

**MEN FOR ALL SEASONS?
THE STRATHBOGIE EARLS OF ATHOLL AND THE WARS OF
INDEPENDENCE, c.1290-c.1335**

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Part 2: Earl David IV (1307-1335).¹

The death of David IV de Strathbogie, earl of Atholl and constable of Scotland, on St Andrew's day 1335, was regarded by Scottish chroniclers as the crucial turning-point of the second phase of the wars of independence. They observed that from this day, until the murder of Alexander Ramsay on 20 June 1342, the Bruce cause had been in the ascendancy in Scotland.² Still, the relative importance of David IV de Strathbogie and what he represented has been largely neglected by medieval historians in Scotland, as have almost the first ten years of the second phase of the wars of independence, between August 1332 and 1341. This is perhaps understandable for two main reasons. Firstly, with the death in 1329 of 'good King Robert', who was shortly followed to the grave by many of his faithful confederates, much of the romance associated with high medieval Scottish history also dies. Historians intending to discuss the decade between 1330 and 1340 are faced with the prospect of writing about people who often seem like mediocre players in comparison to the intrepid figures who basked in the reflected glory of the 'hero king'. While a few of these later individuals are quite interesting people in their own right, not much is known about them. In general, the leading characters of Scottish politics during the 1330s never seem to reach quite the same heights of courage, personality and success as the close adherents of Robert I, although this may be mainly due to the fact that they had no John Barbour to 'spin-doctor' their exploits.

The second reason for this historical neglect is much more banal: most of the Scottish primary source material from the years between 1329 and 1341 is missing. Medievalists are for the most part forced to rely on the occasional surviving charter and on chronicle accounts which are often confusing and whose complexities are only now beginning to be unravelled.³ It is therefore unsurprising that there is only one modern study which covers this period in some detail: *Edward III and the Scots* by Ranald Nicholson.⁴ Although this book can be supplemented with two articles, *Scotland without a King 1329-41* by Bruce Webster⁵ and *Edward de Balliol* by R.C. Reid⁶, this is a very sparse body of work in about one of the most crucial periods in the medieval history of Scotland.

Anybody reading this material, particularly Nicholson's and Webster's accounts, is presented with an almost uniform historical perspective: namely, that between 1332 and 1341 the Bruce dynasty owed its ultimate survival to a heroic, but small, band of freedom fighters who refused to submit to the tyrannical English and Edward Balliol. The leaders of the disinherited lords, who started the whole Anglo-Scottish war off again in 1332, appear reminiscent of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Underlying this picture are primarily Scottish chronicle sources heavily biased towards the Bruce cause. In fact, other evidence tells a very different story, particularly in relation to the crucial three years between 1332 and 1335. The one person who was centrally important to everything that happened during this period was Earl David IV de Strathbogie, leader of the disinherited lords.

David IV de Strathbogie in England, 1326-1332

When Earl David III de Strathbogie died in 1326 he was survived by two sons. His heir, David IV, was not yet twenty one years of age. The younger son, Almeric, remains a rather shadowy figure and not much is known about him except that he settled permanently in England after 1335.⁷

On 1 January 1327 Isabella de Vescy was granted custody of all the Strathbogie lands during David IV's minority.⁸ Her brother, Sir Henry de Beaumont, who had a claim through his wife to half of the earldom of Buchan, was granted the marriage of David IV for a payment of one thousand marks.⁹ David IV later married Beaumont's daughter, Katherine.¹⁰

Like David IV de Strathbogie, although probably not for the same reasons, the Beaumont family were members of the 'Disinherited': families that had chosen to retain their English lands after the Cambuskenneth statute of 1314 and who formed a powerful pressure group at the English court for the return of their Scottish lands.¹¹ This may account for the marriage alliance between the two families of Beaumont and Strathbogie, although control over the extensive Strathbogie lands in England, Ireland and France would have been an attractive proposition for any baronial family. In any event, the Beaumont family did not have wardship of David IV's lands for very long. By 28 July 1327 the escheators on either side of the Trent were ordered to give David IV seisin of his patrimony even though he had not yet reached the age of majority.¹²

There are indications that David IV did not receive his entire patrimony in 1327. The lands in Ireland that had formed part of the Aymer de Valence inheritance were not returned to David IV until May 1330,¹³ and it would appear that at this time he was unhappy with the way in which the inheritance had originally been divided. His argument was that one of King Edward II's favourites, Hugh Despenser (the younger), who in 1326 had been granted custody of Lawrence de Hastings, another heir of Aymer de Valence, had influenced the king to make an unfair division of the property in favour of Lawrence.¹⁴ The court found in David IV's favour and ordered that Valence's other heirs should transfer property to the value of £73-30s-22½d to him.¹⁵

Shortly after David IV received seisin of his patrimony in 1327, English politics were thrown into turmoil by the deposition of Edward II and the rise to power of Queen Isabella and her lover, Roger Mortimer. In need of political support, the usurping couple turned to the more powerful 'disinherited' lords for backing, including Sir Henry Beaumont, Sir Thomas Wake and Sir Henry Percy. Two of these lords, Beaumont and Wake, were related by marriage to Henry of Lancaster, who

also initially supported the new regime.¹⁶

Within two years, changing circumstances at the English court meant that this group fell out of favour. Queen Isabella and Mortimer had attempted to undermine the authority of Earl Henry in the Duchy of Lancaster and both Beaumont and Wake became involved in Lancaster's rebellion between October 1328 and January 1329.¹⁷ Consequently, Beaumont and Wake were disinherited of their lands in England and went into exile, probably in France.¹⁸ Clearly, David IV de Strathbogie was thought to be closely politically affiliated with these men. This is perhaps hardly surprising given his father's long affiliation with the House of Lancaster between 1314 and 1322.¹⁹ On 16 January 1329 Queen Isabella and Mortimer issued an order to take all David IV's castles, manors, lands, goods and chattels into the hands of the authorities.²⁰

