

### **The Kingship of Robert I (1306-29)**

The year 1318 was dramatically representative of the fortunes of the kingship of Robert Bruce. It was also typical of his flint-edged and adaptable response to such fates and makes it plain that Robert's strongest model for his own style of rule and the recasting of the office of King of Scots was surely that of his early antagonist, the formidable Edward I of England.

The opening weeks of the twelfth year of Robert's rule found that monarch and his closest followers still recuperating from the grave physical toll of their fruitless campaign in southern Ireland in January to May 1317, a third season waged in support of Edward Bruce's wars to expand his kingship.<sup>1</sup> The Scots king and his adult brother and heir presumptive, together with the future Guardian of the Bruce realm, Thomas Randolph earl of Moray, had all nearly perished of hunger and ambush in the boggy and political mire of County Limerick. Returning to Scotland, Robert was content to accept truces on two fronts for much of the next twelve months: he even sent envoys to talk with the Archbishop of York about a 'final peace'.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the first three months of 1318 found Robert either mostly in or around Arbroath, the seat of his trusted Chancellor, Abbot Bernard, or close to the border for talks. The king continued his resettlement of lands, offices and national defence: for example, appointing Nicholas Scrymgeour of Dundee as royal standard bearer in return for former Balliol lands and alienating further lowland holdings for the services of at least one-and-a-half knights. But Robert's acts in these weeks also reflected domestic

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S. Duffy, 'The Bruce Invasion of Ireland: a Revised Itinerary and Chronology', in idem ed., *Robert the Bruce's Irish Wars* (Stroud 2002), 9-44.

<sup>2</sup> *Rot. Scot.*, i., 179-80.

concerns and the relative stabilisation of much of his regime north of the border Marches since 1314. For example, it was about this time that Robert endowed a chapel to St Fillan, attached to Inchaffrey Priory, in thanks for the intercession of that saint during Bruce's flight into exile through Perthshire in 1306.<sup>3</sup>

However, in early April word must have reached the king that his warrior lieutenant, Sir James Douglas, abetted by townsmen, had captured the burgh of Berwick-upon-Tweed (which Bruce himself had failed to take by stealth in 1312, betrayed by a barking dog): the Bruce Scots now laid siege to the castle there. By 12 April Robert was in Berwick with his son-in-law, Walter the Steward, Douglas, William Lindsay the chamberlain, Robert Keith the Marischal and others. The king probably withdrew north to celebrate Easter (23 April): 20 May found Robert at Colquhoun near Dumbarton, probably waiting upon a shipment of arms from the continent. But he was back at Berwick by 5 June in time to see his captains storm the castle a fortnight later: this time, the king resolved to retain and rebuild this symbolic strongpoint and port as the most southerly and wealthy burgh of the crown of pre-1286 and Scotland's vital trade in wool.<sup>4</sup>

With the Scots again ascendant, the Berwick campaign provided the springboard to a characteristically systematic and brutal series of springtime incursions into Northumberland, county Durham and Cumberland. Wark, Harbottle and Mitford castles fell and were razed; on the west march the castle-town of Carlisle, which had resisted a concerted siege by Robert in 1315, could report its exhaustion from 'watches' against the Scots; Douglas and Moray also extracted 600 merks for a short truce from Durham's

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<sup>3</sup> *RRS*, v, pp. 144-5, nos. 128-35; S. Taylor, 'The Cult of St Fillan in Scotland', in T.R. Litzka and L.E.M. Walker eds., *The North Sea World in the Middle Ages: Studies in the Cultural History of North-Western Europe* (Dublin 2001), 175-210, 184-5. Bruce also allowed Arbroath abbey access across the royal park at Drum provided it supplied two gates with locks.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, nos. 135-7; *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. H. Maxwell (Glasgow 1913) [hereafter *Chron. Lanercost*], 201-2, 219-20; *Chron. Fordun*, 348; A.A.M. Duncan ed., *John Barbour - The Bruce* (Edinburgh 1997), 621-7.

cathedral regality to add to the thousands of pounds already extorted and expended on invasions of Ireland. Rumours abounded, too, that the Scots were in secret talks with the rebellious Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, against a 'much enraged' Edward II. But Robert did not lose sight of personal grievances. The wealthy port of Hartlepool, held by English Bruce cousins, pleaded in vain with Edward II in June 1318 for protection from 'Robert de Brus' who had vowed to 'burn and destroy [it] for their capturing a ship freighted with his 'armours' and victuals'.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, as was typical of the majority of raids after 1315, Robert himself, sick and without a son as he was, remained in Scotland and in midsummer focussed instead on a circuit of spiritual and political display. These acts were undertaken in anticipation of papal wrath, for not only had Bruce torn up letters and expelled the persons of legates in the previous winter but the seizure of Berwick had broken a two-year truce imposed by John XXII from Avignon. Within a year, Scotland would be showered by letters of excommunication, threats of interdict upon religious services and summons for Robert and his bishops to the curia. The English church hierarchy and crown would make great play of disseminating these declarations.<sup>6</sup> The contemporary *Vita Edwardi Secundi* could also claim symbolic portent in the tale of Bruce forcing a priest to perform High Mass about this time only for a dove to steal away the host.<sup>7</sup> What better way, then, to emphatically assert the piety and legitimacy of the Bruce regime than to mark several universal religious and national events?

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<sup>5</sup> *CDS*, iii., nos. 593, 602, 616-9, 746. In 1319 Bruce would burn the monastery at Holm Cultram despite the presence there of his father's grave [*Chron. Lanercost*, 220-2, 226-8, 237]. For Scottish raids generally see C. McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland 1306-28* (East Linton 1997).

<sup>6</sup> *Foedera*, II, i, 340-1, 350; *CPL*, ii, 420, 429; G.W.S. Barrow, *Robert the Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Edinburgh 1988), 238-9, 247; G.G. Simpson, 'The Declaration of Arbroath Revitalised', *SHR*, lvi (1977), 11-33, 18-20.

<sup>7</sup> *Vita Edwardi Secundi: the Life of Edward the Second by the so-called Monk of Malmesbury*, trans. N. Denholm-Young (London 1957), 89-90.

Hence, Robert was most likely to be found at Stirling about 24 June 1318, the anniversary of Bannockburn and St John the Baptist's day.<sup>8</sup> 29 June was the feast day of Apostles Paul and Peter (Rome's first bishop and Pope) and surely marked by king and court, perhaps at Dunfermline, the resting place of the descendants of 'founding' royal couple Malcolm III (d. 1093) and (St) Margaret (canonised in 1251). But 5 July 1318 found Robert and surely the majority of the political community at the Fife cathedral of St Andrew (St Peter's brother) for the consecration of the completed church by Bishop William Lamberton: one can only wonder what the prelate's sermon preached in the wake of the recovery of Berwick to his diocese.<sup>9</sup> From that bold statement of solidarity Bruce probably moved north with his court to mark, two days later, the Translation feast of St Thomas Becket, the Canterbury martyr and saint-of-dedication of Arbroath's Tironensian abbey. However, 7 July was also now the anniversary of the death of Edward I (1307), an immense watershed for Bruce. In addition, the following day was the death date of Alexander II of Scotland (1249, aged 51); four days later (11 July 1318), King Robert would have celebrated his own forty-fourth birthday.<sup>10</sup>

Such stage-managed events would have been framed in the language of legitimation and universal community support shot through the Bruce regime's written propaganda. But in 1318, posturing must have been all the more necessary given the

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<sup>8</sup> There are no extant royal acts between 5 June and 27 July 1318 but Robert I had moved from Berwick to Leith, Perthshire, in this timeframe.

<sup>9</sup> *Chron. Bower*, vii, 413. An incompletely dated charter survives from 5 July 1318x1327 granting the church of Fordoun in Kincardineshire to St Andrews priory [*RRS*, v, no. 500].

<sup>10</sup> *Chron. Bower*, iv, 301-19 and v, 191, and vi, 331; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 26. 2 July was also the feast of the Visitation of the Virgin and 4 July the translation feast of St Martin; 11 July may have been the anniversary of the battle of Dail Righ, 1306. That key regal dates formed significant markers for Scottish kings is suggested by Robert II's delayed coronation discussed at the end of chapter 2 below; or by Robert III's elevation of his son and brother to Dukedoms at Scone on Trinity Sunday 1398; or by James II's hot-headed confrontation and murder of the eighth earl of Douglas on 21-22 February 1452, the anniversary of James I's assassination (21 February 1437); or by James IV's regicide regime's coronation on 24 June 1488, Bannockburn day, two weeks after the slaughter of James III while wielding the sword of Robert Bruce at Sauchieburn.

imminent retaliation Robert expected. In late July, Edward II began massive preparations for an expedition to recover Berwick: in September, the first of the papal censures perhaps began to arrive.<sup>11</sup> Bruce must have intended a fresh assault on Dublin to deflect both these counter-blows: the gap in his extant dated *acta* from 27 July to 3 December most likely masks his transfer with Randolph to Ulster with reinforcements for Edward Bruce. But if so, they disembarked too late. On 14 October Edward and the core of his army led by MacDonalds, MacRuaridhs, several Stewart cadets, Sir John Soules and Sir Philip Mowbray were slaughtered at Dundalk. The death of his last brother and adult heir and thousands of men immediately exposed the weaknesses in Robert's achievements.<sup>12</sup>

Above all it was the hole in the royal lineage which caused Robert to summon an emergency parliament to Scone.<sup>13</sup> There a fresh act of succession of 3 December 1318 recorded the community of the realm's designation as heir presumptive of the king's grandson, Robert Stewart, in the event of Robert I's death without a son, and of Guardianship by Randolph if Stewart was a minor. As recent analysis has shown, the passage of this act of support for Bruce policy probably did not require the same level of blatant coercion of key individuals as Bruce's regime had felt necessary in assemblies of 1309-10 or 1315.<sup>14</sup> In theory, this seeming reversal in late 1318 of the first act of succession's decision in a parliament at Ayr in April 1315 to bypass the rights of the king's daughter, Marjorie Bruce (d. 1317), and her then unborn offspring by Walter Stewart (d. 1326), in favour of Edward Bruce, could be used to appeal to magnates'

<sup>11</sup> *Rot. Scot.*, i, 183-8; *Vita*, 76; *Chron. Lanercost*, 224-5.

