

ROBERT THE BRUCE

Born 1274, Died 1329
King of Scots 1306–1329

Earl of Carrick

Robert the Bruce was the latest in a long line of Robert Bruces who had been lords of Annandale (in southern Scotland) since around 1120. His mother was Marjorie, countess of Carrick, and because of this his father was the earl of Carrick. Robert was therefore born at Turnberry Castle on 11 July 1274. He was probably raised in Gaelic-speaking Carrick (in Ayrshire). His grandfather, Robert Bruce lord of Annandale, claimed the Scottish throne after the death of Margaret of Norway in September 1290. When his rival, John Balliol lord of Galloway, became king in 1292, Robert's grandfather avoided recognising Balliol by resigning his lands to his son, Robert's father, who became lord of Annandale. Robert's father in turn handed over Carrick to Robert. As a result Robert at the age of 18, as earl of Carrick, was one of the most important leading men in Scotland.

First period of leadership against English occupation

When Edward I invaded Scotland in March 1296, Robert was in the English army. He was therefore one of the few Scottish leaders who was not imprisoned in England after the Battle of Dunbar on 27 April. He joined the revolt against English occupation in the summer of 1297, leading the unsuccessful resistance at Irvine along with two ex-Guardians, Bishop Robert Wishart of Glasgow and James the Steward. After Wallace resigned as Guardian after the Battle of Falkirk in 1298 Robert became joint Guardian with his rival, John the Red Comyn. An English spy reported that at one meeting Robert and John came to blows.

Submits to Edward I and becomes head of the Bruce family

When it looked like John Balliol might return as king, Robert saw this as a threat to his family's position, and so he submitted to Edward I early in 1302. This allowed him to make an alliance with the earl of Ulster (who was loyal to Edward I) by marrying his daughter. Having a friend in the north of Ireland was vital for protecting Carrick. Robert was with Edward I at the siege of Stirling in 1304 – the last resistance to Edward I by those fighting in the name of King John Balliol. While there, he heard of his father's death. Robert was now head of the family. The Bruce claim to the throne now rested with him. He made a secret arrangement with William Lamberton, bishop of St Andrews, whose support would be vital if Robert was to become king.

The killing of John Comyn

Robert Bruce may not have been the only one with an eye to the throne. John the Red Comyn had been the most successful and consistent leader against English occupation after Wallace resigned as Guardian. Only when Comyn's French allies deserted him did he finally surrender on 9 February 1304, bringing the reign of the absent John Balliol to an end. John Comyn was Balliol's nephew, and might have sought to claim the vacant throne. If so, both he and Robert Bruce were probably waiting for the old King Edward I to die before making a move. But they could not both be king. On 10 February 1306 Robert Bruce met Comyn in the church of the Greyfriars in Dumfries and took drastic action, killing Comyn in the most sacred part of the church, beside the altar. This would have been regarded as a terrible atrocity.

Bruce seizes the throne

After killing Comyn Bruce acted fast, seizing castles and marching to Glasgow. There he met Bishop Robert Wishart and was presented with the royal standard. On 25 March Bruce was inaugurated at Scone as Robert I king of Scots. Two days later a mass was celebrated for the new king in Scone Abbey by William Lamberton, bishop of St Andrews. Many leading nobles, however, were absent.

Before Bannockburn: civil war

Killing John Comyn, leader of the most powerful family in Scotland, made most of the greatest lords Bruce's enemies. If Robert was to keep his throne he would not only have to clear Scotland of English garrisons and defeat the king of England, but he would also have to overpower the Comyn family and its many allies. There was little chance of success. On 19 June 1306, three months after becoming king, Robert Bruce faced an English army at Methven north of Perth and was defeated. Bruce fled west, finding refuge in the West Highlands and Islands. Robert returned in spring 1307, starting his comeback in Carrick. This was followed by a lightening campaign across Scotland, picking off the Comyns and their allies one by one.

