

JOHN BALLIOL

Born c.1250, Died 1314

King of Scots 1292–1304 (personal rule 1292–1296)

Early years

John Balliol was the fourth son of the great northern English baron, John Balliol, and Dearbhaill (Derb Forgaill), lady of Galloway. The name Balliol was taken from lands in Picardy (northern France) which John's father held. John's parents probably thought he should have a career in the Church: there is some evidence that he could read Latin, which was unusual for a nobleman. His three brothers, however, died without legitimate children. This meant that John succeeded to his father's lands in 1278, something he cannot have expected when he was growing up. As yet he had little connection with Scotland. This only happened when his mother died in January 1290. Inheriting her lands made him very wealthy. He also took from her the title of Lord of Galloway. This made him a prominent figure in Scotland, as well as a rival of neighbouring Carrick, whose earl after 1292 was Robert the Bruce, the future king.

John claims the throne

Nine months after getting used to his new position in Scotland, John was thrown into the limelight by the death of Margaret of Norway, granddaughter of King Alexander III, in September 1290. John had a strong claim to the Scottish throne. So too did Robert Bruce lord of Annandale (grandfather of the future king). John's greatest allies were the Comyn family: his sister was married to John Comyn, lord of Badenoch, one of the seven Guardians elected in 1286. The danger of civil war was prevented when the Guardians invited Edward I as a neutral neighbour to advise on who should be the next king: Balliol or Bruce. When Edward arrived at the border in May 1291, however, he declared that he was overlord of Scotland with the authority to decide who should succeed to the throne. Edward also encouraged many more men to claim the throne at this point. John Balliol was among the last of them to recognise Edward's overlordship.

John becomes king of Scots

A court case followed (known as the 'Great Cause'), with Edward presiding as judge. On 17 November 1292 it was decided that John Balliol should be the next king of Scots. He was inaugurated on St Andrew's day, 30 November 1290, at Scone. But John was not king in the same way as Alexander III had been. He was required to swear an oath of loyalty to Edward as overlord of Scotland before being inaugurated as king, and then to perform homage to the English king once he had been inaugurated. This was something that no king of Scots had ever done before as part of the procedure for becoming king.

King John's dilemma

Edward I was keen to make sure that he was overlord in fact and not just in theory. This meant that he should have the authority to act as judge over decisions made by the Scottish king. The first case of this kind happened very soon after John became king. John and other Scottish leaders protested to Edward that this was against the recognition of Scottish independence that Edward himself had given in writing on 28 August 1290. Edward's response was to get John Balliol to tear up Edward's earlier promises. The pattern of John's rule was set. On the one hand Edward I treated him as one of his men, while on the other Scottish leaders, such as the Comyns,

demanded that John stand up to Edward and preserve as much of Scotland's independence as possible. John Balliol could not please them both.

Balliol and the Scots defy Edward I

When Edward declared war on the king of France in 1294 he summoned John and leading Scottish nobles to fight in his army. They failed to show up. The Scottish leaders were now desperate to do something to keep Edward I at bay. They met at Stirling on 5 July 1295 and formed a council of 12 to help run the country. John wrote to the king of France offering an alliance, which was finalised a few months later. It was agreed with the French that the Scots would attack England in March 1296. But Edward was already a step ahead. He invaded Scotland at the end of March and destroyed Berwick. On 27 April an army of Scottish knights was defeated at the Battle of Dunbar. In early July, John Balliol surrendered to Edward I in a humiliating ceremony and was taken to England as a prisoner.

Balliol as a deposed king

After the rebellion in summer 1297, a series of Guardians governed in the name of King John Balliol. King John himself, however, never returned to Scotland. To begin with John was imprisoned in the Tower of London. In 1299 he was transferred into the custody of the Pope, and later released to lead a quiet life on his lands in Picardy (northern France). In 1300 Scottish leaders were in touch with him and urged his return. He appointed one of them, John Soules, to be the sole Guardian. But Balliol himself failed to appear in his kingdom. He seems to have stopped having an active interest in Scotland. He continued, however, to refer to himself as king of Scots right up until his death. He lived long enough to hear of the victory at Bannockburn. He died in Picardy about 25 November 1314.

