



Dubh Ghlase

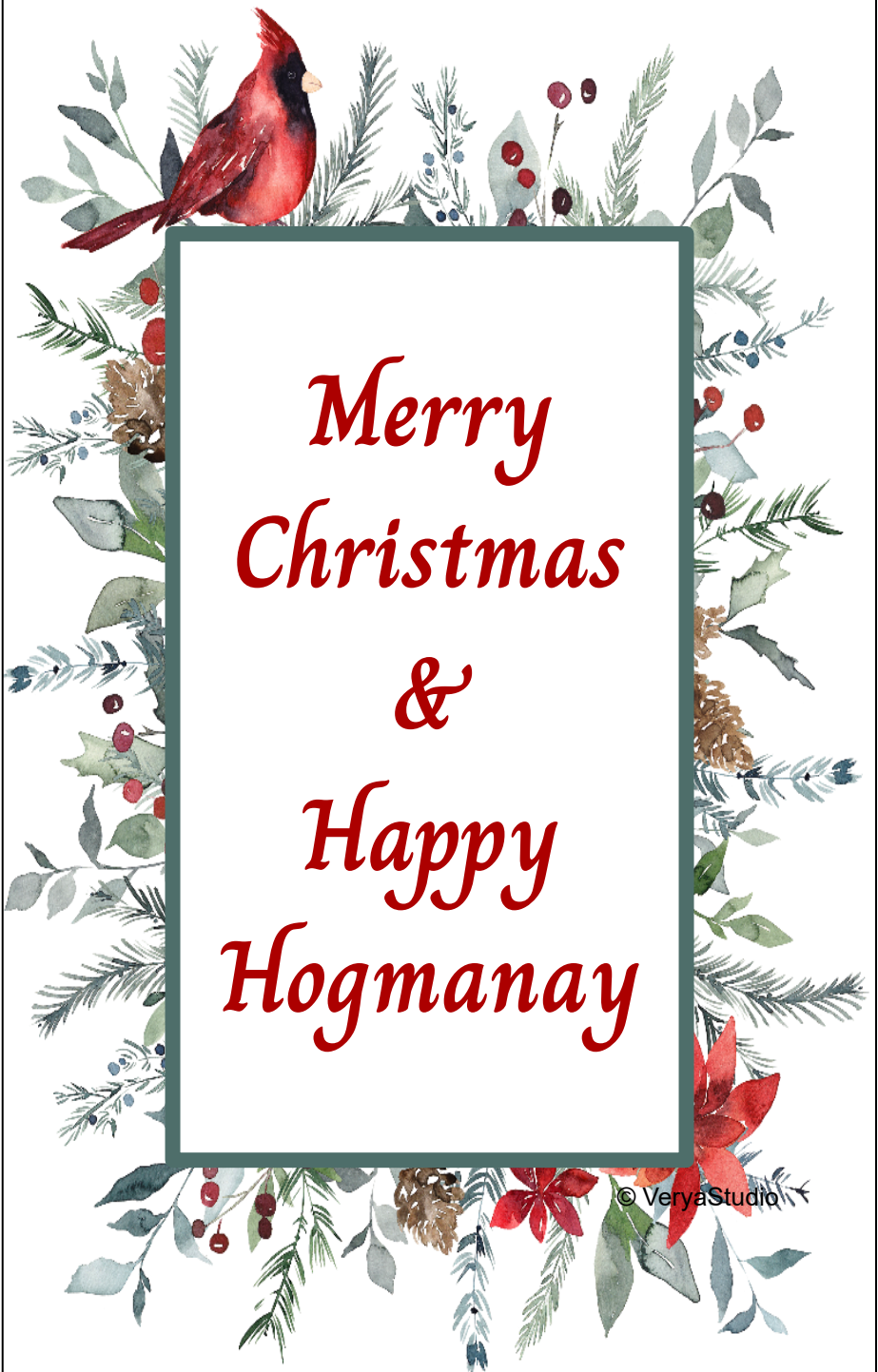
The Newsletter of the Clan Douglas Society of North America

Volume 51 – Issue 4

December 2025

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CDSNA



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NEWSLETTER FOUNDER ~ *Gilbert F. Douglas, JR. MD (deceased)*

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 ONTARIO – **Vacant**

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CDSNA



Regents

REGENT VACANCIES

UNITED STATES

ARKANSAS. Regent(s) needed for
 Batesville and Hot Springs areas

IDAHO. Regent(s) needed for Boise
 area

ILLINOIS (North). Regent(s) needed
 for the Chicago area

INDIANA. Regent(s) needed

KENTUCKY. Regent(s) needed

MINNESOTA. Regent(s) needed for
 Twin Cities area

MONTANA. Regent(s) needed for
 Billings, Hamilton & Kalispell areas

NEVADA. Regent(s) needed for Las
 Vegas area

NEW ENGLAND. Regents needed for
 Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode
 Island and Vermont

OHIO. Regent(s) needed for Berea
 area

PENNSYLVANIA. Regent(s) needed

SOUTH DAKOTA. Regent(s) needed
 for Aberdeen area

TENNESSEE (West/Central).
 Regent(s) needed

TEXAS (South, Central, East).
 Regent(s) needed

UTAH. Co-Regent needed for Salt
 Lake City area

CANADA

BRITISH COLUMBIA. Regent(s)
 needed

NEW BRUNSWICK. Regent(s)
 needed

ONTARIO. Regent(s) needed

There are several events in Canada
 in need of CDSNA representation.



If a local Scottish or Celtic event welcomes clans but does not have a Clan Douglas representative, please consider being the Clan Douglas Society Regent for the occasion.

Representing CDSNA at a single event is better than no Douglas representation at all.



The President's Comments



Greetings Clan Douglas Members! I hope this message finds everyone well as the holiday season approaches. I wish you and your families a very Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas. Please stay safe and enjoy this special time of year.



It has been a busy year with a lot happening behind the scenes with the Board. We have been in regular contact with William Douglas of the Douglas Archives, who keeps us updated on the progress of the proposed monument to Sir James Douglas in Douglas, Scotland. Things are moving forward positively. A sculptor has been commissioned to design a statue and submit a proposal for consideration. As soon as more details are available, I will share them with everyone. I hope Clan Douglas Society will be able to donate to this worthy project and that many of our members will choose to contribute individually as well. It is still some time away, and we are awaiting confirmation on whether donations from outside organizations and individuals will be accepted. More information will follow.

I have recently received several calls from Board members asking whether I had sent them emails or texts requesting that they pay a bill on behalf of Clan Douglas with a promise of reimbursement. To be perfectly clear: *NO Board member or representative of the Clan Douglas Society will ever email, text, or otherwise contact you requesting money.* Scammers are unfortunately very active and continue to use these tactics. Please remain vigilant.

A heartfelt thank-you to all our dedicated Regents as the 2025 games season ends. You are truly the face of Clan Douglas at events across the country, and your hard work and passion are deeply appreciated. Representing our Douglas and Scottish heritage is a labor of love, and we simply could not do this without you. If any member is interested in becoming a Regent, or would simply like to help at games in your area, please reach out to our Vice President Scott Douglas or to me. Your local Regent would also welcome assistance. And to everyone—please come out to the games when you can! You will meet wonderful like-minded people who share a pride in their heritage and make many new friends along the way.

Finally, we now have a solid plan for the location of the 2027 General Membership Meeting (GMM). We will begin announcing details soon so members can start making travel plans. We would love to invite Stewart Douglas back as our guest if his schedule permits, and we will do our best to bring a representative from Scotland to join us.

As always, many thanks to our members, Regents, and Board for everything you do to support the Clan Douglas Society of North America.

Sláinte!

Mark A. Peterson
CDSNA President
A Douglas! A Douglas!





The Vice-President's Comments

Clan Douglas Society of North America is proud to announce that our 2027 General Membership Meeting (GMM) will be held in May 2027 at the Smoky Mountain Scottish Festival and Games in Townsend, Tennessee. Nestled in the beautiful foothills of the Smokies, this vibrant festival provides the perfect setting to celebrate our Douglas heritage with friends, family, and clansfolk from across North America.

Members will enjoy a weekend filled with music, athletics, and Scottish pride, along with our official society meeting and special clan activities. Mark your calendars and plan to join us for this memorable gathering of the Douglas kindred — where history, kinship, and Highland spirit come together beneath the Douglas banner!

More information forthcoming about host Hotel and GMM Dinner soon as it becomes available.

Yours faithfully,
Scott Douglas
Vice President, Clan Douglas Society





The Secretary's Report

Clan Douglas Society of North America, Ltd. Board Meeting
Saturday, September 6th, 2025
9:00 AM PST, 11:00 AM Central, 12:00 EST

1. Meeting Called to Order

2. Roll Call: Board Members present: Carol Morton-Bianchini, Mark Peterson, Tom Douglas, and Scott Douglas. Absent: Tim Tyler and Chuck Mirabile.

3. Welcome Guests: Present: Editor, Jaime Haushalter and Storekeeper, Brandy Mahoney. Absent: Harold Edington and Curtis Rowell.

4. Officers and Storekeepers Report

- a. President's Report: Not much to report.
- b. Vice President's Report: Planning to attend the New Hampshire games to evaluate it as a potential location for our next GMM. Also considering St Louis on Saturday, December 6, 2025 at 5:30 pm. Fredericksburg, Virginia will hold the Fredericksburg Christmas Parade - for more information - Fredericksburg Virginia Christmas Parade.
- c. Secretary's Report: Eric Vigil encouraged new member Laine Douglas to volunteer for the Rio Grande Valley Celtic Festival. Eric is writing a paragraph to post on the Facebook Group and in the Dubh Ghlase December 2025 issue. One Stop Reports have been revised and are a part of legal documentation for our non-profit. Regents are required to complete them along with a brief narrative of their event. The Secretary will assist with tutorials, if needed. Regents can email to set up a brief online meeting. Researching database.
- d. Treasurer's Report: Checking account: \$10,240, Investment Account: \$146,317, PayPal: \$1,027.62. Financial report completed and will be included in the Dubh Ghlase September 2025 issue. City of Deltona Celtic Festival & Highland Games will be held on November 8, 2025. For more information.
- e. Storekeeper's Report: Wish list stated for her job. Mark stated he would use clan's resources to take care of all the things Brandy needs. These were not Board requested reports nor did we approve this. Many hours were devoted to the Storekeeper's setup in March 2025.

5. Old Business

- a. Approve Minutes: Not discussed. Mark did not include it in the meeting.
- b. E-Store Inventory Items: Secretary Carol developed the inventory spreadsheet to be sent to the Treasurer. The Storekeeper completed the entry of Regents' inventory. She did not submit the individual Regents' inventories as requested by the Board.
- c. Website Update: Researching how to deploy AI for notices on membership renewals, greetings for new members, and various other notices. September links were found to be unlinked due to a Wix update. The Board took a vote to deploy AI membership notices and other notices to ease



the volunteer work load as suggested by the Secretary and Mark Peterson held the vote. It was approved unanimously.

- d. Media Update: Not discussed.

6. New Business

- a. GMM Update: Scott Douglas, VP. See above VP's report.
- b. Extra Paid Help for Scott Douglas: Attending the Loon Mountain Games. Volunteers were discussed by Secretary Carol. No paid help was discussed or approved by Board.
- c. Update on Monument Discussion: Mark Peterson engaged in a conversation with William Douglas about the Good Sir James monument funding application, which has been submitted. Mark advised he would help fund personally and wants CDSNA to make a donation. A detailed document of the monument including a lengthy description and measurements to be provided by the project group and will be reviewed by the Board before discussing any donation. No mention of the name of the group working on the project was made. It was brought to us by William Douglas, Douglas Archives.
- d. CDSNA E-Store: Baseball hats suggested by Editor Jaime, and women's tank tops suggested by Secretary Carol as new purchases. Sept Book suggested by Board and Name Tags were added. Banners (8' and 10') are free to Regents. Reorders of store goods can be made online along with banners. Orders will be adjusted as free with a coupon requested from Storekeeper, Brandy. This will provide the order at no cost to Regents and shipping is free. Please email Brandy directly for the coupon and instructions on how to order.

7. Open Discussion: End of meeting.

Respectfully,
Carol Morton-Bianchini
Secretary





Clan Douglas Society of North America New and Renewing Members

Welcome to the Clan Douglas Society

New Members

Suzanne Simonette, NC	Luke Douglas, NH
Bryan Douglas, AZ	Salomaa Mikko, WV
Jason Douglas, CA	Blair Thompson, TN
Jessica Ranard, VA	Karen Douglas Hubbard, TX
Keys Wat, NC	Blyth Douglas, NY
Douglas Luccio, VA	Angie Nash, VA
Jennifer Noyes, ME	Elizabeth Swan, NH
Sara Snodgrass, CA	Steven Douglas, GA
Cory Molloy, CA	Charles Flock, GA
Evangeline Muldoon, MA	Belinda Anton, WA

Renewing Members

Douglas Isbecque, GA Cynthia Lassiter, SC



Warning: Scammers Are Targeting CDSNA Members!

Scammers are sending fake emails to CDSNA members, pretending to be CDSNA Board Members. The emails ask for money or tell you to buy gift cards. **THIS IS A SCAM.** No CDSNA member will ever ask you for money or gift cards.

If you receive one of these emails:

1. **DO NOT** reply.
2. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments as they can put viruses on your computer or phone.
3. Mark the email as spam or delete it immediately.

For extra protection for computer and phone users, notify your email provider (like Gmail, Yahoo, Outlook, etc.) that the message is phishing then block the sender. All email providers have processes to do this.

Stay safe – when in doubt, delete it!



Editor's Observations

Did you know that Christmas, as practiced by the Catholic Church, was banned in Scotland? The prohibition began with the Protestant Reformation of 1560, when John Knox and the Calvinist Kirk condemned Catholic holidays as "popish idolatry" and hotbeds of immorality. By 1640, Parliament enshrined this in the Yule Vacance Act, which outlawed all Yule (Christmas) observances under threat of fines or imprisonment – no feasting, carol-singing, or even court recesses were permitted. This stern policy endured for nearly 400 years, bolstered by further acts in 1690 and 1711. England, by contrast, reinstated the holiday in 1660 under Charles II, highlighting a classic Anglo-Scottish divide.

The Kirk enforced the ban rigorously in urban Lowland areas, rejecting pagan-rooted customs like Yule logs and evergreens as superstitious remnants. In the rural Highlands, however, communities quietly preserved their Gaelic traditions. Christmas was not recognized as a public holiday until 1958, a reflection of Scotland's long-held distrust of what they termed the "English holiday."



In true Scottish resilience, the suppression of Yule simply redirected the nation's winter festivities to Hogmanay, the exuberant New Year's Eve celebration – likely derived from Old Norse or French terms for midwinter revelry. As a secular event, it escaped the Kirk's scrutiny and became a vibrant outlet for ancient solstice traditions, fostering deep community bonds. Here are some of its cherished customs:

- *First-footing*: The first visitor after midnight – ideally tall, dark-haired, and bearing gifts of whisky, salt, coal, and shortbread – ushers in good fortune and wards off misfortune.
- *Redding out*: A thorough house-cleaning to sweep away the old year and welcome renewal.
- Fireworks, torchlit processions, and lively ceilidhs filled with fiddles, reels, and dancing into the night.

Far from dimming Scotland's festive spirit, the ban elevated Hogmanay to iconic status, where it often eclipses Christmas even today. Victorian influences and 19th-century bank holidays gradually reintroduced Christmas trees and Father Christmas, but Hogmanay remains the emotional heart of the season – Edinburgh's grand street parties rival the world's biggest New Year's events. This legacy speaks to Scotland's cultural tenacity: deprive them of one holiday, and they craft a daring, more authentic alternative, weaving pagan roots with Presbyterian practicality into a tradition that is as enduring as it is joyful.

Merry Christmas & Happy Hogmanay!

Respectfully yours,

Jamie Haushalter
Dubh Ghlase Editor





Christmas is Coming



Give a unique Douglas gift
this Christmas



Clan Douglas Society
Challenge Coins \$10



The Douglas Larder
The Clan Douglas Cookbook

\$13



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Christmas with the King: Robert Bruce's 'Festive' Itinerary, 1306-28 Callum Watson, Ph.D.

Merry Christmas everyone! We've never done a specifically Christmas-themed post here on the blog, but I appreciate this year Christmas might be very different for all of us, and so it seemed like an opportunity to do something a little bit different here as well. To that end, today we're going to have a look at how King Robert I of Scotland spent each Christmas during his reign. It should be noted right away that as with much of Bruce's life and reign, we are blighted by a frustrating lack of sources and so it will not be possible to reconstruct for certain what occurred on every Christmas from 1306-1328. It is also worth bearing in mind that Christmas was celebrated rather differently in the medieval period, with Christmastide understood to run from Christmas Day itself (25th December) to the Feast of the Epiphany (6th January). This is actually good news for us, since if we can find evidence for where Bruce was on any of the days of this twelve-day period we can at least make some tentative deductions about how Bruce spent Christmas in a given year. Hopefully, by exploring Bruce's itinerary and who he was with at Christmastide, we can get a sense of how changing circumstances influenced his activities over the course of the reign.

‘Doomed to wander through the world – oh, woe is me!’: Christmas with the Outlaw King, 1306-7



Folio 13 of the Holkham Bible, a picture book produced in England sometime between 1327 and 1335 (and thus perhaps belonging to the end of Bruce's reign). Above, an angel visits the shepherds to inform them of Jesus's birth, while below, the shepherds visit Joseph, Mary and the infant Christ in the stable at Bethlehem. There's a lot to love about this image, from the attentive sheepdog in the top image, the short-tempered expression on the faces of the angel and Joseph, and the shepherd who has apparently been constantly playing the bagpipes all the way from the hill to Bethlehem! Image source: <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=34291>



King Robert's first two Christmases were almost certainly not especially jolly occasions. Having killed his rival John Comyn, lord of Badenoch in front of the high altar at Greyfriar's Kirk in Dumfries in February 1306, Bruce had been hastily inaugurated as King of Scots at Scone on 25th March (the Feast of the Annunciation, which in medieval Scotland was treated effectively as New Year's Day). However, successive defeats at the Battles of Methven in June and Tyndrum in July or August shattered his military support and reduced him to the status of a fugitive in his own kingdom. As a result, we lose track of Bruce altogether in the latter part of the year and we cannot say for certain how he spent the winter of 1306-7. The late fourteenth-century Scottish poet John Barbour has Bruce spending this time on Rathlin, a tiny island off the coast of Ulster (and thus perilously close to enemy-held territory in Ireland). Barbour has Bruce leaving for Rathlin from Dunaverty Castle in Kintyre, where the poet claims the king spent three days (Bk. 3, ll. 677). If this is so, then Bruce must have been gone before

the end of September, when the castle fell to the English. Barbour also reports that Angus Óg Macdonald of Islay submitted to Bruce at Dunaverty, and this may give us a better clue as to how Bruce spent his first winter as king. The Macdonalds were, alongside the MacDougalls and the MacRauridhs, one of three kindreds who claimed descent from Somerled, a formidable twelfth-century 'King of the Hebrides'. These three kindreds competed for dominance in the Hebrides and along Scotland's west coast, and in recent years that MacDougalls had benefitted greatly from familial associations with the Comyns and, through them, the Balliols. This of course made them no friends of Bruce, and it had been John MacDougall of Lorn who had inflicted the

defeat on the king at Tyndrum that summer. Macdonald, on the other hand, had historic connections to the Bruces, having been a party to an agreement (relating to the regulation of Scottish activities in north-east Ireland) known as the 'Turnberry Band' alongside Bruce's grandfather in 1286. As a result, Macdonald's submission in autumn 1306 was surely motivated by an expectation – probably even a promise on Bruce's part – that the interests of the Macdonalds in the west would be promoted by the Bruce regime if Macdonald would provide King Robert with the material support necessary to fight back against his domestic enemies like the MacDougalls. This then gives us our best indication of how King Robert occupied himself in the period from around September 1306 and February/March 1307. Far from languishing on Rathlin or communing with spiders, Bruce most likely spent the winter of 1306-7 travelling around the Hebrides (and perhaps the western Highlands as well), gathering support by exploiting local rivalries, no doubt drawing on his familiarity with the politics and culture of Gaelic Scotland – as well as an ability to speak to the local lords in their native tongue developed during a youth spent



The hill on which Dunaverty Castle once sat. Held for Bruce until the end of September 1306, it may be that King Robert sheltered here briefly before taking flight either to Rathlin Island or into the Hebrides for the winter. This is the last time we have any firm indication between the autumn of 1306 and the spring of 1307. Image source: <http://www.southendargyll.org/heritage.asp>



making regular visits to Carrick. Where precisely Bruce spent Christmas in 1306 is anyone's guess, but he was surely somewhere along Scotland's west coast, frantically building a new basis for the coming war.