Defeating the English in Scotland

To deal with the English he devised a radical new strategy of avoiding pitched battles and destroying castles when he captured them. In this way he made it very difficult for an invading English army to take control in the future. This strategy paid off. Edward II's first full-scale invasion began in September 1310 and lasted nearly a year. But Edward II spent most of that time in Berwick. After he went home, many of the English garrisons in Scotland began to surrender. Robert was also able to begin raids into northern England. When Edward II next brought an army into Scotland, in 1314, Robert Bruce was prepared to face him on the battlefield at Bannockburn. Robert's great victory did not win recognition of Scottish independence at once. It showed Robert's remaining enemies in Scotland, however, that he was master of the country. At the parliament held in Cambuskenneth in November 1314 it was enacted that no-one loyal to the king of England could have lands in Scotland. Nobles had to choose whether they were Scottish or English.

Campaigns and threats after Bannockburn

Scottish independence was not recognised by England until 1328, after many years of Scottish raids into northern England. Bruce had also fought to take Ireland away from the king of England's power by sending his brother, Edward, there with an army. Between 1315 and his death in battle in October 1318 Edward Bruce led many Irishmen as their king. Edward Bruce's death weakened Robert Bruce. In 1320 he thwarted a plot to kill him and replace him with John Balliol's son, Edward.

After Bannockburn: rebuilding a kingdom

Robert Bruce established control over the kingdom by giving major lordships to his closest supporters, such as Thomas Randolph and James Douglas. The alliance with France was re-established in 1326. He also created a stronger legal system, partly by borrowing from English common law. He also introduced, with parliament's approval, regular general taxation as well as customs duty on wool and hides. This was very similar to what Edward I achieved in England fifty years earlier.

Wark (Northumberland): 25 March 1296

Robert the Bruce, as earl of Carrick, does homage to Edward I as his lord and promises to be faithful to him, along with his father and other important people.

We, Patrick, earl of March and Dunbar, Gilbert de Umfraville, earl of Angus, Robert Bruce the elder [lord of Annandale], and Robert Bruce the younger, earl of Carrick, greet all who shall see or hear this letter.

Since we are, and always have been, faithful and subject to the will of the most noble prince, our well-beloved lord, Edward, by the grace of God king of England, lord of Ireland, and duke of Aquitaine, we promise, on our own behalf and that of our heirs, on pain of forfeiting our lives and our property, that we shall serve him well and loyally against all mortal men, on every occasion that we are so required or instructed by our lord the king of England, or by his heirs. And we promise that if we hear of anything hurtful to them, we shall do all in our power to discourage it, and shall bring it to their notice. We pledge ourselves, our heirs, and all our goods that we shall keep and honour these promises.

Further, we have sworn this on the Holy Gospels and after that all of us together, and each of us separately, have done homage to our lord the king in these words: "I become your liegeman in matters of life and limb and of earthly honour, against all mortal men".

Further, all of us together, and each of us separately, have sworn loyalty to our lord the king in these words: "I will be faithful and loyal, and will maintain faith and loyalty to Edward, king of England, and to his heirs, in matters of life and limb and of earthly honour against all mortal men. And never will I bear arms for anyone against him, or his heirs, nor give advice or aid against him, on any occasion which may arise. And I will loyally recognise and perform the services which are attached to the lands which I claim to hold of him, so may God and the saints help me."

As witness of this promise we have had this letter written, and sealed it with our seals.

Irvine: 9 July 1297

Robert Bruce and other leading men of Scotland submit to Edward I after rising against him.

Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick, James the Stewart of Scotland, Alexander Lindsay, John, brother of the Stewart, and William Douglas announce that they, together with the community of their country, have risen against their lord, Edward, king of England, lord of Ireland and duke of Aquitaine and against his peace. And they have committed arson, homicide and many robberies in his lordship and land of Scotland and of Galloway.

In order to make full amends they now submit themselves to the will of their lord the king [Edward I], excepting the terms contained in a document which they have from Henry Percy and Robert Clifford, captains of the army of the king of England in Scotland.

They attach their seals to this document.

Irvine: 9 July 1297

Bishop Robert acts as one of the guarantors for Robert Bruce's agreement with the king. Bruce has agreed to give Edward I his daughter, Marjory, as a hostage as a promise for his good behaviour.

Robert, bishop of Glasgow, James, Stewart of Scotland, and Alexander of Lindsey:

We note the recent war made by Sir Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick, against our lord, Edward, king of England.

