CONNECTING HISTORY

Higher

The Wars of Independence

1249–1328

Michèle S. Duck

Boost

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- historiography, including the latest research and scholarship
- content, especially that it is culturally appropriate, up to date and inclusive
- material, for accuracy and to see that it states facts clearly.

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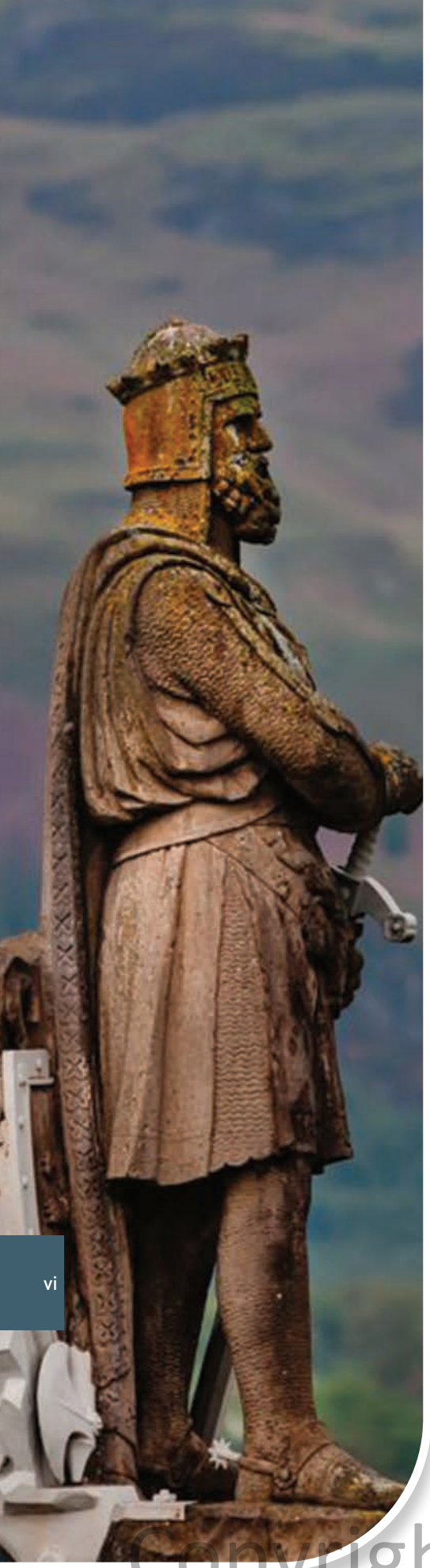


Introduction

The Scottish Wars of Independence were a series of battles fought by Edward I of England, his successors and members of the Scottish nobility between 1286 and 1328. The people and events have been shrouded in myth and legend for generations and their exploits, romanticised and embellished, have come to shape Scotland's identity as a nation. Tales of the battles and the men who fought in them have been retold and popularised by films like *Braveheart* and *Outlaw King*. These films portray blue-faced Highland armies, clad in billowing tartan kilts, playing the bagpipes as they run through heather headlong into the armoured knights of the English forces. However, this book will help you begin to explore what we really know about the Scottish Wars of Independence. Information about this period comes from sources written for entertainment, some of which only exist in part, or sometimes written many years after events. So, historians are sometimes still not in complete agreement about what they tell us – this is reflected in this book. The memory of the Wars still informs the discussion about political unity today, and so it is important to understand the reality, as much as possible, of the events that took place.

Scotland in the thirteenth century was vastly different from the place we know today. The King of Scots governed with the help of powerful families from across the country. There was not one **parliament** building or regular parliaments. Travel was expensive and so government was conducted all over the country. Most people would never leave their local area. Although there were some well-known routes through the kingdom, there were no smooth roads and those who travelled did so by foot, cart, horseback or boat. Travel by boat was by far the fastest way to get around; across seas, between lochs and along rivers. Merchants took their supplies by boat between markets, and armies were supplied by ships from the sea. Scotland actively traded with France and England and exported wool in return for imports of wine and other luxuries.