Christmas 1307 was probably also a somewhat trying time for King Robert. His return to the mainland in the spring had been followed by some frantic manoeuvring and a handful of early strategic successes, most notably at the Battle of Loudoun Hill in May. The death of King Edward I of England in July had delayed the threat of direct English reprisals and freed King Robert to devote his attention to dealing with the 'native' opponents to his rule. To that end, Bruce struck out northwards at the head of a force composed of the Gaelic-speaking allies he had accrued during the winter and the 'army of Carrick', which had apparently flocked to him on his return in spring 1307 despite the reversals he had suffered the previous year. Concentrating his efforts in the north had a double advantage for Bruce. The region was far enough away from the border that it would be difficult for the English administration to directly interfere with his activities, and it allowed him to focus on the traditional powerbases of his rivals the Comyns in the central Highlands and the north-east. Bruce seems to have begun in the far north – in Ross, Caithness and Sutherland – and gradually moved eastwards from there. Happily, we have access to two letters – one written by William, earl of Ross, in autumn 1307 and another written by Duncan of Fren draught, sheriff of Banff, in April 1308 – that give us a sense of the king's movements during this period. From the former we learn that in October/November Bruce negotiated a truce with Ross to last until the following June. Duncan then reports that on the Feast of St Catherine the Virgin (25th November), Bruce seized Inverlochy Castle thanks to 'the treason and deceit of the men of the castle'. Shortly afterwards, Sir Gilbert Glencairnie the Elder was compelled to surrender Inverness Castle due to 'lack of water'. Interestingly, Duncan's letter blames the fall of Inverness on the unwillingness of the earl of Ross to include it in his truce, while Ross's letter insists that he only accepted the truce because he felt he could not rely on the support of the men of Moray. This would suggest that Bruce was benefiting from disunity among his opponents in the north. Having slighted Inverness Castle, Bruce proceeded to burn Invernairn Castle and took Urquhart Castle, on the shores of Loch Ness, 'for want of keeping'. Next, Bruce besieged Sir Gilbert Glencairnie the Younger at Elgin Castle, but unlike his father the younger Gilbert was allowed to negotiate a truce. The king then withdrew to Banff Castle, where according to Duncan 'he fell into sickness of the body'. The precise nature of this illness is unclear, but it may have been the earliest bout of a recurring condition that would eventually claim his life in 1329. Late in his poem, Barbour claims that the malady that eventually killed the king was brought on 'through his cald lying/Quhen in his gret myscheiff wes he' (Bk. 20, ll. 76-7), which would certainly seem to link it to the frantic campaigning Bruce and his men had undertaken in the wet and cold autumn weather of 1307. Both Barbour and another later Scottish chronicler John of Fordun report that the king was so weak that he could no longer walk, having to be carried around in a litter, and this resonates with contemporary descriptions of King Robert in his final years. We also cannot be entirely certain when exactly Bruce fell ill. Duncan gives the





impression that it was before Christmas, probably early to mid-December, whereas Fordun states that it was after Christmas Day. Unhelpfully, Barbour merely states that it was 'eftyr the Martymes [11th November]/Quhen snaw had helyt all the land' (Bk. 9, ll. 128-9). On balance, Duncan's (admittedly vague) dating is probably to be preferred since it makes more sense of the subsequent English manoeuvring that went on in the closing days of 1307. Duncan reports that after abandoning Banff Castle, the Scots occupied Duncan's own manor house at Concorn for two nights, burning it as they left. The reason for leaving, Duncan assures us, was that John Comyn, earl of Buchan (cousin and namesake of the man who Bruce had killed in February 1306), David Strathbogie, earl of Atholl, and Sir John Mowbray had assembled a force with the intention of challenging the Scots in battle. For this reason, the Scots assumed a more defensible position at Slioch near Huntly, in an area that Duncan – who claims to have been present in the English force – describes as a 'wooded marsh'. Both Duncan and Barbour

give the impression that Buchan et al. were emboldened by news that the king was sick and were hoping to exploit this fact to smash the Scottish army while they were vulnerable. Our competing sources offer differing accounts of what happened next. Fordun claims that on Christmas Day the English, 'overwhelmed with shame and confusion', negotiated a truce with King Robert (who in Fordun's view was still hale and healthy at this point). Barbour on the other hand describes three days of skirmishing between the English and the beleaguered Scots. Duncan offers the least dramatic version of events, claiming that Buchan and co. concluded that they could effectively challenge the enemy without a sufficient infantry force. They thus waited a week for infantry reinforcements to arrive, by which time the Scots had slipped away westwards again. It is not clear how long it took for King Robert to recover from his illness, but he was apparently his old self again by the beginning of May, when he negotiated a truce with Sir John Mowbray before immediately seizing and destroying Balvenie Castle and then striking north again towards the Black Isle. Overall, the impression from these sources is that Christmas 1307 was likely another miserable one for King Robert, probably spent seriously ill – possibly in fear for his life – and with the future of his kingship once again under serious threat.



Perhaps the most famous medieval depiction of a Christmas celebration, from the only surviving manuscript copy of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The poem opens amid the Christmas festivities at Camelot, where the mysterious Green Knight interrupts proceedings offering to accept a blow with his axe from any of King Arthur's knights, so long as they agree to receive the same blow from him a year hence. Sir Gawain promptly chops off the Green Knight's head, only for the interloper to pick it up and leave, reminding him of his promise to take the same blow in one year's time. The remainder of the poem concerns Gawain's (mis)adventures on his way to fulfil his oath. Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gawain_and_the_Green_Knight.jpg

The Wilderness Years: Christmases, 1308-15

Sadly, for the next eight years of Bruce's reign, we have no clear picture of how he spent each Christmas. By late 1308, King Robert seemed at last to be making some genuine headway in his bid to assert his perceived rights, and so Christmas of that year may have at least seemed



like a welcome respite after the drama of the preceding two. Victories over the Comyns at the Battle of Inverurie in May and over the MacDougalls at the Pass of Brander around August had given him the upper hand over his domestic enemies, and a fairly successful campaign into Galloway led by his brother Edward Bruce in the summer had made a start at intruding Bruce authority into the former heartland of their rivals the Balliols. The submission of William, earl of Ross, at the end of October had cemented Bruce's control over northern Scotland, and English records indicate that it was around Christmas that Sir Robert Keith, hereditary marischal of Scotland, came into King Robert's peace. Notable submissions such as these were a sign that increasingly the community of the realm, even those with residual Balliol/Comyn affiliations, were starting to recognise Bruce as the man who could best guarantee their interests within the kingdom. Perhaps most importantly, in November 1308 a temporary truce was agreed (and in February extended to last a full year) between King Robert and King Edward

II, an agreement facilitated by French and papal envoys. In the long run, Bruce could exploit the involvement of these foreign agents to claim that he was being internationally recognised as the rightful King of Scots. But even in the short term, a brief respite from warfare gave Bruce space to begin overseeing the administration of the realm in a more active and direct way than he had hitherto been able. While we have no clue as to where King Robert resided for Christmastide in 1308, the period may well have been one of excitement and anticipation, perhaps devoted to tentative preparations for the first parliament of the reign, which would be held at St Andrews in March 1309. Bruce's activities over Christmas 1309 remain even more mysterious. We last see him on 2nd November (when the truce was due to expire) at St Andrews, where he confirmed the rights of his long-standing ally Malcolm, earl of Lennox, as sheriff of Clackmannan. This does not read as the act of king carefully making preparations for renewed hostilities, nor as that of a man frantically trying to arrange an extension to the truce, although it seems unlikely that this was the only business conducted by the king at this time. Dr Michael Penman has reasonably speculated that Bruce may have come to Fife to discuss the possibility of

extending the truce with Bishop William Lamberton of St Andrews, who – while ostensibly still in English custody – was being given increasing freedom by his captors to act as their proxy in dealings with the Scottish royal administration. In sum, it is difficult to get an accurate sense of the general attitude of King Robert and his court in late 1309. His priorities remained the same – to secure recognition of his rights as king from his English opponents – but whether he preferred to do so through diplomatic channels or through further warfare remains uncertain, as do his movements.

We have slightly more evidence to go on for Bruce's outlook at Christmas 1310, though the nature of this evidence once again makes it difficult to pinpoint his precise whereabouts at the time. In June of that year,



King Edward II receiving the crown of England, from a contemporary manuscript of the Chronicle of England. Edward's presence at Berwick from November 1310 until July 1311 may have made Christmas 1310 a somewhat tense time for Bruce, although there are some indications that this also raised the king's hopes of securing a peace deal with the English king. Image source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_II_-_British_Library_Royal_20_A_ii_f10_\(detail\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_II_-_British_Library_Royal_20_A_ii_f10_(detail).jpg)



Maidens defending the 'Castle of Love' from hordes of amorous young knights, from f. 75v of the Luttrell Psalter, produced c. 1325-40. Though obviously a metaphorical illustration, if an earlier dating for the psalter is preferred the arms, armour and equipment utilised by the besiegers at least offers some insight into the gear available to Bruce and his men during their assault on Perth in January 1313. Bruce's Christmas in 1312 was likely dominated with preparations for the attempt on the town. Image source: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_4213_0_fs001ar

Edward II had received a delegation comprising Sir Alexander Abernethy, Sir Ingram d'Umfraville and the MacDougalls – all of whom were Scots with Balliol or Comyn sympathies – and was accused of jeopardising the English crown's hold on Scotland through his 'default and laxity'. Their appeal – coupled with a desire to distance himself from the aristocratic dissent he was increasingly facing in domestic politics – spurred King Edward into undertaking a campaign into Scotland, beginning in September 1310. On the whole, this was not as serious a challenge to King Robert as it might at first appear. Bruce was perfectly capable of keeping out of Edward's way, denying him a pitched battle that – if Bruce lost, as was likely – might see him reduced back to the desperate state he had been in at the end of 1306, or worse still lead to his death or capture. A letter – dated 1st October 1310 – provides some insight into Bruce's strategy at this point. In it, King Robert implores his English counterpart to consider a peaceful settlement to the conflict. Of course, the fact that the letter was produced at Kilmun in Lennox, a region where the slow-moving English royal host would struggle to hunt Bruce effectively, indicates that whatever offers of lasting peace or promises of concessions he

was willing to extend, Bruce intended to remain out of Edward's reach and deny him a military solution. By November, the English army had withdrawn to Berwick-upon-Tweed, but the English king remained there for nearly eight months, not venturing south again until the end of July 1311. This must have made Christmas 1310 something of a tense time for King Robert. Any uncertainty over whether or not King Edward might mount a renewed campaign the following summer threatened to rob Bruce of the momentum he had built up over the last few years. Bruce was not entirely unable to undertake military activities – the contemporary Lanercost chronicler suggests that he led a raid through the Lothians shortly after Edward had withdrawn to Berwick in November – but so long as the English king remained this far north Bruce's ability to expand his authority within Scotland would be limited. On 3rd December we find King Robert at Montrose, seeking to reassert the religious community at Arbroath Abbey of their financial rights. It may be that this indicates that Bruce continued to pursue a similar policy throughout the winter as he had during Edward's active campaigning, remaining in the northern regions of his kingdom and maintaining his distance from his rival. However, in February 1311 an English clerk made a tantalising reference to peace talks that apparently took place at Selkirk on 17th December 1310, with Sir Robert Clifford (a long-standing servant of the English crown) on one side and 'Robert de Brus' on the other. This is particularly fascinating given the tenor of Bruce's letter in October and the suggestion, made by the anonymous authors of the Lanercost chronicle and the *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, that at this time Edward II was willing to recognise Bruce's rights as king if Bruce would in turn provide shelter for the English king's favourite Piers Gaveston. Yet on 15th December, Edward II wrote to his royal officers in the north-western counties to be wary of potential Scottish attacks on the Isle of Man, while the following day he ordered that the 'adherents' of King



Robert in England, Ireland and Wales should be arrested. It may be then that the Scots concluded that the English were not acting in good faith, explaining why nothing ultimately came of these talks.

The king's experience of Christmas 1311 remains a complete mystery for us unfortunately. The late summer and early autumn of 1311 saw King Robert making armed incursions into northern England, which were severe enough that the local communities bought brief truces from the king to see them through the winter. At some point in early 1312, the Scots seized and razed Ayr Castle, so it may be that these assaults on the northern counties were part of an effort to disrupt the supply lines from northern England into southern Scotland and thus to isolate the English garrisons in the south-west. If this was the case, then perhaps Bruce spent Christmas 1311 preparing to make his move against this stronghold, but this is a highly speculative interpretation of the depressingly scant sources available. Bruce's precise activities at Christmas 1312 are also obscure, although



The nineteenth-century canopy over the well at Scotlandwell in Perth and Kinross. A site associated with curative miracles, King Robert's visit to Scotlandwell in February 1314 may indicate that he was once again enduring a period of ill-health, one that had perhaps begun as early as October 1313. Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Well,_Scotlandwell.jpg

we can at least make some more informed deductions in this case. The Lanercost chronicler reports that on 6th December the Scots mounted a covert attack on the walls of Berwick, being foiled only when a barking dog awoke the defenders and alerted them to the danger. Yet on 7th January King Robert was to be found personally leading a successful assault on the walls of Perth, capturing the town and cementing his control of Scotland north of the Forth-Clyde isthmus. The route that King Robert took to lead his forces north – and the places he stopped on the way – are unclear, but it is fair to suggest that Christmastide 1312 must have been spent drawing up plans for the attack on Perth. A significant part of these preparations may have been devoted to dispensing suitable patronage to David Strathbogie, earl of Atholl, to whom the later English chronicler Sir Thomas Gray attributes the capture of Perth. Atholl was technically Bruce's nephew (Bruce's first wife had been Atholl's aunt) but the earl's wife Joan was a Comyn, leading Atholl to initially side against Bruce after 1306. Eagle-eyed readers may recall that Atholl was one of the figures hunting King Robert at Slioch at Christmas 1307! However, with his Perthshire lands increasingly under the control of the Bruce Scots – and he himself being dogged by substantial debts in England – Atholl now sought to ingratiate himself with his uncle's royal administration. The earl was still a very recent recruit to King Robert's side in December 1312 – he had been one of the Scottish magnates to ratify the Treaty of Inverness in October but the English were still making payments to him as late as 4th December – and so it seems likely that the period around Christmas may have included the king making



arrangements to reassure him that his interests would be protected by the Bruce regime, especially if he was expected to be helpful in securing the capture of Perth.

Christmas 1313 may have been another difficult and unpleasant one for King Robert, though once more we cannot be certain precisely how he spent it. It is quite probable that around this time he suffered another bout of his recurrent illness and may once again have been in fear for his life. We get an early indication of this with the grant – undated but probably belonging to an assembly at Dundee in late October 1313 – of the earldom of Carrick to the king's only surviving brother, Edward. Carrick had belonged to their mother Marjory and had been the Bruces' most prestigious title before Robert became king in 1306. Subsequent generations of Scottish kings would treat the title as an effective way of identifying their anticipated heir. Bruce's own son David II would hold the title in the final years of his father's life and would later grant it to his intended successor in 1368, while both of Robert III's sons held the title in their capacity as heir to the throne. It is highly likely that the grant of 1313 was similarly intended as a means of highlighting Edward Bruce's status as the person most likely to inherit the

kingdom in the event of King Robert's death. While Bruce had at least one illegitimate son by 1313, his wife Elizabeth and his daughter from his first marriage Marjory remained in English custody, meaning the chances of one of the king's own offspring inheriting were incredibly slim. The formal acknowledgement of this fact is not in itself particularly odd, but the timing requires some explanation. After all, Edward Bruce had been heir presumptive since 1306, yet in seven years had not been elevated to the earldom despite his brother having had plenty of opportunities to bestow it on him. He had been granted the former Balliol lordship of Galloway ahead of the St Andrews parliament of 1309, but this was probably designed more to encourage him to pacify the region for the king than to identify him as his brother's senior male relative and expected successor. Significantly, the king had revived the earldom of Moray for his 'dearest nephew' Thomas Randolph – who had no claim

to the throne – by October 1312, but Edward Bruce would have to wait a full year for a comparable title. In these circumstances, the decision to grant the earldom of Carrick to Edward Bruce may well have been undertaken in light of another downturn in the king's health, which as in the winter of 1307-8 could have raised concerns that he would not recover. The king does not fall off the radar entirely for the winter of 1313-4 (and, as we have seen, it would not necessary signify anything untoward if he did) but what we can reconstruct of his movements hint weakly at a period of illness. On 18th December Bruce was to be found at Ayr granting one Roger, son of Finlay, all of the lands of one John Seton in the tenement of Cumnock (Seton had stolen horses belonging to Roger and, more seriously in Bruce's view, apparently defected to the English). Ayr was less than twenty miles up the coast from Turnberry Castle, the *caput* (administrative centre) of the earldom of Carrick, where Bruce may have spent a substantial portion of his youth. We know that when Bruce was really dying in 1329, he withdrew to the manor house he had built for himself at Cardross on the Firth of Clyde (again, not far from his native Carrick) and so it may be that in 1313, with his health apparently failing him, Bruce elected to spend Christmas in the





comfortable and familiar surroundings, in a region of his kingdom for which he seems to have had genuine affection. The king then disappears from the record until 16th February 1314, when he was at Scotlandwell bestowing a gift of lands and revenue on Inchaffray Abbey in Perthshire 'for salvation of his soul and for the salvation of the souls of his predecessors and successors'. Again, there is nothing wholly unusual about this grant. Maurice, Abbot of Inchaffray, had been an early supporter of Bruce who would later become the Bishop of Dunkeld thanks in no small part to the king's patronage, and it was common enough for gifts to religious houses to express concern for one's immortal soul. Yet the inclusion of Bruce's successors may indicate that he felt he currently faced an uncertain future. The location of this grant may also be revealing, as the well for which Scotlandwell is named was a place of pilgrimage specifically associated with curative miracles. Most tellingly of all, when the Scots resumed their furious military activities in early 1314, King Robert was nowhere to be found. It was James Douglas, at this point a young up-and-coming war leader from Lanarkshire, who took Roxburgh Castle by ruse on 19th February (three days after Bruce's grant to Inchaffray Abbey) and Edward Bruce who oversaw the slighting of the fortress afterwards. In March, it was the king's nephew Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, who seized and slighted Edinburgh Castle, and the king's brother and heir presumptive who is credited with having besieged Stirling Castle and made the deal with the garrison there that ultimately led to the Battle of Bannockburn in June. Perhaps King Robert eschewed these enterprises in order to reduce the risk of him being killed and thus plunging the future of the Bruce dynasty into uncertainty, but danger had not deterred him from playing a prominent and active role in martial activities before. Nor did it prevent him from leading the Scottish host into battle at Bannockburn later in the year. More likely, Bruce's absence from the events of early 1314 – like his grant of Carrick to his brother and at least his appearance at



The earliest surviving depiction of the Battle of Bannockburn, from Walter Bower's Scotichronicon (1440s). The centrepiece of this image is the famous face-off between King Robert and Sir Henry de Bohun, a young English knight killed by the king on the first day of battle. This encounter suggests that if Bruce had been sick over the Christmas period in 1313-14, he had made a full recovery by June. Victory at Bannockburn strongly shifted the momentum of the conflict in Bruce's favour, and he was afterwards largely free to dictate patterns of landowning in Scotland to suit his aims. Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_Bannockburn.jpg



Scotlandwell – was a result of another bout of ill-health, one that probably made Christmas 1313 another miserable time for the king.