Since Robert afterwards surrendered to the king's peace by negotiations between himself and his allies on the one side, and Sir Henry Percy and Sir Robert Clifford for the king, we now become guarantors for Robert, on pain of our life and limbs, until he delivers Marjory, his daughter, as hostage to Sir Henry and Sir Robert, as was agreed.

Berwick: 23 July 1297

Letter from Hugh Cressingham (the treasurer) to Edward I, advising that an attack be made on William Wallace, who was in Selkirk Forest with a large company of men.

Sire, at Berwick on 14 July, I received two of your letters, delivered by John Brehille and William Ledbury, your messengers. The second letter says that if you could capture the earl of Carrick [Robert Bruce], the Steward of Scotland [James Stewart], and his brother [John Stewart] (who are supporters of the rebellion), you would think your business in Scotland finished. You have given me the task of employing all my skill, using the money which you have sent me, and every other means in my power, to accomplish this.

Sire, before your letters reached me, I had been at Bolton moor in the county of Northumberland on the advice of your council (which was then at Berwick). On 10 July, the most important people of the county came to meet me there. We decided to make an expedition against the enemy on the Thursday before the feast of St Margaret [Thursday 18 July], provided that the army arrived at Roxburgh on the Tuesday before that Thursday.

The army was assembled on the Wednesday in Roxburgh. We had 300 mounted soldiers and 10,000 foot-soldiers in total. And we would have made the expedition had not it been for Sir Henry Percy and Sir Robert Clifford, who arrived on the Wednesday evening in Roxburgh and told us that they had received all of your enemies on this side of the Scottish Sea [i.e. south of the River Forth] into your peace. We told them that even though peace had been made on this side of the Scottish Sea, it would be better to attack the enemies on the other side, or attack William Wallace, who lay there with a large company of men in Selkirk forest. It was decided that no expedition should be made until the arrival of the earl of Warenne, your guardian of Scotland.

If you do not know all the details about the peace, I send a full explanation under the seal of the bishop of Glasgow, along with a confidential letter of his, and a letter containing confidential matters which his clerk told me.

Sire, please do not be offended that I have delayed your messenger for so long: to tell the truth, I have been very annoyed that I have not been able to give you better news. I am keeping William Ledbury, your other messenger, with me (with your permission): I shall send him with better news after the arrival of the earl, God willing.

May God save and keep your noble lordship!

Govan: 5 December 1298

A charter of Robert Bruce, confirming William Wallace's gift of land in Dundee and post of castle keeper to Alexander Scrymgeour (28 March 1298).

Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick, one of the Guardians of the realm of Scotland, to the sheriff of Forfar and his officials: greeting.

I understand that Alexander Scrymgeour has been given possession of Dundee Castle and certain other lands near to the town by the gift of Sir William Wallace. I therefore command you to give him possession of the castle and these lands, both in my name and in the name of Sir John Comyn, my fellow-guardian of the realm of Scotland. Alexander should have them in the same way that is described by the gift of the said Sir William Wallace before we entered into the guardianship of the realm.

Torwood (near Stirling): 13 November 1299

The Guardians write to Edward I telling him that Philip, king of France, has told them that Edward will not trouble them for some time, on Philip's request. The Guardians agree to not cause trouble to the English during this time either, or interfere with the war between England and France.

William, bishop of St Andrews, Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick, and John Comyn, the son, Guardians of the realm of Scotland, in the name of lord John, king of Scotland, established by the community of the realm of Scotland, to lord Edward, king of England: greeting.

The Lord Philip, king of France has told us by his letter that, at his bidding, you will cease and desist from all hostilities against us and the realm of Scotland for a certain time. Lord John, duke of Brittany, messenger of the lord king of France, now in England, has told us this by his letter.

We shall also desist from aggressive hostilities against you and your realm. We shall also desist from interfering with hostilities between you and King Philip.

We have appended our seal, sending this letter with the messenger and signify that we wish Edward to reply to them through the same messenger.

Probably January 1302

Record of the terms by which Robert Bruce returned to the allegiance of Edward I.