Balliol as king

It is easy to dismiss John Balliol as a weak king who found himself in an impossible position, pressurised by Edward I on the one hand and on the other by leading Scots nobles such as the Comyns. He was the first king of Scots, however, to hold parliaments frequently and regularly: there were four sessions between February 1293 and May 1294. In his first parliament he introduced sheriffs to cover the West Highlands and Islands. He also appointed the first treasurer. These are signs that, if John had reigned in happier times, he could have been an effective king.

Leuchars (Fife): 7 October 1290

William Fraser, bishop of St Andrews, writes to King Edward to tell him that a rumour was spread at an assembly of Scots in Perth that Margaret the Maid had died on her way to Orkney. On hearing this news, Robert Bruce came to the assembly with his following and the earls of Mar and Atholl gathered their armies. William waits to hear the news from knights who have been sent to Orkney to find out if the rumour is true. William advises Edward to be careful if John Balliol comes to talk to him so that Edward can keep his upper-hand. If Margaret has died, he asks that Edward comes to the border of Scotland to prevent fighting between the Scots.

To the lord Edward, king of England, lord of Ireland and duke of Aquitaine, your devoted chaplain, William, the bishop of St Andrews in Scotland.

I note that, after the assembly of the Scots at Perth on 1 October your messengers prepared to travel to Orkney to meet Norwegian messengers and to receive their lady, the queen. But a rumour resounded through the people of the

assembly that their lady was dead, on account of which the kingdom of Scotland is in turmoil and the community in despair.

When this rumour was heard and spread, Sir Robert Bruce [grandfather of Robert the Bruce], who earlier had not intended to come to the assembly, came there with a great following in order to hinder certain persons.

The earls of Mar and Atholl have gathered their armies already and there is fear of civil war unless God provides a swift remedy through your industry and service. The bishop of Durham, the earl of Warenne and I have heard that our lady Margaret [the Maid of Norway] has recovered from her illness but is still weak, and so we have agreed to remain near Perth until we hear definite news from knights who have been sent to Orkney. And, as soon as we have good news, which is expected daily, we will set out for those parts for the business committed to us.

If Sir John Balliol shall come to your presence, I advise that in every outcome you take care in dealing with him so that your honour and advantage are preserved.

If it happens that their lady has indeed died, we ask you to please approach the border to the consolation of the Scottish people and to prevent the spilling of blood so that the true men of the kingdom can maintain their oath unbroken and set up him who by law should inherit the throne, if so be it that he is willing to abide by Edward's advice.

Norham: Tuesday 5 June 1291

John Balliol and other potential claimants to the crown of Scotland recognise the right of Edward I to judge who is the lawful heir to the crown.

Florence count of Holland, Robert Bruce lord of Annandale, John Balliol lord of Galloway, John Hastings lord of Abergavenny, John Comyn lord of Badenoch, Patrick of Dunbar earl of March, John de Vescy (on behalf of his father), Nicholas de Soules and William de Ros:

Each of us considers that we possess a right in the realm of Scotland and are entitled to demonstrate, claim and urge this right before the person who has the most power and reason to try their case. Lord Edward, king of England, has shown us that the overlordship of the realm along with the right to hear, try and determine our right belongs to him. Therefore, by our own free will, we do desire and allow that we should receive justice before him as overlord of the kingdom. We are willing to uphold and maintain his decision without dispute.

Berwick: Monday 17 November 1292

Edward I's decision about who should be king of Scotland was made in the hall of Berwick castle, in front of Edward, bishops, earls and 80 people who had been elected to hear the claims of people to the throne. Some of the claimants have withdrawn or not pushed their claims. Robert Bruce and John Balliol both claimed they were the closest relation to the royal line. Edward decided that John Balliol was the closer relation. He makes John the king of Scotland with all the rights that go with it. Edward states the dates when John is to swear his loyalty to him.

On 17 November 1292, at Berwick, in the hall of the castle before the king of England, overlord of Scotland, and in the presence of John, archbishop of Dublin, John, bishop of Winchester, Anthony, bishop of Durham, William, bishop of Ely, John, bishop of Carlisle, William, bishop of St Andrews, Robert, bishop of Glasgow,

Matthew, bishop of Dunkeld, Robert, bishop of Ross, and Mark, bishop of Man and the Isles, and of Henry de Lacy, earl of Lincoln, Humphrey, earl of Hereford, John, earl of Buchan, Gilbert, earl of Angus, Malise, earl of Strathearn, and in the presence of eighty elected persons of Scotland, all the claimants to the throne were called and publicly summoned.

