

The Douglas Emrauld (Emerald) Charter of November,1324 and Sir James, Lord of Douglas c1286 to 1330

Sir James was the son of Sir William Douglas, 'le hardi', 4th Lord of Douglas, with his wife Lady Elizabeth Stewart. Depending on whose side you were on he was 'The Good', 'The Good Sir James' 'The Brave Douglas' or 'The Black Douglas'. His abode was Lintalee. He fought alongside Robert the Bruce at Bannockburn where he commanded the left wing; and later he chased King Edward II and his men to Dunbar Castle and then escaped by ship to England.

In 1314 he captured Roxburgh Castle, disguising his men as oxen. He was made Warden of the West Marches at about the time when the Scottish Army went to Ireland. In 1316 he was involved with some skirmishes with the English near Berwick and he killed Edmond of Caillou of Bordeaux, the English Governor of Teviotdale (later Roxburghshire). In 1317 he ambushed an English force near Lintalee, using birch branches woven together to prevent their escape.

Grantings of Jedburgh Castle, the Town and Forest were made in 1320 by King Robert the Bruce to Sir James and the first two grants were renewed by the King in 1325.

In May,1320 Sir James Douglas was one of the signatories of the Declaration of Arbroath –

People of Medieval Scotland - Charter

DESCRIPTION

Robert, king of Scots, has given his beloved and faithful James, lord of Douglas, knight, for his faithful homage and service to the king, all the king's merchant town of Jedburgh (ROX) with [market?] place and castle tower of Jedworth and his whole town of 'Bondjedworth' (Bonjedward) and the whole of his forest of Jedworth in free forest, having and holding for James and his legitimate male heirs, in feu and heritage, with the homages and services of freeholders, in free barony, with pit and gallows, sake and soke, toll and teams, and infangenthef, saving to the king his suits and services made at Roxburgh of the lands of Hassendean, 'Newland', Lessudden, and 'Aldton', rendering annually the in the name of the burgh ferme of Jedburgh, 100s on Pentecost and Martinmas, and performing the service of one knight in his army.

FIRM DATE

6 May 1320

DATING NOTES

6 May, regnal year 15

PLACE DATE (MODERN)

Arbroath

PLACE DATE (DOCUMENT)

Abirbrothoc

In the Douglas Emerald Charter of May, 1324, many lands were listed as being conferred upon him by the King (Robert I), and without feudal obligations.

These lands conferred upon Sir James included the Barony of Douglas and Kirkmichael, Constabulary of Lauder, Forest of Selkirk, Forest of Ettrick, Forest of Traquair, Forest of Jedburgh with Bonjedburgh (Bonjedward) and the mercat-town of Jedwart, with cattle thereof; the Barony of Bethocroul (Bedrule), and the Baronies of Westerkirk (Wastyrker/Westerker - Half Barony in 1321), Staplegorton (Staplegordon/) in the Valley of Elk in 1320 and Romanno.

Other lands probably conferred on Sir James at that time were Cavers and Ringwood.

Also granted to him Sir James Douglas in about 1320 were 'Sonderland' in (Sunderland in Selkirkshire) as well as 'Lintonrothbrekis' (Linton in Roxburghshire).

Other lands conferred on him by Robert I King, were the land of Polbuthy (Polmoody) and the Vale of Moffat in 1318. Sir James also held lands in Calderclear and Kincavill in Lothian in 1315. Also conferred was the land of Botle (Botill) in Galloway in 1325.

The lands in Galloway were subject to a yearly tribute of a pair of gilt spurs. (A History of the House of Douglas... 1902 by Herbert Maxwell).

Also conferred on him were the lands of Cockburn; certain lands in Berwick and lands in Hidgait.

These conferrals were partly in lieu of a large ransom payment of 4,400 merks, that he could have collected for three French Knights who surrendered to Sir James at the 'Battle of Biland' (Byland) in 1322.

Sir James died in Spain at the Battle of Teba returning Bruce's heart to the Holy Land.

The Douglas Emerald Charter of 1324

From Fraser's 'The Douglas Book' -

14. Transumpt of a Precept by King Robert the Bruce, directed to Bernard, Abbot of Abirbrothoc, Chancellor of Scotland, narrating that in partial discharge of 4400 merks sterling due by the King to James, Lord of Douglas, for the redemption of three French knights and their servants, who had been taken prisoners by the said Sir James at Byland in England, and had been liberated by King Robert at the instance of the King of France, the King desired a charter to be granted to the said Sir James of the indictments of robbers, and the full administration thereof, within the bounds of the barony of Douglas, the King's forest of Selkirk, in which he was officer, the constabulary of Lawder, the forest of Jedburgh, with Bonjedburgh, the barony of Bethocrulle, the baronies of Watstirker, Stabilgortoun, and Romannoks, and within all the lands in Scotland which the said James held in chief of the King, with power to him and his heirs to liberate any of his men who might be indicted by the King's justiciars within the foresaid lands ; reserving to the King and his heirs all other articles pertaining to manslaughter and the crown : To be held by the said James and his heirs, in fee and heritage, for ever, of the King and his heirs, declaring that the said James, his heirs and their men dwelling on the said lands in time to come, shall be free from suits of court, wardings of castles, prisages, talliages, carriages, captions, etc. ; reserving only common aid for the defence of the kingdom ; and that

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ABSTRACT OF THE DOUGLAS CHARTERS.

[1324.

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the charter might be observed, the King, with his own hand, placed a ring containing an emerald stone upon the finger of the said James, to abide as a memorial. Berwick-on-Tweed, 8th November [1324]..... 11

[This charter is known as the Emerald Charter.]

Douglas Scott of 'the Hawick Book' recommends this as a more accurate interpretation of lands represented in the Douglas Emrauld Charter than that by Hume below -

From Hume's 'The History of the House and Race of Douglas and Angus' -

The Douglas Emrauld Charter.

Indictamenta latrociniolorum, et ministracionem eorundem in omnibus, infra omnes terras suas subscriptas: scilicet infra. 1. Baroniam de Douglas. 2. Forrestiam nostram de Selkirk, de qua est officarius noster. 3. Constabularium de Lauderio. 4. Forrestiam de Jedburgh cum Bonjedworth. 5. Baroniam de Batherule. 6. Baroniam de Wester-Calder. 7. Baroniam de Stabilgorthane. 8. Baroniam de Romanok.

It was said that by placing on his (Sir James's) finger, from which last circumstance the writ has been termed 'The Douglas Emrauld Charter.'

'And in order that this charter may have perpetual effect, we in our own person have placed on the hand of the said James of Douglas a ring, with a certain stone called an emeraude. In token of sasine and perpetual endurance to the said James and heirs for ever'. (A History of the House of Douglas... 1902 by Herbert Maxwell).

To James Lord Douglas – all his lands are in “free regalitie, and be putting on ane ring and ane emrod on the Earle and his fuceffors fingers the day he fould take fafine, by the King.” (said to be in the Charter ‘Carta Jacobi Domini de Douglas’ by King Robert I).

Unfortunately, the emerald ring has since been lost, but a sword presented by the King to Sir James apparently still exists, and is in the private ownership of a Douglas family member?

Sally Douglas

8th November, 2018