If Christmas 1313 was a rather glum time for King Robert, then the events of subsequent twelve months revolutionised his position. Victory over the English royal host at the Battle of Bannockburn in June did not guarantee an end to the war, but it did furnish Bruce with the ability to dictate patterns of landholding in Scotland to far greater degree than he had before. On 6th November 1314, Bruce convened a parliament at Cambuskenneth Abbey (within sight of the scene of his recent victory) at which he forfeited all those Scottish landowners who had not yet formally recognised him as the rightful king. In the years after 1314 Bruce would undertake a gradual but thorough-going redistribution of these forfeited lands, essentially rebuilding the Scottish political community as he saw fit. The king remained at Cambuskenneth until at least 14th November, but by 16th had moved on to Dunfermline. On 10th December he was at Dumfries, confirming the rights of the Knights of St John to lands at Torphichen in West Lothian, and he next appears at Arbroath Abbey from 10th-15th February 1315 making a series of fairly minor grants, including a gift to his soon-to-be nephew Colin Campbell and compensating the religious community at Deer Abbey in Buchan from formerly Comyn lands for damage done during the war. We cannot be certain how or where King Robert spent the intervening time, but it is safe to assume that Christmas 1314 was a time of cautious optimism for the king and court, likely occupied with dishing out rewards to those who had supported him thus far, conducting inquests into the value of the forfeited lands, and perhaps even making tentative plans for a major project to codify and rationalise Scots law that would eventually result in the compilation of the *Regiam Majestatem*. Christmas 1315 is another mysterious time in Bruce's life. Penman has suggested that the king may have 'spent a frugal Christmas with his family at Dunfermline while he planned his next bold stroke', possibly making plans for what proved to be another unsuccessful attempt to seize Berwick, mentioned by the

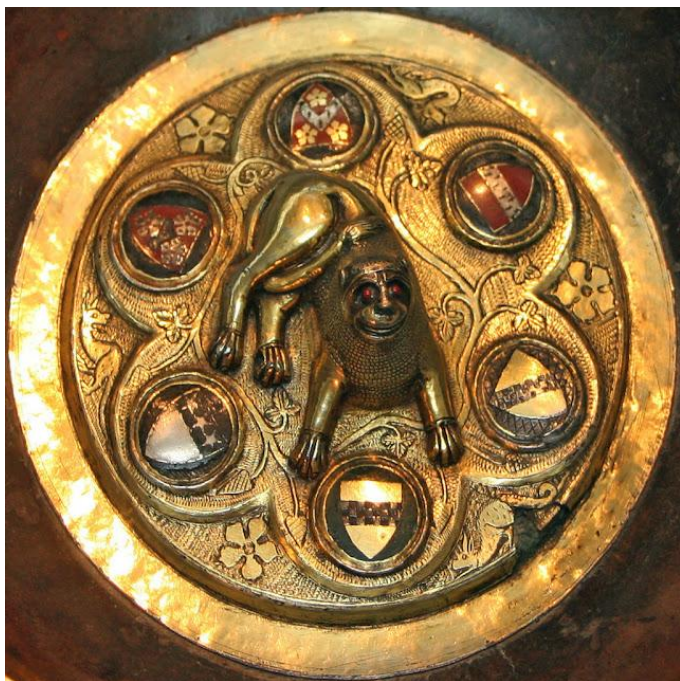


The very fragmentary ruins of Coupar Angus Abbey. Bruce spent Christmas 1316 at the abbey, possibly to take advantage of the altar dedicated to St Malachy to secure the saint's blessing for an upcoming campaign in Ireland. Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_Bannockburn.jpg

Lanercost chronicler as occurring on 14th January 1316. However, it is at Arbroath Abbey that we last find King Robert in 1315, confirming the status of William, earl of Ross's son and heir Hugh as sheriff of Cromarty in two separate documents produced on 5th and 7th December. Hugh Ross's appointment to this office was likely part of a broader policy of balancing out the growing influence of the Macdonalds across the western and northern Highlands, and thus it may be that domestic politics dominated Bruce's mind at this point in time. Arbroath was the site of Bruce's chancery – since its abbot, Bernard, had been his chancellor since at least 1308 – and the abbey was dedicated to St Thomas Becket, one of Bruce's most venerated saints, whose feast day was 29th December. It may well be then that Bruce chose to spend the Christmas period at Arbroath and availed himself



of the opportunity to celebrate St Thomas's feast day at the abbey. In October 1315, the king had contributed four marks annually for the lighting at the tomb of his predecessor King William 'the Lion', who was buried before the high altar at Arbroath. This payment has been associated with remodelling work that Bruce apparently conducted on William's tomb, so a visit to Arbroath at the end of 1315 also enabled Bruce to inspect the work that had been carried out (or to assess what work was required). As it happens, we do know how the king's brother spent Christmas Day 1315. Having scored a significant victory over the English administration in Ireland at Kells on 6th December, Edward Bruce resided at the manor of Loughsewdy in Meath over the Christmas period. It seems likely that news of success in Ireland would have boosted King Robert's confidence over Christmas 1315, although news of the confrontation at Kells cannot have reached him by the time the surviving documents produced at Arbroath were being written.



The gilded print from the centre of the Bute Mazer, a communal drinking vessel created during the reign of King Robert and possibly used on occasion by Bruce himself. The arms depicted in the top right of this image - featuring an ermine fess (horizontal band) on a red field - likely represents Susannah Crawford, a prominent heiress from Ayrshire, who was in receipt of royal patronage in January 1318. Two of the other individuals represented on the mazer - Walter Stewart (between the lion's paws) and James Douglas (to the left of Stewart's arms as we look at them) - witnessed the grant to Susannah and her husband in 1318. Image source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lwr/4352459952/>

A Spirit of Giving: Gifts & Grants, 1316-17

At last in 1316 we have direct evidence for how Bruce spent Christmas again. On 17th December, the king was at Clackmannan instructing Chancellor Bernard to confirm the rights of Paisley Abbey as they were in the time of King Alexander III. However, on 25th Bruce was at Coupar Angus inspecting and confirming a charter by Sir John Graham in favour of Melrose Abbey. The following day, he granted an annuity of eight marks, to be paid from the thanage rents of Tannadice, to one William of Walterston. This raises a significant issue when considering our deductions about Bruce's previous Christmases. The fact that the king covered the nearly fifty miles between Clackmannan and Coupar Angus between 17th and 25th December 1316 tells us that we cannot assume that if Bruce is to be found somewhere in early or even mid-December we can therefore guarantee he would have spent Christmas nearby. The conclusions drawn above can only be provisional at best then. This is the only occasion when we find Bruce producing documents at Coupar Angus, and Penman has brilliantly suggested that Bruce may have wished to pray at the altar dedicated to St Malachy at Coupar Angus Abbey in anticipation of the armed expedition he would lead to Ireland in early 1317. Bruce family tradition had it that King Robert's great-grandfather

had been cursed by St Malachy (a twelfth-century Archbishop of Armagh) for hanging a robber after promising to spare him. The Scots had maintained a military presence in Ireland since early 1315, but despite several notable strategic victories they had yet to score a major breakthrough there, which King Robert may have at least partly blamed on St Malachy's curse. We know that in February 1319 Bruce made a gift of lands to Coupar Angus Abbey to pay for a candle and a lamp for the altar of St Malachy, which may have been a response to the



ultimate failure of the Scottish 'adventure' in Ireland. The unusual decision to spend Christmas at Coupar Angus in 1316 is therefore likely tied to the king's eagerness to ensure the success of the coming Irish enterprise. Excitingly, the witness lists of these two documents offer some insight into who King Robert spent Christmas *with* in 1316. The confirmation on 25th was witnessed by the chancellor Bernard, Abbot of Arbroath, the chamberlain William Lindsay, the constable Sir Gilbert Hay, the marischal Sir Robert Keith, and Sir Alexander Stewart of Bonkyl, a minor Berwickshire nobleman. There are no great surprises here, but there are some notable absences, not least Bruce's nephew Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, son-in-law Sir Walter Stewart (Stewart of Bonkyl's cousin), and Stewart's cousin Sir James Douglas. Randolph had been a mainstay of the king's entourage since 1309 and would accompany Bruce to Ireland in early 1317, while since 1314 Stewart and Douglas had risen to become two of the king's closest regular councillors. However, the charter of 26th indicates that neither witness list provides an exhaustive list of who was with the king at the time. Only the chancellor, constable and marischal witnessed both documents, with the second list being rounded out by Sir David Barclay and Sir James Lindsay. Thus, we must accept that the witness lists give us an incomplete – though tantalising – glimpse at who Bruce spent his Christmas with in any given year.

The following Christmas found Bruce in the south-east of his kingdom, and once again this was probably in response to developments towards the end of that year. At the same time as King Robert had crossed over to Ireland (January 1317), Edward II had dispatched an embassy to Avignon to meet with the recently-elected pope, John XXII. The English delegation enjoyed rather mixed success in achieving its aims, but it did secure papal support for a prospective truce between Scotland and England. To that end, letters were dispatched from the pope to King Robert enjoining him to accept the truce and in August two papal legates even paid a visit to Scotland to discuss the matter. The legates reported that the king greeted them 'with a cheerful face and amiable countenance' but largely prevaricated about needing to seek approval for the truce from his council and even cheekily claiming not to have read the papal missives that addressed him merely as 'governor of the realm of Scotland' since he could not be certain that they were addressed to him! As much of a sticking point as the king's proper title may have been, the fact was that the Scots had little reason to embrace a truce while they were yet to make definitive headway in their efforts in Ireland, and while Berwick (the first Scottish town to be taken at the beginning of the war in 1296) remained in English hands. Bruce's equivocation with the papal envoys was likely intended to delay the process of establishing a truce until a breakthrough came on at least one of these fronts, while at least giving the impression of wanting to be party to the truce if and when peace-making became necessary in the future. To their credit, the papal representatives were not wholly convinced by King Robert's dissimulation. On 16th December, possibly in response to fears (or knowledge of) plans for a renewed assault on Berwick and/or Scottish border raiding, they dispatched a Franciscan friar to reiterate the terms of the truce to the Scottish king. The friar found Bruce at Aldcambus, only ten miles up the coast from Berwick, but he was denied access to the king and on his return journey south was robbed of his





goods (including the paperwork he was carrying), possibly on the orders of King Robert. Nonetheless, Bruce remained in the south-east over Christmastide, presumably wishing to maintain the pretence of being amenable to further truce negotiations as well as to perhaps facilitate preparations for another attempt to capture Berwick. On 26th December, King Robert was at Newbattle Abbey to grant the lands of Newtyle and Kinpurney in Forfarshire to Sir William Oliphant of Dupplin and Aberdalgie. Nine days later, on 4th January, Bruce was to be found at Penicuik, confirming the rights of Sir Duncan Campbell and his wife Susannah Crawford to the baronies of Loudoun and Stevenston in Ayrshire (while acknowledging that if their union produced no offspring, the lands

would revert to Susannah's heirs, since it was through her that the couple claimed these rights). This raises another potential issue with our assessment of how Bruce spent his Christmases, since the king was apparently willing to travel during Christmastide. On the face of it, this might lead us to conclude that even when we can identify where Bruce was on or around Christmas Day, we cannot assume that he remained there throughout the 'festive season', so to speak. However, Penicuik is less than ten miles from Newbattle Abbey, and thus it seems likely that the king had simply travelled there while still residing at the abbey. Once again, the witness lists for these two documents are illustrative of the group surrounding the king at this time. The gift of Newtyle and Kinpurney was again witnessed by the chancellor, chamberlain, constable and marischal, this time joined by the king's son-in-law Sir Walter Stewart. For the second charter, the chancellor, chamberlain and marischal were present (this time without the constable), as was Stewart, and they were now joined by Stewart's cousin Sir James Douglas. Again, these were all frequent councillors of the king and this reinforces the impression that, regardless of the fact it was Christmastide, the regular administrative business of the kingdom does not seem to have stopped.



Thomas, earl of Lancaster, (left) and St George from an early fourteenth-century Book of Hours (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 231). Lancaster had been a perennial opponent of his cousin King Edward II throughout his reign, refusing even to serve on the Bannockburn campaign in 1314 and hamstringing Edward's royal administration in the years after the battle. However, events of 1318 led Lancaster to reunite with the king in the hopes of recovering Berwick from the Scots the following year. This made Christmas 1318 a potentially tense time for Bruce. Image source: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1013046?rskey=OdNTzW&result=1>

Renewed Crisis, Further Uncertainty: Setback & Recovery, 1318-22

By Christmas 1318, the momentum of the conflict was once again beginning to shift against King Robert. The year had started well enough, when in April the Scots were presented with an opportunity to overrun Berwick at last. Although it took until June to winkle the garrison out of the castle, the recovery of Berwick restored Scotland's border as it had been during the reign of King Alexander III and thus had enormous symbolic value for



the Bruce regime. However, it also finally convinced the pope that the king had not been serious about negotiations concerning the truce, and by the end of June he had issued a bull excommunicating not only King Robert but the entire community of the realm so long as they continued to adhere to him. On the one hand, the seriousness of this censure can be exaggerated. The Scottish clergy no doubt offered reassurances to the king and his subjects that the pope could be convinced to rescind this penalty, as they had done the first time Bruce had been excommunicated, and Bruce had no doubt known from the outset this was a risk of his irreverent diplomatic policy. Yet even so, a sentence of excommunication on the entire kingdom was about the worst outcome he could have expected, one that might encourage those within Scotland who had only recently come over to the Bruce cause to consider a change of allegiance. The seriousness of the fall of Berwick was not lost on the English political community either. Since his victory at Bannockburn in 1314, Bruce had benefited greatly from increased tension between Edward II and a significant party of English nobles, led by Edward's cousin Thomas, earl of Lancaster. However, even Lancaster understood that the permanent restoration of the pre-1296 Anglo-Scottish border represented a serious threat to England's prestige. This led to something of a détente between Edward and his cousin, who joined forces for the purposes of staging an attempt to re-capture Berwick in the near future. This was a major material threat to the Scots, raising the possibility of a renewed English invasion of Scotland, possibly on a larger scale than had been seen in 1314. Yet more misery was heaped on King Robert in October, when his brother Edward was killed at the Battle of Dundalk in Ireland. Since the king had still not produced a legitimate son by 1318, and Edward Bruce left no legitimate offspring of his own, this meant that in the event of King Robert's death, the kingdom would be inherited by Bruce's grandson Robert Stewart, who can have been no more than two years old at the time. Though provisions for such an eventuality had been made as early as 1315, the possibility of an infant becoming King of Scots – in the midst of an on-going and bitter armed struggle and with the threat of another invasion looming – raised an uncomfortable sense of uncertainty over the future of the Bruce dynasty. At Christmas 1318 then, King Robert found himself paradoxically at risk from both becoming a victim of his own success following the capture of Berwick *and* falling afoul of his own dynastic insecurity!



King Robert II of Scotland and his second wife and queen Euphemia Ross, as they appear in the Forman Armorial of 1562. Named after his grandfather Robert Bruce, he made his first appearance in the written record on 3rd December 1318, in an entail concerning the proper line of succession for the Scottish kingdom. This document was produced in response to a crisis provoked by the death of Bruce's brother Edward in October. Image source: <https://thefreelancehistorywriter.com/2014/03/21/the-two-wives-of-robert-ii-king-of-scots-elizabeth-mure-and-euphemia-ross/>



Despite the growing set of crises that confronted him in the latter half of 1318, Bruce reacted in typically swift and decisive fashion. On 3rd December, he convened a parliament at Scone which ratified a number of statutes on a wide range of issues – many of them clearly formulated in response to the developing situation – as well as approving a new entail concerning the succession of the Scottish crown. As with an earlier document produced in 1315, the entail expressed the expectation that sooner or later Bruce would have a son of his own to succeed him, but stated that in the event he did not then the king's grandson Robert Stewart should become king. If it occurred that whoever did succeed the king was a minor at the time of their accession, the entail appointed the king's nephew Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, to serve as guardian of the realm until they came of age. If Randolph too died while the king's heir was a minor, then the formidable Sir James Douglas would assume the role of guardian. This could not preclude the possibility of an underage King of Scots, but it at least guaranteed that the king's subjects would have an adult and experienced war leader to look to on matters of war and diplomacy if that did come to pass. Most importantly, by having the entail approved by parliament Bruce was in effect securing the assent of the entire community for his preferred arrangement for the succession. There might



Berwick-upon-Tweed seen from above, with the town's sixteenth-century defences particularly prominent. King Robert seems to have spent several of his Christmases here following his capture of the town in 1318. Berwick had been Scotland's largest and most prosperous burgh before the war began and Bruce appears to have taken particular pride in retaining it, investing considerable sums of money in returning the town to its former glory. Image source: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/berwick-upon-tweed-castle-and-ramparts/history/>

still be those within Scotland who remained anxious about the stability of the Bruce dynasty, but if they acted against it they would – ostensibly at least – be behaving contrary to the will of the community of the realm and breaking their own public commitment to the entail to boot. There were surely those who did harbour such anxieties, for the Scone parliament also passed a statute forbidding anyone from being 'a conspirator or an inventor of tales or rumours by which a source of discord shall be able to arise between the lord king and his people'. Such a provision must have been proposed in response to a feeling that uncertainty over the future of the dynasty and the anticipated English offensive left King Robert particularly vulnerable to internal challenges at this time.

As well as shoring up his domestic position, Bruce also got preparations underway for the defence of Berwick the following year. Previously, Bruce had tended to slight the strongholds he captured, hoping to deny the English the ability to hold them against him in future. However, the symbolism of Berwick for the Scottish royal administration encouraged him to abandon this strategy in favour of maintaining possession of the town. To that end, parliament issued orders for the royal host to assemble 'around the octave of Easter next to come' (that is, 15th April 1319). Bruce can hardly have been entertaining the prospect of meeting the English head-on in battle, but mustering an army for early in the campaigning season gave him options for handling whatever his enemies threw at him when the time came. We cannot be certain whether or not Bruce remained at Scone over Christmas 1318. He was certainly still there on 6th, when he confirmed the rights of the mercantile community at Haddington. The next time we see him, on



29th January, the king was at Berwick granting one John le Glen rights to a millpond at Balmuto in Fife. Aside from this business, there were no doubt inspections to be made of the state of the town's defences, as well as plans for a prospective military response to the threat of English invasion to concoct or review. Precisely when King Robert set off southwards, what route he took, and where he stopped along the way, we sadly cannot reconstruct. English records indicate that at some point during December the Scots sought safe-conducts for a diplomatic mission composed of the marschal Sir Robert Keith, the butler Sir William Soules, the steward of the royal household Sir Alexander Seton, Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, Sir William Mowat, and others to travel to England, apparently for further truce negotiations. Such an embassy must have been discussed at and was probably commissioned by the Scone parliament, and it may be that King Robert felt compelled to spend Christmas in the south-east, just as he had the previous Christmas, if he was still hopeful of keeping the possibility of the papal truce alive.

Of course, even if the Scottish delegation did go south in December 1318 or early 1319, Edward II was no longer in the mood to talk peace. His assault on Berwick did not come at Easter or during the summer, as Bruce seems to have predicted, but in early September Edward's army surrounded Berwick by land and sea and began to apply immense pressure to the garrison there. While Bruce's son-in-law Sir Walter Stewart led the defence of the town, Randolph and Douglas launched a raid deep into English territory, inflicting a brutal defeat on a hastily-assembled militia force led by William Melton, Archbishop of York, at the 'Chapter' of Myton. King Robert's absence from both of these arenas of conflict might conceivably be interpreted as evidence that he was suffering from another bout of his recurring illness at this time, but in context a less dramatic explanation seems likely. It was probably simply deemed to be too dangerous for the king to risk his life on campaign into northern England – and certainly to place himself under threat of capture at Berwick – while the future of the Bruce dynasty had so recently been brought into question by his brother's untimely demise. Randolph and Douglas's raid into England did the trick, causing fresh discord between Edward II – who wanted to continue the siege of Berwick – and his northern magnates, not least the earl of Lancaster – who wanted to withdraw south to defend their possessions. Not only did this ultimately lead the English to lift the siege, by reignited tensions between Edward and Lancaster it promised further disruption for the English royal administration in the months and years to come. No doubt buoyed by these successes, King Robert held an assembly at Berwick, probably something closer to a general council than a full parliament, in December 1319. There would again have been practical reasons for the king to make an appearance in the town, not least to assess the damage done during the recent siege and to inspect the repair efforts. Yet his choice of Berwick also sent a powerful message to his opponents – external and internal alike – about his achievements thus far and his expectations about his future prospects for success. On 8th December, in the company of his chancellor, his marischal, his nephew and his son-in-law, as well as Douglas, Sir David Lindsay of Crawford and Sir David Barclay, Bruce granted the burghal community at Aberdeen the right to hold its annual fair for a fortnight beginning the week after Easter. Two days later, on 10th, Bruce made another grant to the burgesses of





Aberdeen, this time witnessed by the chancellor, marischal and constable, Randolph, William Lamberton, Bishop of St Andrews, William Sinclair, Bishop of Dunkeld, and the king's brother-in-law Sir Alexander Fraser, appearing for the first time as chamberlain. Also on 10th, King Robert granted the barony of Symington in Lanarkshire to one Thomas, son of Richard – witnessed by Chancellor Bernard, Randolph, Stewart, Douglas, and Patrick Dunbar, earl of March – and confirmed a gift of lands in Eskdale by Sir John Graham in favour of the hereditary Butler of Scotland Sir William Soules – witnessed by the chancellor, the marischal, Randolph, Stewart and Douglas. Again, these witness lists confirm the usual suspects were in attendance on the king – the royal officers, his kinsmen, and faithful councillors like Douglas – while the presence of leading clerics – like Lamberton and Sinclair – as well as a leading local magnate – the earl of March – gives us the impression that Bruce was overseeing more than just a meeting of his regular council. The most important development of the council came on 21st December, when King Robert and his nephew Randolph ratified the terms of a two-year truce (to run until Christmas Day 1321) with an English delegation composed of John Hotham, Bishop of Ely, Aymer de Valence, earl of Pembroke, Hugh Despenser the Elder, and Bartholomew de Badlesmere. This was a huge vindication of Bruce's actions over the previous two years. He had seized and then successfully defended Berwick, prevented his English counterpart from establishing a lasting settlement with his aristocratic opponents, and still managed to secure his inclusion in a temporary peace deal that would buy him time and space to try to repair his relationship with the papacy. Though we do not have direct evidence for Bruce's activities over Christmastide in 1319, it seems highly likely that he remained in Berwick, basking in the accomplishments of the past year and perhaps planning for the diplomatic offensive he would launch during the period of truce.