And the king, by the mouth of his judge Roger Brabazon, had his judgment pronounced in this manner:

“You all know that King Eric of Norway, Florence, count of Holland, John Balliol, Robert Bruce, John Hastings, Patrick, earl of March, William de Ros, William de Vesci, John Comyn, Robert de Pinkeny, Nicholas de Soules, Patrick Golightly and Roger de Mandeville, have placed before the eighty persons chosen from Scotland and the twenty-four nominated by the king of England, overlord of the kingdom of Scotland, their claims for the realm of Scotland, and the arguments on which they based their claim. Of these claimants, Robert de Pinkeny, Patrick, earl of March, Nicholas de Soules, Patrick Golightly, William de Ros, William de Vesci and Florence, count of Holland, have withdrawn their petitions.

Since King Eric of Norway, John Comyn and Roger de Mandeville have not pursued their petitions, the king says that they shall gain nothing of what they ask.

You all also know that Robert Bruce [grandfather of Robert the Bruce] claimed the whole realm by reason of his closeness in relationship [to the previous king, Alexander III], and John Balliol likewise claimed the whole kingdom because he was descended from Margaret, the eldest daughter of Earl David [d. 1219, grandson of David I]. It was declared to Robert Bruce that there was no justification for his petition.

You all also know that John Hastings claimed, as a descendant of the third daughter, Ada, of Earl David, a third of the whole inheritance which descended to Margaret, daughter of the king of Norway, by the death of Alexander, last king of Scotland. Likewise Robert Bruce, as a descendant of the second daughter of Earl David, claimed his third of the realm of Scotland.

The king, as overlord of the kingdom of Scotland, after hearing and noting the demands and arguments of John Hastings and Robert Bruce, who were asking for their shares [one third of the kingdom], and examining them carefully, declares as a matter of law and by way of judgment that the realm of Scotland cannot be split, and that the acquisitions of the kings of Scotland cannot be split either. But the lands outside the realm of Scotland should be dealt with according to the laws and customs of the realms of where they are. Therefore the king declares by way of judgement that you, John Hastings and Robert Bruce, shall receive nothing of the shares which you demand.

But to you, John Balliol, as nearest heir of Margaret, daughter of the king of Norway, lady of Scotland, and grand-daughter of the late Alexander, king of Scotland, by right of succession to the realm of Scotland as determined before the king, the king hands over the realm and possession of it, with all the privileges of the kingdom and those things which have come into the hands of the king as overlord since the death of Margaret, except the right in Scotland of the king and his heirs when they wish to raise the point.

The king appoints the date of 20 November for swearing loyalty to him, and Christmas day for doing homage to him for the realm of Scotland.”

Norham (Northumberland): Thursday 20 November 1292
King John Balliol swears loyalty to King Edward I.

I, John, king of Scots, let it be known that I have made an oath and sworn to my liege-lord, Edward, king of England and overlord of the realm of Scotland, at Norham, on Thursday, the feast-day of St Edmund, king and martyr, in the year 1292, and in the 21st year of the reign of King Edward, in the presence of William, bishop of St Andrews, Robert, bishop of Glasgow, John, earl of Buchan, William, earl of Ross, Patrick, earl of March, Walter, earl of Menteith, James, steward of Scotland, Alexander of Argyll, Alexander Balliol, lord of Cavers, Patrick Graham, and William Sinclair, in this manner:

“My lord, Edward, king of England, overlord of the realm of Scotland, I, John Balliol, king of Scots, give my loyalty to you for the realm of Scotland, which I hold and claim to hold from you; I bring to you faith and loyalty of life, limb and earthly honour, against all men, and faithfully recognise and give you the service which is owed from the realm of Scotland, as God may favour me and these Holy Gospels.”

Newcastle: 5 January 1293

Edward I commands King John Balliol to cancel his agreement with Isabella that allowed John to decide who Isabella married.

King Edward of England to John, king of Scotland: greeting.

I have approved the marriage of Isabella Comyn, widow of William Comyn, to my faithful subject Edmund of Hastings. The marriage happened while I held the kingdom of Scotland as overlord. I command you to absolve Isabella from an oath you took from her not to marry without his permission.

Scone: 9 February 1293

King John Balliol holds a parliament. John appoints certain people to be the sheriffs in the western parts of Scotland (where there were not sheriffs before) in order to keep peace there. The earl of Ross becomes the sheriff of Skye; Alexander MacDougall becomes the sheriff of Lorn; and James the Steward of Scotland becomes the sheriff of Kintyre. Each is to have £100 a year as wages [about £54,000 today].

