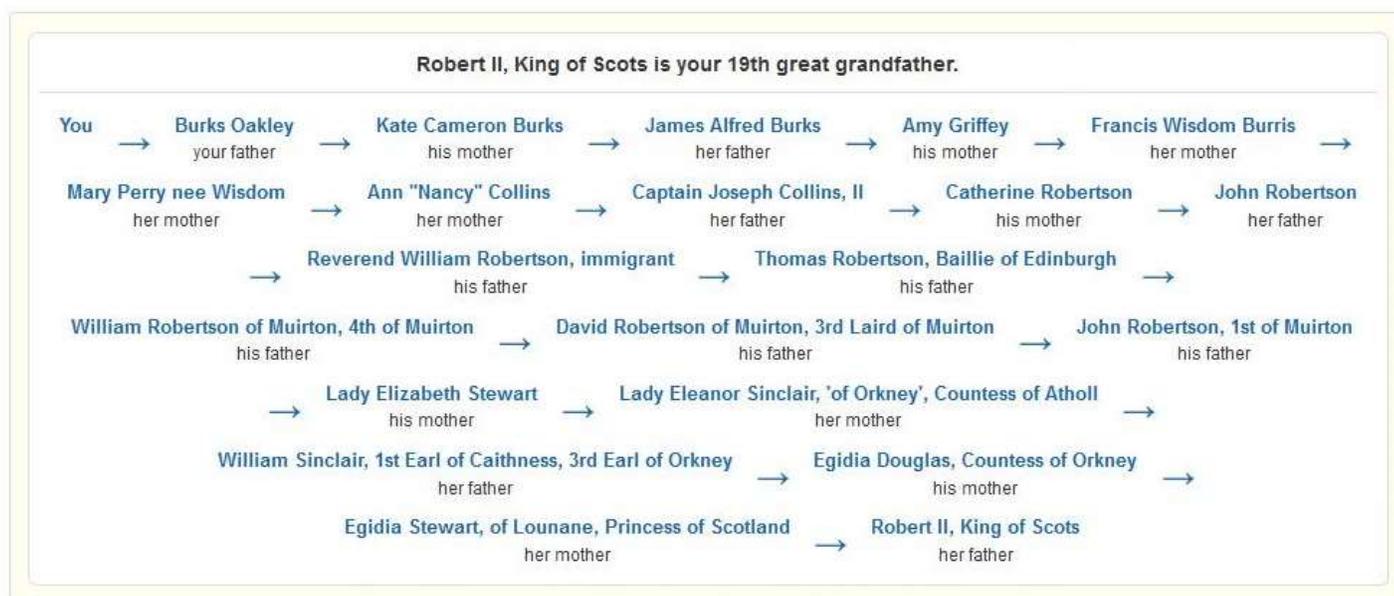


The profile for Alexander Stewart on Geni.com includes:

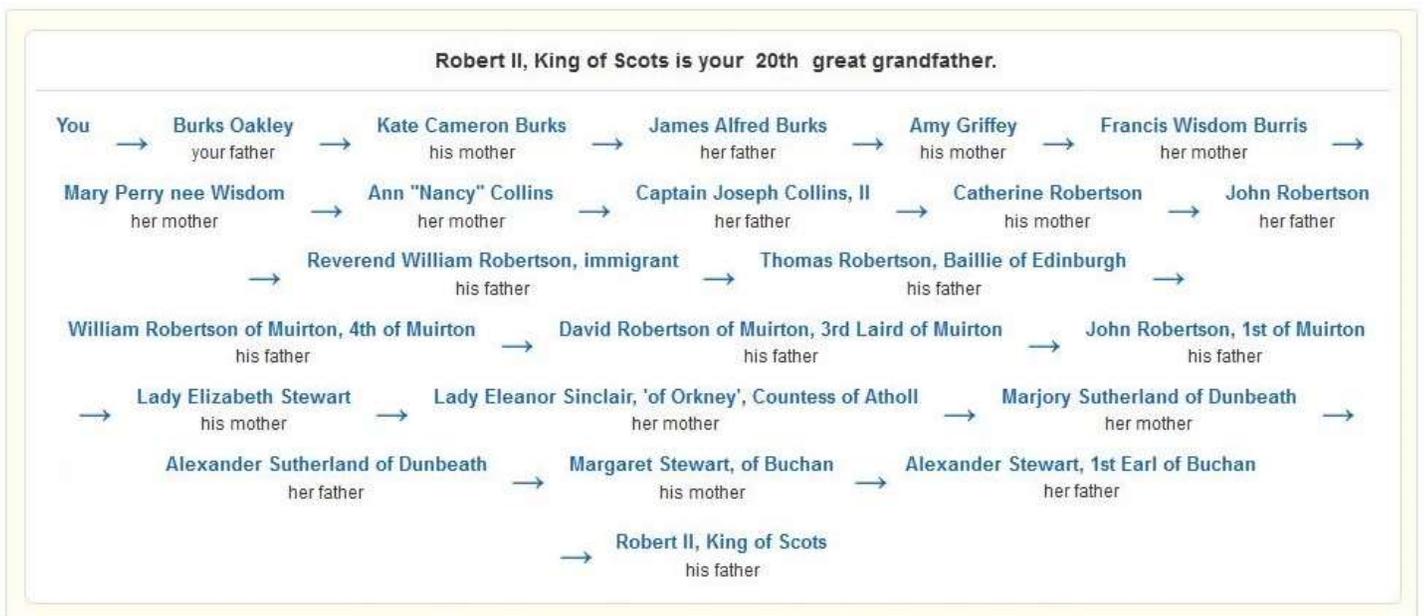
Alexander Stewart, called the Wolf of Badenoch (1343 – 20 June 1405), [date on memorial is 24 July 1394] was the fourth son of King Robert II of Scotland and also the youngest by his first wife, Elizabeth Mure of Rowallan. He was the first Earl of Buchan since John Comyn, from 1382 until his death. Alexander married the widowed Euphemia, Countess of Ross, but they had no children, although he did have a large family by his mistress, Mairead inghean Eachann. Alexander held large territories in the north of Scotland before eventually losing a large part of them. Alexander is infamously remembered for his sacking of the royal burgh of Elgin and its cathedral. His nickname was earned due to his notorious cruelty and rapacity.