<sup>12</sup> *RRS*, v, nos. 138-9; *Barbour - The Bruce*, 667-77; Duffy, 'The Bruce Invasion of Ireland', 38-43.

<sup>13</sup> For the acts of this parliament see: *RRS*, v, nos. 139-42, 301; *APS*, i, 466-74.

<sup>14</sup> A.A.M. Duncan, 'The Declarations of the Clergy, 1309-10', in G.W.S. Barrow ed., *The Declaration of Arbroath: History, Significance, Setting* (Edinburgh 2003), 32-49; R.J. Tanner, 'Cowing the Community? Coercion and Falsification in Robert Bruce's Parliaments, 1309-1318', in K.M. Brown and R.J. Tanner eds., *Parliament and Politics in Scotland, 1235-1560* (Edinburgh 2004), 50-73.

worries about their own rights of succession under a Bruce king: men like Duncan, earl of Fife, might hope now that his daughter (b. c. 1306x1333) and her future husband might succeed to his titles rather than a Bruce placeman.<sup>15</sup> A number of the other statutes passed in this, the most celebrated of Bruce's legislative parliaments, may also have been designed (and initiated long before Dundalk) to allay fears about noble patrimony and respond to petitions of grievance, complaints which Robert may have invited through parliament in the manner of Edward I.<sup>16</sup> In particular, acts detailing the judicial procedures for recovering lands lost in the last two decades of war might offer hope even to those who had defied Robert I's deadline of forfeiture of opponents, an ultimatum set and executed in parliaments at Cambuskenneth near Stirling of October 1313 and November 1314. The recorded pardon of Bishop Henry Cheyne of Aberdeen on 5 December 1318 confirms Bruce's admission of the need for further reconciliation.<sup>17</sup> The fact, too, that many of December 1318's acts were made 'by the counsel and express consent of the bishops, abbots, priors, earls and barons and all the community of our kingdom in full parliament' spoke ostensibly to a growing and genuine consultative role for influential magnates, as well as increasing belief since 1315 in the viability of a Bruce kingship which had now lasted twice as long as that of John Balliol (1292-6).

Nevertheless, there were strong negative undercurrents. The 1318 parliament also passed acts for the maintenance of Scotland's armed host, generally outlawed the spread of seditious talk divisive of king and subjects and prefaced the new succession entail with a promise to punish its violation as treason. Those sealing the latter were also required to

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<sup>15</sup> *RRS*, v, nos. 58, 72; *APS*, i, 464-5. Would things have been different, though, if Marjorie Bruce had still been alive in 1318?

<sup>16</sup> M. Prestwich, *Edward I* (London 1988), 458-61; G. Dodd, 'The Hidden Presence: Parliament and Private Petition in the Fourteenth Century', in A. Musson ed., *Expectations of the Law in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge 2001), 135-49, 135-6.

<sup>17</sup> *RRS*, v, no. 140; A.A.M. Duncan, 'The War of the Scots, 1306-23', *TRHS*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, ii (1992), 125-51, 149-50.

swear on the Bible and relics of unnamed saints: perhaps St Andrews again, whose feast day had just passed (30 November); or St Columba, whose relics may have been used to bless the army at Bannockburn and who was celebrated on 12 December; or even a relic of Becket, the ultimate, and for Bruce anti-Plantagenet, symbol of the cost of betrayal and whose special feast '*Regressio de exilio*', marked only at Arbroath and Canterbury, had fallen the previous day (2 December), a few weeks before the feast of his martyrdom (29 December).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, those who sealed the 1318 tailzie included men not otherwise to be found on Robert I's daily council namely, the earls of Fife and Strathearn, and, of course, Sir William Soules, men all forced into submission to Bruce after Bannockburn, who would all be denied landed interests thanks to the king's continued resettlement in 1319 and all be caught up in the so-called 'Soules Conspiracy' of 1320. This was really a regicidal plot in support of Edward Balliol who had already arrived in London as a paid guest of Edward II as early as November 1318.<sup>19</sup>

Coming as they did, then, in the wake not only of the disaster of Dundalk but, by contrast, a spring and summer of Scottish military success and ceremonial acclamation, the decisions of the December 1318 parliament may have seemed all the more desperate and uncertain to Robert, his government and their enemies alike. The same might be said of the longer-term propaganda process indulged by Robert in distancing himself from Edward Bruce's failure by depicting him as headstrong in verse chronicles commissioned c.1314-29 (used later by John Barbour): a similar white-wash would be applied to the Soules plot.<sup>20</sup> Tellingly, 15 December 1318 and the close of the year would find Bruce

<sup>18</sup> M. Penman, 'The Bruce Dynasty, Becket and Scottish Pilgrimage to Canterbury, c.1178-c.1404' (forthcoming); K. Stringer, 'Arbroath Abbey in Context, 1178-1320', in Barrow ed., *The Declaration of Arbroath*, 116-42. William I had died on 4 December 1214.

<sup>19</sup> M. Penman, 'A fell conuiracioun agayn Robert ye douchty king: the Soules conspiracy of 1318-20', *IR*, 50 (1999), 25-57.

<sup>20</sup> R.J. Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland* (Nebraska 1993); Barbour - *The Bruce*, 675-7.

possibly back at Arbroath, issuing grants to begin the process of increasing the military presence of James Douglas in south-west Scotland to fill the void of Edward Bruce, lord of Galloway and earl of Carrick's demise.<sup>21</sup> But this was also the King steeling himself for what was to come. Both before and after his supporters' counter raids had brilliantly deflected Edward II's ill-fated siege of Berwick in September 1319 and foiled the Balliol plot at the cruel 'Black Parliament' of August 1320, Bruce would be all too keen to secure time and space through pro-longed truces in order to step-up his domestic resettlement, sire a son and answer his critics.<sup>22</sup>

The highs and lows of one year, then, can be used to illustrate Robert I's concerns and practical application of patronage, diplomacy, military strategy, political ideology, justice, courtly image and piety throughout his twenty-three year reign, as well as in illuminating his strengths, weaknesses, beliefs, hopes and fears. Most importantly, however, in addition to highlighting themes which dominated the most under-studied period of Bruce's career, the fifteen years after Bannockburn, such a snap-shot also underscores our need to perceive the great fluctuations affecting these issues and Robert. Against a background of *rapidly* changing local, national and European events, Bruce had to be responsive, flexible and pragmatic as well as pro-active, ruthless, principled and autocratic where possible. Thus it might be said that many of his means of achieving the ultimate goal of a recognised Bruce dynasty of a sovereign Scottish kingdom were shaped and re-shaped by unpredictable circumstances c.1296-1329. A strong case can also be made that much of Robert I's rule reflected what he had encountered of the

<sup>21</sup> *RRS*, v, no. 143; R.D. Oram, 'Bruce-Balliol and the Lordship of Galloway: the South-West of Scotland and the Wars of Independence', *TDGNHAS*, lxvii (1992), 29-47

<sup>22</sup> *RRS*, v, no. 569 (and discussion); *Chron. Lanercost*, 226-8, 237-40.



forceful personal monarchy of Edward I rather than a conscious response to the 'chicken-hearted' Edward II (1307-27).<sup>23</sup>

As such, a number of historians have come to question G.W.S. Barrow's classic emphasis of Bruce's heartfelt co-operation with and leadership of the 'community of the realm' as a binding ideological principle of his cause, a high-road from 1286 to 1314 or 1320 and then 1329. It might be argued instead that this collective 'community' mandate was the more consistent guide-light of Scotland's prelates, an invaluable tool in cementing the church's place in parliament and in partnership with the crown in defying English ecclesiastical supremacy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and thus, after 1286, in attempting to prevent Scottish government factionalism in the face of Edward I's predation.<sup>24</sup> Charismatic church leaders like Wishart of Glasgow, Lamberton of St Andrews, David Murray of Moray, Alexander de Kininmund (of Aberdeen by c.1329), Bernard of Arbroath and Andrew de Moravia (bishop of Brechin and Chancellor 1328-35), trained at continental law-schools and the curia and increasingly inclined to conciliar supervision of papal prerogative, could also use Robert I's rushed inauguration oaths of 25/27 March 1306 and his chancery documents thereafter to reiterate a principle of contractual rule. In their eyes this would have placed a large measure of obligation to seek good counsel from both the first (ecclesiastical) and second (baronial) Estates upon Bruce as king, a plateau of trust and a policy of common-sense which Robert, himself a former parliamentary magnate, would have been anxious to attain in some form anyway in his bid for power.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 240.

<sup>24</sup> D. Broun, 'The Church and the origins of Scottish independence in the twelfth century', *RCHS*, xxxi (2002), 1-35; A.A.M. Duncan, *The Kingship of the Scots, 842-1292: Succession and Independence* (Edinburgh 2002).

<sup>25</sup> D.E.R. Watt, *A Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to AD1410* (Oxford 1977), 299-301, 318-25, 409-13, 585-90; *Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc: Registrorum Abbacie de Aberbrothoc*, (2 vols., Edinburgh 1848), i, xv; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 305-6; A. Black, *Political Thought in Medieval Europe, 1250-1450* (Cambridge 1992), 1-13, 20-2, 39-40, 142-4; J.P.

However, a dynastic politician like Robert Bruce understood a world in which the 'community of the realm' could mean very different things. Robert's grandfather, the Competitor of Annandale (d. 1295), was a veteran of the factionalism of Alexander III's minority (1249-60), of English politics (including the Barons' Wars) and of Edward I's company on crusade (1270-2). Robert of Annandale's influence on the future Bruce king, together with the younger Robert's own participation at Edward I's staged assemblies such as the Norham parliament of 1291 or King John Balliol's inauguration in 1292, must have made it plain that the 'community of the realm' could also represent interest-group opposition to the crown *or* a body of consensus forged by a forceful king and ministers.<sup>26</sup> Similar lessons could have been learned by Bruce attending Edward I's English parliaments of c.1302-6: these saw the English king compromise with his baronial, clerical, burghal and shire representatives over such issues as tax, prise, royal demesne and war service but all the time building towards his renunciation (1305) of any concessions which parliament had extracted in 1297 and 1300.<sup>27</sup>

Bruce's immensely frustrating periods of exclusion from Scottish politics c.1292-7 and c.1300-6, and his humiliating attempts to hijack the direction of Guardianship c.1297-1300, must have made it even clearer that the legitimating authority of the representative 'community' was about the management of men. For Robert that had been brought home hard in a punch-up at Peebles in August 1299 when his fellow Guardian, John Comyn of Badenoch, had seized him by the throat and accused him of plotting *lesémajesté* against the Balliol line: two year's later, Bruce was forced out of office,

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Canning, 'Development c. 1150-c. 1450: Politics, institutions and ideas', in J.H. Burns ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350-c. 1450* (Cambridge 1988), 341-366.