Even though David IV's lands were restored within one month,²¹ the record of King Edward III's pardon of Strathbogie after the deposition of Isabella and Mortimer, dated 2 January 1331, waives a fine of five thousand pounds which Strathbogie had been meant to pay 'for his earlier rebellion'.²² This would suggest that in 1329 Strathbogie had quickly agreed to pay a financial penalty rather than lose his lands and possessions. However, it does not necessarily indicate that Strathbogie was guilty of rebellion in 1329. As he was not forced into exile, it is just possible that Isabella and Mortimer used his Lancastrian connections to force him into paying a fine for their own monetary gain.

The peace between England and Scotland in 1328 raised the possibility of reinheritances for those who had lost their lands in Scotland because of their failure to support Robert I. It might seem surprising that David IV de Strathbogie does not seem to have been considered for reinheritance either during or after the peace negotiations in 1327 and 1328. In contrast to many of the other major disinherited lords he originally came from a native Scottish family although, like Donald of Mar who was restored to his earldom in 1327, David IV de Strathbogie had been brought up in England. One possible explanation may be that David IV was still technically a minor in 1328 and lacked the political influence to press his case even though he had been granted seisin of all his English lands. Another possibility is that his father may have been involved in the plot against King Robert I's life in 1320, and his lands were therefore considered forfeit on grounds going beyond the statute of Cambuskenneth.²³

Alternatively, it may be that the Scots refused to countenance the restoration of David IV for administrative and financial reasons. Recognition by King Robert I of the patrimony of David IV alone would have caused massive upheaval in the political landscape of Scotland. The Scottish crown would have faced substantial compensation claims from people who had been persuaded to support Bruce between 1306 and 1328 and who had been granted new lands in Scotland for their loyalty to the new royal house. Moreover, David IV de Strathbogie had by 1328 also inherited (through his mother) interests in Scottish lands previously held by John Comyn of Badenoch and Aymer de Valence.²⁴ Included amongst these claims were all the lands of Andrew Murray of Bothwell and the lordships of Badenoch and Lochaber which

had been incorporated into the Randolph earldom of Moray.²⁵

In contrast to David IV's claims, at least some of the rights of his father-in-law, Sir Henry Beaumont, were recognised in the treaty of Edinburgh and letters patent promising restoration were issued to Beaumont although he was never actually reinherited.²⁶ By early 1332 David IV and Beaumont were given royal assent to lease some of their lands in England to raise capital, probably to finance the invasion of Scotland.²⁷ At this point David IV also transferred all his rights in the French lands that he had inherited from Earl Aymer de Valence to the earl's widow, Maria de St Pol.²⁸ Once again this may have been to raise capital for the forthcoming expedition to Scotland. However, there had been disagreement among the heirs of Aymer de Valence about the dower to be assigned to Maria de St Pol and the grant may have been a partial settlement of this outstanding problem.²⁹

Earl David IV's Retinue in Scotland, 1332-1335

While optimists in both Scotland and England may have regarded the treaty of Edinburgh as a lasting peace, in August 1332 David IV and the other 'disinherited' lords, using Edward Balliol as a figurehead, invaded Scotland shortly after the death of Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray. Following a victory at Dupplin, Edward Balliol was crowned King of Scots at Scone and Scotland was now in the unique position of having two crowned and anointed kings. Within a short space of time the seven-year-old King David II had been bundled off to safety in France and a large proportion of the Scottish nobility, including two guardians and eight earls, had been killed at either Dupplin or Halidon Hill.

Very little is known about David IV de Strathbogie's retinue while he was in Scotland between 1332 and 1335. The only information comes from two sources: Bower's *Scotichronicon*, and a charter issued by Earl David IV before August 1335. According to Bower, a number of knights were under Strathbogie's command when he was killed at Culblean in 1335. The list of names given by Bower includes Sir Robert de Menzies, Sir Robert Brade, Sir Walter Comyn and his brother Sir Thomas Comyn.³⁰

The Menzies family were major landowners in the earldom of Atholl. However, it is perhaps surprising to find the family supporting Earl David IV after the amount of patronage that they had received from King Robert I.³¹ This may indicate that the Bruce grant of Atholl to the Campbell family failed to produce ties of loyalty and that pre-existing bonds between the Strathbogie earls and the Menzies family had survived the Campbell ascendancy between 1314 and 1332. According to the most recent edition of Bower's work, Sir Robert Brade is not otherwise known.³² However, a Radulfo de Brade is recorded witnessing charters of Thomas of Galloway, earl of Atholl in the thirteenth century³³, and it is just possible that Sir Robert Brade was a later representative of this same family.³⁴

A Sir Walter Comyn is on record as setting out among the 'Disinherited' for Scotland in 1332,³⁵ although it is perhaps more likely that he was a Comyn representative from England rather than a retainer of Earl David IV.³⁶ The identity of

Walter's brother, Sir Thomas, is more problematic. The only record of a man by this name dates to 1340 in an inquiry into his murder at Lewes.³⁷ Obviously, this is not the same person. However, Bower claims that Thomas Comyn was decapitated after the battle of Culblean, and interestingly, Andrew Wynton attributes the exact same fate to a knight he called Sir Thomas Broune.³⁸ The problem is deciding which source is more accurate. Wynton probably composed his work about twenty years before Bower although this does not necessarily make his account more reliable. However, the fact that Wynton also does not mention Sir Robert Brade suggests that he was using a different source of information from Bower, and may have had a different list of names. There is evidence to suggest that the name given by Wynton is correct: an esquire called Thomas Broun appears in English governmental records in 1321 after the conspiracy against Robert I³⁹ and, probably more importantly, the Broun family had also been connected with earlier earls of Atholl over a long period of time. If this identification is correct, it might explain why Thomas was executed after the battle, and demonstrate the strength of pre-existing ties of loyalty between a Strathbogie earl and a family from Atholl.