The lord king, for keeping the peace and stability of the kingdom established and ordained that there shall be sheriffs of these lands:

The lands of the earldom of Ross in the west, the king's land of Skye and Lewis, the lands of Eigg and Rum, Uist and Barra with the very small isles. And William, earl of Ross, should be called the sheriff of Skye.

The lands of Morvern, Ardnamurchan, Locheil, and the lands of various lords in Argyll. And Alexander MacDougall, lord of Argyll and Lorn, should be called the sheriff of Lorn.

The lands of Kintyre, the Isle of Bute and the lands of various lords in Cowal. And James the Steward of Scotland should be called the sheriff of Kintyre.

Each of them shall take £100 sterling each year for his duties and for answering faithfully. And each of these sheriffs should have a letter of the lord king which should contain all of the lands which are assigned to him, and all of the men dwelling in the lands.

Stirling: probably 24 June 1293 (40 days before 3 August)

King John Balliol summons all of his sheriffs to his parliament at Stirling.

John, by the grace of God, king of Scots, to my sheriffs: greeting.

I command that you should give up all other business in order to attend, by every means you can, my parliament which shall be held, if God wills it, at Stirling on the Monday immediately after the feast of the blessed Peter [3 August 1293]. There you will discuss with me and with the other magnates of my realm who will be present certain difficult business touching me and my kingdom.

You should also command your bailies to get all the people living within their areas to be summoned, as they must show in my presence and the presence of the council what right they have to the lands which were given away without my permission after the death of Alexander III, king of Scotland, my predecessor.

You should also know that we have allowed each person to keep his sheep within his own lands and pastures until our parliament is over, even though they might be infected by disease, preventing anyone from causing further problems.

14 June 1294

Record that a court case between King John Balliol, Simon, and King Edward has been postponed. Simon (a subject of John Balliol's) had complained to Edward that John had not treated him fairly in his court case in Scotland.

Record that King Edward sent a letter to the sheriff of Northumberland, commanding him to summon John, king of Scotland, to appear in the king's court to answer Simon, heir of John of Restalrig. Simon had complained to King Edward that King John did not do him justice in his court case against Patrick Graham. The case concerned lands in Restalrig, which should have been transferred to Simon but they were in King John's keeping because of the mental impairment of John of Restalrig.

The sheriff reported that he delivered the summons to King John Balliol at Lanark on 9 February, in front of John Comyn, Alexander Balliol, Hugh de Eure and Walter of Cambo.

Both King John and Simon turned up to the king's court on the day appointed, but because King Edward was busy with other difficult business, the court case has been postponed until the next Easter parliament.

20 June 1294

Record that King John Balliol had failed to turn up to a court case in England. The case was brought by Reading Abbey who said that John did not treat them fairly in their court case in Scotland. The sheriff of Northumberland reported that he had summoned John at his Parliament with a letter from Edward I. John has not appeared now after two letters, so he is being summoned for a third time and told he must give a reason for not turning up before.

Record that the sheriff of Northumberland was ordered by King Edward to present a letter to John, king of Scotland, summoning him before Edward to answer a complaint by the representatives of Reading Abbey. They were complaining that John denied them justice in their court case to regain their ownership of the Priory of May and its properties.

John did not turn up, and so the sheriff showed that he had delivered the summons at Lanark on 10 February before these witnesses: John Comyn, Alexander Balliol, Hugh de Eure and Walter of Cambo.

The sheriff was ordered to summon John for a third time, telling him to appear a month after the next Easter. John was also ordered to show at that time why he had ignored two previous summonses, and to bring with him any records relevant to the case so that it could be settled.

Stirling: 5 July 1295

King John sends messengers to Philip, king of France, to discuss the possible marriage of Edward Balliol (John's son and heir) to one of Philip's relations.

To the most excellent prince his lord and, if it pleases him, his friend, the Lord Philip by the grace of God illustrious king of France, from John by the same grace king of Scots: greeting.

Your royal highness shall know that we make by this letter our beloved and faithful venerable fathers William Fraser, bishop of St Andrews and Matthew de Crambeth, bishop of Dunkeld, and the knights John de Soules and Ingram de Umfraville our special messengers to discuss, if it pleases you, the marriage of a serene young lady who is your descendent or kinswoman to Edward, our firstborn son and heir.