<sup>26</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, ch. 2; Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, chs. 10-13; M. Prestwich, 'Parliament and the community of the realm in fourteenth century England', in A. Cosgrave and J.I. McGuire eds., *Parliament and Community* (Belfast 1983), 5-24.

<sup>27</sup> Prestwich, *Edward I*, 436-68, 523-35.

replaced by Ingelram d'Umfraville, who in turn would conspire to kill him in 1320. In 1305, Bruce, despite Edward I's guarantee in 1302 of his 'right' to pursue the kingship, found himself ousted as one of the Scottish community's representatives at Westminster as the Comyn party moved in to dominate the Edwardian occupation regime.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore there were divergent influences at work on Robert in aspiring to be king. The language and ideology of his regime's most famous extant declarations - of the nobility in parliament at St Andrews in 1309, of the clergy there, too, and in general church council in 1310 at Dundee, and of the barons' letter from Arbroath on 6 April 1320, were based on national 'community' positions first stated between 1286 and 1291 and penned by the same clerical personnel who had defended Balliol Scotland to the pope between 1299 and 1301. Robert I knew the value of such statements in both diplomatic terms and, thanks to the extended Comyn affinity c.1286-1306, in justifying political control in the face of opposition. Above all, the directed will of the community acting for the 'common good' could be used to justify usurpation of the Balliols. But Bruce's Declarations were also inspired by the stage-managed propaganda of Edward I: for example, Longshank's proof of the Scots' submissions to his overlordship in parliaments at Norham (May 1291), Berwick (August 1296) and St Andrews (March 1304), as well as the English barons' letter (1301) in reply to the papal bull *Scimus Filli* (1299).<sup>29</sup> But the reality of Robert's more ready understanding of Edward I's applications of the power of 'community' is underlined by the proof of contemporary English chronicles which emphasise the Bruce Scots' anxiously desired return of documents in addition to the

<sup>28</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 107; G.O. Sayles, 'The Guardians of Scotland and a Parliament at Rutherglen in 1300', *SHR*, xxiv (1927), 245-50; A. Young, *Robert the Bruce's Rivals: the Comyns, 1212-1314* (East Linton 1997), chs. 7-8.

<sup>29</sup> E.L.G. Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174-1328* (London 1965), nos. 28-31, 36; PRO C47/23/3-5; H.G. Richardson and G.O. Sayles, 'The Scottish Parliaments of Edward I', *SHR*, xxiv (1927), 300-17.

Scottish crown's muniments and relics when peace was concluded in 1328. For, in addition to the Black Rood(s?) of St Margaret, the Stone of Scone and Edward III's written statement (1 March 1328) of his abandonment of English overlordship, we are told that Robert I also insisted on the symbolic surrender of 'the indentures of obeissance of the Scottish lords with their seals appended, which men called 'Ragman'...', Edward I's collection of oaths of fealty from over 2,000 Scots, including the Bruces who had twice backed England.<sup>30</sup>

In sum, for Robert, the necessity of using both force and favour, violence and coercion as well as dialogue and compromise, was all too clear in forging a Scottish 'community of the realm' which accepted his kingship after 1306. Thus the December 1318 parliament showed strong signs of wider community support for the Bruce regime and the legislative fruits of genuine consultation among crown, earls, barons and prelates over landed and legal concerns. Yet Robert's earlier assemblies had had to be tightly controlled affairs with certain regional individuals either forced through military defeat to attend and comply with royal policy (for example Alexander Macdougall of Argyll at St Andrews in March 1309), surrender their seals for attachment to crown documents (for example Malise, earl of Strathearn), or watch helplessly from exile as Bruce followers spoke or sealed in their place (for example Duncan, earl of Fife at Ayr in April 1315). It is surely also the case that even where Robert did permit lobbying and discussion of policy to be shaped by those out-with his inner circle, the final decision was still closely

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<sup>30</sup> *Chron. Lanercost*, 259-61; *Sir Thomas Gray's Scalachronica*, ed. A King (forthcoming), f. 212 - my thanks to Dr Andy King of the Department of History, University of Durham, currently working on a revised edition of Sir Thomas Gray's chronicle, for a selection of his MS in progress from which I cite folio numbers; B.A. McAndrew, 'The sigillography of the Ragman Roll', *PSAS*, 129 (1999), 663-752, Stones ed., *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, no. 38. *CDS*, v, no. 494, an inventory of seized Scottish royal goods made after Edward I's death at Burgh-on-Sands in 1307, records the presence of not only the Black Rood of St Margaret and another cross belonging to that queen but also a piece of 'the Holy Cross and many small relics of the confessor, St Edmund, in a burse bearing the arms of the king of France, with other relics which that king sent to Alexander, king of Scotland'.

managed by the imperatives of the crown, 'as the king commands...' or 'the king requires...'.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, even after military victories had given Robert considerably increased support, king and daily council remained unwilling to invite open community discussion of crucial matters. This was certainly true with regard to the royal succession with the Bruce regime's three parliamentary acts (the third came in 1326) designed to prevent alternative challenges and to bind the loyalty of those entering Bruce's peace. Foreign policy, too, surely remained an exclusive crown preserve. This, of course, included not only truce and peace negotiations, with council or parliaments held only to ratify not to propose terms, but also military strategy. No permission seems to have been sought from the wider community for the Scots' breaking of truces in April 1318, January 1322 or February 1327, nor is there evidence that the Ayr parliament of 1315 was asked for approval or funds for the invasion of Ireland. Furthermore, none of Robert's almost annual parliaments or councils after 1318 seem to have allowed input by the community to prevent the king's alienation of royal demesne (especially thanages and forest) or forfeited lands without the 'mature counsel' of his assembled Estates, as would become parliament's concern after 1357.<sup>32</sup>

In patronage, indeed, lay the king's most powerful tool for shaping the community to suit his political ends. Robert's resettlement of lands and offices depended very much on his skills of personal lordship over a considerable period of time, the bulk of his grants

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<sup>31</sup> Tanner, 'Cowing the Community', 69.

<sup>32</sup> A. Grant, 'Thanages and Thanages, from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Centuries' in A. Grant and K.J. Stringer eds., *Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community* (Edinburgh 1993), 39-81, 65-6; M.A. Penman, 'Parliament Lost - Parliament Regained? The Three Estates in the Reign of David II, 1329-71', in Brown and Tanner eds., *Parliament and Politics*, 74-101, 88-101.

would be issued throughout the 1320s, and would do most to mitigate his need to otherwise herd his subjects into doing what he and ministers wanted.

Nonetheless, many of Robert's acts of patronage in the first eight years of his kingship, against a background of civil war, were themselves acts of force which ratified or initiated the violent intrusion of Bruce supporters into rival lordships. Even though the pardon of Duncan, earl of Fife, and the re-entailing of his vital earldom was recorded as following 'consultation and discussion about the status of our lord the king of Scotland and about the common benefit of his realm' in August 1315, this still surely involved the king's intimidation of his former social superior and a galling performance of homage by Duncan who now faced the likelihood that his English daughter would lose her lands to a crown relation.<sup>33</sup> The resentment of Duncan and many of his affinity to this blunt shift in traditional lordship was exposed by the strong Fife presence among the Balliol conspirators of 1320. These were cracks in Bruce's resettlement re-opened even more violently in the south-west (from Galloway to Liddesdale), in Strathearn and in the north-east. These were areas which would be ripped asunder after Robert I's death by the Disinherited and Edward Balliol (whom Duncan of Fife and Malise of Strathearn would crown in 1332).<sup>34</sup>

But while central, south-west and north-east Scotland, and the west coast, too, provide historians with many a traditional tale of the tragic eradication of Bruce enemies by the king and men to whom he granted lands, Bruce's patronage first and foremost rewarded service.<sup>35</sup> Robert's strong regional favour to particular individuals and kindreds

<sup>33</sup> *RRS*, v, no. 72.

<sup>34</sup> Penman, 'Soules Conspiracy', 35-48; M. Brown, *The Wars of Scotland, 1212-1371* (Edinburgh 2004), ch. 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Barbour - The Bruce*, passim; M.E. Cumming-Bruce, *Family Records of the Bruces and the Cumyns* (Edinburgh 1870), 444 (Randolph's bloodhound pursuit of Comyns near Darnaway); my thanks to Mr Bill Anderson of Findhorn Village Heritage Ltd. for reminding me of the local importance of the similar Randolph v. Comyn 'Battle of the Standard' legend in Moray .

among his early support, his lieutenants, now made the great magnates of Scotland, has been broadly studied (though not in comprehensive detail) elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> But here hindsight can again show us the difficulties of fragmented loyalties, internecine rivalry and ambition which Bruce had to attempt to balance over a twenty year period and some of the long-term mistakes he may, in retrospect, be said to have made.

For example, it would be fair to say that Randolph's grant of the regality of Moray of c.1312 (embracing that earldom, Badenoch, Lochaber and much of Strathbogie) was too large a palatinate for one man, especially when held in concert with the southern titles of Annandale, Nithsdale and the hotly disputed isle of Man.<sup>37</sup> Bruce's lack of reliable support in the north was also betrayed by his perhaps too-swift pardon and reward of the earls of Ross. Granted a royal marriage and lands from Skye to Buchan, the Ross house proved an autonomous thorn in the side of both the Randolphs as Guardians and of David II.<sup>38</sup> Royal favour to Randolph and Ross, though, must have contributed to the crown's alienation of its former stalwart allies in the west, the MacDonalds and MacRuaridhs: the former, denied a royal marriage to match those of the neighbouring Ross, Walter Steward and Neil Campbell of Lochawe, would turn to ally with England after 1332; the MacRuaridhs would be forfeited in parliament in 1325 for overstepping their exploitation of vacant lands of the Macdougalls.<sup>39</sup> But even closer Bruce allies would feel snubbed by Robert's resettlement by the late 1320s. Robert Steward and James Douglas could rue not

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<sup>36</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, ch. 14; Young, *The Comyns*, ch. 8; M.A. Penman, 'The Kingship of David II, 1329-71' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of St Andrews, 1999), ch. 1.

