

SCOTLAND-A BRIEF HISTORY

PART 2: FROM 13TH CENTURY TO 16TH CENTURY

Death of Alexander III

In the 13th century, England and Scotland co-existed relatively peacefully using the River Tweed as a border. However, events took a turn for the worse in 1286 when Alexander III of Scotland was found dead on the sands at Kinghorn, Fife. As Alexander left no male heir the country was run by two bishops and four nobles (the Guardians) until a successor was found. Alexander's granddaughter, the 'Maid of Norway' was the nominated successor but she died en route to Scotland.

Interference by Edward I

By 1290 there were two potential successors: John Balliol and Robert Bruce of Annandale. Edward I of England was determined to take advantage of the situation and he offered to make the choice subject to Scotland acknowledging English superiority. As Scotland had no King no reply was forthcoming. However, both of the candidates did, individually, defer to Edward. Balliol was declared King, A choice ratified by Edward in 1292.

Balliol experienced continuing English interference, which led him to negotiate a treaty with France in 1295, known as the 'Auld Alliance'. This in turn led to war between England and Scotland, and a particular savage on attack on Berwick (then in Scotland) by the English who gave no quarter and slaughtered 7500. Edward marched north-crushing resistance at Dunbar in 1296. Balliol submitted at Brechin and was subsequently imprisoned in England and then exiled in France. With Scotland on its knees, Edward commences to integrate Scotland with England, levying heavy taxation.

William Wallace and the Battle of Stirling Bridge

In 1297, William Wallace marched on a position overlooking Stirling Castle, which at that time was held by the English. The armies met at a position upstream of the present Stirling Bridge. Edward did not expect the Scots to fight and made a major mistake in not securing the bridge. Edward sent infantry over the narrow bridge, a weakness which Wallace and Murray took advantage of by sending troops to cut off the English, which had already crossed. The bridge was too narrow to send reinforcements with the result that the English were heavily beaten. For the English this was a disaster. The Scots victory was soured by the death of Murray at the battle.

The defeat at Stirling did act as a catalyst to unite the English with Edward trying year on year for six years to subdue the Scots. This debilitating war prompted the Scots to make overtures to both the Pope and the French for assistance but was rebuffed. So, the Scots capitulated -with exception of William Wallace. However, Wallace was betrayed, captured and executed in London in 1305. Pieces of his body were displayed in various parts of the kingdom as a deterrent to others. However, this action backfired in that it transformed Wallace into a martyr and made his name synonymous with patriotism.

Robert the Bruce

In 1305 Scotland was under the control of Edward I. However, Robert the Bruce, grandson of the original Robert Bruce, entered the scene with ambitions to be King of

Scotland. Wallace meets with John Comyn whose family surrendered to Edward. Bruce murders Comyn, an action that triggered a bid for the Scottish Crown.

Bruce is formally made King, but not by popular acclaim. Because of the murder he is excommunicated by the Pope. Bruce flees to the Gaelic coast in the west and adopts a military strategy of guerrilla tactics. Although not popular, Bruce is tacitly acknowledged as the best candidate to free Scotland. Then Edward I dies.

Battle of Bannockburn

In 1313 Bruce issued an ultimatum to the Scots nobility. Edward II brings an army to Scotland to defeat Bruce. The two armies face each other at Bannockburn, near Stirling Castle. Bruce drew up a defensive position with pits in front to defeat the English cavalry. The English believe the Scots were retreating and attacked with two squadrons but were worsted. During the night Bruce learns that the English occupy a weak strategic position and have poor morale. The next day Bruce attacked the English cavalry with spears. The English are disadvantaged on boggy ground and flee in panic.

Declaration of Arbroath and Scottish Independence

Although Bannockburn secured the kingship for Bruce it did not lead to recognition by the English or the Pope. To pursue his aims, Bruce plundered far into northern England. The Pope orders a ceasefire and excommunicates the whole of Scotland. The Scots respond with the Declaration of Arbroath, which elaborates on why the Scots are aggrieved by the English. This is submitted to the Pope but ignored by him. Bruce did benefit, however, from a 13-year truce with England.

Edward II is murdered in 1327 and England becomes embroiled in civil war. Bruce invades the north of England and threatens to annex his new territory. In 1328 England acknowledges Scottish independence but wars continue for the next 250 years.

The Stuarts and the Renaissance

The Stuart dynasty introduced the Renaissance to Scotland; new thinking in education, technology and fashion from Europe predicated on a rediscovery of classical knowledge from Greece and Rome. Renaissance thought put man and humanism at the centre of the world, not God. It also gave birth to modern government and the notion of the nation state. This event led to the Protestant Reformation in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The Stuarts set about defining power. They were patrons of the arts and used the Great Hall at Stirling Castle as a manifestation of this power; started by James IV and completed after 1500. Stirling was the earliest attempt at a classical building in Britain. The roof carvings (ceiling) are redolent of the gods- and members of the Court of James V- all linked to the playground of the gods at Mount Olympus.

Linlithgow and Falkland are other important palaces endowed by the Stuarts. The entrance to Linlithgow Palace is decorated with badges of chivalry granted to James V. The fountain at Linlithgow is a most exquisite construction and stands out as exceptional in 16th century Scotland. The crown atop the fountain, like that on St. Giles Cathedral,

Edinburgh is closed in the independent, imperial style of James V. Falkland Palace is built in the style of a French Chateau, reflecting Scotland's close ties with France.

New technology includes gunpowder, which took from end of the 14th century to beginning of the 16th century to be refined into an effective armament. It was guns that brought an end to the siege of Edinburgh Castle in 1573 by bringing down the front of the medieval castle.

New knowledge of the Renaissance led to the establishment of universities at Aberdeen and St. Andrew's. The mass production of texts through printing caused concern to the Catholic Church. In the 1520s legislation was introduced preventing importation of Lutheran books. (Martin Luther being the father of the German reformation.) At this time the Catholic Church is perceived as failing the needs of the Scots population.

Mary Queen of Scots and John Knox

In 142 James V died leaving Mary Queen of Scots as his heir. She became sought after as a bride in the machinations of various European super-powers. In the 1550s Scotland was dominated by France, Mary of Guise became Regent in 1554. In 1558 Mary Queen of Scots married the heir to the French throne. The Mary Tudor of England died and was succeeded by Elizabeth. The Scots Protestants looked to England for support.

In 1555 John Knox visited Scotland and made contact with the protestant Lords of the Congregation. Knox returned to Scotland in 1559 where he preached An iconoclastic sermon (at Perth) urging the congregation to riot. In 1560 the Scots parliament outlawed both the mass and the Pope and created the Kirk of Scotland.

In 1561 Mary queen of Scots returned from France to run Scotland. She was prepared to tolerate Protestantism providing she could avail of private mass. Her second husband, Darnley was murdered in suspicious circumstances, an action which triggered a coup by her enemies. Mary's forces were routed at the Battle of Carbury (near Edinburgh) in 1567. She was imprisoned in Lochleven Castle and subsequently deposed in favour of her son James.

At this time George Buchanan developed the theory of Contractual Kingship under which God ordains monarchs provided they do not break the covenant with the people.

Scotland descended into 6 years of civil war during which Edinburgh Castle suffered a two-year siege.

James VI (Scotland) James I (England)

James VI grew up a Protestant. After Mary's execution in 1587 James succeeded to the throne of England where he aimed to be a protestant king of all of Britain. But with the King in London questions were asked in Scotland as to who ruled Scotland-the King in London, the Kirk or the Scots nobility?

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