Let it be remembered that Robert Bruce (the younger), who was in the allegiance of the king of England for the earldom of Carrick, rose up in war against the king his lord because of evil advice. Robert Bruce has now surrendered himself to the peace and will of the king, in hope of receiving his mercy because of the good services he and his kin have done for the king and his ancestors, and because of the good service that Robert has promised to do in time to come. He has declared his will and grace in the following manner:

Robert, his men, and his tenants in Carrick shall be unharmed in life and lands, and free from imprisonment. If a truce or peace is declared in England's war with Scotland or France, which makes Robert unable to enjoy his own estates (of which he now has possession in Scotland), King Edward promises to take his loss into account, so that he may have a reasonable income.

The king grants to Robert that none of his family's lands in England or Scotland will be taken away from him.

Because Robert fears that the realm of Scotland might be removed from the hands of King Edward and handed over to John Balliol or his son, or that Robert's right might be put into question in the future, King Edward promises to Robert the right to defend his lands in a fair hearing, and he will treat Robert justly in court.

If anyone tries to injure Robert, the king will support him in his right and defend him, so far as a lord should do for his man.

Aberdour: 3 March 1304

Edward I praises Robert Bruce for doing the king's business north of the Forth.

Edward, king of England, to my loyal and faithful Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick, Sir John de Segrave and their company: greeting.

I applaud your diligence in carrying out my affairs and I beg you to complete the business you have begun so well, and to bring matters to a close before you leave the districts on that side the River Forth. I urge you in earnest to do this.

Inverkeithing (Fife): 16 April 1304

Edward I writes to Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick (later King Robert the Bruce), thanking him for sending his siege-engines to Stirling and asking him to send a vital part of the great engine.

King Edward, writing from Inverkeithing, to the earl of Carrick: greeting.

I thank you for sending your siege-engines to Stirling. I ask you now to forward the rod of the great engine if you possibly can, for which I will send you help.

About 1305

Record of a complaint by Robert Bruce to Edward I about the loss of his lands in Annandale.

Robert Bruce to my lord, King Edward: greeting.

I have been kept out of my lands of Annandale and Lochmaben Castle for four years now, and I still am kept out of them undeservedly to my loss and great grievance.

I beg that I may have my lands and castle back, so that I may serve you, my lord, and hold my properties under you as my neighbours do.

If I am not better treated than I have been so far, I can neither borrow nor live without causing great mischief!

February 1306

Receipt of a payment to a man for strengthening the king's castles (because of Bruce's rebellion) on the way back from telling the chamberlain about John Comyn's death.

Payment made to William of Hawick, chaplain, going from Dumfries to meet the chamberlain of Scotland near Lanark, in order to tell him of the death of John

Comyn. On his return he caused the king's castles to be fortified because of the rebellion of the said Robert Bruce.

March 1306

Receipt of a payment to friars from London going to Dumfries to find out if the death of John Comyn in a church was true.

Payment to John of Winton, clerk, sent by the king to the Friars at London for sending 2 friars to Dumfries to make an inquiry into the death of John Comyn. For expenses for 10 days from 5 March: 23s. 9d. [£615 today]

March 1306

A letter to Edward I telling him that Robert the Bruce has taken control of many castles (Dumfries, Ayr, Dalswinton and Tibbers).

My lord, I inform you that the earl of Carrick [Robert the Bruce] now holds the castles of Dumfries and Ayr and the castle of Dalswinton, which belonged to John Comyn, and the castle of Tibbers, which belonged to Richard Siward. And Bruce holds this Richard and William Balliol in prison.

March 1306

An English spy writes to Edward I telling him that Robert the Bruce has started a rebellion in Galloway (South West Scotland). The spy thinks that Bruce is now trying to make himself King of Scots, and he hears that Bruce is on his way to Scone to be crowned.

My lord, I write to you with news that the earl of Carrick [Robert the Bruce] has made war in Galloway. The earl of Carrick has been at Glasgow and Rutherglen and has received the oath of loyalty from the people wherever he has arrived. The wicked bishop remains at Glasgow as his chief adviser. I understand that the earl of Carrick is attempting to seize the realm of Scotland and to be king.

On the day that this letter was written, John of Menteith informed me that the earl of Carrick had crossed the water [the Firth of Clyde] with 60 men-at-arms. The Saturday before this letter was written, the earl of Carrick came to Glasgow and the bishop gave him full forgiveness for his sins, made him swear that he would live under the direction of the clergy of Scotland, and freed him to secure his rightful inheritance [i.e. the Scottish crown].