I have given these messengers full power to agree and complete the engagement as far as possible, and to do all other things needed for the contract.

Whatever our messengers shall command to be done in the discussing will be upheld by us now and in the future.

In testimony of this we have attached our seal to this letter.

This letter was given at Stirling on 5 July in the year of our Lord, 1295.

Paris: 23 October 1295

Treaty of Scotland and France (full text can be found online at www.rps.ac.uk, under John Balliol's reign, Dunfermline assembly, 23 February 1296).

Philip king of France agrees to an alliance between the king of Scots and him.

Philip writes: the most important thing for a king and kingdom to win praise, peace, happiness and prosperity is the bond of love with other kings and kingdoms. Kings should display this love in order to keep justice and suppress wicked people. By helping each other, kings will help peace to grow.

Because of this love, Philip agreed that they should create an alliance of family bonds so that their friendship may flourish.

The messengers and Philip agreed the following:

- 1. Edward Balliol, heir to the throne of Scotland, should marry Jeanne, Philip's niece (daughter of Charles, count of Valois and Anjou).**
- 2. The king of France will pay 25,000 French coins towards the marriage.**
- 3. The king of Scots must give Jeanne £1,500 a year as her dowry (a gift given to the bride). He must do this by giving her rent from certain lands in France and England.**
- 4. The king of Scots promises to help stop the king of England attacking France by providing military assistance and advice to the king of France.**
- 5. The king of Scots will invade England to distract Edward from the war with France.**
- 6. The king of Scots promises to make sure his subjects treat all of the French as friends and help to fight the king of England (in particular the Scottish churchmen, nobles, barons and townspeople).**
- 7. If the king of England attacks Scotland, the king of France will help by distracting Edward elsewhere and sending help to Scotland.**

8. **If the king of England leaves his kingdom at any time, or sends lots of knights out of the kingdom, the king of Scots should invade England.**
9. **Neither the king of France nor the king of Scots is to make a truce (an agreement of peace) with the king of England without including the other in the agreement.**

Philip by the grace of God king of the French, to all who shall see this letter: greeting.

Of all the ways in which rulers and kingdoms attain their praise, and win the good quality of peace and tranquillity, and ensure the happiness and prosperity of its subjects, this is the most important: that the bonds of love, unity and faithful friendship are nurtured among kings and kingdoms. Thus kings and princes should display, when it is necessary, feelings of loving devotion to each other for the sake of their zeal for justice, and to repel injustices, and to suppress the disrespectful acts of the wicked, and to put down attacks by enemies. A king or prince in prosperous circumstances should gladly help another so that no king or prince struggles alone in hardships. And through the act of defending each other, the harmful attacks of those who hate peace will be put down, so that the sweet quality of the peace long hoped for may prevail. And by the beauty of this peace they, as devoted sons of peace, may serve more devotedly.

Therefore the renowned prince John, illustrious king of Scotland and our special friend, carefully paying attention to these advantages and useful benefits, has specially sent to us the venerable fathers William Fraser, bishop of St Andrews and Matthew de Crambeth, bishop of Dunkeld, and the knights John de Soules and Ingram de Umfraville as his messengers, specially appointed for this purpose to agree alliances and bonds of friendship for the future. We graciously agree with the wishes of the king in this matter, in order that the family bond of this alliance and the faithful coming together of friendship may flourish all the more and endure with greater stability.

Therefore a harmonious settlement has been reached between us, with the good will and consent of our beloved and faithful brother Charles count of Valois and Anjou, and the messengers acting in the name of the king of Scots, that a marriage should be contracted between Edward (the king of Scots' firstborn son and future king of Scotland who, according to the agreement made with the messengers, is to succeed the king of Scots in the kingdom of Scotland and all his other lands) and Jeanne (the firstborn daughter of our brother, Charles).

We promise that we and our successors will give 25,000 *petits livres Tournois* [French coins] towards the marriage with Jeanne. Likewise the king of Scots must give Jeanne £1,500 a year as her dowry [about £800,000 today]. £1,000 of this should be yearly revenue in the following lands: Bailleul, Dampierre, Helicourt and Hornoil in the kingdom of France, and Lanark, Cadzow [Hamilton], Mauldslie, Cunningham, Haddington and Dundee Castle in the kingdom of Scotland. However, if the revenue from all of these places exceeds £1,000 a year, the excess money should be given to the king of Scots. And if there is a shortfall in the revenue, the king will be responsible for making up the total from his other revenues. Or, he can assign two times a year when the £1,500 will be given to her. And he will give her a guarantee for this dowry. And if in the course of time the king wishes to pass to a second marriage, he will have to ask our permission on the matter of the dowry.