A surviving charter of Earl David IV's has an extensive witness list, but only three of these names could have belonged to the earl's retinue: Patrick de Carnoto, knight; Simon de Sawelton, chamberlain and Henry de Wollor.⁴⁰ A Patrick de Carnoto (or Charteris) does appear on a number of occasions during the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in primary source material, though never in connection with the earldom of Atholl or any of the Strathbogie family.⁴¹ If this is the same person, this knight was either a new addition to Strathbogie's retinue, or he was associated with one of the other magnates on the witness list.

Simon de Sawelton, "our chamberlain", was clearly part of Earl David IV's familia. A Simon de Saltoun (also de Camera or de Saultone) was a clerk of the chamber in Robert I's household from the mid-1320s, working under the chamberlain of Scotland. This Simon de Saltoun disappears from governmental records sometime after December 1331.⁴² While he may have died, it is also possible that his position in the Bruce household became redundant when Edward Balliol was crowned King of Scots in 1332 and David II fled to France. Given the similarity of the surnames Saltoun and Sawelton, and of the job each man was said to perform, one might speculate that the Simon de Saltoun of Robert I's entourage obtained a position in the household of Earl David IV sometime after 1332.

The identification of Henry de Wollor is even more uncertain. According to Walter Bower, a Thomas de Wooler was appointed as Edward Balliol's lieutenant in Rothesay and Dunoon in 1333,⁴³ and it is possible that Henry and Thomas de Wooler were related. Their surname suggests a Northumbrian origin, and Earl David IV did have possession of lands in that region which his parents had inherited from the Comyns of Badenoch. It is noticeable, however, that there is no record of any members of the Inchmartin, de Strathbogie or Cambron families being closely associated with Earl David IV in the 1330s, even though members of the Inchmartin and Cambron families were alive during that period.⁴⁴

*The Return of the Prodigal Grandson? - Earl David IV of Strathbogie and
Scottish politics 1332-1335*

Although it is difficult to decide Earl David IV's exact role in English politics between 1326 and 1332, it is well known that he played a key part in the resumption of hostilities between Scotland and England in 1332.⁴⁵

By July 1333 Scotland was in a worse political position than it had ever been, even if the excesses of King Edward I are included. According to Walter Bower, only the castles of Dumbarton, Kildrummy, Urquhart, Lochleven and Loch Doon remained under the control of Bruce loyalists after the defeats at Dupplin and Halidon Hill.⁴⁶ At this stage King Edward Balliol proceeded to dispense massive amounts of patronage to his supporters and many of the Scottish holdings of the 'disinherited' lords were recognised and augmented. Further consequences of Halidon Hill appear in the records of King Edward Balliol's Edinburgh parliament of February 1334: from this point Henry de Beaumont styled himself earl of Buchan and Moray and constable of Scotland.⁴⁷ Earl David IV was also rewarded: he was granted all Robert Stewart's lands,⁴⁸ possibly along with the title 'steward of Scotland'.⁴⁹

However, even if early 1334 is considered to be the nadir of Bruce fortunes in Scotland, later that year John Randolph, earl of Moray, returned from France and his sudden appearance seems to have caught King Edward Balliol, Earl David IV and King Edward III by surprise. Randolph's return may also be linked to an upsurge in pro-Bruce feeling within Scotland. By July 1334 Robert Stewart, together with other Bruce adherents, was once again in control of Renfrewshire, Bute and Rothesay.⁵⁰ King Edward Balliol's and Earl David IV's officials in Carrick, Cunningham and Kyle were also persuaded to join the Bruce party.⁵¹ In southern and central Scotland a number of pro-Balliol lords changed allegiance and joined the earl of Moray.

The unpreparedness of the pro-Balliol party was probably compounded by infighting between King Edward Balliol and Earl David IV over the eventual fate of the earldom of Mar.⁵² One of the disinherited lords who claimed the earldom was Richard Talbot. Married to another of the Comyn of Badenoch heiresses, Talbot was Earl David IV's uncle by marriage. If Talbot's claim had been accepted by all parties in the new Balliol regime, Earl David IV and two of his relations by marriage, Talbot and Beaumont, would have controlled the earldoms of Moray, Atholl, Buchan and Mar, as well as the lordships of Lochaber, Badenoch, Strathbogie and Strathgairn.