The 'Declaration of Arbroath', a letter addressed to Pope John XXII ostensibly from the barons of Scotland but likely heavily influenced by the Bruce regime's chancery, produced in April 1320. The letter was part of a concerted diplomatic offensive by the Scottish royal administration during the truce of 1319-21 to restore relations with the papacy. The fact that several of those named as Bruce supporters in this later would within a year be implicated in a plot to depose the king illustrates the fact that King Robert still faced a significant crisis of authority at this point in the reign. Image source: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/Declaration>

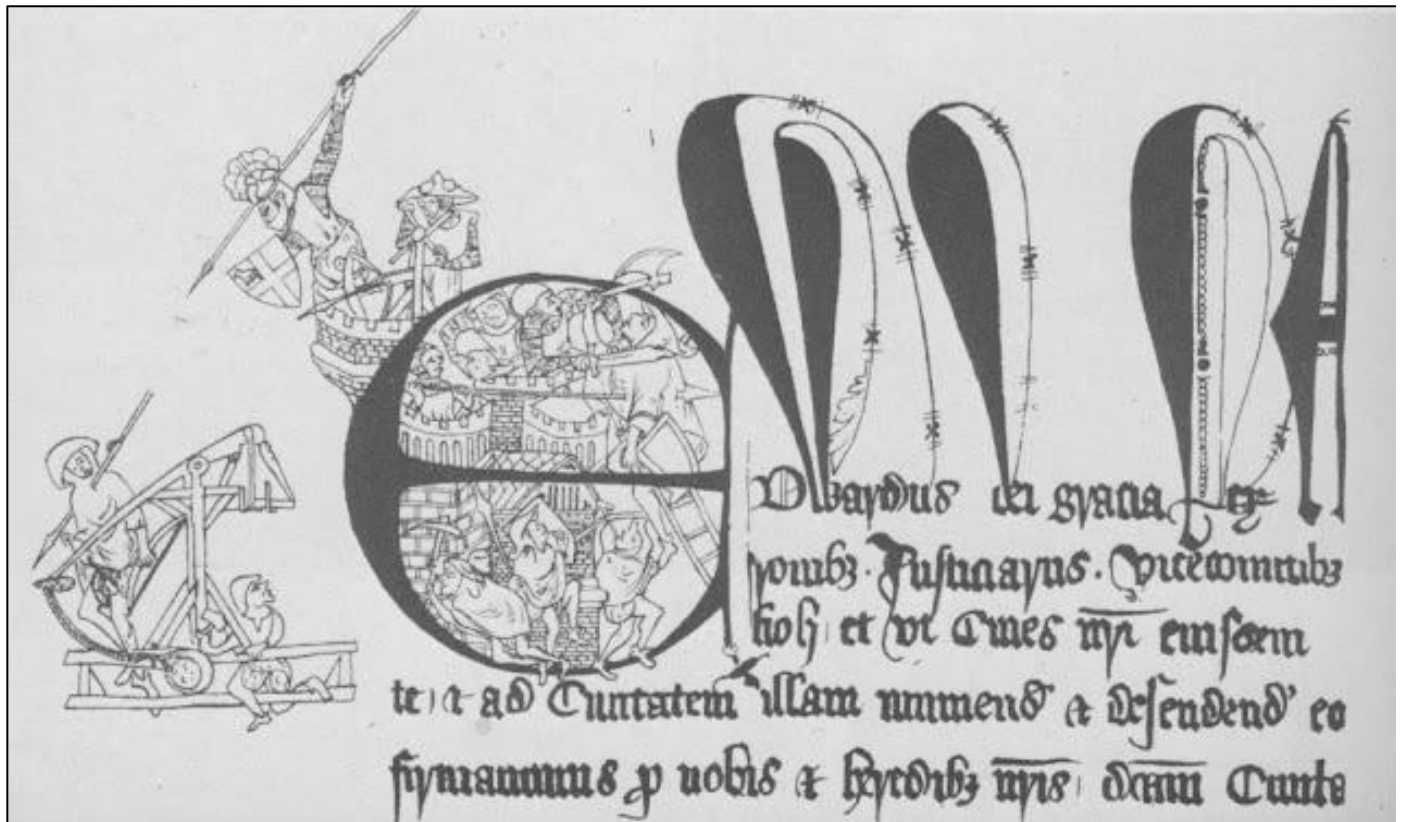


While Christmas 1319 may have seemed like a time of triumph for King Robert, the crisis sparked in 1318 was not entirely over. Over the course of 1320 it became apparent that a conspiracy had been formed against King Robert, led by some significant figures from within the community and even some of those close to the king himself. The precise nature of the conspiracy is rather difficult to reconstruct, not least because the Bruce regime appears to have worked hard during 1320 to cover-up the details. But judging from the list of those implicated at the so-called 'Black Parliament' which met at Scone in August to condemn the plotters it had probably been gestating since late October 1318 in the wake of the death of Edward Bruce. Those eventually found guilty were all men with former Balliol/Comyn connections who likely felt they had not been suitably rewarded for their shift in allegiance to Bruce, or else resented the generosity the king had lavished on his more enthusiastic supporters out of lands forfeited after 1314. Their aim was probably to overthrow – possibly even kill – King Robert and install Edward Balliol, the son and heir of John Balliol, Bruce's immediate predecessor as King of Scots. One of those implicated in the conspiracy was the aforementioned William Soules, who may have hoped to exploit his privileged access to the king's person as Butler of Scotland to facilitate this plot, a fact that may explain why the Bruce administration was so eager to suppress

the details of their scheme. As serious as this threat seems to have been, the plot may still have been only partly formed when it was blown, as it certainly seems to have been rolled up pretty quickly and effectively once it was exposed to the king and his courtiers. Nevertheless, the ruthlessness of the Bruce regime in dealing with the conspirators and burying the specifics of the plot suggests that the royal administration was fairly shaken by its revelation. We cannot be certain how Bruce spent Christmas in 1320, but it seems likely that the shadow cast by the discovery of the plot against him still hung over the court at this point. On 24th November, Bruce was at Scone, issuing a reassuring letter to the monks at Melrose Abbey promising that any payments that they made for repairs to the defences at Berwick would not set a precedent for further exactions in the future. We next find him at

the Abbey of St Congall just north of Dumfries on 14th January, and how he spent the intervening time remains unclear. Here, Bruce confirmed the rights of Holm Cultram Abbey in Cumbria to £10 annually from the lordship of Buittle in Galloway. As well as restoring the abbey's rights as they were before the war, the king claimed to be acting 'for the salvation of his soul and of the souls of all his ancestors and successors' and also honouring his father, who was buried at Holm Cultram. He may also have wished to subtly illustrate his ability to intrude his authority into northern England, perhaps reflecting suspicions that the English royal administration had supported or even colluded in the recent plot against him. Bruce's presence in the south-west in mid-January 1321 may indicate that he had once again spent Christmas south of the Forth for the purpose of facilitating further peace talks, and it does appear that Scottish envoys visited Carlisle around this time in an effort to translate the existing truce into a lasting peace deal. This impression is weakly reinforced by the fact that on 26th January Bruce was to be found at Berwick extending safe conducts for up to fifty unnamed representatives of Edward II, valid for one month from 2nd February. Presumably, these unspecified representatives of the English king were expected to discuss terms for permanent peace. Bruce's activities around Christmas 1321 are even more of a mystery





The illuminated capital from a charter of 1317 rewarding the inhabitants of Carlisle for successfully defending their town from the Scots the previous year. The illustration here celebrates the town's defence and features Sir Andrew Harclay (identifiable by the arms on his shield) personally leading the defence of the town by casting spears down at the Scots below - with devastating effect! Harclay's meteoric rise in the defence of the Anglo-Scottish border continued after 1316, seeing him created earl of Carlisle in 1322, but by January 1323 he had apparently lost faith in Edward II's ability to defend his northern subjects from Scottish attacks. Image source: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/a966aa63-2201-4410-b3de-bb3d89cb621f>

unfortunately. Our best clue comes in the form of a letter – dateable to the period December 1321-February 1322 – between Randolph and Douglas on the one side and Lancaster on the other. It seems from this letter that Bruce was offering cautious encouragement to Lancaster's efforts to undermine Edward II, which may imply that the king once again spent Christmas in the south of his kingdom to be more easily available for correspondence. However, the fact that these tentative negotiations were apparently conducted through Randolph and Douglas could equally mean that Bruce was consciously distancing himself from the discussions, perhaps to give himself plausible deniability if the English royal administration or the papacy became aware of them and accused him of abusing the terms of the truce. Christmas 1321 was also the date appointed for the end of the truce that had begun in 1319, and in January 1322 Scottish raids into northern England resumed. It may then be that Christmastide of that year was spent preparing for this fresh round of conflict and formulating a policy for encouraging Lancaster's dissent, but where the king was during all of this is anyone's guess.

The tone of the surviving correspondence between Bruce and Lancaster (who was coyly codenamed 'King Arthur', apparently in case the letter came to the attention of the English authorities) suggests that King Robert was not overly committed to lending active support to the earl's cause. Yet the defeat, capture and execution of Lancaster in March 1322 represented another potential blow for King Robert's interests. Buoyed by the apparent defeat of his internal enemies, Edward II resolved to lead yet another full-scale invasion of Scotland, his second in under three years. Bruce's response was once again decisive and effective, and surely reflected a confidence



born of his success in weathering the crises he had faced since 1318. King Robert enacted a devastating 'scorched earth' policy across southern Scotland, destroying crops and driving livestock north of the Forth on an enormous scale. The king then withdrew to Culross in Fife to wait out Edward's invasion. Through late August Edward's army slogged its way as far north as Edinburgh, remaining there for a week before sickness and starvation forced them to retreat south again. Under normal circumstances, Bruce might have been expected to leave it at that, but he must have smelled blood on the weakened and demoralised English army because as they withdrew he gave chase, having presumably mustered his army at Culross in anticipation of such an opportunity. At Byland in Yorkshire, King Robert inflicted another telling defeat on the English, forcing King Edward to flee desperately for his life. If defeat at Bannockburn had been disheartening for the English, defeat on their own soil was absolutely devastating for them, particularly the northern communities who were most at risk from Scottish raiding. While Edward II may initially have still entertained hopes of orchestrating a rival from this latest setback, victory at Byland raised Bruce's expectations of being able to secure a new, more permanent peace settlement. If he could not immediately arrange this with his English counterpart, then he would at least apply as much leverage as he could to Edward's northern subjects. On 24th November Bruce was at



Dunfermline Abbey in Fife. Bruce may have spent Christmas 1323 here in anticipation of the birth of his twin sons in March 1324, seeking the intercession of St Margaret, who was buried at the abbey. Image source: <https://our.fife.scot/dunfermline-area/dunfermline-abbey-1/>

Innermessan, on the shores of Loch Ryan near Stranraer, granting lands to Whithorn Priory. Precisely one week later – on 1st December – the king was at Forfar, nearly two hundred miles north, making confirmations in favour of Arbroath Abbey. However, by 3rd January 1323 he may have returned to the south-west, as on that day an agreement was ratified between King Robert and Andrew Harclay, earl of Carlisle, at Lochmaben Castle. Harclay was a prominent figure in the defence of the northern English counties and had been instrumental in bringing a conclusive end to Lancaster's rebellion in early 1322. On paper then, he might seem like an unlikely ally for King Robert. However, the disastrous outcome of Edward II's military enterprise of 1322 had clearly convinced Harclay that the English king was no longer capable of gaining the upper hand in the on-going struggle or even of effectively protecting his northern subjects from Scottish depredation. Harclay's agreement with Bruce therefore committed the earl to doing his best gather support for a lasting peace deal with the Scots and to persuade the English king to accept this settlement, as well as guaranteeing the safety of Harclay's possessions from further Scottish attacks. It is not entirely clear whether Bruce was present in person at Lochmaben in January 1323, since although the Scottish commitment to the deal was made in his name it was his nephew Randolph who is mentioned as having sworn on the Gospels to uphold the agreement alongside the earl. On 8th January, Bruce was at Arbroath offering concessions to the Dominican monks of Perth, which may indicate that from Forfar in early December King Robert moved east to spend Christmastide – including the feast of St Thomas Becket – at Arbroath, leaving Randolph to oversee the arrangements with Harclay. Lochmaben may even have been chosen



as the venue for the agreement to be ratified not only for its proximity to the border (and thus convenience for Harclay to attend) but also because it was the *caput* of Randolph's lordship of Annandale. Yet given that Bruce had been able to cover the distance from Innermessan to Forfar in a week, it is not impossible that he managed to travel from the meeting with Harclay at Lochmaben on 3rd January to Arbroath by the 8th. Wherever the king was at Christmas 1322, it seems highly probable that his time was occupied with preparations for the furtive pact with Harclay and was perhaps also tinged with hope that this would soon lead to a similar agreement being reached with Edward II.

Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All Men(?): Christmas in a time of truce, 1323-1327

In fact, the deal struck in January 1323 turned out to be a death sentence for Harclay. When the English royal administration found out about it, they issued orders for Harclay's arrest and on 3rd March he was hanged, drawn and quartered. However, by now the pressure on Edward II was too great, and in May the Scottish and English governments entered into a thirteen-year truce. This was not quite the permanent peace settlement that Bruce had hoped for, but it at least offered the chance of an extended period in which he could consolidate his achievements. We cannot be certain where Bruce spent the first Christmas of the truce, although Penman has proposed that he resided at Dunfermline Abbey from at least 16th November (the Feast of St Margaret, who was buried at Dunfermline) until perhaps as late as February 1324. This is primarily based on the strength of two charters – one dated 16th January 1324 and the other dated 20th January – produced at the abbey, but it would also fit with the fact that on 5th March Bruce's queen Elizabeth gave birth to twin sons – John and David – at Dunfermline, suggesting that she would have been pregnant during Christmastide 1323. It seems likely that the royal couple were eager to invoke the intercession



A surviving section of the castle wall at Berwick-upon-Tweed, visible from the platform of Berwick Railway Station. Bruce resided at Berwick throughout the Christmas period of 1324-5, probably staying at the castle. Much of Bruce's time here seems to have been occupied with the rewarding of his most faithful followers. Image source: Yours truly.

of St Margaret, who was associated with royal pregnancies in medieval Scotland, and Elizabeth may have worn a relic of St Margaret – her 'birthing serk [shirt]' – while in labour. The queen at least then may have spent the latter part of 1323 and early months of 1324 at Dunfermline, and no doubt the king was preoccupied during this period with the hope that he would finally have a son to succeed him. The birth of John and David – though ultimately marred somewhat by John's death in infancy – provided a huge boost for the royal administration, assuring both king and community that the Bruce dynasty would survive for another generation. Added to this, in January 1324 Pope John finally began to address Bruce as 'King of Scots'. While the pope claimed to be doing



so only as a way of smoothing future peace negotiations, and gave no indication that he would rescind the sentence of excommunication on the community, this represented a major step forward in Bruce's relationship with the papacy. If late 1323 was a time of hopeful expectancy – both literal and figurative – for the Scottish court, early 1324 was a time to celebrate.

Of all of Bruce's Christmases, Christmas 1324 is perhaps the best evidenced. This is thanks in part to the fact that the king held an extended council at Berwick in early November and remained in the town over the entire Christmas period. Bruce was at Berwick from at least 1st November, when he issued instructions to his brother-in-law the chamberlain to arrange for ten marks out of the burgh ferme of Aberdeen to be paid to the Carmelite friars at Aberdeen to pay for the upkeep of the church there. A major part of the business of this council seems to have been concerned with rewarding some of Bruce's closest councillors, which itself may have reflected a feeling that with the establishment of the current truce the hardest part of the war was now over and thus the king was due to settle the debts he owed for years of diligent and often dangerous service. On 7th November, the marischal Sir Robert Keith resigned all of his lands, titles and possessions – including his hereditary office – in preparation for them to be re-granted. The surviving copy of the re-grant is a notarial instrument of 1430 and gives the date as 26th December, but this date surely refers to when the grant was formally logged rather than when it was made. It is difficult to comprehend why Bruce would wait fully seven weeks between Keith's resignation and the re-grant, and Keith was witnessing royal charters styled 'marischal' on 12th December, between his resignation and the apparent date of the re-grant! This, coupled with the make-up of the witness list to the charter restoring Keith's possessions, suggest that there was a much shorter period (perhaps less than twenty-four hours) between the resignation and the re-grant. From the terms of the charter, it is clear that the purpose of this elaborate piece of political theatre was to rationalise Keith's various holdings and to entail them on his surviving male heirs. The Anglo-Scottish conflict had enabled Keith to significantly expand his landed interests, receiving lands in Lanarkshire (originally for his service to the English crown) and the north-east (benefiting from



The heraldic achievement of the lord of Keith ('lourt a keets') as depicted in the late fourteen-century Armorial of Gelre. The individual represented here is William Keith, who had acquired the Keith patrimony thanks in part to a grant made by Bruce in favour of William's uncle Robert Keith around Christmas 1324. The charter of 1324 was designed to entail the Keith estates and titles in the male line, apparently in response to fears about the future of these holdings in light of the death of Robert Keith's son John. Image source: <http://journals.socantscot.org/index.php/psas/article/view/6386>



Bruce's forfeiture of the Comyns). Having resigned all of these disparate claims along with the hereditary office of marischal, Keith now received them all back as one grant, with his various lands now permanently associated with his office. The charter also clarified that in the event of Keith's death, he should be succeeded by his grandson and namesake Robert, since Keith's own son John had already died (possibly recently). If the younger Robert predeceased his grandfather (as eventually happened), then Keith's office and holdings should pass to his brother Edward and his heirs. This was essentially the same arrangement that Bruce himself had made for the succession of the crown in 1315 and 1318 and was likely intended a means of reassuring a long-standing and close associate of the future security of his family's interests. The re-grant was witnessed by Chancellor Bernard, Sir Gilbert Hay the constable, the king's kinsmen Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, and Sir Walter Stewart, Sir James Douglas, and four bishops – William Lamberton, Bishop of St Andrews, John Lindsay, Bishop

of Glasgow, William Sinclair, Bishop of Dunkeld, and Gilbert, Bishop of Sodor (i.e. the Isles). As we shall see, this represents the core of the individuals who were to witness most of the documents produced at Berwick, and the presence of the bishops hints at the fact that this was business being conducted by an extended council, rather than simply in the presence of the king's regular entourage.

The day after Keith's resignation, Sir James Douglas had his wide-ranging lands across the south of Scotland raised to the status of a regality – that is, he was given rights to the proceeds of justice within the bounds of his estates and exempted from the exactions of royal officers in all but the most serious cases. Moreover, King Robert personally invested Douglas with an emerald ring,



The ruined fifteenth-century tower house at Aberdour Castle, the oldest part of the castle remaining. The barony of Aberdour, on the southern coast of Fife, was granted to Bruce's nephew Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, in January 1325, while Bruce was still at Berwick after Christmastide. Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aberdour_Castle_-tower_ruins.jpg

symbolising the significance of the public relationship between these two men. Ostensibly, the king's gift to Douglas was in compensation for the latter's agreement to release three French knights and their valets who Douglas had captured at the Battle of Byland in October 1322, which was itself a staged act of magnanimity that Bruce had used to curry favour with the French king Charles IV. Yet it also served to cement the position of Douglas as one of the king's most valued councillors and confirmed the role of Douglas's heirs in Bruce's plans for the future defence of the marches. On the same day (8th November), Bruce gave his nephew Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, similarly wide-ranging judicial powers over the burgh of Inverness as well as rights to the burgh customs. Again, Randolph was one of the king's most useful and trusted lieutenants in war, diplomacy and the administration of the realm, a role that would only expand in the final years of the reign as King Robert's health deteriorated, and this grant was surely made as reward for his hard work up to this point. That is not to say that Bruce and his council felt that the war was over and that they could now rest on their laurels, as around 18th November they dispatched an embassy to York for further peace talks with the English. Indeed, if the contemporary *Vita Edwardi Secundi* is to be believed, the Scots were rather bellicose in their demands at York, even threatening renewed war if their demands were not met. Possibly they were encouraged by news of English



reversals on the Continent, where the French had recently successfully occupied Aquitaine and forced another embarrassing truce on Edward II. The embassy's objectives and remit would certainly have been subject for discussion at the general council, and the fact that Bruce remained at Berwick for so long after it had been dispatched may again indicate that he hoped to be available to receive news of their progress. Back in Scotland, King Robert continued to bestow largesse on those closest to him. On 20th November, he rewarded one Patrick, described as 'his chief medical surgeon', with a scattered collection of lands in Angus, Carrick and Galloway 'for sufficient service of medical surgery'. It is tempting, given what we know about how long the king had left to live, that this indicates that Bruce was beginning to suffer another downturn in his health, but this is probably reading history backwards. The gift to Patrick may well have covered services rendered over a long period of time and does not necessarily suggest that Bruce was particularly unwell in the closing months of 1324.