<sup>37</sup> A. Ross, 'Men for All Seasons? The Strathbogie Earls of Atholl and the War of Independence', Part 1 and Part 2, *Northern Scotland*, 20 (2000), 1-30 and 21 (2001), 1-15.

<sup>38</sup> *Chron. Bower*, vii, 57-9; Penman, *David II*, 40, 69-70, 99-100, 199-227.

<sup>39</sup> J. Munro and R.W. Munro eds., *Acts of the Lords of the Isles, 1336-1493* (Edinburgh 1986), lxi-ii, 1-8; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 289-92.

gaining an earldom: both their houses would challenge Bruce's son over titles and regional offices.<sup>40</sup>

Yet here, once again, Robert must have learnt something crucial from Edward I. The English conqueror faced a dilemma between 1296 and 1306 in being unable to reward his own captains with Scottish lands without fatally alienating the Scottish community he sought to rule and perpetuating war.<sup>41</sup> Thus there was wisdom in Robert's refusal to elevate a larger number of families too high in territorial and political terms in the wake of his revolution. It is uncertain just how late in his reign Robert waited to raise the Campbells as earls of Atholl or the Stewarts of Bonkil as earls of Angus.<sup>42</sup> He certainly held off in forfeiting Mar (rather than, say, granting it to his brother-in-law, Andrew Murray of Garioch) and was justified by Earl Donald's return from England by 1327. Robert may have hoped for reconciliation with the Umfravilles of Angus and Strathbogies of Atholl: his regime's vendetta against the Macdougalls, MacDowells and McCans would also cool with time.<sup>43</sup> A parallel reticence may also be detected in Robert's enforcement of law and order. In the context of the wars of Scottish succession, strong personal justice from Bruce or his officers might simply have alienated more magnates to the Anglo-Balliol camp. Robert's response to the Balliol plot of 1320 undeniably had this effect. Yet even then the horrific execution of Sir David Barclay of Brechin for failure to inform was curiously offset by the mere forfeiture and

<sup>40</sup> Penman, *David II*, passim and below, ch. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 104, 132-6, 324-8 [Appendix]; Prestwich, *Edward I*, 461, 479, 483, 500, 511-5.

<sup>42</sup> Robert may have granted Atholl to the Campbells as early as 1314x1319; the first extant mention of Stewart use of the Angus title is June 1329 but, as with the Campbells, an earlier grant may have been obscured by the minority of the heir [RRS, vi, nos. 394, 497; *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford 2004), article nos. 54147, 54327-8.

<sup>43</sup> RMS, i, App. ii., nos. 483, 639; *Chron. Bower*, vii, 73-7; Oram, 'Bruce-Balliol and the Lordship of Galloway', 43-7; Penman, *David II*, 24, 31-3, 38.



imprisonment of Soules and Umfraville, the acquittal of others and the incorporation of Murdoch of Menteith. Such acts surely betray Robert's nervous balancing act.<sup>44</sup>

It might be argued that Robert concentrated instead on restoring a network of reliable sheriffs and coroners and legislating for effective processes of law and appeal by written precedent so as to avoid any build up of resentment towards his personal judicial or conveyancing role. Bruce also seems to have respected the potent ties of customary, unofficial law in certain regions and resisted following the model of Edward I in reforming all archaic local practices.<sup>45</sup> Overall, does this perhaps explain why no anecdotal tales of Bruce's wise personal (and central) justice survive from the years after August 1320, as we might expect? Even at the end, Robert, at least ostensibly, directed the appeals of the Disinherited, headed by Percy, to recover land under the treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton through the due process of brieve and court rather than through Bruce's personal judgement.<sup>46</sup>

The strongest proof of Robert's paranoia about the stability of his own landed settlement lies in his apparent renegeing on promises to accommodate the Disinherited within the 1328 peace treaty.<sup>47</sup> Robert himself, given his thirteenth-century heritage, must have been tempted to return to the close-knit aristocratic community of Anglo-Scottish cross-border landholding and intermarriage of pre-1306. The Scottish monastic houses

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<sup>44</sup> Penman, 'Soules Conspiracy', 48-54. Robert I's difficulties in knowing who to punish or pardon are illustrated by his acceptance of one Piers Libaud, keeper of Edinburgh castle for Edward II in 1314, who 'became Scottish, in the allegiance of Robert the Bruce, who afterwards suspected him of treason and had him hanged. It was said that he doubted him because he was too open; he believed that he had always been English at heart, and was waiting for his best chance to harm him' [*Scalachronica*, f. 240v].

<sup>45</sup> *ER*, i, 102-8 (sheriffs' accounts 1328-9); Lord Cooper trans., *Regiam Majestatum and Quoniam Attachiamenta* (Edinburgh 1947); T.D. Fergus trans., *Quoniam Attachiamenta* (Edinburgh 1996); Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 292-302; Prestwich, *Edward I*, 205, 503-5; H.L. MacQueen, *Common Law and Feudal Society in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh 1993), 106-14, 152-8. Thus in 1324, Robert accepted the complaint of the community of Galloway against the summary powers of crown officers [*RMS*, i, App. i, no. 59].

<sup>46</sup> *RRS*, v, no. 353; *ER*, i, 102-8.

<sup>47</sup> S. Cameron and A. Ross, 'The Treaty of Edinburgh and the Disinherited (1328-1332)', *History*, lxxxiv (1999), 237-56.

and James Douglas certainly began to recover English lands around 1329, a fact which says much about modern assumptions of the Bruce's invention of anti-English patriotism.<sup>48</sup> It is likely that grumbling from Bruce's subjects in the wake of the peace treaty of 1328 made it clear that his reconfiguration of the political landscape had gone too far. Looking ahead, Robert may have anticipated a maelstrom of competing baronial interests involving the ambitions of his lieutenants and their growing sons.

But Robert had lived long enough to see the more immediate costs of his early largesse in search of support. He must have been conscious that the many grants of lands he had given to armed supporters in 'free barony' or 'regality' had not only reduced him to bastard feudalism c.1326-9 (for example pensions instead of territory), but had also potentially eroded monarchical authority.<sup>49</sup> Worse, by 15 July 1326, Robert had to report to parliament at Scone that 'the lands and rents, which used of old to belong to his Crown, had by divers donations and transfers, made on the occasion of war, been so diminished that he had not maintenance becoming his station without the intolerable burdening and grievance of his commons.'<sup>50</sup> Admittedly, the conditions which the Estates then attached to a grant of an annual tenth of rents and fermes for Robert's lifetime to sustain his household and government did not extend to future scrutiny by the community of the realm of alienations from the royal demesne. Yet the will to ensure the king should 'live of his own' was there in the insistence that the tenth be used only for the designated

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<sup>48</sup> *Foedera*, ii, 762; *CDS*, iii, nos. 675, 1036; M. Brown, 'Henry the Peaceable: Henry III, Alexander III and Royal Lordship in the British Isles, 1249-72' in B.K.U. Weiler and I.W. Rowlands eds., *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III (1216-1272)* (Aldershot 2002), 43-66. For a valuable study of just what the Bruces lost in England see R.M. Blakely, 'The Bruce Family in England and Scotland, 1100-1290' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham, 2000), chs. 4-5. The *Vita*, 132, asserts that in peace talks in 1324 Robert I had sought to recover his family's barony and revenues in Sussex.

<sup>49</sup> Penman, *David II*, 34. James Douglas certainly began to use his regality powers to defy the crown over local matters [M. Brown, *The Black Douglases: War and Lordship in Late Medieval Scotland, 1300-1455* (East Linton 1998), 26-8].

<sup>50</sup> *APS*, i, 483.

purpose, that all subjects should pay equitably and that no remissions from the levy should be granted by the king or the grant would void.

The July 1326 parliament also ratified another act of succession and the treaty of mutual alliance with France.<sup>51</sup> But that this was not an assembly of Estates coerced into agreement by the crown in the manner of 1309-15 or, to a lesser extent, 1318, is made clear by the nature of the tenth of rents and fermes, given by subjects who 'would be pleased, from the gratitude that became them, to find a way and manner whereby he might be suitably maintained.' That this was no mere form of words and followed free consultation with the community is attested to by its almost full payment each year and by the similar collection of a second tenth granted in 1328, and delivered on time, to meet the costs of peace reparations to England.<sup>52</sup> The three Estates had been summoned to parliament at Holyrood in March 1328 empowered with 'special authority' (*vestram specialiter*) and bearing their seals to consider terms for peace.<sup>53</sup> This was in no sense the demand of an autocratic regime. Such a government, driven by hard principles of Roman Law, might have insisted its subjects attend with 'full powers' (*plena potestas*) to simply rubber-stamp a tax to pay for a pre-determined policy. But for the ailing Robert I, who now had a son and the upper-hand against England, there had to be recognition of the practical politics of the possible: after two decades, more subjects of the realm were now prepared to recognise a Bruce dynasty and concern themselves with its policies, therefore they should be consulted. Robert I's acceptance of the conditions attached to his 1326 tenth and his promise to forego (the English practice of war-time) prise for a year were a

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<sup>51</sup> *RRS*, v, nos. 299-301. Is it possible, though, that in 1326 Robert had sought a Revocation of war-time grants in 1326 but Parliament only allowed him a tenth?

<sup>52</sup> *ER*, i, 102-7; *CDS*, iii, nos. 1007, 1017-8.

<sup>53</sup> *RRS*, v, no. 563.

reflection of this shift in political dynamic and, again, an echo of Edward I who had made concessions to his parliaments in search of support between 1297 and 1305: just as Edward ultimately sought to annul his concessions to the Commons, so Robert could still retain ultimate control, an expediency which later allowed him to change some of the terms of peace apparently without consultation.<sup>54</sup>

Robert's murderous seizure of the crown had necessitated his disbursement of vast amounts of territory to secure support. But his model of patronage would be one denied to his successors. However, in Bruce's foreign policy it could be argued that there emerged a model of independent diplomacy and strategic conduct which successive kings of Scots could have benefited from following but of which, as a whole, for various reasons, they quickly lost sight.

