William Douglas, 1st Earl of Douglas

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

William Douglas, 1st Earl of Douglas (c. 1327–1384) was a Scottish magnate.

Contents

- 1 Early life
- 2 Death of the Knight of Liddesdale
- 3 War with England and Battle of Poitiers
- 4 Earl of Douglas and Mar
- 5 Marriage and Issue
- 6 References
    - 6.1 Notes
    - 6.2 Sources

William Douglas	
Earl of Douglas	
Seal of the 1st Earl of Douglas	
Predecessor	*New Creation*
Successor	James Douglas, 2nd Earl of Douglas
Spouse(s)	Margaret, Countess of Mar
Issue	
James Douglas, 2nd Earl of Douglas, George Douglas, 1st Earl of Angus (illegitimate)	
Father	Sir Archibald Douglas
Mother	Beatrice Lindsay
Born	1327 Scotland
Died	May 1384 Douglas, South Lanarkshire
Buried	1384 Melrose Abbey[1]

Early life

William Douglas was the son of Sir Archibald Douglas and Beatrice Lindsay, and nephew of "Sir James the Good", Robert the Bruce's trusted deputy. From the time of his father's death at Halidon Hill, he is described as being a ward of his kinsman and godfather, William Douglas, Knight of Liddesdale and was educated in France.[2] In 1342, under pressure from Liddesdale, his uncle Hugh the Dull resigned the Lordship of Douglas to him, though Liddesdale rapaciously administered his estates while it was in his ward-ship, and assumed direct ownership of some of the Douglas territories.

Douglas returned to Scotland, upon reaching his majority in 1348, and immediately started to put his house in order. In 1346-47 following the Battle of Neville's Cross, King David II, and other nobility, including Liddesdale, were held captive by the English. Edward Baliol used the opportunity to ravage the whole of the south of Scotland. Douglas gathered his men and drove the English out from his ancestral lands of Douglasdale.[3] Douglas went in the style of his uncle, the Good Sir James, and for the following few years waged guerrilla war against the English in the Ettrick Forest and Jedforests.[4]

Douglas next became one of the commissioners to negotiate with the English for the release of David II of Scotland.[5]

Death of the Knight of Liddesdale

In 1353, Edward Baliol was ensconced at Buittle in his ancestral territories in Galloway. Douglas led a raid there to eject him due to Baliol's forfeiture of those lands that had been made over to Sir James Douglas in 1324.[6] Following this raid, returning through the Forest, Douglas came across Liddesdale hunting on what Douglas viewed as his desmesne. This was the match that lit the fuse of years of resentment over Liddesdale's assumption of the Douglas patrimony, notwithstanding Liddesdale's murder of Sir Alexander Ramsay of Dalhousie which John of Fordun gives as a reason for the enmity between the men.[7] Liddesdale, once in high standing with the Crown, had fallen into disfavour following his murder of Ramsay and another Knight, Sir David de Barclay. Douglas set upon Liddesdale and killed him. In February 1354, William of Douglas received a new charter from King David bestowing all the lands held by his uncle Sir James, his father Sir Archibald, and Liddesdale itself.[8][9]

War with England and Battle of Poitiers

In 1355 the truce with England expired and Douglas with the Earl of Dunbar and March, whose lands had been ravaged, decided to take Norham Castle in retaliation. One of Douglas' captains, Sir William Ramsay of Dalhousie, was instructed to despoil the lands around Norham and burn the town in an effort to entice the garrison out to battle. Ramsay did so and the English under the castle's constable, Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton and Lord Dacre, gave chase. Douglas and March meanwhile were encamped seven miles away in woodland to the south of Duns, when Ramsay had reached them. The English pursuers were ambushed by the Scots force, and completely overwhelmed. Following this Battle of Nesbit Moor, Douglas and March joined with the Earl of Angus in making an assault upon Berwick, but the Scots had to retire from there before the advancing army of Edward III. King Edward laid waste to the Lothians in an event that would be known as the "Burnt Candlemas". His supply lines were overstretched, and following the sinking of his fleet, and the Scots scorched earth policy, Edward had to turn homewards, but not before being ambushed and nearly taken by Lord Douglas's men outside Melrose.[10][11] Following Edward's retreat into England, Douglas arranged a truce with William de Bohun, 1st Earl of Northampton that would last until Michaelmas.[12]

He also arranged a Safe conduct to visit the captive King David. Following this Douglas crossed with a large following to France and took up arms with Jean le Bon against Edward of Woodstock, the Black Prince. Douglas was present at the Battle of Poitiers where he was knighted by the French King. Douglas fought in the King's own Battle, but when the fight seemed over Douglas was dragged by his men from the melee. Froissart states that "... the Earl Douglas of Scotland, who fought a season valiantly, but when he saw the discomfiture he departed and saved himself; for in no wise would he be taken by the Englishmen, he would rather there be slain".[13] After the defeat there Douglas escaped, but left a number of his men either slain or captive, including his first cousin latterly the 3rd Earl of Douglas, Archibald the Grim.[14][15]