These circumstances seem to have left John Randolph and Andrew Murray of Bothwell free to pursue Earl David IV and Henry Beaumont in the north. According to *Gesta Annalia*, Randolph trapped Earl David IV somewhere in Lochaber in September 1334 and got him to join the pro-Bruce side with "hardly any persuasion".⁵³ In contrast, Sir Thomas Grey of Heiton suggests that Earl David IV was forced to join the Bruce cause under threat of death.⁵⁴ At this point Earl David IV's political allies in the north-east were certainly no longer in a position to help him. Henry Beaumont was being besieged in Dundarg castle, Geoffrey Mowbray had joined the Bruce party and Richard Talbot had been captured by Bruce loyalists.⁵⁵

A surviving charter of Earl David IV's, issued before August 1335, provides the

first indication that neither Bower nor Grey have left an accurate account of Earl David IV's change of sides in September 1334. The opening clause of the charter describes David IV as 'earl of Atholl' and 'constable of Scotland'. The document is witnessed by Robert Stewart, John Randolph, earl of Moray, Patrick, earl of March, and Andrew Murray of Bothwell.⁵⁶ This evidence indicates that Earl David IV's claim to the earldom of Atholl had been recognised by King David II's guardians, and that he had also been granted the constablership of Scotland, previously held by his father between 1311 and 1314. Presumably, granting Earl David IV the earldom of Atholl was not a huge problem: the last Campbell incumbent was already dead and had not left any heirs. However, the charter also demonstrates that the Hay family had lost the constablership of Scotland to a member of the Strathbogie family for a second time. Sometime between September 1334 and August 1335 the Bruce regime had made two large concessions to Earl David IV.

Later evidence indicates that these were not the only awards made to Earl David IV during this period. In 1376 King Robert II issued a charter under the great seal to John Gordon, great-nephew of Sir Adam Gordon. The document begins by stating that John Gordon had previously resigned the lordship of Strathbogie into the king's hands and that this charter was a re-grant of his lands. It then provides a brief history of the lordship after 1314, beginning with the fact that Sir Adam Gordon had originally received the lordship of Strathbogie after the forfeiture of Earl David III de Strathbogie. Subsequently, it describes how Andrew Murray of Bothwell, acting as guardian for King David II, gave back the lordship of Strathbogie to Earl David IV.⁵⁷ Clearly, King David II's guardian of Scotland took the lordship of Strathbogie away from the Gordon family and returned it to Earl David IV sometime between September 1334 and November 1335.

One potential problem with this charter is that, as far as historians are aware, Andrew Murray did not become guardian of Scotland again until the spring of 1336, well after the death of Earl David IV. For much of the period when Earl David IV supported King David II, the guardians of Scotland were Robert Stewart and John Randolph. Perhaps the scribe made a simple error in 1376 by confusing John Randolph, earl of Moray, and Andrew Murray of Bothwell. Nevertheless, this confusion should not be allowed to obscure the realisation that two families loyal to King David II, the Hays and the Gordons, were forced to relinquish their claims to lands and titles, sometime between September 1334 and November 1335, to accommodate Earl David IV's support of the Bruce cause.

In addition to all these considerable claims and offices, Earl David IV was also the senior male heir of the Comyns of Badenoch and Lochaber. In 1336, shortly after the death of Earl David IV, King Edward Balliol granted the wardship of the lordship of Lochaber to John of the Isles until Earl David's heir came of age.⁵⁸ In 1343 John of the Isles also received title to Lochaber from King David II.⁵⁹ This last grant is something of a problem: in 1343 Lochaber should still have been part of the Randolph earldom of Moray, and there is no sign that John Randolph was ever compensated by the crown for losing a major part of his earldom. This suggests that at some point before 1343, Lochaber had already ceased to be part of John

Randolph's earldom of Moray. Unless one assumes that Andrew Murray, as guardian of Scotland between December 1335 and 1338, granted away part of the earldom of Moray while John Randolph was in prison, one may speculate that Randolph alienated the lordship of Lochaber himself while he was co-guardian of Scotland between 1334 and August 1335.

While the evidence is not as detailed for Badenoch, it seems to tell a similar story. The castle of Lochindorb had been closely associated with the lordship of Badenoch since the thirteenth century and this important fortification was under the control of Earl David IV before 1335. Even after his death, Earl David's wife retained effective control of the castle, and presumably the surrounding countryside. In fact, the supporters of King David II were unable to wrest control of Lochindorb from Countess Katherine de Strathbogie until she was rescued by King Edward III in July 1336.⁶⁰ Of course, control of Lochindorb does not necessarily mean that Earl David IV was also granted the lordship of Badenoch by King David II's guardians before November 1335. However, as with Lochaber, there is no evidence to indicate that John Randolph possessed, or ever regained, control of Badenoch between 1336 and his death in 1346.

Further information about the lordship of Badenoch during the early 1340s is found in Walter Bower's chronicle. In late 1342 King David II's chamberlain, William Bullock, was arrested by Sir David Barclay. According to Bower, Bullock was incarcerated in Lochindorb castle.⁶¹ The use of Lochindorb by one royal official to imprison another royal official might be taken to indicate that the castle was under the control of King David II in 1342, even though John Randolph, earl of Moray, had been released from English custody in 1340.⁶² Technically, John Randolph should have held Lochindorb castle in 1342 as earl of Moray. The fact that Lochindorb was clearly in royal hands by 1342 would make sense, however, if it is assumed that the lordship of Badenoch, together with Lochindorb, were given to Earl David IV by John Randolph before November 1335, and then confiscated by Andrew Murray on King David II's behalf after Countess Katherine of Atholl was forced to leave the area in the summer of 1336.

It is possible, then, that at some point before November 1335, John Randolph, as co-guardian of Scotland for King David II, detached two large pieces of his Moray earldom, the lordships of Lochaber and Badenoch, and granted them to Earl David IV as the grandson and senior heir of John Comyn of Badenoch (d.1306). Although this seems to be a rather radical proposition, it is further supported by the fact that there are no Badenoch and Lochaber returns in the taxation roll of the regality of Moray in 1337.⁶³ Their omission from this document appears particularly significant given that properties in Moray which had been destroyed by King Edward III in 1336 were rendering taxation one year later.