Robert was undeniably aware of the value a renewed Franco-Scottish alliance would have for his cause, especially in its early years of factional struggle. Yet there was no desperate, obsequious search in the first two decades of the Bruce regime for any active French alliance. Robert surely knew that Philip IV of France (d. 1314), in a position of relative strength and indeed at peace with England after 1302, had no need to commit himself to aid Scotland directly. Philip might, if approached, seek to secure an insurance policy for his realm akin to the treaty secured with the Balliol-Comyn regime in 1295-6, perhaps through threats to squeeze vital Scottish trade with Flanders: the 1295 treaty had been a one-sided affair which bound the Scots to attack England and in the end may actually have provoked Edward I into re-routing to attack Scotland before France.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Prestwich, *Edward I*, 451-5, 523-35; Cameron and Ross, 'Treaty of Edinburgh and the Disinherited'.

<sup>55</sup> *APS*, xii, 5; *RRS*, v, no. 299; A. Stevenson, 'The Flemish Dimension of the Auld Alliance', in G.G. Simpson ed., *Scotland and the Low Countries, 1124-1994* (East Linton 1996), 28-42; N.A.T. Macdougall, *An Antidote to the English: the Auld Alliance, 1295-1560* (East Linton 2001), ch. 1.

Instead, Robert could be said to have bided his time, aware of events in France, but committed only to using developments there as leverage against England.

Thus Robert's regime made great play of Philip IV's letter recognising Robert's kingship in 1308 and inviting him on crusade. This provided a pretext to test magnate loyalties in Bruce's first parliament at St Andrews in March 1309 (surely inspired in part by Edward I's assembly there in March 1304) in a letter of reply from the barons but which voiced only a vague promise to join the French once the kingdom was secured.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, major Scottish raids often coincided with shifts in power in France affecting England. For example, Philip V's anticipated death on 3 January 1322 was followed by Douglas and Randolph's incursion into Northumberland three days later, a raid which also took advantage of the rising of Lancaster and Hereford. Robert and his churchmen may also have looked to a revival of French influence over the Avignon papacy as a means of lifting excommunications (1306-08 and 1318-9). Moreover, Bruce must have learnt something of the calamities which might result by observing French problems of royal succession following Philip IV's death in November 1314. The stuttering French inheritance meant, of course, that an active French alliance could be of little use to the Scots between 1314 and 1323. But, above all, this meant that Robert had attained a position of relative independence and strength by the time the French once more raised the question of English homage for Gascony. Even then, Robert did not get Scotland embroiled cheaply in the short Franco-English conflict of Saint-Sardos (1323-5). Rather, Scottish overtures to France coincided with the beginnings of Edward II's internal crisis following the rebellion of his French wife.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *APS*, i, 459.

<sup>57</sup> R.M. Haines, *King Edward II* (London 2003), 311; McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, 96-8.

Moreover, when it came, the Franco-Scottish treaty of Corbeil, ratified in parliament by the Scottish Estates in July 1326, reads more like a genuine business agreement of cautious equals rather than a French sop to a desperately out-numbered Scots regime (as in 1295).<sup>58</sup> True, the Scots remained ostensibly committed to an invasion of England in the future event of Anglo-French war, and the French only to aid and counsel in the opposite case. But the need for this alliance for Robert was at that time wholly secondary to the effort to pressurise England. The Corbeil indenture was completed three years into a thirteen year Anglo-Scottish truce.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, when Edward III's army moved towards Scotland in 1327, after a truce-breaking assault by the Scots on Norham castle on the very day of the teenage king's coronation, the Scots did not solicit French aid (nor did they object to the presence of some French and Flemish knights in the English host).<sup>60</sup> Then, when peace was concluded with England in 1328, the French alliance was allowed to continue but not to stand in the way of closer ties with England: the marriage of David Bruce (born March 1324) had been reserved for an English royal bride, not as a sacrifice to secure untested French promises as had Edward Balliol's in 1295.<sup>61</sup>

This is not to say that Robert I was cold to the French. His regime made considerable efforts to persuade the kings of France - as it did the Papacy and Scots - of the legitimacy of Bruce kingship. In this it was remarkably successful. The majority of later fourteenth- and fifteenth-century French and Flemish chronicles recited a version of

<sup>58</sup> For example, in 1295 the French crown's version of the treaty styles John I as 'nostre special ami'; the 1326 treaty styles Robert I simply as 'nostre cousin'; the 1371 treaty styles Robert II as 'nostre tres chier cousin' [F. Autrand and P. Contamine, 'Remarques sur les alliances des rois de France aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles', in L. Bély and I. Richefort eds., *L'Europe des Traités de Westphalie* (Paris 2000), 83-110, at 100]. The 1326 treaty was first ratified by Robert at Stirling on 12 July [RRS, v, no. 299]

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, no. 232.

<sup>60</sup> J. Viard and E. Déprez eds., *Chronique de Jean le Bel* (2 vols., Paris 1904), i, 111-2; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 251-2.

<sup>61</sup> RRS, v, nos. 342-5.

the Great Cause (1291-2) and the years which followed which white-washed Bruce behaviour. Even those historians hosted by the English, Le Bel and Froissart, would also absorb this trend to praise Robert as an honourable warrior king. Much of this propaganda triumph may have been achieved by Scots clerics in France, for example the sizeable group of ex-patriots in orders at St Denis, the French royal mausoleum.<sup>62</sup> But the greatest measure of their success must surely be that the two outstanding moments of French contact with the Bruce Scots, in 1308-09 and 1326, occurred despite the residence in France as potential pawns of first John and then Edward Balliol. It was surely their presence that gave Robert no illusions in dealing with Scotland's new 'auld allies' and he remained committed to an independent policy of intelligence, war and diplomacy, only committing to France after earlier treaties with Norway (about the annum for the Western Isles, 1312) and Flanders (about trade, 1321) and his long truce with England.<sup>63</sup> As such, Robert's rule underlined to future kings of Scots the value of an independent *real politic* as well as limited guerrilla warfare in dealing with England.

Robert's heritage as well as his experiences since 1295, or as king from 1306, also made him uncomfortable with French ties.<sup>64</sup> We have no actual evidence that Robert ever went to the continent before 1306. However, Bruce and his brothers had been brought up in the Irish sea world of Carrick, and one of them at least was probably fostered to Ulster. The Bruce party's exile to the Western Isles and Rathlin in 1306-7 and its commitment to invading Ireland (1315-18) were testament not only to Robert and Edward Bruce's own

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<sup>62</sup> M. Penman, 'Scotland, France and a Chronicle Tradition in the Fourteenth Century' (forthcoming); *Chron. Le Bel*, i, 83-6; K. Lettenhove ed., *Oeuvres de Froissart publiées avec les variantes des divers manuscrits* (24 vols., Paris 1870-7), ii, passim; H. Geraud ed., *Chronique Latine de Guillaume de Nangis de 1113 à 1300* (2 vols., Paris 1843-4), i, 42-5, 408-10; A. Hellot ed., *Chronique Parisienne Anonyme de 1316 à 1339* (Paris 1885), nos. 94, 99, 100-22; J. Lemoine ed., *Chronique de Richard Lescot, Religieux de Saint Denis 1328-44* (Paris 1896), iv-xxxi, 32; K. Lettenhove ed., *Istoire et Chroniques de Flandres* (2 vols., Brussels 1879), i, 223, 463.

<sup>63</sup> *RRS*, v, nos. 25, 185.

<sup>64</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 321.

outlook but an extension of the interests of such close allies as James Steward (d. 1309, like the king married to a de Burgh of Ulster), the MacDonalds and MacRuaridhs and Thomas Randolph as Lord of Man. Given this family circle - as well as the Bruce connection with the earls of Ulster marked by the Turnberry Band in 1286 and Robert's own second marriage in 1302 - this surely instilled the Bruce regime with a genuine belief in the potential for a Celtic alliance which would destabilise English lordship in Ireland and Wales.<sup>65</sup> Robert learned the hard way that the native Irish were far more problematic as allies *c.*1315-8 than the alternative of exerting leverage over the de Burgh house of Ulster on its own *c.*1327-8. In this the king may have been sternly influenced by his formidable wife.<sup>66</sup> But Robert's later involvement as the guardian of his young nephew, William earl of Ulster, nonetheless underlined his perception of the crucial importance of Scotland's western (and north-western) approaches: his marriage connections within Scotland with the families of Stewart, Ross, Campbell and Murray, his regular presence at Dumbarton and Cardross and on occasion places like Glenkill (Arran) and Dunstaffnage, his circumnavigation of Kintyre in 1315 and his subsequent building of a castle and regional port at Tarbert in the 1320s, and the transfer of the vital Abbot Bernard of Arbroath to be bishop of the Isles *c.*30 April 1328, all further emphasise this western strategic policy.<sup>67</sup>

As such, as well as being guided by family ties, Robert also displayed further kingly traits shared, not merely with Alexander III (whose work, and John I's, in settling

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<sup>65</sup> McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, ch. 5; S. Duffy, 'The Bruce Brothers and the Irish Sea World, 1306-29', in idem ed., *Robert the Bruce's Irish Wars*, 45-70.

<sup>66</sup> R. Nicholson, 'A Sequel to Edward Bruce's Invasion of Ireland', in *ibid*, 153-62. Elizabeth de Burgh was not long imprisoned by the English crown and was allowed to reside in some comfort near the royal court [*CDS*, iii, nos. 169, 239, 299, 305, 323-4]. It is likely that Elizabeth would wield influence over Robert's policy in Ireland after her release in 1315: e.g. David Bruce was born nine months after the conclusion of the long truce of 1323.

<sup>67</sup> *ER*, i, 52-8 [Tarbert, with cocket seal], 123; *RRS*, v, p. 785; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 289-92. My thanks to Richard Oram for emphasising the economic importance of the west coast at this time; *Liber S. Thome*, i, xv



the Isles he was continuing) but also with Edward I. For, above all, the great English king had founded the success of his monarchy on his ability, crucially, to assess and execute policy in terms of the three or four realms of the British Isles, and beyond the English Channel, whilst always keeping an ultimate goal in view.<sup>68</sup> Robert I's successors lost sight of his decision to place intervention in Ireland as well as northern England over and above commitment to the French.