Douglas returned to Scotland by mid Autumn, and was involved in peace negotiations with the English, one aspect of the treaty was the creation of March Wardens of which Douglas was one. Under the auspice of this office, Douglas seized Hermitage Castle in Liddesdale from the English in response to their depredations on Eskdale.[16] Douglas was part of the parliament that met at Berwick in 1357, which finalised the release of King David through the Treaty of Berwick, Douglas himself being one of the securities for his release.[17]

Earl of Douglas and Mar

Douglas was created Earl of Douglas on the 26th January 1358.[18][19] In 1364, he joined David II in seeking a treaty with England which would have written off Scotland's debt to England in return for depriving his nephew, Robert the Steward, formerly an ally of Douglas, of the succession. Edward III's son, Lionel of Antwerp, would have taken the Scottish throne, although the independence of Scotland was to be guaranteed, and a special clause provided for the restoration of the English estates of the Douglas family.

The plan never succeeded and, on the accession of Robert II, Douglas was nevertheless reconciled and appointed Justiciar South of the Forth in 1372. The last years of his life were spent in making and repelling border raids. He died at Douglas in May 1384.

Marriage and Issue

William, Earl of Douglas married in 1357, Margaret, Countess of Mar and had two children:

- James Douglas, 2nd Earl of Douglas (1358–1388)
- Isabel Douglas, Countess of Mar (1360–1408)

The Earl of Douglas also fathered an illegitimate son by his wife's sister-in-law, Margaret Stewart, widow of Thomas, Earl of Mar and Countess of Angus in her own right:

- George Douglas, inherited the estates of Angus and was later created Earl of Angus.

- Margaret Douglas, received in 1404 the lands of Bonjedward from her sister Isabel of Mar.[20]

References

Notes

1. ^ Maxwell, vol I, p.93
2. ^ Maxwell, Vol I, p.76
3. ^ Fraser, Vol I, p.217
4. ^ Fraser, VolI, p.217
5. ^ Fraser, Vol I p.218
6. ^ Maxwell, VolI p.57
7. ^ Fordun, p.360 clxx (http://www.archive.org/stream/johannisdefordun02ford#page/360/mode/2up)
8. ^ Maxwell, Vol I pp.78-79
9. ^ Fraser, vol i, pp222-228 (http://www.archive.org/stream/douglasbook01fras#page/627/mode/2up)
10. ^ Fordun, CLXXVI,p.374
11. ^ Maxwell, vol I, p80
12. ^ Maxwell, vol I p80
13. ^ Froissart,CLXII, pp.124-126
14. ^ Fordun, CLXXVII pp.375-376
15. ^ Fordun, p.377 *note*
16. ^ Maxwell, Vol 1, p.80
17. ^ Fraser, Vol.I,p.233
18. ^ Maxwell, Vol.I, p.81
19. ^ Fraser Vol.I, p.234
20. ^ Fraser, Vol.I, pp.290-91

Sources

- ⊚ This article incorporates text from a publication now in the public domain: Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press

- Brown Michael, *Black Douglases: War and Lordship in Late Medieval Scotland, 1300-1455*. Tuckwell Press. 1998
- Brenan, Gerald, *A History of the House of Percy II vols*. London 1902
- Fordun, John of, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed.Skene, W.F., Edinburgh 1871.[1] (http://www.archive.org/details/johannisdefordun01ford)
- Fraser, Sir William, *The Douglas Book IV vols*. Edinburgh. 1885
- The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707 [2] (http://www.rps.ac.uk/), K.M. Brown *et al*. eds (St Andrews, 2007–2011).
- Froissart *Chronicles*, trans. Lord Berners, ed. Macaulay, G.C.. London 1904.[3] (http://www.archive.org/details/chroniclesoffroi00froiuoft)
- Grey, Sir Thomas, *Scalacronica*, trans. Maxwell. Glasgow 1904.[4] (http://www.archive.org/details/scalacronicareig01grayuoft)
- Maxwell, Sir Herbert, *A History of the House of Douglas II vols*. London. 1902
- Sadler, John, *Border Fury-England and Scotland at War 1296-1568*. Pearson Education. 2005.

Peerage of Scotland		
Preceded by **New Creation**	**Earl of Douglas** 1358–1384	Succeeded by **James Douglas**
Preceded by **Margaret Douglas**	**Earl of Mar** *suo jure uxoris* 1374–1384	Succeeded by **James Douglas**
Preceded by **Hugh the Dull, Lord of Douglas**	**Lord of Douglas** 1342–1384	Succeeded by **James Douglas**