Taking all of this material together, it can be suggested that at some point between September 1334 and November 1335 the guardians of Scotland for King David II made a series of staggering concessions to Earl David IV. To accommodate him, the Gordons lost their lordship of Strathbogie, the Hays lost the constablership of Scotland, and John Randolph divided his earldom into two parts by alienating the

lordships of Badenoch and Lochaber. Although there seems to be no evidence concerning the lordship of Strath'an, which also formed a large part of Earl David IV's patrimony, it is possible that he would have received this property back as well.

It is likely that this series of concessions was part of Earl David IV's price for changing sides in September 1334, mainly because there would have been no great need to grant him extensive lands and the title of constable, and presumably compensate the original owners, after he had changed sides. September 1334 would have been the most obvious time for Earl David to demand, and receive, lands in compensation for betraying King Edward Balliol and King Edward III. If this was indeed the case, then by September 1334, Strathbogie and Comyn lordship in the Central Highlands had been fully resurrected and recognised by the Bruce party.

These land and title grants were an astonishing compromise by the Bruce party to accommodate the leader of the disinherited lords. For Earl David, his decision was a political masterstroke: he had gained Bruce recognition of his vast powerbase and influence in Scotland. Moreover, the accommodation between the two parties casts new light on the relative strengths and weaknesses of Earl David's and John Randolph's positions in late 1334. In any event, shortly after changing sides Earl David was also appointed as King David II's 'lieutenant of the north' and Scottish chroniclers were quite willing to admit that Earl David performed his new role well.⁶⁴ It can be argued that this appointment by John Randolph may itself have been recognition of the influence and control that Earl David IV had already established, or resurrected, in northern Scotland.

Acquiring Earl David IV's support was undoubtedly a huge coup for the members of the Bruce party and the effort they had expended on getting him to change sides initially seems to have worked to their advantage. However, it is clear that by the Dairsie parliament of April 1335 a major split had occurred in the new pro-Bruce alliance in Scotland. On one side was Robert Stewart, loyally supported by Earl David; on the other side were John Randolph, Patrick earl of March, Andrew Murray of Bothwell, Alexander Mowbray and William Douglas of Lothian. Although the exact cause of this dispute is not known, it was probably serious: *Gesta Annalia* literally accuses Robert Stewart of being an idiot.⁶⁵

There is little doubt that the kingdom of Scotland was still in a disadvantaged position in 1335. Of its two kings, one, David II, was a minor in France and would not be returning for the foreseeable future, even if he survived his minority. The other, Edward Balliol, had proved to be untrustworthy and a firm adherent of King Edward III of England. The Bruce party desperately needed a mature king to personally lead the continuing fight for independence. It might just be that the alliance between Robert Stewart and Earl David, beginning in April 1335, was the first public airing of Robert Stewart's intention to claim the throne for himself. Consider what both men represented: Robert Stewart was the Bruce heir to the throne and had already proved himself capable of leading men in war. Earl David was the leading representative of the Comyn family in Scotland. This family had dominated the Scottish political scene over a long period of time before their control was crudely interrupted by King Robert I in 1306. Moreover, after the death of Henry

Balliol, brother of King Edward Balliol, on 17 December 1332, Earl David would also have been the senior male Balliol heir. For many Scots in 1335, the political alliance between Robert Stewart and Earl David might have seemed like a chance to unite the resources of a deeply factionalised country against the English.⁶⁶

It is also clear that this new alliance between Robert Stewart and Earl David IV survived the ructions of the Dairsie parliament. In July 1335 Randolph led a force of southern Scottish knights and soldiers against the count of Namur during the battle of Burgh Muir. Robert Stewart and Earl David are conspicuously absent from accounts of the battle.⁶⁷ Shortly afterwards, John Randolph was captured by the English. This invasion of Scotland was quickly followed by another expedition, led by King Edward III and King Edward Balliol, which occupied Perth.⁶⁸ Chronicle sources agree that this was one of the largest English armies ever seen in Scotland.⁶⁹ Earl David used this opportunity to open talks with the two kings at Perth and it is clear that at this stage he was still allied to Robert Stewart, whose name was also included in the general negotiations.⁷⁰

In the autumn of 1335, as a reward for submitting and changing sides once again, Earl David IV was made guardian of Scotland for Edward III and Edward Balliol. This was a good political move for him to make: if these two kings were absent from Scotland, Earl David would rule in their place. In September 1335 the two kings duly obliged and returned to England, leaving Earl David IV in charge of Scotland. It is at this point that Scottish sources begin their tirades against Earl David. *Gesta Annalia*, for example, describes him in apocalyptic terms as a tyrant who wanted to exterminate all the freeholders of Scotland.⁷¹ While there is no way of disproving this allegation, it is more likely that the chronicler was beginning to set the scene for the justification of Earl David's death at Culblean.