Wow, did you catch that? Alexander was a son of King Robert II of Scotland. So that means that I am descended from King Robert II. How cool!

Here is my ancestral line back to King Robert II:



Oh my! This is the “shortest blood relationship”, but it doesn’t show the path I thought it would. I was expecting the ancestral line through Margaret Stewart and her father Alexander Stewart, which is shown here:



On this line, King Robert II was my 20th-great grandfather (I had to create this chart using “cut and paste”, since Geni.com only shows the “shortest blood relationship”).

It appears that there are two different lines from King Robert II to Lady Eleanor Sinclair, Countess of Atholl, and one is one generation shorter than the other. Oh well, the interesting thing is that I am descended from Robert II, King of Scots.

Here is a short excerpt from the Wikipedia article about Robert II:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_II_of_Scotland

Robert II (2 March 1316 – 19 April 1390) was King of Scots from 1371 to his death in 1390. He was the first monarch of the House of Stewart as the son of Walter Stewart, 6th High Steward of Scotland, and of Marjorie Bruce, daughter of the Scottish king Robert the Bruce by his first wife Isabella of Mar.

OK – now we’re getting somewhere. Robert II’s maternal grandfather was Scottish king Robert the Bruce – more about him shortly. [As an aside, do you remember a movie where Robert the Bruce was one of the key players?]

Here is Great Seal of Robert II, King of Scotland:



Robert the Bruce, King of Scots

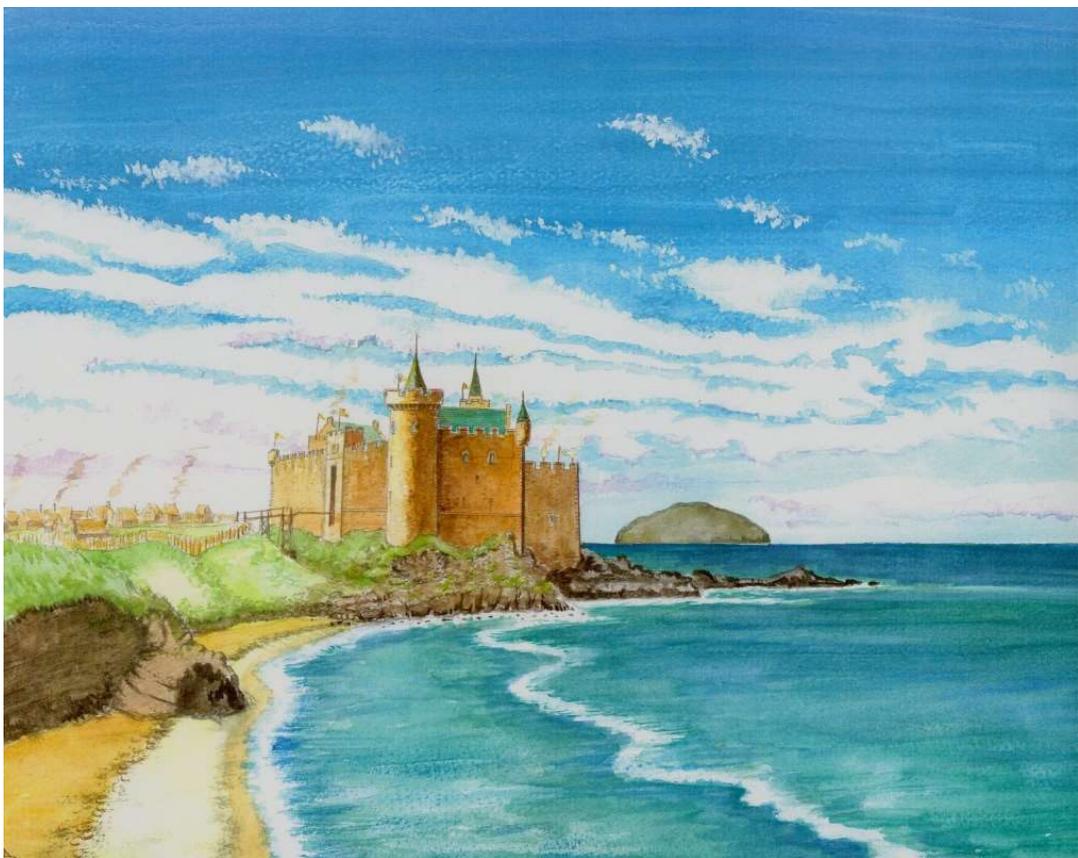
Finally, we now get to Robert the Bruce, King of the Scots. Here is his profile from Geni.com:

	Roibert a Briuis, Rìgh Alba
Gender:	Male
Birth:	July 11, 1274 Turnberry Castle, Ayrshire, Scotland, (Present UK)
Death:	June 07, 1329 (54) Manor of Cardross, Dumbartonshire, Scotland, (Present UK) ("An unclean ailment" - traditionally ascribed to leprosy.)
Place of Burial:	Body in Dunfermline Abbey (Dunfermline, Fifeshire), Heart in Melrose Abbey (Melrose, Roxburghshire, Scottish Borders), Scotland, United Kingdom
Immediate Family:	Son of Robert de Bruce, 6th Lord of Annandale and Marjorie, Countess of Carrick Husband of Isabella of Mar and Elizabeth de Burgh, Queen of Scots Ex-partner of Mistresses Father of Sir Robert Bruce ; Margaret Bruce ; Christina de Brus ; Walter de Brus ; Niall Bruce, of Carrick and 7 others Brother of Isobel de Bruce, Queen of Norway ; Christian Bruce ; Edward de Bruce, Earl of Carrick, King of Ireland ; Nigel Bruce, of Annandale ; Matilda (Maud) Bruce and 5 others

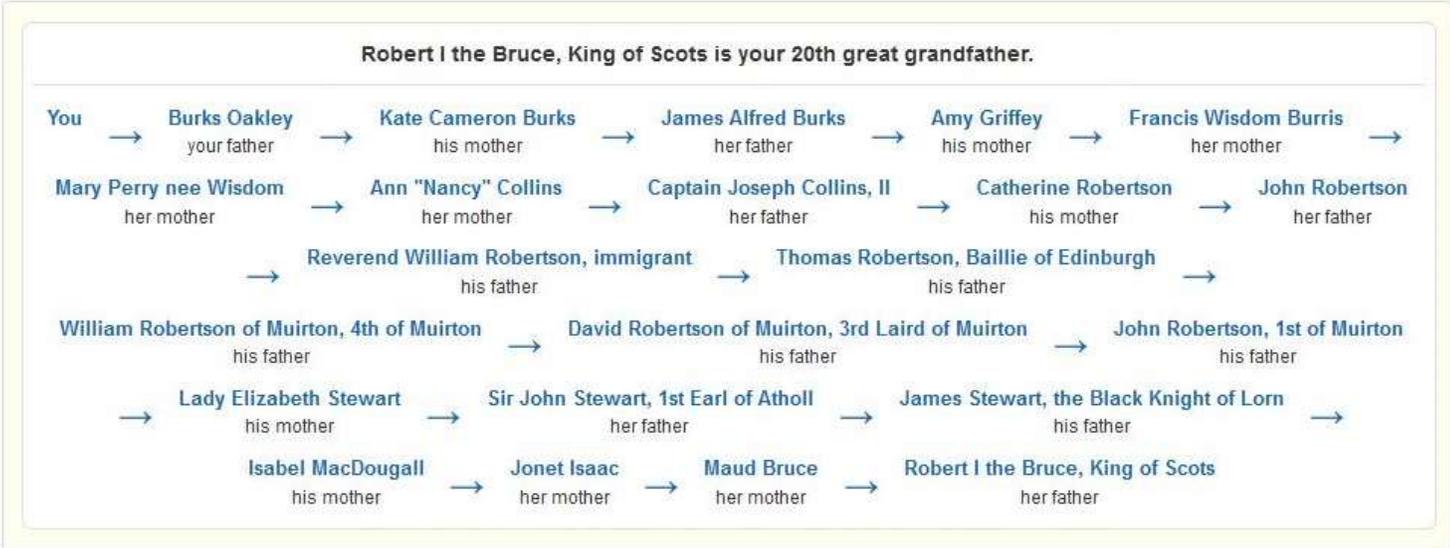
He was born in Turnberry Castle, which was built right on the Scottish coast. This castle is in ruins now:



Here is an artist's reconstruction of what it looked like in the Middle Ages:

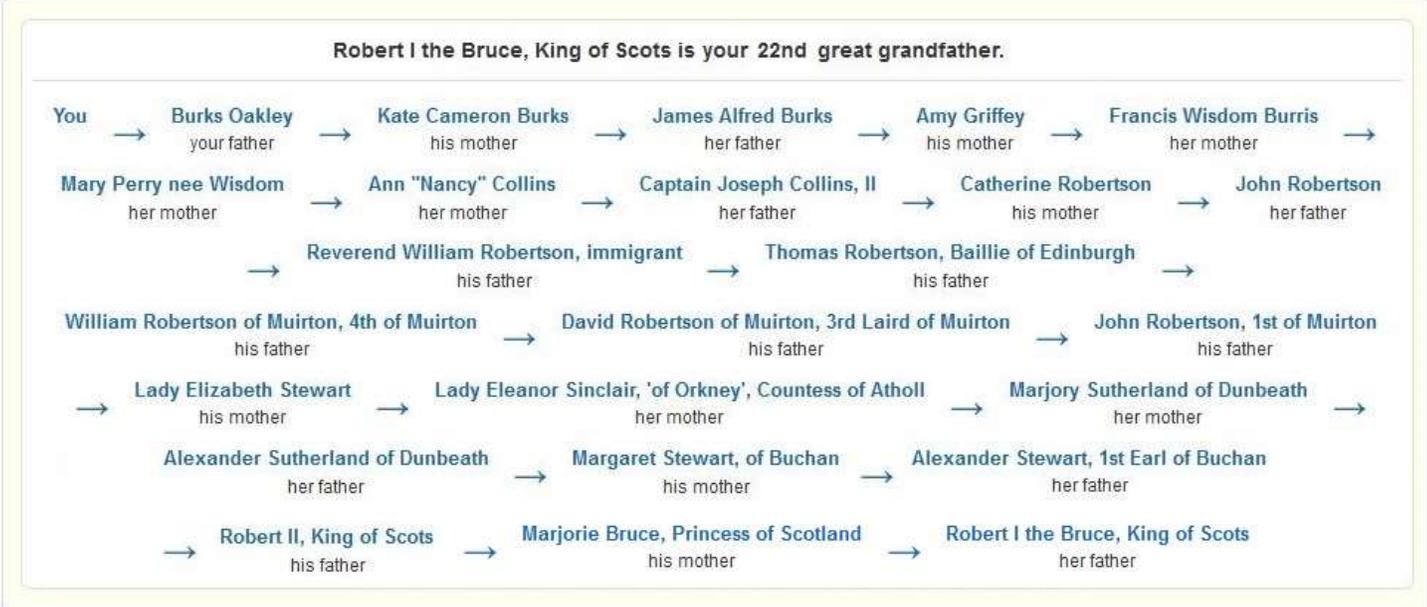


Here is my ancestral line back to Robert the Bruce:



Note that this is a totally different line than I was expecting. Once again, this is due to the fact that Geni.com always displays the “shortest blood relationship”.

Here is the ancestral line I was expecting:



These two different ancestral lines are the same from me back to Lady Elizabeth Stewart. Then one line goes back through Lady Elizabeth’s mother to Robert the Bruce, while the other line goes back through her father.

Here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia article about Robert the Bruce:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_the_Bruce

Robert the Bruce, King of Scots

Robert I (11 July 1274 – 7 June 1329), popularly known as Robert the Bruce (Medieval Gaelic: Roibert a Briuis; Modern Scottish Gaelic: Raibeart Brus; Norman French: Robert de Brus or Robert de Bruys; Early Scots: Robert Brus; Latin: Robertus Brussius), was King of Scots from 1306 to his death in 1329. Robert was one of the most famous warriors of his generation and eventually led Scotland during the First War of Scottish Independence against England. He fought successfully during his reign to regain Scotland’s place as an independent country and is now revered in Scotland as a national hero.