Robert's Gaelic links rested, too, on strong cultural and spiritual ties. Edward I had been a king skilled in the eclectic cultivation of court, monarchical image and piety. This he wielded both as a genuine expression of polity and faith and to win backing for his wars and rule at national and local levels.<sup>69</sup> According to the contemporary chronicler, Sir Thomas Gray, Bruce spent part of his adolescence as a 'a young batchelor of King Edward's chamber'.<sup>70</sup> If so, the impressionable Robert would have had access to the ceremonial heart of Plantagenet politics at Westminster, Windsor and Canterbury. This would have continued during Bruce's periods of loyalty to Edward c.1292-6 and c.1302-5 and embraced much of the itinerant court of the veteran English king in Scotland.<sup>71</sup> Altogether, this surely had a deeper impact on Bruce's own perception of what a royal court should be than any lingering impression left by Alexander III, although Robert was undeniably aware of the political, martial and spiritual centres of MacMalcolm power.<sup>72</sup> Some sense, too, of the necessity of a cult of court must have been impressed upon him by his grandfather, celebrated by northern English chroniclers as a

<sup>68</sup> R.R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles, 1093-1343* (Oxford 2000), chs. 6-7.

<sup>69</sup> M. Prestwich, 'The Piety of Edward I', in W.M. Ormrod ed., *England in the Thirteenth Century* (Nottingham 1985), 120-8; D. Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (London 2000), 122-9.

<sup>70</sup> *Scalachronica*, f.194v.

<sup>71</sup> The Bruces had a London family home at Tottenham [*CDS*, iii, no. 198].

<sup>72</sup> That said, *Chron. Lanercost*, 8-9, written at a house with strong Bruce associations, could assert that when Alexander III had come to England in 1278 with 'his consort and a train of his nobility, [he] exceeded all others in lavish hospitality and gifts.'

great patron of household hospitality and piety.<sup>73</sup> In view of all these influences, though, we might postulate three strong strands to Robert I's evolving court culture: the continuation of royal expression by Scotland's thirteenth-century monarchy; an emulation and rivalry of England's prestigious royal court and its imperialist image; and a perhaps far more personal strand of chivalry and faith, leaning to the Irish Sea World as well as, famously, to the Holy Land after death.<sup>74</sup> However, after 1306 all of these streams, would be consciously bound up with Robert I's continued need to secure support for his regime and to win Scotland's struggle against England.

The itinerary which can be drawn from Robert's extant *acta* makes it clear that Bruce quickly realised the importance of the royal presence at traditional centres of power. The royal inauguration site of Scone and the nearby royal burgh of Perth feature regularly as charter issue sites after 1314. Had Robert's kingship lasted longer, allowing David Bruce to succeed as an adult, this central region would surely have become pre-eminent as royal Scotland's administrative and ceremonial base.<sup>75</sup> But before 1329 Robert also combined his stops in Perthshire with a wider spiritual circuit which annually seemed to embrace Dunfermline, St Andrews and Arbroath, if not always through the presence of Bruce and his closest advisors and family then through royal gifts to these religious establishments given at significant times of the year. These were Scotland's three wealthiest ecclesiastical foundations which Robert also took care to nurture as economic loci.

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 111-2.

<sup>74</sup> G.G. Simpson, 'The Heart of Robert I: Pious Crusade or Marketing Gambit?', in B.E. Crawford ed., *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland* (Edinburgh 1999), 173-86.

<sup>75</sup> *RRS*, v, passim; P.G.B. McNeill and H.L. MacQueen eds., *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707* (Edinburgh 1996), 166-70; R.D. Oram, 'Scotland's Parliaments: the Middle Ages', in M. Glendinning ed., *The Architecture of Sovereignty: Parliamentary, Civic and Government Buildings of Scotland* (East Linton, forthcoming); and see below, ch. 2 n78.

For example, when at truce after 1314, Bruce may often have joined his Chancellor, Abbot Bernard, in spending Christmas with a well attended court of prelates, earls and barons in and around Arbroath, perhaps travelling there via St Andrews (feast day 30 November) and Forfar (a favourite castle of Alexander II) and remaining in the abbey and burgh on the Angus coast until January, embracing the feast day of Becket's martyrdom. St Thomas's cult may have taken on a large measure of ambivalence for Scots after 1296.<sup>76</sup> But the evidence suggests that this did not deter Bruce. Robert's own perspective on the archbishop's martyrdom in 1170, as well as the fate of Arbroath Abbey's founder, William I (1165-1214), in being captured in war against England, may have been warped by his own sacrilegious murder of Comyn in 1306 and the long conflict which followed. But Becket was an extremely persuasive icon in dealings with England, Europe and the Papacy, particularly for his opposition to a king of England and Robert's regime may have invoked St Thomas's name in such ploys as the king's speech before Bannockburn, the Remonstrance of the Irish Princes (1317) or even in claims that the Balliols were descended from one of Becket's killers.<sup>77</sup> Arbroath abbey itself, moreover, as well as housing a relatively safe base for the busiest late-medieval Scottish royal chancery, also had strong connections with the relics of St Columba, a national saint of immense spiritual importance to both Gaels and Lowlanders, again invoked by Bruce at Bannockburn.<sup>78</sup> Robert's patronage to Arbroath was bountiful and matched only by his favour to the great Cistercian border abbey of Melrose, a house dedicated to

<sup>76</sup> Stringer, 'Arbroath Abbey in Context', 122. *RRS*, v, shows that Bruce was at or near Arbroath about Christmas in 1314, 1315, 1316, 1318, 1321, 1322, 1325, 1326, 1327 and 1328, but as Professor Duncan shows at pp. 135-8, such place-dates surely represented most often the travels of the Chancellor until c. Mar. 1328, Abbot Bernard.

<sup>77</sup> Penman, 'The Bruce Dynasty, Becket and Scottish Pilgrimage to Canterbury'; *Chron. Bower*, vi, 365 [1314], 387 [1317]; *Chron. Lanercost*, 145. Bruce had re-sworn allegiance to England in 1297 on the sword of Becket's martyrdom held at Carlisle cathedral [*Chron. Guisborough*, 295].

<sup>78</sup> D.H. Caldwell, 'The Monymusk Reliquary: the Breccbennach of St. Columba', *PSAS*, 131 (2000), 262-82; *RRS*, v, nos. 49, 74-5, 112, 132, 151, 153, 164, 175, 203, 213-4, 219, 221, 241, 260, 280.

another devotional figure of growing international cult status, the Virgin Mary, and a crucial participant in Scotland's wool trade.<sup>79</sup> As well as planning to inter his heart there (alongside the remains of Alexander II, the monarch said to have named Robert I's grandfather as his heir c.1237) Robert's gifts to Melrose included £2,000 per annum of southern justice profits from 1325 to fund rebuilding and 100 merks of the Berwick and Haddington customs every year from 1326 (granted by Robert while at Arbroath over Christmas) to cloth and shod the poor each St Martin's day (11 November) and to feed each monk a daily meal of rice to be known as 'the king's dish'. This grant bears strong comparison to the regular almsgiving of Edward I and his queens.<sup>80</sup>

Bruce's greatest military victory may also have inspired a number of close kin and followers to develop something of a cult of St John the Baptist (feast day 24 June).<sup>81</sup> But Robert's family and his subjects were surely meant to be most impressed by his further development of Dunfermline, the royal Augustinian foundation to which he also gave a disproportionate amount of patronage. The last two MacMalcolm kings had established the cult of St Margaret there in emulation of Henry III of England's championing of the

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<sup>79</sup> For Bruce Scot devotion to the Virgin and other saints see: *ER*, i, 61 [£4 p.a. for Queen's soul at Lady Chapel, Cullen], and 239 [Queen's gift to altar of St Mary, Dunfermline]; *RRS*, v, 91 [1316, grant of 44 merks p.a. to Perth Blackfriars for soul of Alexander III], 196 [1321, confirming William, earl of Ross's foundation of six chaplains to St Duthac, Tain, in memory of Alexander III, Robert Bruce's ancestors and John Strathbogie earl of Atholl], 230 [1323, grant of tenth of all Galloway justice profits to Holyrood Abbey, dedicated to Virgin], 240 [1323, gift to Carmelite friars, Banff, dedicated to Virgin], 262 [1324, confirming grant by Christian Bruce to Dumfries chapel in memory of Holy Cross and Christopher Seton], 275 [1325, to Whithorn priory dedicated to Virgin and St Ninian], 356 [1328, for the soul of Neil Bruce for masses at the hospital of Turriff, Aberdeenshire]. For wool see D. Ditchburn, *Scotland and Europe: the Medieval Kingdom and its contact with Christendom, 1214-1560* (East Linton 2001), 162-76.

<sup>80</sup> *RRS*, v, nos. 64-5, 96, 108, 120, 122, 169, 179-80, 201, 269, 271, 287-9, 308, 310, 379-80; Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 123-6 [1237]; Prestwich, 'Piety of Edward I'. See also: *ER*, i, 58 [alms given at Tarbert]. Bruce did not, though, emulate Edward I's mass use of the king's touch for scrofula, even though 995 soles had sought this rite in Scotland in 1303-4 [M. Bloch, *The Royal Touch* (London 1973), 60].