The council at Berwick apparently continued into December. On 12th December he inspected and confirmed a series of charters by King David I, David's son Henry, earl of Huntingdon, and great-grandson King Alexander II concerning the rights of Jedburgh Abbey. That this was done in the presence of the extended council is confirmed by the witness lists of these confirmations. Though the lists change slightly with each confirmation, those present with the king on the 12th included the chancellor, constable and marischal, his nephew Randolph and son-in-law Stewart, the stalwart Douglas, the bishops of St Andrews, Glasgow and Sodor, the justiciar of Lothian Sir Robert Lauder, Sir Edward Keith (the marischal's brother), Sir Alexander Seton, and Sir Adam More. More, a minor landowner from Ayrshire (but with several grants in East Lothian), had been an occasional witness to royal charters since at least 1321 and would be serving as the steward of the royal household by 1328. Indeed, he may already have assumed that role from Seton, who would be serving as steward of the king's son by 1328 and may have been given that honour from the time of the boy's birth in March 1324. More witnessed the confirmation of only one of the charters however (that of Alexander II), while Seton witnessed two (interestingly, those not witnessed by More), and so More may have merely been present as a local knight eager to make an appearance at the council. Four days later, on 16th December, Bruce gave the monks at Arbroath Abbey rights to land in Berwick forfeited by one Simon of Dirleton, described as an 'enemy and rebel...who died in England'. This act was witnessed by Stewart and Douglas and the bishops of St Andrews, Glasgow and Sodor, this time joined by William of Fogo, Robert Marshal and William of Ancrum (abbots of Melrose, Jedburgh and Kelso respectively) as well as Patrick Dunbar, earl of March, and Duncan, earl of Fife. The more clerical make-up of this witness list reflects the fact that this grant concerned the religious community at Arbroath, while the earls of March and Fife may have had connections with the 'rebel' Simon (Dirleton is located in East Lothian and thus sat at a point where these two magnates' spheres of influence overlapped). The absence of Chancellor Bernard is unsurprising given that as Abbot of Arbroath he was effectively a beneficiary of the charter and thus could hardly serve as a witness to it as well. Another four days later, on 20th December, Bruce lavished yet more patronage on Randolph, issuing a confirmation of his nephew's rights to





the lordship of Man in return for the service of six ships of twenty-six oars with men and supplies for six weeks service, as well as an annual payment of 100 marks to be rendered at Inverness each Pentecost. The chancellor is mentioned as having been commanded to produce the relevant documentation (and thus was again not listed as a witness despite being physically present). The constable was present as well, as were Stewart and Douglas, the bishops of St Andrews, Glasgow and Sodor, and the earls of Fife and Dunbar. Added to these now were William Sinclair, Bishop of Dunkeld, Hugh, earl of Ross, and Malise, earl of Strathearn, suggesting that far from winding down the council continued to grow as December progressed. Unfortunately, no witness list survives for a gift, made on 31st December, of 100 shillings to the chapel of the Holy Cross in Dumfries, to be paid by the local sheriff from the revenues of the barony of Caerlaverock. The chapel in question had been founded by Bruce's sister Christina in memory of her husband Sir Christopher Seton, who had been captured by the English while defending Loch Doon Castle on behalf of his brother-in-law the king and was executed on the very spot



Melrose Abbey in the snow. Bruce was here in November 1325 and may have intended to spend Christmas in the south again, possibly at Berwick as he had done the previous year. However, he appears to have diverted the royal court north, possibly in response to a developing standoff between the monastic community at Scone Abbey and the civic authorities in Forfar and Perth. Image source: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/melrose-abbey/>

where Christina had later established the chapel. Bruce was still resident at Berwick as late as 10th January, being attended by the chancellor and constable, his son-in-law, the bishops of St Andrews, Glasgow and Dunkeld, and the earls of March and Fife, all of whom witnessed the king's grant of the barony of Aberdour in Fife to Randolph (who was probably also still present as well). It is not until 24th January that we find King Robert having moved north to Arbroath again. The impression given of Bruce's Christmas in 1324 is thus of a long, fairly leisurely period in a town that the king seems to have taken great pride in keeping, with his days being dominated by the distribution of royal patronage to his closest and most faithful adherents and kindred. This in turn speaks of a king who was increasingly confident in the security and stability of his regime, and must have felt like a lifetime away from the cold, harrowing Christmas he had struggled through on the run in 1306, or spent bedridden at Slioch in 1307!



By comparison to the sedate Christmas of 1324, the pace of Bruce's activities at Christmas 1325 was frantic, although this does not seem to have been in response to a particularly serious crisis. It may simply be that he was once more moving around dealing with matters as and when they arose, resulting in an apparently more hectic itinerary. On 1st November, Bruce was at Melrose, instructing his brother-in-law the chamberlain to ensure that the religious community at Dryburgh Abbey received the twenty shillings annually from the burgh ferme of Roxburgh that had been due to them since the time of King William 'the Lion' (r. 1165-1214), which was apparently to be used to literally keep the lights on at the abbey. By 14th December he was at Clunie in Perthshire, writing to the sheriff and baillies of Forfar and warning them not to interfere with the rights of the community at Scone Abbey. It may be that the king produced this letter while on his way to the abbey in person, as on 29th December Bruce again wrote to the sheriff and baillies of Forfar – and now included the sheriff and baillies of Perth in this missive – from the abbey itself, claiming to have 'inspected and truly understood' the charters held there and reiterating his warning not to interfere with the community's rights. It seems from these letters that there had been some tension between the monks at Scone and the local civic authorities, so perhaps Bruce felt compelled to make a personal appearance and intrude his own royal authority into the situation to settle things quickly. However, the fact that Clunie is north of Scone suggests that the king may already have been planning to spend Christmas north of the Forth. Precisely one week later, on 5th January, King Robert was in Forfar itself (perhaps having come to impress his seriousness on the royal officers he had so recently had to admonish). Here, he made a grant of lands in Lanarkshire to Sir John of Monfode, witnessed by the chancellor, the chamberlain, the constable, the marischal, Randolph, Stewart and Douglas, Bishop Lamberton of St Andrews, Sir Alexander Seton and Sir Adam More. This very much reads as a fairly standard complement of the royal court, who had likely been with Bruce throughout his recent travels. By 10th January, Bruce had moved on to his beloved Arbroath Abbey, still in the company of Abbot Bernard, Bishop Lamberton, Stewart and Douglas, now joined by the earls of Ross, Fife and Strathearn and the bishops of Glasgow, Dunkeld and Moray. The greater status of those present at Arbroath may reflect the fact that the king was about to make a grant connected with his funerary arrangements, although this is not how the gift is framed in the document. The charter in question set aside £100 from the burgh ferme and customs of Berwick – to be topped up from the customs of Edinburgh and Haddington if the full sum could not be gathered from Berwick – to provide a daily meal of rice in almond- or pea-water, to be known as the king's dish, for every monk at the monastery. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the king may have doubted how appealing this would be to the brethren, since the charter allowed that the monks might chose



*A late fifteenth-century illustration of Isabella of France with her mercenary army in 1326, from the *Recueil des croniques et anciennes istories de la Grant Bretagne* by Jean de Wavrin. In the background, her rival Hugh Despenser the Elder is being tortured to death. Isabella's dramatic moves against her husband Edward II in late 1326 must have made that Christmas a time of excitement at the Scottish court, although it is sadly unclear precisely how and where Bruce spent this period. Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isabella_and_Roger_Mortimer.jpg*



to forgo the king's dish and give it instead to the poor, and it also offered reassurances that the provision of the king's dish should not interfere with the usual meals at the abbey. Furthermore, the monks were expected to feed and clothe fifteen 'poor people' from this sum of money each year at Martinmas (11th November), with specific requirements placed upon how the poor should be clothed. If the monks failed in this, they would be required to provide food and clothing for fifteen poor people the following Christmas under the supervision of the forester of Selkirk, who in this period would have been appointed by Sir James Douglas and thus not a man to be messed with! Though it is not mentioned in the charter itself, by this point Bruce had probably already conceived of the plan to have his heart interred at Melrose after his death, and thus the grant may have been seen by the king as part of the obsequies surrounding his eventual demise. By 16th January Bruce was back at Scone, bestowing privileges on Cambuskenneth Abbey, his Christmas tour of Perthshire and Angus apparently drawing to a close.

The king's activities around Christmas 1326 are once more somewhat tricky to reconstruct, but it would appear that he spent it north of the Forth again. Between 14th and 26th November, Bruce was at Berwick, rewarding – among others – the same Roger, son of Finlay, who had been the recipient of royal patronage shortly before Christmas 1313. By 26th November however, Bruce was at Dundee, making arrangements for the upkeep of Scone Abbey with funds raised by the sheriff and baillies of Perth. On 3rd January 1327, we find him at Arbroath Abbey, granting land in Banffshire to a clerk named Andrew. This may indicate that following his visit to Berwick the king made a leisurely progress up the east coast, probably spending Christmastide at Arbroath Abbey (allowing him to once again celebrate the feast of its patron St Thomas Becket there as well). He was accompanied on the 3rd by Chancellor Bernard, the marischal, his nephew Randolph, his eldest illegitimate son

(and namesake) Robert Bruce, lord of Liddesdale, Sir William Munfichet (a local knight), and the royal pantler Sir Andrew Murray of Bothwell, who had married the king's sister Christian earlier in the year. Of course, this likely represents only a partial list of those who spent Christmas with King Robert in 1326-7. Two grants dated 14th January place the king at Perth and nearby Scone Abbey, and Bruce was still at Scone Abbey two days later on 16th. By 1st February, the king had moved on to Stirling, where he made a grant of some Perthshire lands in favour of the constable, Sir Gilbert Hay. Again, this suggests a fairly sedate journey southward again. Despite this apparently relaxed itinerary, the royal court may well have been abuzz with news from England in Christmas 1326. Between the defeat of Lancaster



Durham Cathedral in the snow. During Christmastide 1327 Bruce made a gift of five stags annually to the religious community at Durham, which might have been intended as an act of cross-border generosity designed to encourage the normalising of relations between the Scottish crown and the communities of northern England in light of the coming peace settlement. Image source: <https://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/>



and his fellow rebels in March 1322 and the conclusion of the Anglo-Scottish truce in May 1323, Edward II seems to have believed that by the mid-1320s he was free to govern England however he saw fit. However, in promoting the interests of his favourites the Despensers, Edward alienated his queen Isabella, who abandoned him. In September 1326, Isabella had landed in southern England at the head of a mercenary army, ready to seize control of the kingdom from her husband. By late October Isabella was in a strong enough position to have her teenaged son Edward declared guardian of the realm and on 16th November – while Bruce was at Berwick bestowing his beneficence on Roger, son of Finlay – Edward was taken into custody. The extreme uncertainty over the fate of Bruce's English counterpart must surely have excited considerable interest at the Scottish court over Christmas 1326. First-hand insight into developments in England would have been brought to the king by his estranged nephew Donald, earl of Mar, who had chosen to remain in England even after 1314 but returned to Scotland by early 1327 to request his uncle's support in restoring Edward II to power. Obviously, Bruce cannot have harboured much affection for his long-standing rival, but the unprecedented instability brought about by Isabella's invasion presented an irresistible opportunity for King Robert to leverage further diplomatic concessions from the beleaguered English royal administration. Indeed, even as the young Edward III was being crowned at Westminster Abbey on 1st February 1327, the Scots swarmed over the border, in breach of the truce, and descended on the northern counties again.

The gamble of reigniting the war in order to put renewed pressure on the English at the negotiating table paid off spectacularly. After Randolph and Douglas had led her mercenary army a merry dance around Weardale in the summer, Isabella apparently recognised the extreme vulnerability of the English marches and resolved to pursue a peaceful solution to the threat posed by revived Scottish aggression. Talks rumbled on between the Scots and the English from November 1327-February 1329, though King Robert was reportedly too ill by this point to personally take part in the negotiations (he is described by an eye-witness to his visit to Ireland that summer as being too weak to do anything but speak). Nevertheless, the ongoing discussions must have been the royal court's overriding concern through the Christmas period in 1327.

Furthermore, the king's acts give the impression that, sick though he was, Bruce continued to practice the kind of itinerant kingship that the Scots expected of their ruler. On 4th December, King Robert was at Arbroath Abbey, expanding the landed rights of Sir John Bonville in Aberdeenshire. This was the anniversary of the death of King William 'the Lion', who had founded the abbey and was buried there, so it is possible that Bruce took part in the annual religious ceremonies that commemorated this moment in the foundation's history (while also appreciating the restoration work on William's tomb that Bruce himself had commissioned). However, he did not apparently hang around to see in the feast of St Thomas Becket there this year, as on 26th December King Robert was at Newbattle Abbey in Midlothian (where he had spent Christmas 1317). This journey south was almost certainly connected to the peace talks with England, which were predominantly conducted at Edinburgh. That matters concerning Anglo-Scottish relations were at the forefront of Bruce's mind at this point is further suggested by the fact that at Newbattle Bruce made a gift of five stags





annually from Selkirk Forest for the Cathedral priory at Durham 'because of his devotion to Saint Cuthbert and his monastery of Durham'. The religious community at Durham had come in for more than their fair share of punishment from Bruce's forces over the years – as recently as August the Scots had briefly occupied the Bishop of Durham's hunting park in Weardale – and so this gesture of generosity was probably intended as a means of soothing relations between the Scottish crown and the chief ecclesiastical centre in north-east England. The king may even have hoped that this would go some way to normalising cross-border relations as they had been before the war began. The king was accompanied on 26th by Chancellor Bernard and the marischal, his nephew Randolph and brother-in-law Murray, his illegitimate son Robert, Douglas, and Seton. Bruce may then have been at Dumbarton (or staying nearby at his manor house at Cardross) for part of the exchequer audit conducted from 4th January to 26th February. Surviving charters place him at Cardross on 15th and 16th February, so he was apparently present for the latter part of the audit and had possibly been there for its beginning as well. However, the king was at Arbroath again in late January to early February, confirming a charter of Alexander III in favour of Dunfermline Abbey on 24th January and granting Baldowrie in Angus to one William Marischal, described as the king's 'serjeant' on 4th February. Following the audit at Dumbarton, Bruce then travelled across the country to Edinburgh for what would prove to be the final parliament of the reign, which culminated with the ratification of the final peace deal with England on 17th March.

'I see a vacant seat...and a crutch without an owner': Last Christmas, 1328



*An illustration of a stag hunt from an early fifteenth-century manuscript of *La livre de la chasse*, a late fourteenth-century treatise on hunting written by Gaston Phoebus, Count of Foix. It was likely this sort of activity that Bruce travelled to Arran to indulge in for his final Christmas in 1328, although given the sorry state of his health by this point it is doubtful whether he was able to actively engage in much hunting in person. Image source: <https://www.themorgan.org/collection/ivre-de-la-chasse/59>*

Thanks to the survival of the exchequer accounts of the final two years of the reign, we have a surprisingly clear sense of how King Robert spent his last Christmas. It is perhaps an indication of how the formal conclusion of the war had altered the court's priorities that Christmas 1328 was preoccupied not with the business of state but rather with a hunting trip to the Isle of Arran. Here, Bruce resided at Sir John Menteith's manor at Glenkill on the



south-west of the island, possibly in the company of his four year old son David (and seven year old daughter-in-law Joan). However, the king's health was also clearly failing him by this point, and this too may have influenced the decision to spend a relatively sedate Christmastide in the insular idyll of Arran. Three payments of £18, 66s and £14 to John the apothecary were intromitted into the chamberlain's accounts alongside the king's expenses incurred at Glenkill, suggesting that he required medical assistance throughout the trip. Alongside John the apothecary (and perhaps the young David Bruce), King Robert was joined at Glenkill by the constable and marischal, Randolph, Douglas, Sir Adam More, and the new chancellor Walter of Twynham, a canon of Glasgow who had replaced Bernard in the role in anticipation the latter's elevation to the bishopric of Sodor earlier in the year. Also present may have been Robert of Peebles, who had replaced the king's brother-in-law Sir Alexander Fraser as chamberlain sometime in 1327, Sir Alexander Seton, and even Robert Lauder, justiciar of Lothian, all of whom witnessed royal acts soon after the trip. The visit to Arran was probably intended as a pleasant precursor to a planned pilgrimage to the shrine of St Ninian at Whithorn Priory. This trip was both a penance and a quest for divine relief from the malady that was slowly killing him. On 6th February, a series of royal acts show King Robert picking his way down the coast from his castle at Turnberry to Carleton near Lendalfoot, a journey of around thirteen miles. This seems to have been the opening leg of the pilgrimage, which would turn out to be the king's final expedition. By May, Bruce was back at his beloved manor house at Cardross, where he would die on 7th June. This last, restful (or at least comparatively quiet) Christmas contrasts sharply with many of those that had gone before. Bruce had spent Christmases on the run, in his sickbed, feverishly working to mitigate developing crises, and seeing to the typical day-to-day business of managing a kingdom and leading an itinerant royal administration. Often, as we have seen, the manner in which Bruce spent Christmastide – and the difficulties we face in developing a sense of this – was reflective of the state of his fortunes in a given year. That he could devote his last Christmas to family and friends, in relative seclusion and comfort (his illness notwithstanding), almost like a modern Christmas, stands as something of a testament to his success in achieving his lifelong ambition of establishing himself and his successors as the rightful rulers of Scotland.



Callum Watson has a PhD in History from the University of Edinburgh, with a focus on warfare, politics, and society in late medieval Scotland. He works for the National Trust for Scotland at the Battle of Bannockburn Visitor Centre, where he provides guided tours of the exhibition center and the battlefield. He writes on various subjects relating to Scotland's 14th and 15th century history at Knight of the Two L's blog (<https://drcallumwatson.blogspot.com>), which is a regular feature in the Dubh Ghlase Newsletter. He can also be found on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DrCallumWatson) and on Instagram (www.instagram.com/cpwatson1375/). He has appeared in BBC's Rise of the Clans episodes on Robert Bruce and James I, and in Britain's Lost Battlefields episode on Bannockburn, as well as serving as one of the historical Advisors for the Netflix film *Outlaw King*.

If you appreciate his work, please check out Dr. Watson's blog, follow him on Facebook and Instagram or email Dr. Watson at:



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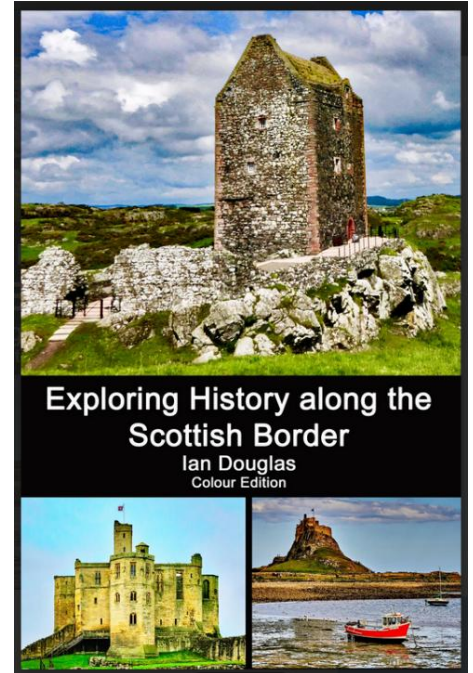


Exploring History along the Scottish Border by Ian Douglas

Ian Douglas, a longtime Clan Douglas Society member has published a new book! His new book is a major update to his earlier "Exploring History in the Scottish Borders" with new material.

Whilst the Douglas dynasty straddled much of Scotland, Douglas history is particularly focused on the border area. Archibald Douglas, later the 3rd Earl of Douglas, was appointed Lord of Galloway to impose royal authority on what had been the ungovernable south west. He built the awesome Threave Castle as his base to control the area. Douglases were frequently appointed Wardens of the Marches, responsible for imposing order and protecting Scotland from English raids and invasion.

The frequent wars and raids between England and Scotland left their mark on the area and its people. This did not produce Robin Hood characters, it produced a tough and often violent people, the Border Reivers. But its past also left its mark in splendid castles such as the Douglases' Threave and Hermitage, beautiful ruined abbeys, and a depth of history few other areas can match.



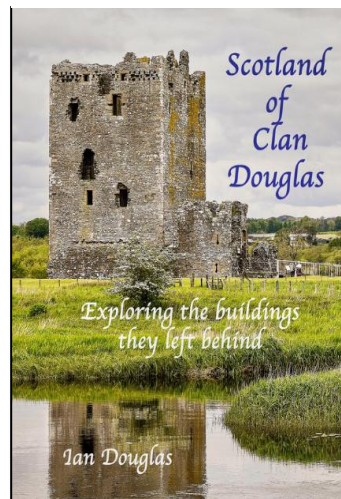
Exploring History along the Scottish Border covers the history of the Scottish and English side of the border. Illustrated by many colour photographs, the book also acts as a guide to the key historical sites in the borderland.

A quick links on Amazon:

Amazon US link

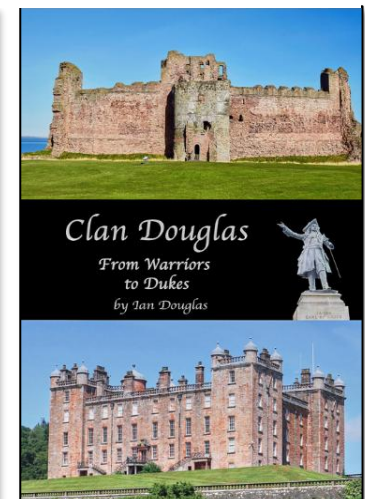
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News From All Over



St. Andrew's Society of Detroit Highland Games Detroit, MI ~ August 1-2



It was a glorious day in Detroit for the St. Andrew's 176 Annual Highland Games. It has been a very long time since Douglas had a clan tent at St. Andrew's, We, my wife Kerry, and I set up early Friday night which turned into a reunion of old friends from different clans and some new friends were made.

Saturday morning was gorgeous. The tent was very busy since a Douglas tent hadn't been at St. Andrew's in decades. Many families enjoyed our tent and many questions were sort and many of them were even answered!

The bringing of our scotty puppy, Margret Ross Lady Douglas was a real hit at many clan tents and our own. She was a true ambassador for Clan Douglas always full of hospitality, tail wags and a few puppy kisses. The Drum Major of the day was Xavier Allan of The Essex and Kent Regt. Of Ontario, Canada. He graced us by wearing the Regt. Douglas in honor of the Cameronians. The regiment will be celebrating their anniversary later this year. If it couldn't get any better, my wife (a Douglas) won the Drum Major competition!