In September 1335 Earl David IV started to besiege Kildrummy castle. Andrew Murray of Bothwell, William Douglas of Lothian and Patrick, earl of March, marched northwards to relieve the castle. Walter Bower gives two reasons for this expedition. The main catalyst for Murray's foray northwards was the fact that his wife, Lady Christian Bruce, was in the castle. The powerful concept of a woman in distress adds a touch of chivalry and romance to the story and firmly casts Earl David as a wicked man. The second catalyst was the oppression of the common Scots by Earl David.⁷² Of these two reasons, perhaps the first is the more believable. Before his death in 1338, Scottish chroniclers admit that Andrew Murray of Bothwell killed more of his fellow Scots through his use of scorched earth tactics, than had died in battle since 1332.⁷³

Scottish historical orthodoxy has accepted the idea that Earl David IV was besieging Kildrummy almost without question, even though a number of years ago Reid published an agreement between King Edward Balliol and Richard Talbot concerning Kildrummy castle which dates to 17 February 1334.⁷⁴ Nicholson interpreted this document as an agreement whereby Talbot could have Kildrummy if he captured it.⁷⁵ However, the wording of this document states fairly unequivocally that Kildrummy castle was under Balliol control early in 1334: "[...] This indenture made between the right honourable prince Edward by the grace of god king of

Scotland on the one part and Richard Talbot knight on the other part bears witness how the said king has consented to the said knight his ally to deliver out of his keeping to the said knight the castle of Kildrummy with its appurtenances [...]. The fact that Talbot was styled 'Lord of Mar'⁷⁶ after this exchange took place suggests that Kildrummy was taken by the Balliol party sometime between 1332 and February 1334.

More importantly perhaps, if Kildrummy castle was under King Edward Balliol's control before February 1334, and under Talbot's thereafter, why do all the Scottish chroniclers state that Earl David was besieging the castle in the autumn of 1335, given that he was on their side? There would seem to be two possibilities: either the castle had been retaken by the Bruce faction before November 1335; or Kildrummy was handed over to Andrew Murray of Bothwell after August 1334 when Talbot had been captured by forces loyal to King David II.⁷⁷ Given that no account has survived of a siege at Kildrummy by Bruce loyalists between 1334 and 1335, the second option is perhaps a more plausible explanation. Bower describes how in late August 1334, shortly after Richard Talbot was captured and before Earl David joined the Bruce side again, Strathbogie led a large armed force from Atholl and took possession of all the lands of the Comyns.⁷⁸ If there is any truth in this statement, then, given that Richard Talbot was the junior Comyn of Badenoch male heir, it is just possible that control of Kildrummy castle could have been assumed by Earl David at this time. If it was, Earl David could have handed over, or exchanged, the castle as part of the negotiations when he changed sides in September 1334.

At any rate, Scottish and English chroniclers definitely place Earl David IV at a siege of Kildrummy in 1335. It is the one common factor among all the sources, while they disagree on the sequence of events leading up to, and following, the battle of Culblean.⁷⁹ The Chronicle of Lanercost, for example, states that Andrew Murray of Bothwell and other Scottish lords were supposed to attend peace negotiations in November 1335 but instead they went north to lift the siege of Kildrummy.⁸⁰ *Gesta Annalia* and Bower, in contrast, both state that Andrew Murray, who was by this time guardian of Scotland for King David II, and his associates asked permission from the chief councillor of King Edward III, Sir William Montague, to go north and relieve Kildrummy.⁸¹ On balance, perhaps the Scottish chroniclers are more accurate in this regard, since they would have no reason to insert such bizarre information if it were not true. Lanercost's version of events may be English governmental propaganda which distanced King Edward III from the events that followed. It is known that Andrew Murray and other Scottish magnates were at this time in negotiation with Edward Balliol and Edward III regarding the possibility of a truce and that the English chancery issued a number of safe-conducts for these men.⁸²

Nicholson attempted to rationalise the putative agreement between Andrew Murray and King Edward III regarding Earl David by suggesting that the English cognisance was in fact an attempt to lure the Scots into a Halidon Hill scenario: by committing themselves to relieving Kildrummy, the Scots would be forced into fighting a pitched battle during which they would be completely destroyed by Earl David IV.⁸³ However, this argument is rather unlikely for the simple reason that the

English had absolutely no guarantee that Earl David IV would win a battle against Andrew Murray. Moreover, it is peculiar that they would be willing to risk the life of the man who essentially governed Scotland for them in the first instance. In short, assuming that Earl David IV was still in favour with King Edward III, there was no reason why the English should let Andrew Murray go after him. Furthermore, the idea that King David II's guardian of Scotland felt it necessary to obtain Edward III's permission to attack the English lieutenant of Scotland seems paradoxical. It is extraordinary that Edward III, and presumably Edward Balliol, agreed to Murray's plan.

However, it appears that these erstwhile enemies colluded to get rid of Earl David IV, and that for two, possibly three months, in the autumn of 1335 a temporary alliance was formed between Edward III, Edward Balliol, Andrew Murray of Bothwell and William Douglas of Lothian to attack Earl David IV; an attack which culminated in Strathbogie's death at Culblean on St Andrews Day 1335. Although we do not know the terms of the pact, Murray's and Douglas's actions hardly seem like the work of gallant Scottish freedom fighters. It is also noticeable that there are no overtly anti-Scottish reactions to the death of Earl David IV in English governmental records. Rather, King Edward III and King Edward Balliol chose to renew and extend the period during which the Scots could discuss peace with the English administration.⁸⁴ If Earl David IV had been loyal to both Edward III and Edward Balliol, this would seem to be a very strange response on behalf of these kings to the killing of their cousin, who was also their lieutenant of northern Scotland. This strongly suggests that Earl David IV had alienated both kings. Sir Henry de Beaumont, according to *Gesta Annalia*, was the only person to even react to the death of Earl David IV, by hunting down those he felt were responsible for his son-in-law's death, torturing and killing them.⁸⁵