As a “national hero”, Robert the Bruce appears on a £20 bank note:



Here is another summary of Robert the Bruce from the Britannica.com website:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Robert-the-Bruce>

Robert the Bruce, original name Robert VIII de Bruce, also called Robert I, (born July 11, 1274 – died June 7, 1329), king of Scotland (1306–29), who freed Scotland from English rule, winning the decisive Battle of Bannockburn (1314) and ultimately confirming Scottish independence in the Treaty of Northampton (1328).

Here is a photo of the statue of Robert the Bruce at the Bannockburn Heritage Centre, Bannockburn, Stirling, Scotland:



Again, Robert the Bruce was my 20th-great grandfather on the “shortest blood relationship”.

In 1995, Angus MacFayden stood alongside Mel Gibson in “Braveheart,” playing Robert the Bruce, the future King of Scotland, who picks up the mantle of freedom fighter from Gibson’s William Wallace.



A quarter century later, MacFayden reprised the role in “Robert the Bruce”. A review of this movie is at:

https://madison.com/ct/entertainment/movies/robert-the-bruce-wanders-in-the-footsteps-of-braveheart/article_b8239d5f-7247-5cfb-8762-691370f41e2c.html

The trailer for this movie is on YouTube at:

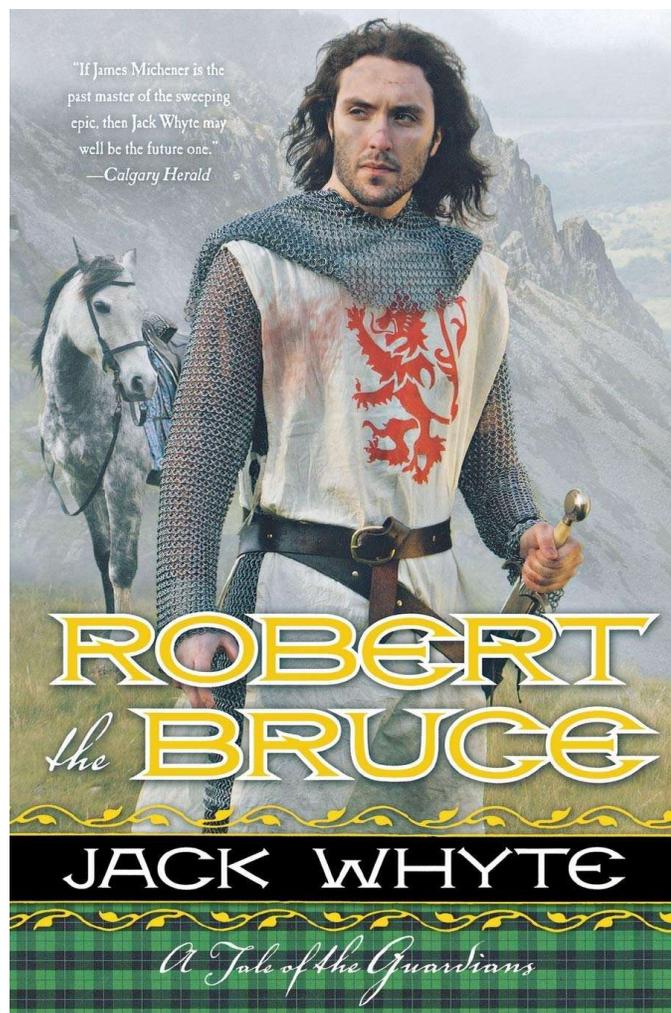
<https://youtu.be/7Kpwd6DmpBg>



Robert the Bruce also has been featured recently in print. Jack Whyte was a Scottish-Canadian novelist of historical fiction. Born and raised in Scotland, he moved to Canada in 1967. More about him on Wikipedia at:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Whyte