Many friends were made! We had a ball at the tent. Onward to the Kalamazoo Scottish Festival on September 6th!

Brian Lewis
Michigan Regent



Julie and Robert Douglas of Harrison, Michigan help Regent Brian Lewis during the 176th Annual St. Andrews of Detroit Parade of Clans.



Drum Major of the Day, Xavier Allan of the Essex and Kent Regt. Of Ontario Canada wearing the Regt. Douglas in honor of the Cameronians.



Kerry Douglas winner of the Drum Major competition.



Margret Ross Lady Douglas



Southwest Missouri Celtic Festival Buffalo, MO ~ September 6

Saturday September 6 was a lovely, cool, clear blue-sky kind of day in Buffalo, MO making it a near perfect day for the Southwest Missouri Celtic Festival. Why do I say “near perfect”? Because the visiting crowds were very small compared to previous years. Some along clan row blamed that on the lack of advertising for the festival in the nearby regional center of Springfield, MO.



However, just because the crowds were small doesn't imply a lack of activity at the Douglas tent. We were privileged to have three members join us for the parade – Donna Tatum, Michael Brewer-Douglas, and Gale Roberts. I was able to get a photo of Michael and Gale with me. The comradery along clan row at this event is amazing. Many of us have been attending for so many years that the weekend is akin to a family reunion. What this festival lacks in size, it has in heart.

There was one other reason for this being just a near-perfect day ... somewhere in Buffalo is my wonderful wide-brimmed felt fedora. I do hope it is being enjoyed by whoever picked it up.

Yours Aye,
Regent Harold



L-R: Michael Brewer-Douglas, Regent Harold, Gale Roberts. It is always a pleasure seeing these two at Buffalo. On a side note, I really miss my hat.



Middle Tennessee Highland Games & Celtic Festival Hendersonville, TN ~ September 6-7

The 10th annual Middle Tennessee Highland Games & Celtic Festival was held on September 6 & 7, 2025 at Sanders Ferry Park in Hendersonville. They held their very first Calling of the Clans on Friday night as well.



The rain came in late Friday night and was sporadic all Saturday morning, although that did not stop the crowds from coming out. By afternoon it was just cloudy and the temperature was lovely. Sunday was sunny and much hotter! Most of us agreed that we preferred the Saturday rain and cooler weather better!

There was a new Clan contest at this event. Clans/Families were given the topic "How the Scots have contributed to the USA" and were asked to make a poster or display telling how their clan or family has inspired the USA in some way. You may have heard of aircraft called DC-3's and DC-10's etc? The D stands for Douglas! Clan Douglas did not win anything in the poster contest, but we enjoyed talking to many attendees about Douglas' contributions and handing out wee airplanes in honor of Douglas Aircraft's designs that have benefited the entire flying industry for more than a century. A Douglas! A Douglas!

Quite a few Allied and Sept families stopped by for a wee chat and a bite of Scottish shortbread. Besides numerous Douglases there were Dalzells, McKittricks, Sandlins, Blackwoods, Caldwelles, Kilgores, Clendenons, Galbraiths and many Kirkpatricks! We even had the pleasure of a couple of Kirkpatricks join in the (delayed because of rain) Tartan Parade!

Amid the many band competitions, dancing competitions, heavy athletic competitions, musical guests, food, vendors and Clans, Life Member Skyler Chastain won 3rd in the Bonny Knees contest again (he had placed 3rd also at an event in which we participated just the weekend prior!)

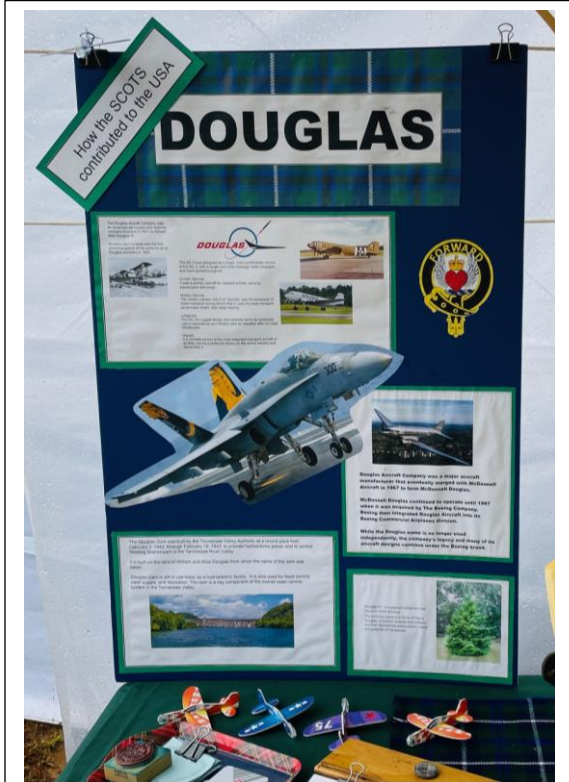
A big shout out to Chris O'Dell for sharing two of his extra Patron VIP wristbands so that the Douglas Regents could visit the Hospitality Tent for a free hot lunch both Saturday and Sunday! Chris is a big help in the Douglas tent as well. Thank you! (and Paula too!)

A wonderful time was definitely had by all who braved those morning showers to celebrate their various heritages with like-minded kinfolk.

Tyson & Betsy Chastain
Tennessee (East) Regents



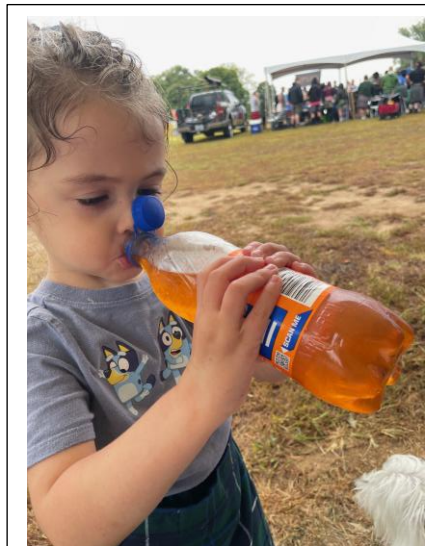
Proud Douglases (& Kirkpatricks) in the Tartan Parade



How the Douglas family has contributed to the USA poster contest



Ready to go despite the rainy weather



Wee Douglas, Abbey getting her first sip of "Scotland's Other National Drink"



Calling of the Clans



Life Member, Skyler Chastain has the 3rd Bonniest Knees in Middle Tennessee!





17th Annual Scots-Irish Festival Dandridge, TN ~ September 27

The 17th annual Scots-Irish Festival was held in Dandridge, Tennessee on September 27, 2025. Dandridge is on the banks of the appropriately named Lake Douglas! Last year the festival was cancelled just two days before it was to commence as Hurricane Helene's aftermath was set to rain down on the exact date of the 2024 festival. 'Twas a good thing it was cancelled then too, as the flash flooding from the torrential rains devastated Western North Carolina as well as that area of East Tennessee. Luckily the wonders of Douglas Dam spared a good portion of eastern Tennessee from further destruction from those floods.



There were eleven clans present in 2025, a new record number! Clan Douglas reserved two tent spots in order to have a larger area to accommodate members and guests. This area of the Appalachian Mountains has an extremely high number of Douglas and kin still living here. Hence the name of the aforementioned Lake and Dam! It was a good thing that we had extra space as the rains came in shortly after the opening of the street fest and lasted about three hours! Many people took advantage of the larger hospitality area that Clan Douglas offered....be they Friend or Foe!

Two Pipe & Drum bands played and marched, several Scottish and Irish dancers showed off their great talents, and a couple of storytellers entertained all. There were children's activities with animals to pet and three Celtic bands performed some fabulous jam sessions each, including a three-hour Ceilidh both Friday and Saturday nights!

The Ale Garden was sponsored by a local craft brewery this year who took it upon themselves to brew up a unique Scottish Ale specifically for this festival. They named it after the gorgeous location of this event...."Loch Dughlas". How many other clans can say they have a craft beer name for them?! A Douglas, a Douglas!

Even though the festival started with a thunderous downpour, that didn't seem to hinder the people from walking down Main Street, partaking in food and activities; and enjoying the sights and sounds of a traditional Scottish day!

Tyson and Betsy Chastain
Tennessee (East) Regents



Tyson and Betsy Chastain, TN Regents



Clan Douglas prepared to offer shelter from the rains!



Local Brewery brews up a Loch Dughlas Scottish Ale



GREAT PLAINS RENFEST Wichita, KS ~ September 27-28

What a gorgeous weekend it was at the Great Plains Renfest in Wichita, KS – mostly clear skies and a light breeze with temperatures wonderful for visitors but a bit warmish for wool-wearers. I manned the Douglas tent this time for KS Regent Michael Sotomayor, who was feeling under the weather.

I had a number of enjoyable conversations with tent visitors... but all of them were seeking information about other clans. Sadly, the Douglas crowds must have been busy at one or more of the other FIVE civic/cultural events being held in Wichita the same weekend.

Even though it was a bit lonely at the tent without any other Douglases ... an empty tent is better than no tent at all.

If Wichita, KS is a daytrip for you, consider attending the festival next year and supporting your Clan Douglas Regent.

Moving FORWARD...
Harold Edington
CDSNA RVP Central



An empty tent at a festival is still better than no tent at all.



Virginia Scottish Games The Plains, VA ~ August 30-31

What a wonderful season it has been celebrating our Scottish heritage! Michelle and I had the pleasure of representing the Clan Douglas Society of North America at both the Virginia Scottish Games and the New Hampshire Highland Games, and we couldn't have asked for better company, weather, or spirit.



The Virginia Scottish Games were alive with the sound of pipes, drums, and laughter as clans gathered under sunny skies to share their stories and pride. The Douglas tent was full of good conversation, smiles, and the familiar kinship that always brings our members together. Michelle and I truly enjoyed reconnecting with familiar faces, meeting new friends, and sharing in the fellowship that makes our Society so special. The parade of tartans and the stirring music of the massed bands reminded us why we hold our heritage so dear.

Loon Mountain Highland Games Lincoln, NH ~ September 19-21

From Virginia, we journeyed north to the breathtaking White Mountains of New Hampshire for the annual Highland Games at Loon Mountain. There, among the misty peaks and the sound of bagpipes echoing across the valley, we once again gathered with our Douglas kin. The camaraderie was incredible, and our tent stayed busy all weekend with visitors eager to learn more about Clan Douglas history and traditions.



A true highlight of the New Hampshire Games was welcoming Jenny Rose Boyes of Maine as our newest Regent. Jenny brings such enthusiasm and heart to the Clan Douglas Society, and we're excited to see her energy and leadership strengthen our presence in the Northeast.

Michelle and I are deeply grateful to everyone who stopped by, volunteered, or simply shared a story and a smile. These gatherings are more than festivals—they're family reunions that remind us of our shared history and the friendships that carry the Douglas name proudly forward.

Until we meet again—aye, the heart of Douglas beats ever proudly!

Scott & Michelle Douglas
Regent, Clan Douglas Society of North America





Jenny Rose Noyes New Regent for Maine and New Hampshire

My name is Jenny Rose Noyes, I am 52 years old, and I am a fourth-generation Falmouth, Maine resident. I'm a passionate family genealogist and living-history performer with the Maine Renaissance Faire, with deep family roots in colonial Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. I have two adult sons, Marshall Noyes and Christian Rosebrook, who fully support my love for researching and preserving our ancestral history.

While not a professional genealogist, I've spent years exploring my ancestral lines and building historical connections throughout New England and, more recently, Nova Scotia. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management, which has provided me with a strong foundation in event planning and public engagement.

My genealogical work includes a potential State of Maine Chapter with Scott McKenzie, President of the Scots' Charitable Society, John T. Mann, historian and archaeological site director for the Means Massacre Archaeology Project, and Dave McCausland, founder of the Maine Ulster-Scots Project. I also attended a lecture by Christopher Gerrard, Professor of Archaeology at Durham University and lead author of *Lost Lives, New Voices*, and I hope to connect with him further regarding his ongoing DNA and archival research, and his collaborations with the Maine Ulster-Scots Project.

I'm continuing to expand my own DNA research, with a focus on uncovering the journeys and stories of Douglas and Ulster-Scots descendants in New England. I'm fortunate to have a strong support network, including Warren and Tracie Moffatt, and Dawn Hamilton, and I'm eager to build community, honor the past, and help strengthen the Clan Douglas presence throughout the New England region.

Jenny Rose Noyes

JNoyesMaineDouglas@gmail.com





4th Annual Highland Games of Harper's Ferry Harper's Ferry, WV ~ October 4-5

Clan Douglas participated for the first time at the 4th annual Harper's ferry highland games in West Virginia on October 3rd and 4th 2025. Both days were a beautiful 80 degrees and we had a great turnout of visitors at our Clan tent. 3 members renewed their membership and an amazing 8 new individuals became 1st time members. We were surprised with all the interest as well as the delight of helping people towards learning their names are linked to Clan Douglas. Can't wait for next year.

James Agnew
Maryland Regent



Highland Games of Harpers Ferry



Maryland Regent James Agnew with West Virginia Regent Tyler Agnew



Visitors enjoying the tent displays and chat with the Regents



New member Michael Kaufman (Maxwell) doing his best Black Douglas impression




Utah Regent 2025 Report

Although I wasn't able to attend any festivals this year in an official representative capacity, I was grateful for the chance to attend the Utah Scottish Association Highland Games and Scottish Festival back in June. It was a wonderful event filled with great music, food, and fellowship.

I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives from several clans, including Lamont, Wallace, and Campbell, as well as members of the Scottish American Military Society. I also enjoyed talking with a number of vendors who travel to festivals around the state. It was a great opportunity to reconnect with our Scottish community here in Utah and to build relationships that will help strengthen the presence of Clan Douglas at future events.

Trent Duke
Utah Regent





The Clan Douglas Society of North America invites you to apply for scholarships to pursue your passion for Scottish arts! Whether it is piping, drumming, dancing, Scottish languages, Highland Games, or Scottish studies – we are here to support your journey!

Applications may be submitted anytime and the deadline is always May 1st.

**For more information visit our website:
<https://www.clan-douglas-society.org/scholarships>**



Oklahoma Highland Gathering Choctaw, OK ~ October 11-12

The Oklahoma Highland Gathering was held in Choctaw, Oklahoma, on October 11-12, 2025. The Women's Lightweight World Championship Scottish games competition took place here and featured competitors from across the United States as well as from several European countries. This



year's event had 21 clan tents that were lined up along the athletics field, giving us a front row seat to the competition. We also had whiskey tasting, a fun and lively heavy stone lifting competition for anyone brave enough to enter, sheep herding dogs, highland cows, traditional blacksmiths demonstrating their artistry, and a living history replica of a Scottish/Scandinavian village.



Earl Bagwell and wife

We had a number of visitors at the Clan Douglas tent on Saturday despite being in the midst of football season, which is serious business in Oklahoma, but Sunday was slower due to unseasonably warm temperatures and strong winds. Karen Wolfberg submitted her membership application to join CDSNA, and I was excited to have cousin Haley (Blaylock) DeVanney bring her two youngest, Lynnlee and Daniel, to the festival to start learning about their Scottish heritage.

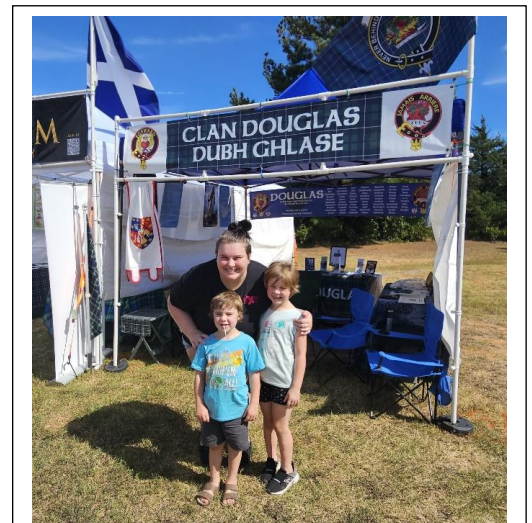
Local CDSNA members helped to make the weekend a success. Madisen Kirkpatrick helped with the tent on Saturday and Donna Hopkins let us use her tent and made sure we had enough shortbread to eat.

The next festival in Oklahoma will be the Stirling Classic in May 2026, although there is also the possibility of a new Scottish festival starting that could be held in the OKC area next April.

Jody Blaylock
Oklahoma Regent



New CDSNA member Karen Wolfberg and Beth (Douglass) Smith



Haley (Blaylock) DeVanney with daughter Lynnlee and son Daniel



Mississippi Celtic Fest Brandon, MS ~ October 10-11



The Mississippi Celtic Festival took place on October 11-12 in beautiful Brandon, MS, on the shores of the Ross Barnett Reservoir. The scenery was beautiful, and the weather was perfect with clear blue skies and refreshingly low humidity all weekend!

The festival hosted the 2025 Masters World Championship games, showcasing top 10 competitors from across the USA and Europe. I lost track of the new world records after 10, but there more. CDSNA member Bobby Douglas aka The Kilted Cowboy, represented the USA and Clan Douglas with style and grit.

The crowds were more interested in the games, but a good number wandered over to the clan tents. I was visited by Blaylock, Rutherford, Agnew, Hamilton, Dalyell, Young, Weir and Kirkpatrick families.

I want to thank Miranda Brewer who stopped by, introduced herself as "Harold's cousin" then promptly began helping me pack up. Thank you, Miranda!

Yours aye,
Jamie Haushalter
Mississippi Regent



Bobby and Kathy Douglas stopped by the Clan Douglas tent



Clan Douglas open for business



A perfect weekend the games

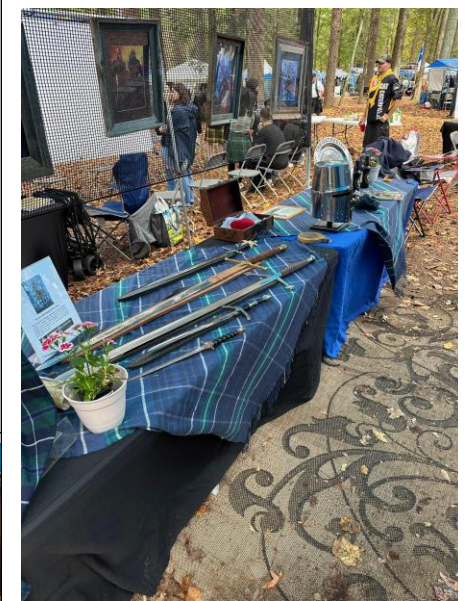




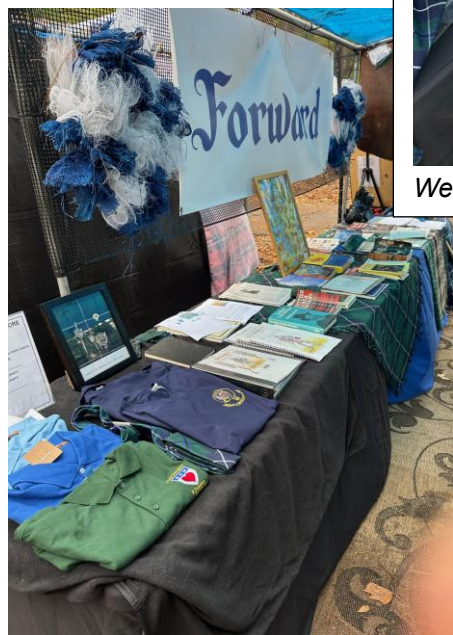
Stone Mountain Highland Games and Scottish Festival Stone Mountain, GA ~ October 17-19



Doug Isbecque, CDSNA Georgia Regent



Weapons display



Clan Douglas education display



Ready for the Clan parade



Kate Morton, Women's Caber toss winner



Deltona Celtic Festival & Highland Games Deltona, FL ~ November 8

The inaugural Deltona Celtic Festival & Highlands Games were held under sunny skies on November 8, 2025. Everyone raved about the venue – location, shopping, food, and athletic events. We hope to add this to our annual games' rotation.



Thanks to all who signed our registration. In all, we had 16 people stop by for a chat, view our reference materials, and store goods. And to share some snacks and libations.

My wife, Mona and I would like to give special thanks to Sally and Mark Hill and to Tom Douglas for their help with the tent logistics at the games. Many hands make light work, and their assistance made for a more enjoyable day for us.

We were delighted to welcome Shirley Douglas Ferguson as the newest member of CDSNA and look forward to seeing her again at many more events. We'll be back on January 17 & 18, 2026 for the Central Florida Highland Games in warm and sunny Florida*. Please come join us if you are in the area.

Jeff Sparks
Central Florida Regent



Clan Douglas ready to step out for the Parade of Clans at the inaugural Deltona Celtic Festival & Highlands Games





Fresno Scottish Gathering and Games Fresno, CA ~ September 20

Clan Douglas was out in full force at the Fresno Scottish Gathering and Games, and we had a full day of fun and a very busy booth. We signed up two new members, Micah Dixson and Sara Snodgrass, and want to welcome them to the Clan Douglas Society of North America. We hope to see you both at future events!