The king of Scots, because of his love of justice and his affection towards us, our house, our throne and the inhabitants of our kingdom, is angry at the wrongs, hostile invasions and unjust aggressions which the king of England has put on us and our

faithful subjects, by land and sea up to the present. The king of England has violated the duty of loyalty by which he is bound to us and continually attempts to offend us. Therefore the king of Scots, in order that he may bind us and our successors more closely to him and his successors with the affection of mutual love, proposes to give us effective and powerful help, out of pure feelings of affection, to end these wrongs, assaults and acts of aggression. He has entrusted this power to his messengers. These messengers have promised us that the king of Scots, in the present war which we are waging against the king of England and his supporters (both the king of Germany and any other of his supporters), will publicly and openly assist us in England if a war of this kind comes to them, using all of his resources both by land and sea. And they will provide counsel and help as quickly as possible.

In order for the wrongful attacks of the king of England to be stopped, and for him to be forced to give up his wicked invasions and hostile acts, he must be preoccupied elsewhere. Thus the king of Scots will endeavour to initiate and continue war against the king of England at his own expense with all his might and that of his subjects, as often as is needed for him to make war while we are fighting the war begun by us against the king of England.

The messengers also promise that their king will make sure that his prelates (as far as it is lawfully possible for them), earls, barons, other nobles, and communities of his towns will conduct themselves towards us and our successors during the war in the manner that is written above, and they will make war on the king of England with all their resources as well. And they promise that these people will send us a letter to show their approval, with their seals attached, as quickly as possible.

It was agreed between us and the messengers that if the king of England should gather together his forces and attack the kingdom of Scotland (either personally or acting through someone else) after the war has begun by the king of Scotland at our request ... we will help him by keeping the king of England occupied in other parts so that he is distracted from the invasion in other directions, provided that we have been given enough of a warning by the king of Scots himself, and we will send him appropriate help into Scotland at our expense.

If the king of England leaves England in person, or removes a notable number of armed knights or foot soldiers from the land for the war between us and him, the messengers promise that the king of Scotland will attempt to enter the land of England with all his forces, as wide and as deep as possible, making war there and pitched battles, besieging and laying waste the land, using every means he can at his own expense.

It was further agreed between us and the messengers that, if war is begun by the king of Scots on our behalf against the king of England or if the king of England shall make war against the king of Scots, we shall not settle our own war or enter into a truce unless the Scots are included in the truce which we make concerning all the wars. And similarly, the king of Scots shall not be able to make a truce concerning all the wars without us.

For the holding, implementing and observing of all those things written above we bind ourselves, our heirs and successors and all our subjects, present and future, to the king of Scotland and his successors. The king of Scotland must approve and renew the treaty in his name, and send us a letter of approval, authenticated by his seal, as soon as possible.

In testimony of this, we have attached our seal to this letter.

This was done at Paris on 23 October in the year of our Lord, 1295.

Dunfermline: 23 February 1296

Confirmation of the Franco-Scottish treaty (full text can be found online at www.rps.ac.uk, under John Balliol's reign, Dunfermline assembly, 23 February 1296).

King John approves of the agreement made between Philip king of France and his messengers.

John desires that the love and affection which exists between the two kingdoms should grow more. So, he sent messengers to France to negotiate a marriage between the two kingdoms and to discuss other matters relating to the kingdom. The messengers and Philip agreed over the marriage and to creating a bond of friendship between the two kingdoms.

John attaches his seal to the letter as proof that he agrees with the treaty. Certain other people of the kingdom also agree and so attach their seals as proof (bishops, abbots, earls, barons and burghs).

John, by the grace of God king of Scots, to all who shall see this letter: greeting.

We desire with all our heart to continue and increase for the future the inward love and affection which our ancestors and the whole community of our kingdom have particularly felt towards the most excellent kings of France until now. The love conceived over such a long period of time should not lie concealed any longer, but should rather continue into the future on an ever-more solid basis.