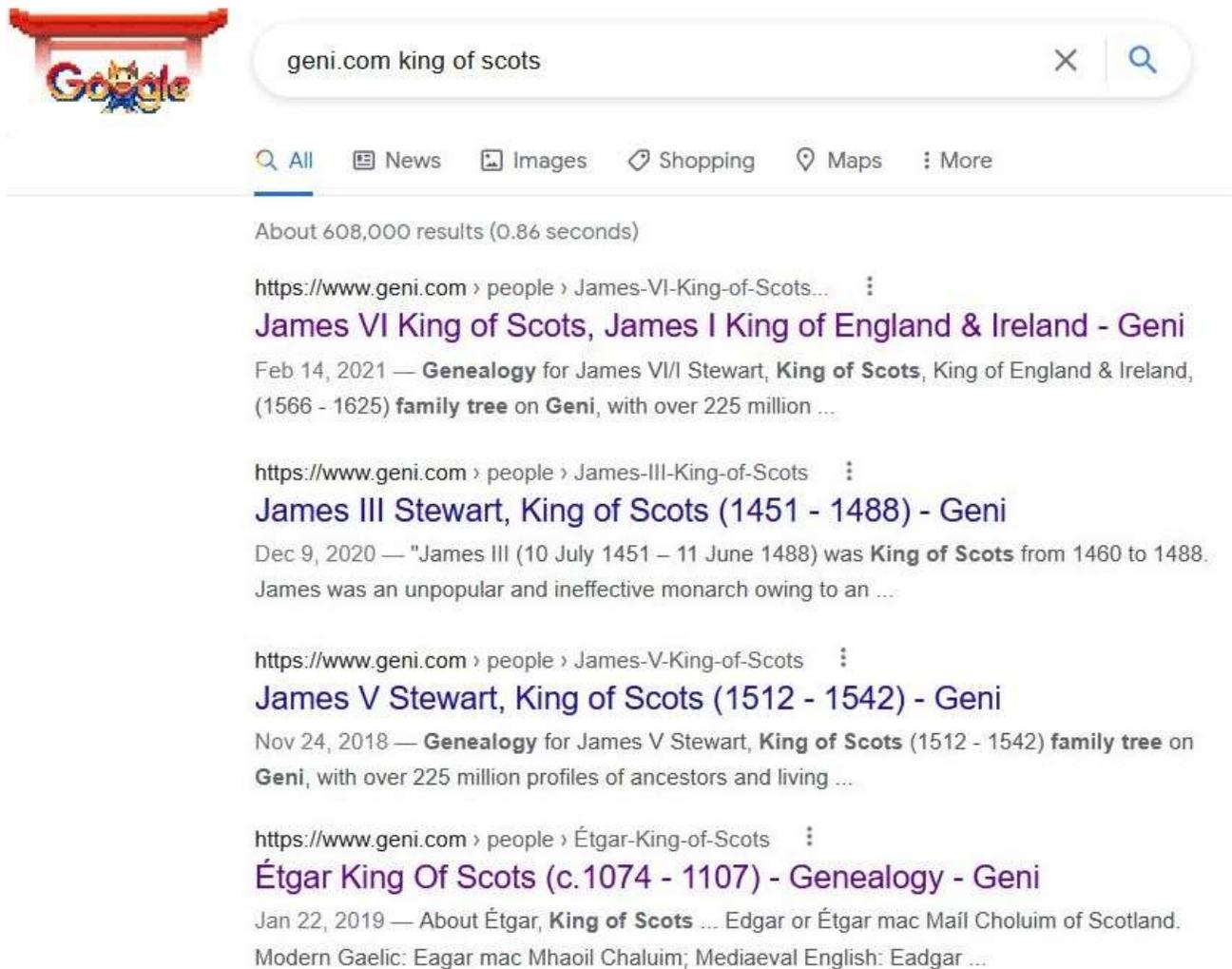
His series “The Guardians of Scotland” included *The Renegade* (2012), which was published as *Robert the Bruce* in the United States in 2013.



How cool to be a descendant of Robert the Bruce!!

Ancestral Lines to Other Scottish Kings

As I was finishing the writing of this chapter, I wondered if I was descended from other Scottish kings. So I Googled “geni.com king of scots” (no quotes). This search turned up a number of hits:



Amazingly, a few of them turned out to be my ancestors!