Matt and Jackie McCoy with their little one Cassie

Although the Gathering and Games took place on a hot day, we all had a great time. We visited with members Joe and Teresa Blaylock and with their grandchildren Vita and Christian Blaylock. CDSNA member Keith Dughi came all the way from Elk Grove (near Sacramento) not only to attend the games but also to help Cora and I set up and tear down—which is a huge blessing. We are so grateful for such great friends. A special thank you to Vita and Christian for all your help—you guys rock! Cora and I truly appreciated it. Seeing young ones out there chipping in tells me Clan Douglas is going to be in good hands.

The games featured Highland athletics, pipe bands, a great group of vendors and food vendors, children's athletics, and archery. One of the really interesting aspects of the Fresno Scottish Gathering and Games is that the Fresno Scottish Society (which sponsors the event) partnered with the Order of the Gauntlet and Rose to bring full-contact medieval combat with real (blunted) swords, armor, maces, and pole axes. When we first heard they were holding tournaments at our games, we thought it would be balsa-wood swords and plastic armor. We were in for a big surprise — this is full-scale medieval fighting, and

they literally wail away on each other. It is something to see! If you ever get a chance to witness this type of event, I absolutely recommend it. Check it out online—it's pretty awesome.

We had a great Clan March and were one of the clans with the largest group. It was wonderful spending time with family and extended family Douglasses in the tent. We had a successful day and enjoyed our time with fellow Clan Douglas members.

Best Regards,

Mark and Cora Peterson
Northern California Regents



The Wolfe Brothers having fun at the Clan Douglas tent



Cora Peterson from Clan Douglas awarding Best Clan Spirit Award to Clan MacBean



Clan March Fresno Games

Dubh Ghlase is your newsletter, so let's fill it with your stories!

Do you have a favorite Douglas tale? A family scoundrel, an interesting family history or the story behind a treasured heirloom? What about a visit to Scotland, Tantallon Castle or Bannockburn? Would you like to share your favorite photos of Scotland with CDSNA members? ***

Please email your pictures and stores you would like to share to: CDSNA.Editor@gmail.com

****** Full credit will be given for stories and pictures.***



40th Highlands and Islands Games & Celtic Music Festival Gulfport, MS ~ November 8-9

With no hurricanes lurking in the Gulf this year — the weather was close to perfect Gulf Coast weather though quite blustery on Sunday.

The 40th Highlands & Islands Games and Celtic Music Festival was a grand celebration, and the Douglas tent was hopping all weekend with cousins dropping by to visit, swap stories and sign the roll.

A highlight for me was a long chat with Hope Vere Anderson, Baron of Bannockburn and Chief of Clan Anderson. He shared an interesting local tale about Sir William “le Hardi” Douglas. In 1267, while riding atop Criffel (the big hill south of Dumfries), Sir William’s horse stumbled and fell, nearly killing him. Of course, he survived and lived to fight many more days. Truth or legend? We will probably never know, but it is a great story all the same.

The organizers paid warm tribute to all veterans with a special ceremony, presenting each with a handsome 40th Anniversary commemorative pin. It was a touching moment and very much appreciated by the veterans in attendance.

All in all, another wonderful weekend.

Jamie Haushalter
Mississippi Regent



This is the only picture that I took early Saturday morning before the gates opened.



A History of the House of Douglas

from the earliest times down to the legislative union of
England and Scotland

(published 1902)

By Sir Herbert Eustace Maxwell, Bt. 1845-1937



The free source book from which this series of chapters from volume one of Maxwell's two-volume work is found is on the **Internet Archive** site: <https://archive.org/details/historyofhouseof01maxw/mode/2up>

Here is a screenshot image of the numerous download options for this book...

A history of the house of Douglas from the earliest times down to the legislative union of England and Scotland

by Maxwell, Herbert Eustace, Sir, bart., 1845-1937



Publication date	1902
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Up next is Chapter 11 ~ The Earls of Morton



CHAPTER XI

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JAMES DOUGLAS, second son of Sir George of Pittendreich [li.], brother of the 6th Earl of Angus [l.], succeeded to the earldom of Morton under the disposition of his father-in-law, the 3rd Earl of Morton [xxxv.]. He was born about 1516, and, notwithstanding the forfeiture and banishment of his father and uncle in 1528, and the general proscription of the house of Douglas, which endured till James v.'s death in 1542, he remained in Scotland with his mother, and was named as her heir in a charter of Pittendreich granted in her favour by King James in 1536.¹ This is taken by Sir William Fraser as disproof of Godscroft's statement that James's boyhood and youth were spent in hiding from the

xxxvi. James Douglas, 4th Earl of Morton, Regent of Scotland, c. 1516-1581.

¹ *Reg. Magni Sigilli*, iii. No. 1541.



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King's persecution. But Pittendreich had been forfeited in 1528, and bestowed upon the King's bastard brother, James Stuart, Earl of Moray, afterwards Regent, who held them until the date of the charter in question; which charter was revoked in the year after its execution, when Moray resumed possession, and held the lands until the restoration of the Douglasses in 1543. All this seems quite consistent with Godscroft's account of young James Douglas's mode of life. He expressly states that nothing is known about the early years of James's elder brother David [lv.], but that—

“Of this James it is certainly known that, all the time of his father's banishment and exile, he lurked under the borrowed name of James the Grieve¹ or James Innes; first, with his cousin at Glenbervie; afterwards, for fear of being discovered with so near a kinsman, with some gentleman in the more northern parts of Scotland. And as he bore the name, so he did also execute the office of a grieve and overseer of the lands and rents, the corn and cattle of him with whom he lived. . . . He attained hereby such skill in husbandry, and such perfection in economy and thriftiness, that, having acquired a habit of frugality, he not only repaired the decayed and shattered estates of these two earldoms, Angus and Morton, but also helped to recover and augment the revenues of the Crown and kingdom more than any other Regent.”

It has been described in the last chapter how, as soon as James V. was off the scene, the 3rd Earl of Morton was restored, and how he bestowed his youngest daughter upon James Douglas younger of Pittendreich, whom he constituted his heir. Thereafter James became known as Master of Morton.

Marries
Elizabeth,
daughter of
the 3rd Earl
of Morton
[xxxv.], 1543.

Like his father Sir George [li.], and his uncle Angus [l.], Morton was an ardent advocate of the English alliance, which at first received the support of Regent Arran. But Cardinal Beaton, head of the French faction in Scotland, soon gained over the Regent, who abjured the reformed religion, so that the Douglasses found themselves once more in opposition. No effective opposition could be offered in the sixteenth century without the arguments of cold steel and gunpowder, wherefore Angus and his

¹ “Grieve” is the Scottish term corresponding to the English farm-bailiff.



clan entered into a mutual bond of defence, and to the Master of Morton was committed the keeping of Dalkeith Castle. Here he was besieged by Regent Arran, and surrendered upon honourable terms on 7th November 1543, being allowed to depart with all the garrison, and to remove his goods and gear.¹

The perplexing politics of these years will be more fully dealt with under the memoirs of the 6th Earl of Angus [l.] and of Morton's father, Sir George Douglas [li.]; meanwhile it is enough to mention that Morton and his elder brother, like the rest of the Douglasses, after having been served with summonses for high treason, became outwardly reconciled with the Regent's Government. But as long as Cardinal Beaton's influence was supreme, no Douglas head was safe on its shoulders. The Earl of Hertford's sudden descent upon the Forth, in May 1544, probably saved the lives of the Earl of Angus and his brother Sir George, whose treasonable correspondence with the English had been intercepted, and who were at the time imprisoned in Blackness. Sir George's sons, David and James, had actually offered to surrender the great castle of Tantallon to the invaders,² showing that they were in perfect concert with their father, who had invited the English to invade Scotland.

The scene now shifts from national defence to faction war. Arran was practically deposed at a convention of barons at Stirling [3rd June 1544]; the Queen-mother, Mary of Guise, was committed to the authority of four bishops and twelve lay peers; Arran stood on his defence in Blackness Castle, and the English—that is, the Douglas—faction seemed in the ascendant once more. But it is all very confused, as might scarcely be otherwise, seeing that "euerie lord did for his awne particulare proffeit, and tuke na heid of the commoun weill."³ Angus was unscrupulous enough in the means by which the French policy should be

¹ *Morton*, i. 5.

² *Hamilton Papers*, iv. part i. 94, 98.—Maitland Club.

³ *Diurnal of Occurrents*, 33.



MORTON'S CAPTIVITY

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defeated and the English alliance secured, but when Scottish drums were beating the point of war, the Douglas blood in him would assert itself, and he bore himself as became a skilful and courageous soldier. It does not appear that the Master of Morton was with his uncle and Arran, now restored as Regent, when they routed the English under Eure and Layton on Ancrum Moor [27th February 1545]; but he was with the army which, in August of the same year, mustered on Roslyn Moor and marched into Northumberland 30,000 strong, with 3000 French auxiliaries, and which, on the treacherous advice of Angus and Sir George, turned its back on a very inferior English force and marched back into Scotland.

In June 1548 the Master of Morton was besieged in his castle of Dalkeith by Lord Grey, and being taken prisoner with the rest of the garrison, was sent to the Tower of London, where Godscroft believed that he remained for "certain years, for during that time he learned the . . . English tongue and tone, which he did ever thereafter much delight to use." Probably he did not regain his liberty till the pacification in 1550.

Taken
prisoner at
Dalkeith,
June 1548.

His first appearance as Earl of Morton was at the Privy Council on 14th October 1552. His elder brother David became 7th Earl of Angus [lv.] upon the death of his uncle the 6th earl [l.] in 1557; and at David's death in June of the same year, Morton undertook the duties of tutor and guardian to his infant son Archibald, 8th Earl of Angus [lvi.]. Having, therefore, practically absolute control over both these great earldoms, and the princely possessions comprised therein, Morton was now a territorial magnate as great as any of the old Earls of Douglas had been. But the times had moved somewhat: politics had been complicated by the advance of reforming doctrines in religion, and the battle of the creeds had greatly confused the old simple formula that might made right. Morton moved very warily at first. Son of the prime agent in the English interest, he



naturally inclined to the side of the Reformation, and in
Joins the
Lords of the
Congregation,
December
1557. December 1557 signed the confederation which
 bound the Protestant barons together as Lords
 of the Congregation. He took little part in their
 deliberations; when Perth was held against the
 Queen-Regent, Morton was absent on duty, settling the dis-
 puted frontier between England and Scotland [31st May
 1559]; neither is he recorded as having had any hand in the
 seizure of Edinburgh by the Reformers in July. The truce
 then concluded between the Lords of the Congregation and
 the Queen-Regent, to endure till the following January,
 broke down almost immediately, and again the lords
 advanced upon Edinburgh in October.

This time also Morton held aloof, although close at hand
 in Dalkeith, and although Sadleyr had just written to the
 English Council that "the Protestants make [of Morton] a
 certain account to be theirs." Sadleyr had been long enough
 in Scotland by this time to read shrewdly the motives of
 Scottish politicians, and in a subsequent letter probably
 interpreted the earl's attitude aright. He is "simple and
 fearful . . . albeit he hath by his handwriting bound himself
 to take part with the Protestants, yet he lieth aloof; some
 think he doth it partly fearing which party shall prevail,
 and partly in respect of the great benefit that he hath
 heretofore received at the dowager's hands, by whose
 means he hath obtained the earldom of Angus, though
 another hath a better title to the same;¹ and yet we
 think him to favour the Protestants more than the other
 party."

Morton, in short, was performing that delicate feat in
 political athletics, not unfamiliar to students of history
 ancient and modern, known as "sitting on the fence."
 He remained at Dalkeith when the Lords of the Congrega-
 tion withdrew from Edinburgh to Stirling. But he was
 not long in doubt about which was the stronger party.
 The earnest reformers were stimulated by the return of John

¹ Referring to Margaret, Countess of Lennox, only surviving legitimate offspring
 of the 6th Earl of Angus.



*Monument to
Lady Margaret Douglas
Niece of Henry VIII.
In Henry VIII's Chapel, Westminster.*



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Knox in this year; the Church of Rome was in no country more cynically corrupt than in Scotland, and had lost much of its hold upon the affection of the commonalty; lastly, there was the ever-present residuum, the irresponsible mob whose arbitrament has turned the scale in so many momentous issues, fired on this occasion, as Bishop Lesley mournfully described: "specialie for hoip of the spulye¹ of the freris² places and kirkis."

Moreover, the English army was on the march. It crossed the Border on 2nd April 1560; from that moment Morton felt assured of success, and took a leading place among the Reformers. The lords, with their English allies, laid siege to Leith, which the Queen-Regent had garrisoned with French troops. During the siege they bound themselves by a covenant to "set forward the reformation of religion according to Goddis word." Morton signed this covenant,³ and also, on 10th May, the ratification of the treaty concluded with Queen Elizabeth at Berwick on 27th February.

Signs the
Reformers'
Covenant,
27th April
1560.

The Queen-Regent died on 10th June in the same year, and the French troops were dismissed immediately thereafter. In the absence of Mary Queen of Scots in France, the Lords of the Council summoned Parliament to meet in August, when four-and-twenty "regents" were appointed, whereof twelve, of whom Morton was one, were designated as councillors to act in the name of the Queen. Outside Parliament, John Knox "taught publickly upon the prophecie of Haggee. He was fervent in application."⁴ Inside Parliament, the Scottish Reformation was established by law, in the teeth of the prelates, once all powerful in the legislature; the Pope's jurisdiction was declared at an end, the mass proscribed, and the confession of faith approved, as drawn up by Knox. Sir James Sandilands of Calder, a knight of St. John, holding ecclesiastical rank as Master of the Preceptory of

¹ Spoliation.

³ Original at Hamilton, 27th April 1560.

² Friars.

⁴ Calderwood, ii. 12.



Torphichen, was sent to France to obtain the royal assent, but failed to obtain access to the Queen of Scots.

In October Morton was appointed one of three ambassadors to carry report of these proceedings to Queen Elizabeth, and to propose to her a marriage with the Earl of Arran, eldest son of the former regent, who had become Duke of Chatelherault.

When Queen Mary, escaping from the ships of war which her cousin Elizabeth of England had sent out to intercept her, landed at Leith on 19th August 1561, Morton at once took a foremost place among her advisers, and did his best to temper the inevitable friction between a Protestant people and their Popish Queen. He opposed Knox's attempt to interfere with Mary's private exercise of her religion; but it is doubtful whether he accompanied her in her tour to the north in the autumn of 1562—an expedition which ended so mysteriously in the operations against the Earl of Huntly, head of the Catholic party. Huntly was slain at Corrichie, and his son, Sir John Gordon, taken and executed; the chancellorship of Scotland, which Huntly had held since 1547, being bestowed upon Morton.

Appointed
Chancellor
of Scotland,
1562.

The witty and beautiful young Queen from the first caused her chancellor many an anxious and perplexing moment. Her marriage, of course, was a constant subject of speculation among her ministers and courtiers. Mary took delight in bewildering them with the multitude of her suitors; but she gave a severe shock to Morton's equilibrium when she announced her intention of choosing as her consort Lord Darnley, the son of the Countess of Lennox, a formidable claimant on the Angus succession. Personally, Morton disliked Darnley, as did a number of the other Scottish nobles, but he dared not offend Lady Lennox by betraying his feelings; that, at least, was the interpretation put on his conduct by Randolph, the English ambassador, who wrote to Cecil in May 1565: "My Lord of Morton this time was absent, but so disliked that I have not heard any man worse spoken of. He is now in hopes



*James Douglas.
1st Earl of Morton.
From a painting at Dalmahoy.*



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that [the Countess of Lennox] will give over her rights of Angus, and so [he] will become friends to that side." In fact, in this matter, Morton resumed his favourite posture on the fence, detesting the Darnley marriage, yet refraining from opposing it, lest the Countess of Lennox in revenge should persist in her claim to the magnificent property of his young nephew, to whom Morton was heir-presumptive.

How accurately Randolph had gauged the situation is shown by the contract between the Lennoxes, Darnley, and the boy Angus on 12th and 13th May 1565, wherein the Countess of Lennox ratified the infestment of Angus in his estates, and renounced all claim on her part or that of her posterity, provided—

The Countess
of Lennox
renounces
her claim,
May 1565.

"The said Archibald Erle of Angus, with expres consent and assent of the said James Erle of Mortoun, his tutor, for his interesse and acceptand the burding vpoun him, as said is, sall, with the assistance of his hail freindis and all that will do for him within the realme of Scotland, be quhatsumever honest and lefull menys at the vtermaist of his and thair poweris and vpoun thair awin expenss, solisst, avance and sett furthwardis the said Henry Lord Dernley . . . to the mariage to be contractit and solemnizat betwix hir hienes and the said Lord Dernley, and sall employ thameselffis, ther labouris and guidis in maist honorable maner thairupoun."¹

Morton, therefore, cannot be judged as disinterested in his support of the Queen, although it may be granted that her personal charm may have had some effect upon one who was certainly not indifferent to feminine beauty. Two days after Queen Mary had secured her chancellor's support, she announced her betrothal with Darnley. Morton remained calmly at his post, but Moray, who detested Darnley, left the court with Argyll and other lords, and prepared for rebellion.

The marriage took place on 25th July, Morton acting as carver to the King and Queen at the great banquet which followed it. In October he took the field against the insurgents, sharing with the King command of the main division of the army, while Lennox took the advanced

¹ Fraser, iii. 255-261.



guard, and Huntly¹ the rear. Morton, in fact, was in chief command; but Mary's suspicion of him was on the alert, by reason of his well-known friendship with Moray and Argyll. Therefore, after the insurgent lords had been driven across the Border, a bond was exacted from Morton for the delivery, whenever required, of Tantallon Castle, which he held as his nephew's guardian.²

This put the chancellor upon his guard; it behoved a man in danger of losing the royal favour to gather other support to himself, if he set any value upon liberty and life.

Morton soon became aware that it was the Queen's purpose to obtain the forfeiture of Moray, Argyll, and the other banished lords; current report, confirmed by Mary's behaviour, pointed out her confidential secretary, David Riccio, as chief adviser in this design, and, which was of singular interest to Morton, indicated the Italian as probably to be appointed chancellor in the earl's room. Riccio had enemies already in the highest quarters. Mary had certainly set tongues wagging by her indiscreet intimacy with him; even if there were no truth in her alleged amour, doubtless she found in his cultivated conversation and musical talent an agreeable relief from the vapid chatter of the husband who had already forfeited her "vehement love"—from the dull Scottish Court, so different from that in which she had grown to womanhood—and from the interminable lectures of grim and tactless divines. It was the case of James III. and his "fiddlers and bricklayers" over again, and similar means were applied as remedy. Even Darnley, though he was continually absent from his wife, hunting and hawking, was quite willing to fall in with his father, Lennox's, project for doing away with the foreigner. Sir James Melville, a contemporary diarist, imputes the origin of the plot to Morton, and says that he employed his amiable cousin, George Douglas [liv.], future Bishop of Moray, to

¹ George, 5th earl, son of the 4th earl, slain at Corrichie three years previously.

² *Reg. Privy Council*, i. 382, 417.

Murder of
Riccio, 9th
March 1566.



MURDER OF RICCIO

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inflare Darnley's mind against Riccio. William Maitland of Lethington was as deep in it as any one. "I see no certain way," he wrote on 9th February to Cecil, "unless we chop at the very root." Four days later Randolph wrote to Leicester that "David, with consent of the King, shall have his throat cut within these ten days." There were plenty of people in the secret—John Knox has not escaped the imputation, but there is nothing to prove that he knew about it beforehand. He certainly never condemned it afterwards. But Morton, though resolved to "chop," was careful that responsibility should rest on the proper shoulders. He persuaded Darnley to grant a "band of assurance," declaring the coming crime to be of his own designing, and guaranteeing the performers against all consequences at the hands of "great persons." Darnley pledged himself in this document to maintain the Protestant religion, and to restore the banished lords, in consideration whereof he was to receive equal regal rights with the Queen.

The circumstances of the deed on 9th March 1566 have been too often described to require detailed repetition here. Probably the intention was to seize Riccio and execute him publicly after some summary form of judicial procedure; but sixteenth century politicians were not meticulous about the precise means to a desirable end, and Scottish daggers ever slept lightly in their sheaths. Hence, when, at dusk on Saturday, 9th March, Morton, with an armed band, had secured the gates of Holyrood Palace, forced his way to the Queen's supper-room, where were Darnley and Ruthven, seized Riccio in his mistress's presence and dragged him into the anteroom, it was the cleric, George Douglas [liv.], say nearly all writers, who ended the scuffle by snatching the dagger from Darnley's belt, and plunging it into Riccio's bosom, cried, "Take that from the King!"¹

Message of the murder had filtered through the locked

¹ Anthony Standen [unpublished MS. at Hatfield] says George drove the dagger through Riccio's temples.



palace gates. A crowd gathered outside, to whom Darnley appeared, and dispersed the people with the assurance that all was well within. The Queen was locked into her chamber, Bothwell and others who resisted were overpowered, and custody of the palace was taken over by Morton.

Next day, Sunday 10th, Moray and the banished lords came to Edinburgh, and on Monday 11th obtained an interview with the Queen, Chancellor Morton explaining their grievances and intentions to her Majesty. Mary spoke them fair, and proposed a general reconciliation; but that very night she escaped to Dunbar, taking with her the craven Darnley, and escorted by Lord Seton with 200 horse. At Dunbar she was joined by Bothwell, whose masterful bearing had already won her changeful heart.