They had a meal together and the earl left in the direction of Menteith to cross the River Clyde. And when he came to Dumbarton he ordered Alexander Lindsay and Walter Logan to demand the surrender of the castle, and that John of Menteith should go out under truce to talk with them. John would not agree to come out of the castle, but allowed the earl to come under truce so close to the castle that John could hear from inside what he wanted to say. The earl demanded the surrender of the castle and John replied that he held it by the king's commission and he would not surrender it except to the king.

10 April 1306

Charter of Edward I after Robert the Bruce crowned himself king of Scots. Edward I gives all of Bruce's lands to his (Edward's) daughter and her husband because Bruce is now a traitor.

I, King Edward, have given to Humphrey de Bohun, earl of Hereford and Essex, in return for his good and praiseworthy service, and to Elizabeth his wife, my daughter, the castle of Lochmaben and all the lands in Annandale previously belonging to Robert Bruce, formerly earl of Carrick.

Bruce has forfeited these lands for his crime in seditiously and treacherously slaying John Comyn of Badenoch [the Red Comyn] in front of the high altar of the church of the Friars Minor at Dumfries, and so committing sacrilege.

The land is to be held by Earl Humphrey, his wife, and their heirs under all kings of England. Failing such offspring, the land should be given back to me and my successors.

July 1306

Receipt of a payment to a messenger taking letters round the country announcing the sentence against Bruce for killing Comyn.

Payment to Alan, messenger, for his expenses going from Berwick to Perth and Stirling to carry letters of the Friars Minor concerning the public sentence made against Robert Bruce and his accomplices.

July 1306

Receipt for a messenger who told Edward I the news that the English army (led by Aymer de Valence) had defeated Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Methven in June.

From the account book of the keeper of the king's Wardrobe:

Payment to Laurence Somer, messenger of Aymer de Valence, for bringing the king news of the battle between the English and Scots at Perth. Delivered by Laurence's own hand to the king at Northampton in July: 100s. [£2,500 today].

Lazenby (Yorkshire): 30 July 1306

Record of the sentence to hang John Seton, who helped Robert the Bruce kill John Comyn and take control of the king's castles.

John Seton was captured in Richard Siward's castle at Tibbers, which John was holding against King Edward for Robert Bruce, a traitor.

John is to be drawn and hanged for aiding Robert Bruce in the murder of John Comyn in the church of the Friars Minor at Dumfries, in contempt of God and the most Holy Church, and against the king's peace.

1 August 1306

Edward I writes to his judges, telling them the sentence against a criminal called Bernard Mowat. Bernard is sentenced to be hanged for fighting with Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Methven, for killing some of King Edward's officers, and for burning churches in Scotland. Bernard, along with other Scottish prisoners, was executed four days later.

King Edward to my judges: greeting.

I inform you of the charges and sentences relating to a certain prisoner: Bernard Mowat is condemned for being in the conflict between Aymer de Valence, my lieutenant in Scotland, and Robert Bruce, on the Sunday before Midsummer's day that year [19 June], and bearing arms against my army, fighting in the field between St Johnstone of Perth and the town of Methven, and criminally slaying some of my men there who were taken on the field, and slaying Roger de Tany, my valet, in Selkirk forest, and burning and destroying churches in Scotland.

Bernard has appeared before the court and is sentenced to be drawn and hanged. He has no lands or possessions.

Between August and November 1306

Records of payments made to messengers for taking letters authorised by the Pope against Robert the Bruce and those who were present at John Comyn's death: Alexander de Lindsay, Christopher Seton, and his brothers John and Humphrey.

Payments made to messengers taking two letters to the Irish bishops, sealed by the archbishop of York and the bishop of Carlisle, who were appointed by the pope to give a sentence against Robert, earl of Carrick, and the knights Alexander de Lindsay, Christopher Seton and his brothers, John and Humphrey, who were present at the death of John Comyn.

Lenton (Nottinghamshire): 30 September 1307

King Edward II commands his deputy in Scotland to put down Robert Bruce's rising in Galloway.

Edward, king of England, to John of Brittany, earl of Richmond, my lieutenant in Scotland: greeting.