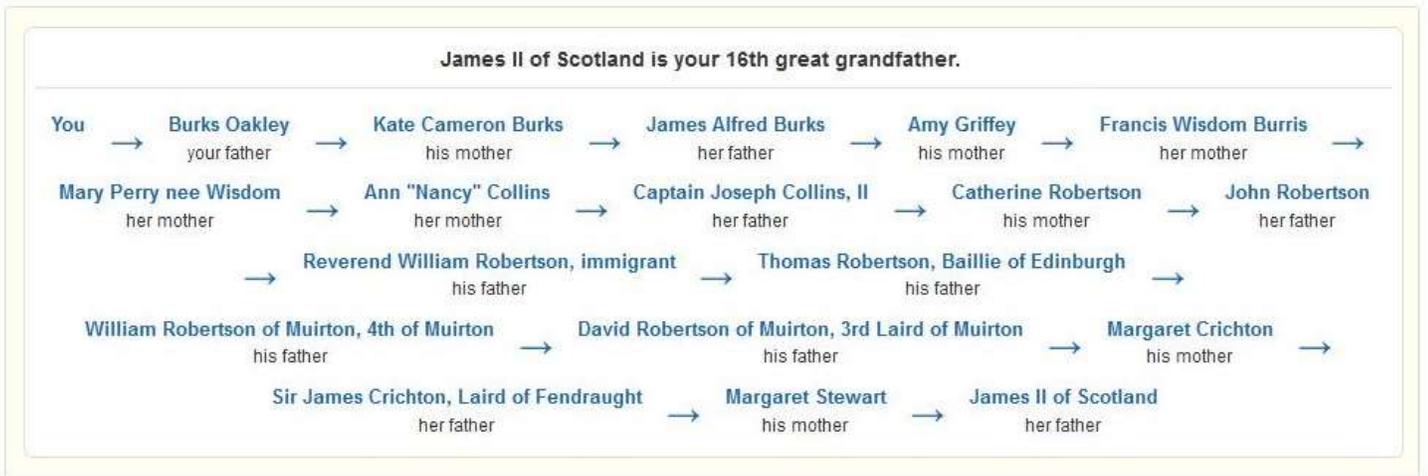
James II

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_II_of_Scotland

James II of Scotland

James was born in Holyrood Abbey. He was the son of King James I and Joan Beaufort. By his first birthday, his only brother, his older twin, Alexander, had died, thus leaving James as heir apparent with the title Duke of Rothesay. On 21 February 1437, James I was assassinated, and the six-year-old James immediately succeeded him as James II. He was crowned in Holyrood Abbey by Abbot Patrick on 23 March 1437.

On 3 July 1449, the eighteen-year-old James married the fifteen-year-old Mary of Guelders, daughter of the Arnold, Duke of Guelders, and Catherine of Cleves, at Holyrood Abbey. She bore him seven children, six of whom survived into adulthood. James's nickname, Fiery Face, referred to a conspicuous vermilion birthmark on his face which appears to have been deemed by contemporaries an outward sign of a fiery temper.



James II was my 16th-great grandfather. This ancestral line is very similar to the one going back to Robert the Bruce – it is identical from me back to David Robertson of Muirton, 3rd Laird of Muirton (my 12th-great grandfather). Then the line back to James II goes through David Robertson’s mother, while the line back to Robert the Bruce goes through David Robertson’s father.

Robert III

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_III_of_Scotland

Robert III of Scotland

Robert III (1337 - 1406), born John Stewart, was King of Scots from 1390 to his death. He was known primarily as the Earl of Carrick before ascending the throne aged around 53 years. He was the eldest son of Robert II and Elizabeth Mure and was legitimized with the marriage of his parents in 1347.



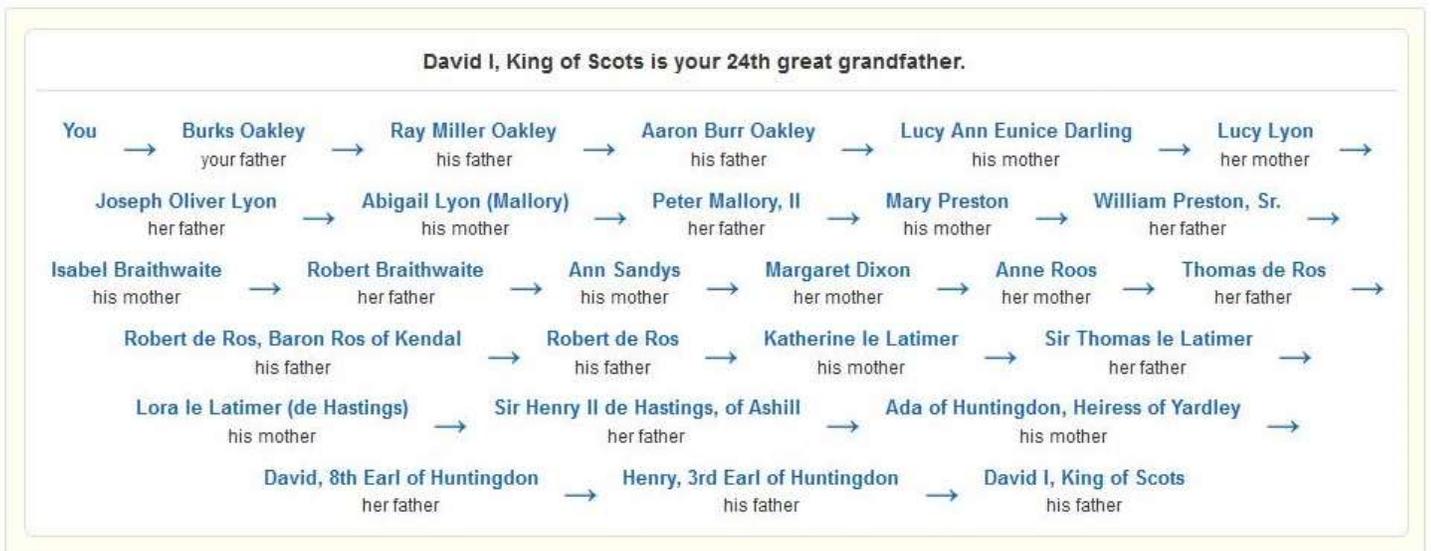
Well, this one just adds two more generations back from James II of Scotland – his father, James I of Scotland, and his paternal grandfather, Robert III, King of Scots.