In order for this to be more clearly revealed, we have recently sent across to France the venerable fathers William Fraser bishop of St Andrews and Matthew de Crambeth bishop of Dunkeld and the knights John de Soules and Ingram de Umfraville, our beloved and faithful subjects, as our special messengers to the most excellent prince and lord Philip, by the grace of God illustrious king of the French, in order to arrange an engagement and marriage between Edward Balliol, our first born son and, what is more, the future heir to Scotland, and any female descendent or kinswoman of the lord king of France. And also to discuss all pieces of business which relate to us, Edward our firstborn son, our kingdom and its inhabitants.

Our messengers negotiated with the king of France, both on the subject of the wedding and on entering into mutual bonds of friendship. They agreed according to a fixed manner and formula.

We approve of this treaty, and so we confirm and renew it by this letter, reinforcing it by attaching our seal. And because the prelates of our kingdom (as far as law allows them) and the earls, barons, other nobles and communities of the towns approve and promise themselves to observe the treaty, their seals have been attached to this letter as well in proof of their consent and approval. The following seals are attached.

Bishops: William Fraser bishop of St Andrews, Robert Wishart bishop of Glasgow, Matthew de Crambeth bishop of Dunkeld and Henry Cheyne bishop of Aberdeen.

Abbots: the abbots of Arbroath, Dunfermline, Holyrood, Kelso and St Andrews.

Earls: John Comyn earl of Buchan, Donald earl of Mar, Malise earl of Strathearn and John earl of Atholl.

Barons: John Comyn, James the steward of Scotland, Alexander Balliol, Geoffrey Moubray, Richard Siward, Herbert Maxwell, Patrick Graham, Nicholas Hay, Nicholas Graham, Alexander Comyn of Buchan and Alexander Bonkle.

Towns: Aberdeen, Perth, Stirling, Edinburgh, Roxburgh and Berwick.

This letter was given at Dunfermline on 23 February, in the year of our Lord, 1296.

Berwick: 5 April 1296

John Balliol writes to Edward I to tell him that he is tired of Edward harassing his kingdom and people. Therefore John cancels any loyalty he or his subjects have promised to Edward.

John, king of Scotland, to lord Edward, king of England: greeting.

I note that you and others of your realm – to your knowledge, for surely you should not be ignorant of what they do – have inflicted, by naked force, grievous and intolerable injuries, slights, and wrongs upon me and the inhabitants of my realm. And indeed you have caused harm beyond measure to my liberties and those of my kingdom in a manner which offends God and is against justice.

For instance by summoning me outside my realm at the mere beck and call of anybody, as your own whim dictates, and by harassing me unjustifiably; by seizing my castles, lands and possessions and those of my people unjustly and without any fault on my part; by taking away to your realm, both by land and by sea, my possessions and those of my subjects; by slaying merchants and other inhabitants of my realm; and by forcibly seizing the men of my realm, taking them into your own, and keeping and imprisoning them there.

I have often sent my messengers to you to try and change these things. Yet the injuries have not only persisted as they were, but more offences have been committed which are worse than the first, by you and your subjects. For now you have come to the frontiers of my realm in a warlike manner, with a vast number of soldiers and an army openly assembled, to disinherit me and the inhabitants of my realm. And you have crossed beyond into my realm and brutally committed acts of slaughter and burning, as well as aggression and acts of violence both by land and by sea.

I cannot any longer endure these injuries, insults, and grievous wrongs, nor these hostile attacks, nor can I remain in your fealty and homage (which, it must be said, were taken under extreme coercion from you) and I desire to assert myself against you, for my own defence and that of my realm, to whose defence and safekeeping I am tied by the bond of an oath.

And so by this letter I renounce the oath of loyalty and homage which I have done to you, and which any other person among my faithful subjects has done to you either for the lands which they hold in your kingdom or for their membership of your household or retinue. This I do in my own name and in the name of each and all of the men.

Berwick: 27 April 1296

Having already seized the lands in England of Balliol and other Scots, Edward I commands two English sheriffs to remove any Scots from England who live on their lands.

Edward, king of England, to the sheriffs of Bedford and Buckingham: greeting.

I have already commanded you to seize all the lands and goods of John Balliol, late king of Scotland, and others of the realm of Scotland who have lands in your jurisdictions, and who have remained in Scotland, and hand them over to the crown.

I now command that any Scotsman who is living on the lands of Scotsmen in England should be removed from there immediately.