I command you to march to Galloway to put down Robert Bruce, as John de St John, Dougal Macdowell, Donald son of Can and other great men there have written to tell me that Bruce and his accomplices are burning and plundering, and inciting and compelling the inhabitants to rebel.

I have commanded the following men to aid you with their forces: Patrick, earl of Dunbar, John of Hastings, John son of Marmaduke, Robert of Keith, Alexander of Abernethy, Henry Sinclair, Alexander de Balliol, and John de Vaux, and also John, baron of Wigtown and Richard le Brun, keepers of the peace of Lancaster, Cumberland and Westmorland, with Roger Heron and Simon Ward, keepers of the peace of Northumberland and Tynedale.

April 1308

The sheriff of Banff tells Edward II about the trouble Bruce has caused in the North East of Scotland, in particular the siege of Elgin Castle.

Duncan of Frendraught, sheriff of Banff, to my lord, King Edward: greeting.

My earlier letter to you was intercepted. I now send details of Robert Bruce's campaign in the north during the past winter, ending with his renewal of the siege of Elgin Castle on Palm Sunday [13 April] 1308.

1 May 1308

John Mowbray writes to Edward II telling him he has ended the siege of Elgin Castle by Robert the Bruce.

John Mowbray to my lord, King Edward: greeting.

I report that I have relieved Elgin Castle, which had been besieged by Robert Bruce. I recommend Duncan of Frenndraught [the sheriff of Banff] to you for his good services to me.

Auldearn (in Moray): 31 October 1308

William earl of Ross does homage to Robert Bruce as king of Scots.

I, William, earl of Ross, announce that, because the lord Robert, king of Scots, has forgiven my bitter spirit and all kinds of offences against him and his men, and graciously granted me all my lands, and has invested me with the lands of Dingwall, and Ferincoskry in the earldom of Sutherland, I subject and bind myself and my heirs and all my men to my lord the king in all circumstances.

I promise that we shall be faithful to him and his heirs from now, and faithfully give him service, aid and advice against all mortal men and women.

I have made this oath upon God's holy Gospels. I also attach my seal along with the seal of Hugh, my son and heir, and John, his son, along with the seals of the bishops of Moray and Ross.

Arbroath: 26 April 1309

Charter by Robert Bruce giving the Bishop of Glasgow all of his churches and properties and money as a reward for supporting Bruce. These things are to be given over to the chancellor and the chamberlain and anyone else nominated by the bishop (Bishop Robert being a prisoner in England at this time).

Robert, king of Scots, to my justiciars, sheriffs, grieves and bailies: greeting.

Since Robert, bishop of Glasgow, has consistently and patiently supported my work as king, I grant him by this charter all of his churches, lands, property, revenues, possessions, and goods.

I command that, from now on, you should all make sure that the churches, lands, property, revenues, possessions, and all of the bishop's goods which are in your jurisdiction, are released to my chancellor and chamberlain, or to the bishop's appointed representatives.

I also forbid you from troubling Bishop Robert. Anyone who goes against my wishes will face a large fine.

Soon after 11 March 1309

John of Argyll writes to Edward II, telling him how Robert Bruce has attempted to invade his lands, and asking for help. He also claims Bruce was spreading false rumours that John had submitted to Bruce.

John of Argyll to King Edward: greeting.

I received your letters on 11 March, for the content of which I greatly thank your majesty. I was on my sick-bed when they reached me, and had been for half a year. Robert Bruce had approached my territories with 10,000 or 15,000 men both by land

and sea. I had no more than 800 to oppose him, 500 of these guarding my borders. What is more, the barons of Argyll gave me no aid whatsoever.

Yet, though we were fewer in terms of power, Robert Bruce asked for a truce from me, which I granted him for a short space of time, and received the same from him in return, until your majesty sent me support.

I hear that Robert, when he came, was boasting and saying that I had come to his peace when he told me that many others were rising in his aid, which God and I know is not true. Should your majesty hear this from others, you are not to believe it, for I am and will ever be ready to serve you to the utmost of your power.

I have three castles to guard and a loch 24 leagues long [about 72 miles] on which I have vessels properly manned, but I am not sure of my neighbours. As soon as your majesty or your forces arrive, I will be ready with lands, ships and others to aid you, if sickness does not prevent me. But if it unfortunately does, I will send my son with his forces to your majesty.