While it could be argued that Earl David IV was a victim of high politics, Edward III and Edward Balliol were undoubtedly in the military ascendancy in Scotland in the autumn of 1335 and had no pressing need to acquiesce to Andrew Murray's request. Quite simply, Edward III could have said no. This raises the question of what Earl David IV was actually attempting to do in Scotland in 1335 before King Edward III, King Edward Balliol, Andrew Murray of Bothwell and William Douglas of Lothian put aside their not inconsiderable differences in order to get rid of him. Perhaps one answer is that Earl David IV was descended from royalty on both sides of the border. He may have come to regard himself not only as the natural successor to John Comyn of Badenoch as the leader of the political community of Scotland, but also as a better potential king of Scots than David II Bruce, Edward Balliol or Robert Stewart. Perhaps he resolved to follow the example first set by Robert Bruce in 1306 and usurp the title 'King of Scots' for himself. If Earl David IV de Strathbogie had decided to further his own ambitions in Scotland at the expense of King Edward Balliol, King David II, King Edward III and Robert Stewart in 1335, this might well account for his sudden death in battle and the complete lack of official reaction to his demise.

NOTES

- ¹ I would particularly like to thank David Ditchburn who, as supervisor of my MA dissertation, was closely involved in this project from its inception. Thanks are also due to Colm Ó Baoill, Sonja Cameron, Ulrike Morét and Grant G. Simpson. A version of this paper was recently given at a seminar in Edinburgh and the author is grateful to Stephen Boardman and Alex Woolf for their helpful comments and suggestions on that occasion.
- ² D.E.R. Watt (general editor), *Scotichronicon*, 9 vols. (Aberdeen, 1987-) [hereafter *chron. Bower* (Watt)], vii, 155.
- ³ Dauvit Broun, 'A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun', in Barbara E. Crawford (ed), *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Renaissance Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1999), 9-30.
- ⁴ R. Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots* (Oxford, 1965) [hereafter Nicholson *Edward*].
- ⁵ B. Webster, 'Scotland without a King, 1329-1341', in A. Grant and K. Stringer (eds), *Medieval Scotland* (Cambridge, 1993), 223-38.
- ⁶ R.C. Reid, 'Edward de Balliol', in *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd ser., 35 (1956-57) [hereafter Reid 'Edward'], 38-63.
- ⁷ *CPR*, 1334-38, 268.
- ⁸ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office* (London 1891-) [hereafter *CPR*], 1327-30, 134.
- ⁹ *Calendar of Fine Rolls* (London 1911-) [hereafter *CFR*], 1319-27, 431.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, 1327-37, 488.
- ¹¹ S. Cameron and A. Ross, 'The Treaty of Edinburgh and the Disinherited (1328-1332)', in *History*, 84 (1999) [hereafter Cameron and Ross, 'Disinherited'], 238.
- ¹² *Calendar of the Close Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office* (London 1892-) [hereafter *CCR*], 1327-30, 156.
- ¹³ *CPR*, 1327-30, 533.
- ¹⁴ *CCR*, 1330-33, 456.
- ¹⁵ *ibid.*, 585.
- ¹⁶ Cameron and Ross, 'Disinherited', 247.
- ¹⁷ M. Prestwich, *The Three Edwards* (London, 1994), 112.
- ¹⁸ *CPR*, 1327-30, 440 and 1330-34, 180. Within one month of Edward III's coronation on 25 November 1330, safe conducts were issued for both men to return to England [*ibid.*, 1330-34, 20].
- ¹⁹ A. Ross, 'Men for all Seasons? The Strathbogie Earls of Atholl and the Wars of Independence, c.1290-c.1335' in *Northern Scotland*, 20 (2000) [hereafter Ross, 'Men for all Seasons'], 1-30.
- ²⁰ *CFR*, 1327-1337, 116.
- ²¹ J. Bain (ed) and others, *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh, 1881-1986) [hereafter *CDS*], iii, no. 975.
- ²² *CPR*, 1330-34, 33.
- ²³ Ross, 'Men for all Seasons', 18.
- ²⁴ For the Aymer de Valence lands in Scotland see: *CDS*, ii, no. 1214, no. 1682, no. 1839 and no. 1840.
- ²⁵ G.W.S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1988), 280.
- ²⁶ Cameron and Ross, 'Disinherited', 253.
- ²⁷ *CPR*, 1330-34, 326, 382, and 385; *CPR*, 1334-38, 81.
- ²⁸ *ibid.*, 397.
- ²⁹ *CDS*, iii, no. 854.
- ³⁰ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 117.
- ³¹ It should be noted that the bishop of Dunkeld, William Sinclair, a prominent supporter of King Robert I also changed allegiance after Earl David IV returned to Scotland in 1332 [cf: Nicholson, *Edward*, 84-94]. This may again demonstrate the strength of the links between the Strathbogie family and people domiciled in the earldom.
- ³² *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 225.
- ³³ For example: *Registrum de Dunfermelyn* (Edinburgh, 1842), 86.