David I

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_I_of_Scotland

David I (1084 - 1153) was a 12th-century ruler who was Prince of the Cumbrians from 1113 to 1124 and later King of Scotland from 1124 to 1153. The youngest son of Malcolm III and Margaret of Wessex, David spent most of his childhood in Scotland, but was exiled to England temporarily in 1093. Perhaps after 1100, he became a dependent at the court of King Henry I. There he was influenced by the Anglo-French culture of the court.

The term “Davidian Revolution” is used by many scholars to summarize the changes which took place in Scotland during his reign. These included his foundation of burghs and regional markets, implementation of the ideals of Gregorian Reform, foundation of monasteries, Normanization of the Scottish government, and the introduction of feudalism through immigrant French and Anglo-French knights.



Oh my! This is a completely new ancestral line. While all the previous lines have gone through my paternal grandmother, Kate Cameron Burks, this line goes through my paternal grandfather, Ray Miller Oakley.

In clicking around on the Geni.com website, I learned that I have another ancestral line back to David I, King of Scots:



This line also is on the Oakley side of my family, but it goes through Hannah Mariah Miller, whereas the previous line went through Hannah’s husband, Aaron Burr Oakley.

Malcolm III of Scotland

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malcolm_III_of_Scotland

Malcolm III (1031 - 1093) was King of Scotland from 1058 to 1093. He was later nicknamed "Canmore" ("ceann mòr", Gaelic, literally "big head"; possibly understood "great chief"). Malcolm's long reign of 35 years preceded the beginning of the Scoto-Norman age. Henry I of England and Eustace III of Boulogne were his sons-in-law, making him the maternal grandfather of Empress Matilda, William Adelin and Matilda of Boulogne. All three of them were prominent in English politics during the 12th century.



This just adds Malcolm III as David's father.

William "The Lion", King of Scots

My ancestral line back to Malcolm III went through his great-grandson, William "The Lion", King of Scots.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_the_Lion

William the Lion (1142 - 1214) was born circa 1142, during the reign of his grandfather King David I of Scotland. William reigned as King of Scots from 1165 to 1214 (49 years). He had the second-longest reign in Scottish history before the Act of Union with England in 1707. James VI (reigned 1567–1625) would have the longest.

William "The Lion" was my 21st-great grandfather:



And this seems to be a good place to end my search for Scottish kings from the Middle Ages who were my ancestors. But I'm sure I would find at least another one, if I kept looking.

Summary

This chapter began with a rather different approach – I did a Google search for “English castles”, which led me to Dunrobin Castle in Sutherland, Scotland. Another search for “geni.com Dunrobin Castle” led me to Lord William Moray (1210-1248), who owned this castle and just happened to be my 22nd-great grandfather.

Looking at my ancestral line back to Lord William Moray led me to

- Robert de Moravia, 6th Earl of Sutherland - my 18th-great grandfather
- Robert's wife, Margaret Stewart
- Margaret's father, Sir Alexander Stewart - “the Wolf of Badenoch”
- Robert II, King of Scots - my 18th-great grandfather
- Robert the Bruce, King of the Scots - my 20th-great grandfather

Almost as an afterthought, I found my ancestral lines to a number of Scottish kings, including:

- James II
- James I
- Robert III
- David I
- Malcolm III
- William “The Lion”

I'm not sure that any of this is very useful knowledge outside of a trivia game, but it does give me a reason to travel to Scotland and visit Dunrobin Castle.

Appendix – Miscellaneous Photos



Dunrobin Castle in Sutherland, Scotland



Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn.



The Bruce stronghold of Turnberry Castle reconstruction suggestion with NETFLIX's image of Chris Pine as King Robert the Bruce from *Outlaw King*.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outlaw_King

Outlaw King, stylized as *Outlaw/King*, is a 2018 historical action drama film about Robert the Bruce, the 14th-century Scottish King who launched a guerilla war against the larger English army. The film largely takes place during the 3-year historical period from 1304, when Bruce decides to rebel against the rule of Edward I over Scotland, thus becoming an "outlaw", up to the 1307 Battle of Loudoun Hill.



Statue of Robert the Bruce at the entrance to Edinburgh Castle.