<sup>81</sup> E.g. *CPR*, i, Pet. 538 and *RMS*, i, no. 483 [Edward Bruce and Archibald the Grim Douglas hospital dedicated to St John at Hollywood]; *Liber S. Thome*, i, no. 352 [hospital at Arbroath]; D.E. Easson ed., *Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland* (London 1957), 146 [Helmsdale hospital given to Kinloss Abbey by Robert I's ward, William earl of Sutherland]; an Edinburgh hospital [*ibid*, 141]?

royal cult of St Edward the Confessor at Westminster.<sup>82</sup> Such Bruce activities as issuing grants to Dunfermline on or around the death dates not only of Alexander II and Alexander III but also Robert's own birthday underlined the vital duty the king perceived in upholding sacred monarchy.<sup>83</sup> But it could also be argued that Robert's further development of the Lady Chapel at Dunfermline, added to the north-east end of the nave close to St Margaret's tomb c.1250-1325, as a mausoleum for both royal family members and their spouses was a direct counterpart to Edward I's further patronage of Westminster c.1270-90 for the tombs of his wife, children and their kin and key political and military supporters of his regime: by the 1350s Elizabeth de Burgh, Thomas Randolph, Donald earl of Mar (d. 1332), Sir Andrew Murray of Garioch (d. 1338) and many of the Bruce women would lie close to King Robert at Dunfermline's high altar.<sup>84</sup>

If Robert had seen England's royal sepulchres before 1306 he had also passed through the painted chambers of Westminster and seen there Longshank's own iconographic additions to Henry III's wall murals of St Edward the Confessor (including his coronation). The English king whom Robert feared most placed special emphasis in these commissioned works on such classical, biblical and historical figures as Solomon,

<sup>82</sup> M. Ash, 'The Church in the Reign of Alexander III', in N.H. Reid ed., *Scotland in the Reign of Alexander III, 1249-86* (Edinburgh 1988), 31-53; P. Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: Kingship and the Representation of Power, 1200-1400* (London 1995), ch. 2.

<sup>83</sup> *RRS*, v, nos. 6, 188, 190, including gifts of a cocket seal (also given to Arbroath) and ferry income and chaplainries at St Margaret's chapel at the Queen's-ferry over the Forth; see also *ibid*, nos. 43-4, 125, 206, 234, 303, 305, 331, 340, 407, 411, 413, 416, 476. Only the abbots of Dunfermline and Arbroath are listed as witnessing the 1318 act of succession. Robert may have boosted Margaret's cult through Queen Elizabeth's use of Margaret's birthing shirt when David and his twin were born at Dunfermline; Margaret's feasts were then celebrated annually according to Bower [*Chron. Bower*, vii, 99; *ER*, v, 447, 512].

<sup>84</sup> J. Steane, *The Archaeology of the Medieval English Monarchy* (London 1993), 41-55; R. Fawcett, *Scottish Medieval Churches* (Stroud 2002), 30-3; *Chron. Bower*, vii, 35, 45, 65, 305. For Thomas Randolph's payment for masses in the Lady Chapel at Dunfermline for the soul of the King, the Virgin, the Trinity and St. Margaret c.1327 see *Registrum de Dunfermlyn*, no. 357. The erection of Lady Chapels as an extension to the east wing of ecclesiastical sites giving greater focus to association with key saints was a fashionable trend after c.1200 and the Scots could draw on developments at Salisbury, 1220s, Durham and Ely, 1230s, and Westminster, 1250s [T. Tatton-Brown, 'Canterbury and the Architecture of Pilgrimage Shrines in England', in C. Morris and P. Roberts ed., *Pilgrimage: the English Experience from Beckett to Bunyon* (York 2002), 90-107, 99-100].

Brutus (versus Scotland) and the crusading Richard I as well as a number of the Nine Worthies of Chivalry including King David, Alexander the Great, Arthur (versus Wales) and - in a separate tableau of homiletic images - Judas Maccabeus, the warrior leader of the Israelites against the Syrians. Edward I's patronage of a Round Table at Winchester and St Stephen's chapel at Westminster extended these themes.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the spoils of his wars Robert clearly had little ready money to spend on such lavish displays.<sup>86</sup> But in Robert's literary patronage we can find a cheaper, more resilient, form of such image-building. It is striking that the epithetical poem for Bruce penned in 1329, perhaps by Bernard of the Isles, likens the dead king to many of the same galaxy of stars to which Edward I aspired: Achilles, Ulysses, (St) Andrew, Solomon and of the Nine Worthies Hector, Alexander, Arthur, Caesar, Charlemagne and, above all, Judas Maccabeus, a figure to whom the Declaration of Arbroath had also compared Bruce. These works, together with the tale of Bruce forcing a captured English poet to write heroic verse for him after Bannockburn (a direct riposte to Edward I's celebration of the siege of Caerlaverock in 1300?), and the verse chronicle of Bruce's own life which Robert surely commissioned sometime between 1314 and 1329, make it clear that he was all too aware of the value of such propaganda.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, Robert

<sup>85</sup> J. Alexander and P. Binski eds., *The Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England, 1200-1400* (London 1987), chs. ix-x; Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, 98-9, 112-4. Edward II, too, would build on these expressions of power by commissioning a painted life of Edward I himself for the royal suites at Westminster in 1324.

<sup>86</sup> *ER*, i, 52-202. As much is suggested by what little survives of Robert's *Exchequer Rolls* (1328-9 only) and raises the question of the fate of Edward II's baggage trains (worth c.£200,000?) and the income from raiding (shared among Bruce's lieutenants?).

<sup>87</sup> *Chron. Bower*, vi, 357-77 and vii, 45-57, which also contains the tale of a herald at the court of Edward III proclaiming Robert to be one of the three greatest knights of the day; T. Wright ed., *The Roll of Caerlaverock* (London 1864); *Barbour - The Bruce*, introduction, for Robert's verse commissions. Sir Thomas Gray's *Scalachronica*, f. 200v. ('as the chronicles of his deeds testify') and *Chron. Le Bel*, i, 111 ('histoire faite par le dit roy Robert') were also aware of Bruce-commissioned works. A ballad contained in a manuscript of Fordun's chronicle of c.1380 also appended Bruce to the list of Nine Worthies [A. McKim ed., *Blind Harry - The Wallace* (Edinburgh 2003), xiii, xx n19]. As a recent study of chivalry in Scotland has noted, Barbour's *Bruce* also contained passages allying Bruce's actions with the Worthies Hector, Caesar, Arthur and Judas [K.C. Stevenson, 'Knighthood, Chivalry and the Crown in Fifteenth-Century Scotland, 1424-1513' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2003), 199].

invested time and effort on such craft at a time when Edward II was openly criticized for its neglect.<sup>88</sup>

Robert was also undoubtedly aware, however, that it was the militaristic and chivalric flavour of his propaganda and courtly image which would be most potent in influencing his subjects. Many of Robert's royal grants fulfilled the necessity of increasing Scotland's military capabilities in terms of knights, men-at-arms, bowmen, spearmen and galleys, with the training of lesser ranks to be overseen by annual sheriff's *wappenschaws* (from December 1318).<sup>89</sup> But the many bloody tales of Bruce's own valour in the north and south-west in 1307-10 and his slaying of Bohun in single-combat before Bannockburn which survive in Barbour (and thus most likely come from Robert's own court history) provided the ideal for Bruce's militarised subjects to emulate. The recorded exploits of James Douglas and Thomas Randolph serve a similar end and were perhaps also designed as the narrative basis of tournament pageantry and court theatre. It is clear that Bruce cultivated this kind of martial atmosphere not only through his raiding of northern England and his revival of 'military feudalism', but through his household.<sup>90</sup> Robert paid for the remodelling of a royal park at Edinburgh which later occupants used for tilting and single-combats. Robert also probably followed Alexander III in providing his heir (and, most likely, Queen Elizabeth) with a separate royal household. Based at Turnberry after 1324, David's household was, though, clearly planned to nurture an entourage skilled in war with key knights like Sir David Barclay (jnr.), Sir Malcolm

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<sup>88</sup> 'And whereas when his noble father Edward [I] went on a campaign in Scotland, he used to visit on his march the English saints, Thomas of Canterbury, Edmund, Hugh, William and Cuthbert, offering fair oblations, commending himself to their prayers, and also bestowing liberal gifts to monasteries and the poor, this king [Edward II] did none of these things' [*Chron Lanercost*, 240]. However, English rolls' evidence for royal devotions c.1309-39 tends to dilute this criticism of Edward II [M. Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe, 1270-1380* (Oxford 2001), 308-18].

<sup>89</sup> Penman, *David II*, 29; *RRS*, v, no. 139, xxvii.

<sup>90</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 289.

Fleming, Sir Alexander Seton (a possible Precentor of the Scottish Knights Hospitaller) and Sir Robert Keith the Marischal guarding and tutoring the child before and after 1329. The apprentice household of Edward, Prince of Wales, may have provided a model in this case.<sup>91</sup>

Bruce royal followings were surely also to be strongly identified in visual terms. Robert's extant accounts for 1328-9 detail some crown expenditure on ceremonial robes for courtiers.<sup>92</sup> It is likely this extended, too, far more so than before 1286, to disbursement on royal livery for key figures in the household. England's crown developed its badge of the Leopard (or lion) couchant c.1300-50, absorbing the new European-wide interest of the age in the language of *blazon*.<sup>93</sup> In the same way, Bruce's regime may have intensified the Scottish crown's visual association with the Lion rampant. There is evidence that that the presence of the royal banner at Bruce's inauguration has been deemed vital and the lost *Exchequer Rolls* may hide the employment of surcoated heralds by Bruce in diplomacy.<sup>94</sup> Robert could be said to have missed a number of opportunities to mimic Edward I in the creation of royal ritual and tradition. For example, Robert did hold the singular event of St Andrews cathedral's

<sup>91</sup> *ER*, i, 137-50; Haines, *Edward II*, ch. 1.

<sup>92</sup> *ER*, i, 167, 229, 255, including cloth for David Bruce's household knights and esquires.

<sup>93</sup> A. Ailes, 'Heraldry in Medieval England: Symbols of Politics and Propaganda' in P. Coss and M. Keen eds., *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge 2002), 83-104.