- ³⁴ Brades are also recorded in connection with Traquair in the late thirteenth century [cf: *CDS*, ii, no. 34] and with lands near the moor of Pentland [cf: *CDS*, iv, no. 1762]. Later, during the reign of King David II, the Brade family appears in respect of lands near Edinburgh [cf: J.M. Thomson and others (eds), *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum* (Edinburgh, 1882-1914) [hereafter *RMS*], i, App.2, no. 759]. See also a grant to Newbattle abbey [[cf: B. Webster (ed), *Regesta Regum Scotorum* (Edinburgh, 1982) [hereafter *RRS vi*], vi, 420]]. However, all these records point to a Lothian family, rather than an Atholl connection.
- ³⁵ W. Stubbs (ed), *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II: Annales Londiensis and Annales Paulini*, 2 vols., (London 1882-83), ii, 103-04.
- ³⁶ A Walter Comyn is mentioned in connection to Sir Henry Beaumont in 1331 [cf: *CDS*, iii, no. 1046].
- ³⁷ *CDS*, iii, no. 1325.
- ³⁸ F.J. Amours (ed), *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6 vols., (Scottish Texts Society, 1908), vi, 68.
- ³⁹ *CDS*, iii, no. 731.
- ⁴⁰ National Archives of Scotland [hereafter *NAS*], GD50/130/6.
- ⁴¹ For example: A.A.M. Duncan (ed), *Regesta Regum Scotorum v: The Acts of Robert I* (Edinburgh, 1988), 580-81
- ⁴² *ibid.*, 209.
- ⁴³ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 97.
- ⁴⁴ R. Milne (ed), *The Blackfriars of Perth: the Chartulary and Papers of their House* (Edinburgh, 1893), 25-27.
- ⁴⁵ Cameron and Ross, 'Disinherited', 256.
- ⁴⁶ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 93.
- ⁴⁷ Nicholson, *Edward*, 160.
- ⁴⁸ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 95.
- ⁴⁹ F.J.H. Skene (ed), *Liber Pluscardensis*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1877-80) [hereafter *Skene Pluscardensis*], ii, 204.
- ⁵⁰ Nicholson, *Edward*, 148.
- ⁵¹ *ibid.*, 166.
- ⁵² Skene, *Pluscardensis*, ii, 204. Alexander Mowbray, Henry Beaumont and Richard Talbot were also involved in the argument. A new earl of Mar appears at this time and Nicholson [cf: Nicholson, *Edward*, 158] suggests this was Richard Talbot. However, a petition to Edward III by Geoffrey Mowbray claiming lands through his wife, Isabella of Mar [cf: D. MacPherson and others (eds), *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londinensi et in Domo Capitulari West Monasteriensi Asservati* (London 1814-19) [hereafter *Rot. Scot.*], i, 278] might suggest otherwise.
- ⁵³ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 107.
- ⁵⁴ J. Stevenson (ed), *Scalacronica, by Sir Thomas Grey of Heton knight. A Chronicle of England and Scotland from AD MLXXI to AD MCCCLXII* (Edinburgh, 1836), 164.
- ⁵⁵ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 95.
- ⁵⁶ *NAS*, GD50/130/6. John Randolph was in English custody by August 1335, so this charter must have been issued between September 1334 and August 1335.
- ⁵⁷ *RMS*, i, p. 207, no. 566
- ⁵⁸ Jean Munro and R.W. Munro (eds), *Acts of the Lords of the Isles, 1336-1493* (Edinburgh, 1986), 1-2.
- ⁵⁹ Webster, *RRS vi*, 113-14.
- ⁶⁰ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 119.
- ⁶¹ *ibid.*, 157.
- ⁶² *ibid.*, 149.
- ⁶³ J. Stuart and others (eds), *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, 23 vols. (Edinburgh, 1878-1908), i, 440-47.
- ⁶⁴ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 107. As a consequence of changing sides, Earl David's smaller properties in England and Ireland were declared forfeit by King Edward III before February 1335 (*CPR*, 1334-38, 61, 81, 84 and 89).

- ⁶⁵ W.F. Skene (ed), *Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum* (Edinburgh, 1871) [hereafter *Chron. Fordun* (Skene), 358 "Hic Seneschallo adhaerens, qui tunc non magna regebatur sapientia...".
- ⁶⁶ It might be suggested that the period of alliance between Earl David IV and Robert Stewart after April 1334 was when Stewart made his first contacts with the Atholl kindred, *Clann Donnchaidh*.
- ⁶⁷ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 113.
- ⁶⁸ Nicholson, *Edward*, 212-15.
- ⁶⁹ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 109.
- ⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 223.
- ⁷¹ *Chron. Fordun* (Skene), 359.
- ⁷² *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 117.
- ⁷³ *ibid.*, 137.
- ⁷⁴ Reid, 'Edward', 60.
- ⁷⁵ Nicholson, *Edward*, 152, n.1.
- ⁷⁶ T. Rymer (ed) *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae e Cuiuscunque Generis Acta Publica*, 3 vols. (London, 1816-69), ii, 876.
- ⁷⁷ *Chron. Fordun* (Skene), 357.
- ⁷⁸ *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 103.
- ⁷⁹ The sources also disagree on the strength of Earl David's force at the battle of Culblean. *Gesta Annalia* [cf: *Chron. Fordun* (Skene), 360] talks about five knights and a 'rabble'. Murimuth [cf: Edward M. Thompson (ed), *Adae Murimuth Continuatio Chronicarum* (London, 1889), 75-76] states that Earl David was riding with only a few people and that thirteen of these were killed. It is only in Bower [cf: *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 117] and *Liber Pluscardensis* [cf: Skene, *Pluscardensis*, ii, 204] that Earl David's army becomes thousands of men.
- ⁸⁰ J. Stevenson (ed), *Chronicon de Lanercost* (Edinburgh, 1839), 283-84.
- ⁸¹ *Chron. Fordun* (Skene), 360 and *Chron. Bower* (Watt), vii, 117.
- ⁸² *Rot. Scot.*, i, 385-88.
- ⁸³ Nicholson, *Edward*, 232.
- ⁸⁴ *Rot. Scot.*, i, 391.
- ⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 353.