24 February 1310

This document is also known as 'the Declaration of the clergy'. See 'Propaganda' for more analysis.

The major churchmen of Scotland state that when Edward I made John Balliol king during the succession crisis, they always supported his opponent, Robert Bruce. Once Balliol had been taken away, they agreed to make Robert the Bruce king of Scots.

We, the bishops, abbots, priors, and other clergy of the realm of Scotland, make known that when a dispute arose between John Balliol, lately installed as king of Scotland de facto by the king of England, and the late Robert Bruce, the grandfather of Robert who is now king, concerning which of them had the better title, by right of birth, to inherit the rule over the people of Scotland, the faithful people always believed that Robert, the grandfather, was the true heir after the death of King Alexander and of his granddaughter, the daughter of the king of Norway.

The whole people of the realm of Scotland were wearied by the stings of many sufferings: their King John had been captured by the king of England and imprisoned and deprived of his realm and people, the kingdom had been betrayed and reduced to slavery by John and laid waste by much plundering, the people were filled with the distress of constant sorrow, they were exposed to every danger and given over to the occupier (Edward), and tortured by war, and made captive, and oppressed, overthrown and enslaved by the slaughter of many innocent people and by continual burnings. The people were near to eternal ruin unless speedy repair was brought by divine counsel to fix such a disfigured and desolated kingdom and its governance.

The people were unable to bear any longer such numerous, great and heavy injuries more bitter than death, often coming to them because they had no captain and faithful leader. And so, by the guidance of God, under whose authority kings rule and princes govern, the people agreed on Lord Robert, who now is king, the rights of his father and his grandfather to the kingdom. And with their knowledge and approval he was received as king so that he might reform the defects of the realm and correct things needing to be corrected and steer those that lacked guidance. By their authority he was set over the realm, and formally established as king of Scots. The faithful people of the kingdom wish to live and die with Robert who, by the right of his blood and other cardinal virtues, is fit to govern and is worthy of the name of king because he has repaired such a damaged and forsaken kingdom by repelling injury

with the sword, just as many previous princes and kings of Scots had done by the sword in former times.

If anyone claims that he has right to the kingdom by producing sealed letters from the past, which record the consent of the whole people, you should know that all this arose by force and violence which nobody could then resist, and amid numerous fears, tortures of bodies and various terrors which could well have disturbed the senses and minds of perfect men and destroyed the most committed people.

We therefore have sworn fealty to Lord Robert, our king of Scotland, and his successors, being compelled not by force or deceit but by pure wish. And in sign of our testimony and approval of all these things we attach our seals to this writing.

Kildrum (in Cumbernauld): 1 October 1310

Robert writes to Edward II, passionately appealing for peace between their peoples. Edward must stop persecuting Robert and devastating his kingdom. Robert and his people are ready to do anything in their power to achieve this peace.

To the most serene prince the Lord Edward by God's grace illustrious king of England, Robert by the same grace king of Scots, greeting in Him by whom the thrones of those who rule are governed.

When the minds of the faithful find rest under the sweetness of peace, the life of Christians, and the whole of Holy Mother Church, is adorned with good conduct because the affairs of all kingdoms are everywhere arranged more favourably.

Our humility has led us, now and at other times, to beseech your highness more earnestly so that, having God and public decency in sight, you would take pains to cease from the persecution of us and the disturbance of the people of our kingdom so that there may be from now on an end to devastation and the spilling of Christian blood.

Certainly, everything which we and our people will be able to do by bodily service or to bear by giving freely of our wealth for the redemption of good peace and for the grace of your good will for all time (which must be earned), we are prepared and shall be prepared to accomplish in a suitable and honest way, with a pure heart. And if it should be agreeable to your will to hold negotiations with us on these matters, may your royal eminence send word in writing to us, by the bearer of this letter.

Written at Kildrum in Lennox, 1 October in the fifth year of our reign [1310].

Dundee: 12 April 1312

Robert Bruce orders his officials not to allow the royal burghs to negotiate with anyone, except through the chamberlain of Scotland or his officials. And all royal revenue is to be paid through the chamberlain as well.