<sup>94</sup> A.A.M. Duncan, 'St Kentigern at Glasgow in the Twelfth Century', in R. Fawcett ed., *Medieval Art and Architecture in the Diocese of Glasgow* (London 1998), 9-24, at 19. Robert I may have left a pet lion to his son [*ER*, i, 277-] and possibly a Carrick herald [W.M. Metcalfe ed., *Legends of the Scottish Saints*, (3 vols., Edinburgh 1896), ii, 329]. There were certainly Lyon, Wallace, Bruce and Douglas heralds at the Scottish court by the 1380s/90s [C.J. Burnett, 'Early Officers of Arms in Scotland', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 12 (1996), 3-13]. Note also Robert I's favour to his standard bearer, Nicholas Scrymgeour, including a gift of Northumberland lands in 1327 [*RRS*, v, nos. 131, 251, 323]. The growing importance of the Lion as Bruce Scotland's royal military badge may be reflected in Fordun's emphasis of this emblem in his coverage of the reign of Fergus, son of Ferchard, first king of Scots, 'whose mighty shield bore a red lion on a yellow field' or of Fergus, son of Erth, who according to Fordun joined the Picts with his two brothers and his 'fellow countrymen, the Irish and Norican islanders' and recovered Scotia which was 'his by right': 'the dauntless Lion floats above his head, emblem of his fierce valour, bloody red.' In the same manner the Douglasses emphasised the blood red heart of Bruce as their badge [*Chron. Fordun*, i, 42, 77-8; M. Brown, 'Rejoice to hear of Douglas': The House of Douglas and the Presentation of Magnate Power in Late Medieval Scotland', *SHR*, lxxvi (1997), 161-84].



consecration and secured coronation and anointment for future Scottish kings, but why did he return Edward II's seal and shield to him after Bannockburn when they could have been gifted to a royal abbey or used in future coronations? And did Robert resign himself too readily to Westminster's refusal to return the Stone of Scone in 1328?<sup>95</sup> But Scotland's militarised royal environment, emphasising service, military skill and armorial surcoat, did provide powerful inspiration for the next generation of warriors like Sir Alexander Ramsay of Dalhousie, leader of a famous 'school' of knights and one of those who sealed the 1320 barons' letter, and his great rival, William Douglas of Lothian.<sup>96</sup>

However, Bruce's martial qualities should not mask his wider abilities. Barbour's story of Bruce reading to his exhausted band from a French *chanson de geste*, the *Romance of Fierabras*, whilst being pursued to the Argyll coast in 1306 - or his narration of tales of Troy, Alexander, Caesar, Hannibal and Arthur - returns us to Bruce's spiritual and human face, a man painfully sensitive to the costs and duties of his bid for the throne.<sup>97</sup> His written propaganda suggests that the king also had an understanding of and empathy with the myth-history of Egypto-Greco-Irish foundation and dominant Scots over Picts, and then against Angles, which the Scottish clergy had sought to cultivate through their chronicles and king-lists since c.1124.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, Bruce's hosting of a

<sup>95</sup> William I's battle gear had been gifted by Henry II to York Minster; Edward III would give Durham cathedral David II's standard and a Rood of St Margaret after the battle of Neville's Cross, 1346 [Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 230; Penman, *David II*, 138]; in 1299, John Balliol's crown and seal were given to Canterbury [*Chron. Walsingham*, i, 78]. And see now R. Welander, D.J. Breeze and T.O. Clancy eds., *The Stone of Destiny: artefact and icon* (Edinburgh 2003).

<sup>96</sup> M. Brown, 'The Development of Scottish Border Lordship, 1332-58', *Historical Research*, lxx (1997), 1-22.

<sup>97</sup> Barbour- *The Bruce*, 72, 132; W.F. Nicolaisen, 'Stories and Storytelling in Barbour's Brus', in J.D. McClure and M.R.G. Spiller eds., *Bryght Lanternis: Essays on the Language and Literature of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland* (Aberdeen 1989), 55-66; R.W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford 1999), 32. Fierabras was the son of the Sultan of Babylon who associated with Roland and Charlemagne in the recovery of Rome and the Holy relics before converting to Christianity. A later fourteenth-century parliamentary briefing document also noted how Robert I 'used continually to read, or have read in his presence, the histories of ancient kings and princes, and how they conducted themselves in their times, both in wartime and in peacetime; from these he derived information about many aspects of his own rule...' [A.A.M. Duncan, 'A Question about the Succession, 1364', *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society XII* (Edinburgh 1994), 1-57, at 25.

<sup>98</sup> D. Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots* (Woodbridge 1999).

graduation feast for his brother, Alexander Bruce, at Cambridge in 1303, and his epithetical poem hint at Robert's literacy in understanding matters judicial and administrative. The death-lament for Robert compared him to Socrates the philosopher and Gaius of Rome, 'the law-giver' and it is possible to believe that the court of war overseen by the fatherly Bruce also housed a king capable of full participation in the codification and improvement of laws - much as Edward I had done in England - through such works as *Regiam Majestatum* (probably assembled around 1318, that crisis year). The virtues and vices of 'good governance' and kingship were themes which Edward I's painted halls at Westminster also illustrated.<sup>99</sup> This further reflected the demanding portfolio of skills which Robert knew was expected of an effective king and which David Bruce - and, we should note, Robert's grandson, Robert Stewart - were committed to learn.<sup>100</sup>

It is, though, a harsh irony that the disruption of war and exile between 1329 and 1341 would see David II learn instead of many matters martial, courtly and spiritual from neighbouring kings. This would also cause David once again to lose sight of the genuine Gaelic face of his father's kingship. He may have been old enough to remember his father's pilgrimages in his final weeks of 1329, but David would make at best only limited devotion to such important Highland, south-western and Irish saints as Fillan, Malachy and Ninian. The first rested on a Perthshire shrine cult which had given Robert shelter in 1306, blessed his forces at Stirling in 1314 and received the king's gift of a chapel and masses c. February 1318; the second was a figure the Competitor had crossed but who might have aided the Bruces in their invasion of Ireland; as might St Ninian, also

<sup>99</sup> *Chron. Bower*, vii, 47-51; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 143; *RRS*, v, pp. 77; Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, 98-102.

<sup>100</sup> *ER*, i, 297, 431 [books and Dominican friars in the prince's household].

the chief devotional cult of Galloway, former Balliol lands, through which Robert dragged his dying body in 1329 en route to St Ninian's, Whithorn.<sup>101</sup> All of these saints were thus vital figures from the Bruce baronial past and in Robert I's own cause: these were no mere tactical observances in the manner of Edward I's devotions at such Scottish altars as St Kentigern of Glasgow in 1301.<sup>102</sup> Robert's favoured residence in his final years, his relatively simple unfortified manor house of hall, chambers, kitchens, aviary, garden, park, jetty and 'great schipp' at Cardross, near Dumbarton, was a heartfelt reflection of his western spirit. In that sense, too, the east-coast and decidedly Lowland adult David II would lose his father's ability to appeal to the faith and culture of the full geographical extent of his kingdom as well as to penetrate it with justice or fire and sword. Robert Steward (Robert II) of the Stewartry, Renfrew, Bute and Kintyre would seek to fall Bruce's true heir in that and other spheres.<sup>103</sup>

Fuller consideration of Robert I's court and kingship, therefore, reveals a multifaceted, constantly evolving ruler, a far more complex character than that left to posterity.<sup>104</sup> Bruce developed very definite ideas for projecting and enforcing royal authority upon both everyday domestic matters and the greater problems of war and diplomacy. He could be not merely 'humane and kingly, generous and firm of purpose' but also ferocious, mean, forgiving, devout, penitent and indecisive.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, in death, Robert's actions betray some of his own sense that all his emergent ideology, patronage, legislation, military tactics, religiosity and personal image might not in the

<sup>101</sup> *Chron. Lanercost*, 112-4; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 317-8; Penman, 'Soules Conspiracy', 56-7 and below ch. 2; Taylor, 'The Cult of St Fillan in Scotland', 184-8, which also discusses the heraldic association of St Fillan with the Bruces of Annandale by c.1390.

<sup>102</sup> P. Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* (London 1999), 21; Vale, *The Princely Court*, 314-8.

<sup>103</sup> *ER*, i, ad indecim for 'Cardross' and below chs. 2-3.

<sup>104</sup> M. Penman, 'Reputations in Scottish History: King Robert Bruce (1274-1329)', *Études Écossaises*, 10 (2005), 25-40.

<sup>105</sup> Quote - Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 312-3.

end be enough to stave off permanently the English aggression begun by Edward I. Robert requested his body be interred at Dunfermline and his entrails, perhaps, at St Serf's chapel near Cardross.<sup>106</sup> But the designation of his heart to rest at Melrose after pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the care of Sir James Douglas and a lavish military entourage was at once an act of contrition and a propaganda response both to John Balliol (whose father's heart lay at Sweetheart Abbey in Dumfriesshire) and, ultimately, Edward I, a crusader and, in his later years, a patron of many European shrines but who had also declared that in death his heart should be taken to the Holy Land by 140 liveried knights and that his bones should be borne by English armies re-conquering Scotland. Robert's own royal relic was thus to serve as one talisman among many in the anticipated struggle to preserve Bruce Scotland from the unfinished business of 1306-29.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Scotsman*, 29 March 2001. St Serf's feast fell on 1 July, making this a day Robert I might also have marked in summer 1318, perhaps at St Serf's, Lochleven, en route to Dunfermline or St Andrews from Stirling?

<sup>107</sup> Steane, *Archaeology*, 55; Simpson, 'The Heart of Robert I'.

Robert ordered pits to be dug beside the road. The Scottish army was then laid out in four groups using the lie of the land to its best advantage, to confine the vast English army within a very limited space. On the morning of the battle, the Scots advance was lead by the King's brother, Edward Bruce. The skeleton was attributed to Robert I on the basis of the sawn sternum, a procedure carried out after death to remove his heart in accordance with Robert's wish to have it carried by Sir James Douglas on Crusade. The bones were measured and drawn, and a plaster cast was taken of the skull by artist William Scoular. Robert I (11 July 1274 – 7 June 1329), popularly known as Robert the Bruce (Medieval Gaelic: Roibert a Briuis; modern Scottish Gaelic: Raibeart Bruis; Norman French: Robert de Brus or Robert de Bruys, Early Scots: Robert Brus), was King of Scots from 1306 until his death in 1329. Robert was one of the most famous warriors of his generation, eventually leading Scotland during the Wars of Scottish Independence against England. Robert I had two chancellors and, so far as is known, four chamberlains. Dom Bernard, Bernard abbot of Arbroath. The origins and early career of Bernard are uncertain. all the acts of the fourteenth century, or at least of 1306–71, on the same principles. The preservation of a chronological framework presented problems, but remains the main principle. Since the intermingling of precisely dated and broadly datable... Reigned 1306 - 1329 (Family Tree). Zoom in to this image. Share this image on social platforms. Mark this image as a favourite. Download a larger version of this image. About this artwork. title: Robert I (known as Robert the Bruce), 1274 - 1329. Earl of Carrick and Lord of Annandale. Reigned 1306 - 1329 (Family Tree). accession number: SP I 31.1. artist: Unknown. gallery: Scottish National Portrait Gallery ( Print Room ). object type