Deserted by Darnley, who stoutly repudiated all part in the conspiracy,¹ the Protestant party scattered, Morton and Ruthven seeking refuge in England, where they claimed protection from Elizabeth. The Queen of England had been kept informed of the successive steps in the conspiracy, and had been quite prepared to profit by its success; but the turn taken by affairs made it prudent that she should dissociate herself from even a tacit part in the matter, and on 16th June Morton sailed for Flanders. He was back in England on 4th July, when he received orders to "convey himself to some secret place, or else to leave the kingdom."²

The Earl of Moray remained in Scotland during his friend Morton's exile. Bothwell, though a Protestant—"the stoutest and the worst thought of"—was now a power at court. To him Moray had to address himself to secure the Queen's consent to Morton's recall. Darnley's part in this affair had inspired Mary with unconquerable aversion from her consort, whereof she made no secret to Bothwell. That unscrupulous individual, perceiving that

¹ "All men were discharged by proclamatioun to affirme that the King was partaker or privie to the last fact; wherat manie smiled."—Calderwood, ii. 316.

² *Cal. State Papers, Scotland*, i. 237.



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Morton's return would turn the balance against Darnley, used all the power he had acquired over Mary to obtain her forgiveness for him. Mary at last having consented to pardon the fugitives, Morton returned in January 1567, but, being forbidden to come within seven miles of the court, was met at Whittinghame by Bothwell and Secretary Maitland, who invited him to plunge into a far more serious plot than the first, namely, one against the King's life. Fourteen years later, a few hours before Morton suffered on the scaffold, he gave his own account of how he received Bothwell's proposal, which is truly so little to his own credit, that it may be accepted as a very probable version of the truth.

Bothwell told him that the Queen desired that "the King should be tane away," holding him more guilty of Riccio's blood than Morton himself. Now Morton had special reason for detesting Darnley, who had betrayed him, and past events had proved that he suffered from no insuperable qualms about murder for a sufficient purpose. Speaking within a few hours of his own death, he did not say that he was at all shocked by such damnable proposals, but that he declined to be mixed up in fresh trouble, seeing that he was not yet free from the consequences of the old one. In spite of repeated solicitations by Bothwell and Archibald Douglas [xxxvii.] he continued firm in his refusal, at least until Bothwell should show him the Queen's authority in her own handwriting, "the quhilk warrand he never reported vnto me."

The position, then, was this. Morton knew weeks beforehand that a plot was in progress against King Henry's life; he declined to take an active part therein, as he did not wish to get himself into fresh trouble; but he diligently refrained from giving any warning to the intended victim, "ffor I durst nocht reveill it for feir of my lyfe." Asked why he allowed Archibald Douglas to take part in such an odious crime, he replied that he neither ordered nor advised him to proceed or refrain. Reminded that Archibald, being his servant and dependor, implicated his master



in whatever he did with his knowledge, Morton replied: "Mr. Archibald at that tyme was a depender on the erle Bothuel, making court fer him self, rather than a depender of myne." Asked whether he received Archibald after the crime, he replied: "I did indeid," and listened to the particulars from the mouth of one of the King's assassins.

The blackest part of Morton's conduct, as explained in his confession, remains to be told.

"Last of all it was said to him concerning this purpos that, in respect of his owin depositioun, his pairt wald be suspectit to be mair fowle nor he declairit; he spereit¹ 'ffor what reasone?' I was ansuerit, 'Because ye, beand an auctoritie, howbeit ye puneist vtheris fer that murther, ye puneist not Mr. Archibald, whome ye knew to be guiltie thair of.' He ansuerit, 'I puneist him not, indeid, nather durst I, for the caus befor schawin,'"² namely, fear of his precious life. Now Morton did himself injustice in thus excusing himself. No man ever breathed who had less regard for his own personal safety than he; in later years it was a frequent subject of reproach and remonstrance by his friends that he would not take ordinary precaution against assassination. Rightly or wrongly he considered himself indispensable to his country's welfare and to the Protestant cause, and deemed that it would be an irreparable misfortune to Scotland if he lost either life or influence. Morton's qualities, good and ill, were on a large scale: he was free from petty weakness of all kinds.

It is time to explain who was this Mr. Archibald Douglas, so balefully prominent in this affair. He was the younger brother of William Douglas of Whittinghame, and grandson of the 2nd Earl of Morton [xxxiv.]. Trained in France for the priesthood, he accommodated his conscience to accepting the Protestant cure of Douglas parish, and in 1565 he was raised to the bench as extraordinary Lord of Session in place of the Bishop of Orkney. Four months later, having been concerned in the murder of Riccio, he

xxxvii. Archibald Douglas, Parson of Glasgow, died c. 1600.

¹ Enquired.

² Morton's confession: R. Bannatyne's *Memoriales*.



ARCHIBALD DOUGLAS

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fled to France, whence, having obtained the favour of Charles IX., future author of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, he was allowed to return to Scotland, and exerted himself to obtain pardon for his fellow-conspirators. He was present with his servant Thomas Binning at the murder of Darnley in Kirk-o'-field, where he "tynt his mulis"—lost his slippers or dancing pumps, having come straight from the revel held by the Queen at Holyrood in honour of Bastian's marriage. But no proceedings were taken against this worthy at the time for his part in the crime; on the contrary, in the year following Darnley's death, he was made an ordinary Lord of Session in place of Bishop Lesley, the historian. In 1571 Regent Lennox, at Morton's instance, bestowed upon Archibald the parsonage of Glasgow, which appointment the General Assembly refused to confirm, not without reason, it seems, to judge from Richard Bannatyne's account of the scene, when Douglas at last was allowed to go through the form of examination.

"In register it was appointed to be put the exercise made be Mr. Archibald Douglas, made at Stirveling in the assemble of August 1571, who being comandit to prepare himself for the same be the kirk, send Mr. Walter Gourlay to bid him be reddie against the morne, fand¹ him playing at the tables² with the lard of Bargany; and efter he had resavit the kirkis charge in wrait fra the said Walter, ansuerit, 'Why not? ye may say I am at my studie.' On the morne when he come to the place of examinatione wanting a psalme buke, and luki till sum gud fellow suld len him one, Mr. David Wemys had give him the Grek testament (per Heroniam), but he said, 'Thinke ye, sirs, that everie minister that occupeis the pulpet hes Greik?' and when he had gottin the psalme buike, after luki and casting ower the leives thereof a space, he desyrit sum minister to mak the prayer fer him; 'fer,' said he, 'I am not vsted to pray.' Efter he red his text . . . he sayis, 'fer the conexione of this text I will reid the thing that is befoir,' and sua red a gud space, till he come whair he began, and sa continewed his exercis with mony rastlie noises, &c. Ye may persave it was frutfull, seing he culd not pray at the beginning. O Lord! what salbe said whan sic dum dogis salbe sufferit to mock the ministrie of thy word, and the trueth thereof, on this maner?"

Just a week after Bothwell's trial for the King's murder, namely, on 19th April, Morton received from Parliament formal ratification of his earldom.³ He was once again the

¹ Found. ² Probably backgammon. ³ *Acts of Parl. Scot.*, ii. 562.



most powerful territorial potentate in Scotland, and if he feared to reveal what he knew of the crime, it is no matter for surprise that the mouths of humbler witnesses were sealed, or that Bothwell's mock trial on 9th April had ended in an acquittal. Rather than serve on the jury, Morton declared he would pay forfeit, giving as his reason that Darnley was his kinsman.

Deeper and deeper he descended into the mire; on 20th he even signed the bond consenting to the Queen's marriage with her husband's assassin,¹ notwithstanding that, as there is good reason to suppose, he was maturing a project for Bothwell's overthrow. Morton knew well enough that Bothwell, having used him for his own purpose, would not hesitate to crush him when that purpose should be fully accomplished, and Bothwell played well into his rival's hand. He was a married man, yet on 24th April 1567 he intercepted Queen Mary on her journey from Stirling to Edinburgh, and carried her off, a willing and probably collusive captive, to Dunbar. Then he instituted two processes of divorce against his young wife, Lady Jane Gordon, sister of the Earl of Huntly, whom he had married little more than a year before—a match of Mary's own making! and obtained decree upon them respectively on 3rd and 7th May. On the 15th Bothwell, created Duke of Orkney, and Queen Mary, were married under Protestant rites by the Bishop of Orkney.

The scandal of the whole proceeding was intolerable; horror thereof drove Athol and other Catholic lords into the arms of the Protestant party. They entered into the bond already subscribed by Morton and the other members of the secret council, pledging themselves "to seek the liberty of the Queen, to preserve the life of the Prince, and to pursue them that murdered the King." A plan for the seizure of Bothwell and Mary in Holyrood miscarried; warned in time, they had shut themselves up in Borthwick Castle. Thither Morton and Home rode with some hundreds of their followers, and surrounded the place during

Civil war,
June 1567.

¹ *Memoriales*, 319; Calderwood, ii. 354.



MARY'S SURRENDER

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the night of 10th June. Bothwell managed to escape to Dunbar, where Mary, dressed as a man, joined him a few days later. The confederate lords then seized Edinburgh, and issued a proclamation at the Cross. Meanwhile Bothwell had been gathering what forces he could, and advanced with the Queen upon the capital. Morton, in command of the insurgent army, met the royalists at Carberry Hill on Sunday, 14th June. Mary sent the French ambassador to convey her wish that "the matter should be taken up without blood." Morton replied that his party were in arms, not against the Queen, but against the murderer of the late King, and promised submission if he were given up. Thereupon Bothwell proposed to submit to the ancient ordeal by battle to prove his innocence, offering to do single combat with Morton or any other. The challenge was accepted, but Lord Lindsay claiming his right as a nearer kinsman of Darnley, Morton gave him place, and girt him with the great two-handed sword of Archibald Bell-the-Cat [xlili.]. Then Queen Mary interfered, declaring that her consort was of too high rank to fight with any subject, and calling upon her troops to drive the traitors off the hill. Not a man of them moved, except towards the rear; Bothwell saw the game was up; accepted Morton's private hint to avoid a worse fate by making his escape, and rode off the field, leaving the Queen to return to Edinburgh a captive.

A sorrowful cavalcade it was as ever summer sun looked down upon. Mary, "in a short pitticoate, little syder than her knees,"¹ her beautiful features soiled with dust and smirched with passionate weeping, rode between Morton, murderer of Riccio and accomplice in Darnley's murder, and Athol, head of the Catholic lords, upon whom she had relied. From windows and stairs in the crowded High Street curses and jeers were hurled at the fair head, which ought to have been the pride of Scotland. Many of her captors were hot to have her blood, but Morton restrained them—at least so a Protestant contemporary states²—and

¹ Calderwood, ii. 364.

² *Ibid.*, 366.



on 16th June Mary was imprisoned in Lochleven Castle, under charge of Sir William Douglas [lviii.], owner thereof, and the Lords Lindsay and Ruthven.¹

Three days later, on 19th June, Morton, acting as chief of the State in Moray's absence, hearing that one of Bothwell's servants had come to Edinburgh Castle to recover some of his master's property, sent Archibald Douglas and others to arrest the man. The result was that a certain silver-gilt casket came into Morton's hands, which, on the 21st, was forced open in the presence of several of the lords. It was found to contain highly compromising documents, including letters from Queen Mary written to Bothwell before their marriage, which, if genuine, proved beyond all doubt guilty foreknowledge of the murder of Darnley. It is impossible in this place to follow the discussion, which has never yet produced agreement, and probably never will, as to whether these papers were forged, tampered with, or genuine. If they were forged, who was the forger—Lethington or Archibald Douglas? In whose interest were they forged? In that of Morton and the Protestant party undoubtedly, to whose schemes and policy the Queen was the chief obstacle, and it is scarcely possible that Morton should not have been aware of such a forgery. The conscience of the man who knew of Darnley's approaching fate, and refrained from warning him thereof for fear of his own life, would not have shrunk from sanctioning the fabrication of evidence in support of a charge which, after all, he and many others were convinced was true. On the other hand, had Morton at that time desired the execution of Queen Mary, would it not have been much simpler for him to let that take place, as was strongly urged by some of the lords, immediately after the surrender at Carberry? Instead of doing so, he had been the chief means of saving the Queen's life, at least so says Calderwood, thereby incurring from some of the other lords the reproach of being "a stayer of justice." Genuine or forged, these

The Casket
Letters,
June 1567.

¹ *Morton*, i. 24.



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casket letters were founded upon in Parliament, which, in December, confirmed Morton's action in committing the Queen to prison.

Meanwhile, on 24th July, Mary was compelled to abdicate in favour of her son, James VI., and nominated as Regent her natural brother, the Earl of Moray. An interim council was appointed to act under Morton till Moray's return; the young King was crowned at Stirling on 29th July, Morton taking the oaths on his behalf and swearing to maintain the Protestant religion. Moray took up the regency on 22nd August, Morton having been restored to the chancellorship.

Morton had good cause to congratulate himself upon the discretion which had kept him clear of the plot against Darnley, for, on 14th December, when four of Bothwell's wretched instruments were put on trial and condemned to death for their part therein, no mention of the chancellor's name occurred in their long and minute depositions.¹

It is true, as admitted by Calderwood, Morton's unwavering panegyrist, that it was commonly believed and reported that Moray and Morton were at the bottom of the whole deadly plot, but both had the sagacity to be absent from Edinburgh when it took effect, and few dared to speak above their breath.

In May 1568 Queen Mary escaped from Lochleven and

¹ Since this paragraph was written I have been favoured with a transcript of the remarkable discovery by Father Ryan, S.J., in the Cambridge MS. of Hepburn of Bowton's deposition. A long passage which occurs in this MS. does not occur in the copy of the confession attested as "true" by the Lord Justice-Clerk, Bellenden [B. M. Cotton, *Caligula*, c. i. folio 325], which was no doubt the same as that put in at the Westminster conference. In this passage occurs the following important sentence:—"Item depossis that ilk ane that wer of the band [for the murder of Darnley] and siclike the erle of Morton and Syr James Balfour [who had *not* signed the band] suld haif send twa men to the committing of the murther." This, if true, would account for the presence of Archibald Douglas and his servant Binning, as representing Morton. The inference is a sinister one: namely, that Moray caused Bellenden to attest a false copy of Bowton's confession, which was submitted at Westminster, so as to screen Morton. Yet who shall pronounce what weight is carried by the confession of Hepburn, the murderer present, against the confession of Morton, the accomplice absent?



joined a force of 6000 men which her adherents had collected in readiness. Moray was in Glasgow at the time, and summoned Morton to his assistance. The Queen appointed Argyll her commander-in-chief, and marched to Hamilton; but Argyll fell sick, and his absence proved fatal to the conduct of operations when, on 13th May, the forces of the Queen and the Regent met at Langside. Moray's army, whereof Morton commanded the advanced guard, was inferior in numbers to the Queen's by one-third; nevertheless Mary, seated on Cathcart Hill, about a mile from the conflict which ensued, had to witness the complete rout of her people, and rode off the field escorted by the Lords Herries, Fleming, and Livingstone. A few days later, trusting to the protection of her cousin, Queen Elizabeth, she crossed the Border, never to return to Scotland. But her friends remained faithful to their beautiful Queen, whose evil fortune had gone far to obliterate what was deplorable in her record. Morton had enough ado to secure the position he had won for himself, not to mention the defence of the reformed religion. He could not afford to be scrupulous in remembering old friendships, and the influence of his former confederate, William Maitland of Lethington, upon Elizabeth's policy towards Scottish parties, caused him much anxiety. Maitland, one of the authors of Riccio's murder, had gone over for the nonce to Queen Mary's interest, notwithstanding that he had accompanied Moray, Morton, Lindsay, and the other commissioners to York, where they publicly made their indictment against the Queen of Scots, and the casket letters were privately shown to the Duke of Norfolk. It came to Morton's knowledge that Maitland was in secret communication both with Elizabeth and with Mary's adherents; accordingly he caused the Regent to direct the arrest and arraignment of Maitland on the charge of complicity in Darnley's murder. In view of the opposition expected from the Queen's party, Morton held himself ready at Dalkeith with 3000 men to protect the judges in case of disturbance. But the trial never took place. Kirkaldy of

Escape of
Queen Mary
from Loch-
leven, and
May 1568.

Battle of
Langside,
13th May 1568.



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Grange demanded, before Maitland should go to an assize, "the like justice to be done upon the Erle of Mortoun and Mester Archibald, and Lord Heris offerit to feicht with the Erle of Mortoun that he was upon the consell and airt and part of the Kingis murthour."¹ So Morton deemed it prudent to keep away from the capital. Kirkaldy then rescued Maitland and took him into Edinburgh Castle, which these two continued to hold for Queen Mary, till they were overpowered in 1573.

On 23rd January 1570 the Regent Moray was assassinated in Linlithgow by Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh. Morton applied to Queen Elizabeth for an armed force to assist him in punishing the Hamiltons, threatening, if she persisted in holding aloof, that "he would not run her course any longer." This forced Elizabeth's hand; Sussex crossed the Border, wasted the lands of some of Queen Mary's party in that region, and marched to Hamilton, where he did the like. Lennox, father of the murdered Darnley, and grandfather of the young King, returned to Scotland at this time, and, at Morton's earnest instance with the Protestant party and Queen Elizabeth, was appointed to the regency. This did not interfere with Morton's position as practical head of the Government, "the strongest man in Scotland," as Drury described him to Cecil;² but nearly all the nobility had ranged themselves against him in the Queen's cause. The civil war, therefore, which was now in progress, was the old blood-feud of Douglas and Hamilton in an aggravated form.

Now, Archibald Douglas knew far too much about Morton's guilty foreknowledge of the crime of Kirk-o'-field to make it safe for Morton to neglect him; accordingly he was employed as the confidential agent of his powerful relative in negotiations with the English Government. Archibald could play many parts—parson, judge, diplomat, murderer—but there was

The Earl of
Lennox ap-
pointed Re-
gent, 12th
July 1570.

Treachery of
Archibald
Douglas, 1570.

¹ Melville's *Memoirs*, 218.

² *State Papers (Foreign)*, 1569-1571, No. 184.



one in which he always failed—that of an honest man. While employed by Morton, he took pay from Drury, the English commander in Berwick, as a spy; he entered into treasonable correspondence and dealings with Kirkaldy and Maitland, whom Morton was besieging in Edinburgh Castle; but he could not refrain from cheating them of 1000 out of 5000 Flemish gold crowns which he was commissioned to convey to them; he even caused his servant, Binning, to attempt Morton's life with a pistol. It is not improbable that his rancour against Morton arose out of pique at the appointment of another Douglas to be Archbishop of St. Andrews in 1571; but the fact that he was deep in conspiracy against his patron did not prevent him accepting at his hands the parsonage of Glasgow, when straightway he began to stir up the Presbyterian clergy to resist Morton's intromissions with their stipends.

Chief in Morton's counsel at this time was John Knox, who greatly strengthened the earl in offering resistance to Elizabeth's wavering inclination for Mary's restoration. In February 1571 Morton, Pitcairn, lay abbot of Dunfermline, and Mr. James MacGill, clerk of register, went on an embassy to London, in order to convince the Queen of England of the necessity for Mary's continued imprisonment. Ambassadors in Mary's interest were already in London—Bishop Lesley of Ross, Bishop Gordon of Galloway, and Lord Livingstone. Elizabeth appointed Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Mildmay, and Sir Francis Knollys to receive Morton's representations, which, being put in writing and laid before her, mightily offended her by the assertion of the inherent right of subjects to depose their sovereign under certain circumstances. But at this juncture a letter arrived from Sir Francis Walsingham, whom Elizabeth had sent on a secret mission to Paris, announcing that a project was afoot for the marriage of Mary with the Duc d'Anjou, which had received the sanction of the Pope. Now this was pure and intentional fiction on the part of Walsingham, intended to fire Elizabeth's jealousy of Mary, for negotiations had been in progress for some



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time for the marriage of Elizabeth herself to Anjou. The device took effect, but only a temporary one. Presently Elizabeth seemed ready to fulfil the conditions of the articles settled at Chatsworth between Mary and Lord Burghley, which included the restoration of the Queen of Scots and the removal of her son to England. Nothing was farther from Burghley's design than a settlement so menacing to Protestant interests; it was probably in full collusion with the English Secretary that Morton at this stage resiled from the negotiations, declaring that he was not empowered by the Scottish Government to consent to Mary's restoration. The Scottish commissioners returned home, and the Regent's Government were so well satisfied with Morton's discharge of his mission, that, in order to indemnify him for his expenses, they bestowed upon him the bishopric of St. Andrews, vacated by the death of Archbishop Hamilton.

After this, Elizabeth resumed the traditional policy of England, encouraging alternately the hopes of each party in Scotland, thereby aggravating the bitterness of civil strife, and rendering an agreement between parties less practicable than ever.



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- Newsletter submission dates are accepted until the 15th day of the month prior to the publication month.
- **March 2026** newsletter submissions must be received no later than **March 15, 2026**.
- Please submit articles to: CDSNA.Editor@gmail.com.
- All members are welcome to submit articles, game reports, pictures, or general information. It is requested that any items submitted be related to CDSNA or of general Celtic Interest

The *Dubh Ghlas* Newsletter editor will make all final decisions as to the content of the newsletter and design of the front cover.

Clan Douglas Society of North America



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