Robert, king of Scots, to all my officials in the kingdom: greeting.

My highest parliament held at Inchturh has issued an order that my burghs and burgesses should not negotiate through anyone or anybody except through my chamberlain and his officials. Further, it was decided that military service and taxes should be given to the chamberlain and his officials. I therefore command that you should by no means allow the burghs or burgesses to go against this, on my orders.

Between April and October 1312

Charter by Robert the Bruce, giving Thomas Randolph the earldom of Moray in return for his loyalty and service to Bruce. Everyone in the earldom should obey Thomas, who is now their lord.

As king, Bruce keeps Inverness for himself, and control over high-ranking churchmen in the earldom.

During battle, men from the earldom must fight for the king under Thomas's banner. In return for the title of heir, Thomas must give the king 8 knights to fight for him.

Many important men witnessed the charter being made.

Robert, king of Scots, to all the men of his kingdom: greeting.

You should know that I have given Thomas Randolph, knight, my beloved nephew, for his homage and service to me, all of my lands in Moray as they were held by Alexander III, king of Scotland, my late predecessor. In addition I give him all the other neighbouring lands, within specified boundaries, including the northern borderlands of Argyll that belong to the earl of Ross.

I order my sheriffs of Inverness and his officials from the burgh to help the earl and answer to him and his heirs. And they should intervene on his behalf without needing any other special order from me.

I also grant that all the men of the earldom who hold land directly from me should do homage, swear loyalty, attend court and perform all other services to Thomas and his heirs, except the four crimes of the crown which I keep for my own courts (that is murder, rape, arson and theft).

I keep for myself the burgh of Inverness, with its castle and the lands belonging to the burgh, with the fishing rights in the River Ness and with the burgh's mill. I also keep for myself the oaths of loyalty from the bishops, abbots, priors and other high-ranking clergy in Moray, and the right to make appointments of priests to churches.

The men who can be mustered by me for the defence of my kingdom should come to battle under the banner of Earl Thomas and his heirs, along with the others who formerly used to follow the banner of the earl of Moray.

In return for the earldom, Earl Thomas and his heirs are to provide me and my heirs with 8 knights to serve in my army, and Scottish service and aid as owed by custom from every davoch.

Witnesses: William, bishop of St Andrews; William, bishop of Dunkeld; Henry, bishop of Aberdeen; Bernard, abbot of Arbroath and the king's chancellor; Malcolm, earl of Lennox; Gilbert Hay, knight; Robert of Keith, marshal of Scotland; Alexander Menzies, knight; Henry Sinclair, knight.

Dumfries: 14 July 1312

An English spy writes to Edward II telling him about Robert the Bruce's Parliament at Ayr and plans to attack England and castles.

My lord, since I left you at York, Sir Robert Bruce has held a Parliament at Ayr and intends to send Sir Edward, his brother, with the greater part of his forces, into England, while he himself attacks the castles of Dumfries, Buittle and Caerlaverock, remaining there and sending his light troops to plunder the North for their support.

7 February 1313**Record of the surrender of Dumfries Castle to Robert the Bruce.**

The castle of Dumfries was surrendered on 7 February 1313 to Sir Robert Bruce by Sir Dougal Macdowell [constable and sheriff of Dumfries].

Parliament at Cambuskenneth: 6 November 1314**Legislation: statute of disinheritance on those who had died or lived outside the faith and peace of the king**

In the year of grace 1314, on 6 November, the most excellent prince the Lord Robert by the grace of God illustrious king of Scots, held his parliament in the monastery of Cambuskenneth.

It was finally agreed (with the advice and approval of the bishops, other prelates, earls, barons and other nobles of the kingdom of Scotland, and also all the community of the kingdom) that all those who died outside the faith and peace of King Robert in the war or otherwise, or those who had not come to his peace and faith on the allocated day although they had been often summoned and lawfully expected to do so, should be deprived of their lands and titles forever which they hold within the kingdom of Scotland. And they should be considered as the king and kingdom's enemies from then on, forever deprived of any further claims of right for themselves or their heirs.

Therefore, for the memory and proof of this decision, the seals of the bishops, other prelates, earls, barons and the rest of the nobles of the kingdom, were attached to this document.