Kincardine: 2 July 1296**Resignation by King John Balliol of the realm of Scotland, with all its people and their homage.**

John, king of Scotland: I see that by evil and false advice, and my own folly, I have grievously offended and angered my lord Edward, king of England, lord of Ireland, and duke of Aquitaine, in many ways.

While I still owed him loyalty and homage, I made an alliance against him with the king of France (who then was, and still is, his enemy) by agreeing to arrange a marriage with the daughter of Charles, the French king's brother, and to harass King Edward, and help the king of France, with all my power in war and by other means.

And by the same evil advice I have defied King Edward, and have withdrawn myself from his homage and loyalty by renouncing his homage.

And also I have sent my men into England to burn, plunder, murder, and do many other wrongs, and have fortified the land of Scotland against him, which is his fief, by putting and maintaining armed men in the towns, castles, and elsewhere, to defend the lands against him, and deprive him of his rights.

For all these reasons and these many transgressions, my lord, the king of England, has entered the realm of Scotland and taken and conquered it by force, defeating the army that I had sent against him, a thing which he was rightly able to do as lord since I had renounced my homage to him and done the things already described.

Therefore, acting under no constraint and of my own free will, I have surrendered to him the lands of Scotland and all its people, with the homage of all of them.

Stracathro Churhyard (Angus): 7 July 1296**John Balliol cancels of the treaty between Scotland and France.**

On 7 July 1296, in the presence of the witnesses recorded below, the lord John, king of Scotland, in his full and free royal power, publicly and by his free will recognised by his own voice that, having been led astray by evil advice by his messengers sent to France, he entered into certain agreements, contracts and illicit peaces, in the name of Edward, his son, and the inhabitants of his realm, with the lord Philip, king of France, and others of the realm of France, against his lord, Edward, king of England, and against the loyalty owed for his kingdom of Scotland made previously to the said king and his men.

He had approved and confirmed this treaty by his letter with a seal. He now claims to be reconciled to his lord, the king of England, and wishes from now on to be faithful to him in everything. He has renounced and annulled the treaty with France.

Done in the cemetery of Stracathro in the presence of Anthony, bishop of Durham and the noble men, Sir Humphrey, earl of Hereford, Sir John Comyn, earl of Buchan, Sir Hugh Despenser, and Sir John Comyn of Badenoch, senior, knights, who were called as special witnesses.

Brechin Castle: 10 July 1296**John Balliol resigns his kingdom to Edward I, king of England.**

On 10 July 1296, John, king of Scotland, returning to the goodwill of Edward, king of England, not by force but of his own accord, in the presence of witnesses specially summoned for the purpose, submitted himself and his kingdom of Scotland, and the whole right that he had in it, and the people of his kingdom, and all his goods, to the will of the lord king of England. And he gave up his kingdom, along with the homages, his other rights, his royal dignity, royal honour, and all his lands and possessions to his lord, the lord king of England, with a grateful spirit. And he returned by free will clearly and absolutely. And he openly stated all this with his own tongue.

Done in the Castle of Brechin on the day and month stated above, in the presence of Anthony, bishop of Durham, and the noble men Sir John Comyn of Badenoch, senior, Sir Brian fitz Alan (both knights), and Master Alexander Kenney, clerk of the said king of Scotland, and then chancellor.

Torphichen (West Lothain): 29 March 1298

William Wallace, as a knight, Guardian of Scotland and leader of the army, gives to Alexander Scrymgeour land in Dundee and the post of keeper of Dundee Castle. Wallace does this in the name of John Balliol, who he still regards as king of Scots.

William Wallace, knight, Guardian of the kingdom of Scotland and leader of the army of Scotland, in the name of the lord John Balliol, king of Scots, by the consent of the community of the kingdom state that I, by the consent of the magnates of the kingdom, have given lands to Alexander Scrymgeour in the territory of Dundee: namely the land called Great Field, with the acres in the field to the west which belonged to the king, and the meadow of the king in the territory of Dundee.

And in addition, I give him the office of constable of Dundee castle, for homage to be made to the king and his heirs, and faithful service and aid to the kingdom. And he is to carry the banner of the king in the army from the time of the present agreement.

York: 19 December 1298**Record of expenses for John Balliol while he was a prisoner in England.**

Payment to Michael of Winchester, clerk, for expenses to John Balliol and for the robes of Balliol's chaplain: 8 marks [about £2,750 today].