There had been strong social links between the kingdoms of Scotland and England. Before the Wars, subjects of the King of Scots had been able to hold lands in England, and English subjects were able to hold lands in Scotland. For much of the period, the Wars of Independence were as much a civil war as they were a war against the overlordship of Edward I. Scottish nobles fought for and against both sides, and between themselves, in an effort to maintain their own power and prestige. However, after 1314, cross-border land ownership was forbidden by the Scottish King and the nobility had to choose to keep either their land in Scotland or their land in England. By 1328, Scotland had established itself as an independent kingdom without English influence under one King. But how and why did this happen?

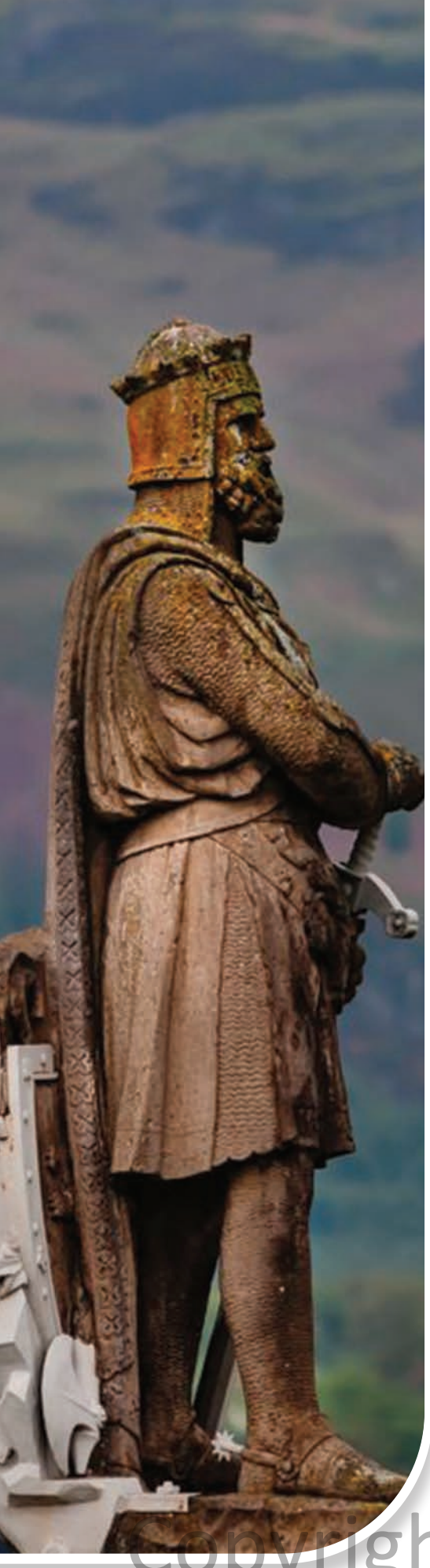
To help us, we must answer the following questions: why was Scotland thrown into a succession crisis after the death of Alexander III? What role did Edward I play in choosing the next King of Scots? Why did King John Balliol have difficulties ruling Scotland? How did Scotland resist English overlordship and how did Edward assert it? What was William Wallace's contribution to the resistance and how effective was other resistance? Why

was Robert Bruce VII, popularly known as Robert the Bruce, able to rise to become the King of an independent Scotland?

The answers to these questions are included in the following pages. Note, there is not one simple, straightforward answer to each. Instead, we will be dealing with evidence-based arguments. You will use the straightforward and clear structure to target different sections of this text. This will allow you to find the relevant, accurate and developed knowledge needed to support a convincing argument that answers a key issue. You will also find explanations and analysis of these arguments, helping to integrate this information in source question responses. Finally, activities at the end of each chapter will help develop source skills and nurture the understanding needed to write clear and well-reasoned responses.

Whether revising for an examination, writing an assignment or deepening your understanding of a particular area, this book will help you. Each chapter covers a specific issue that could appear as a source-handling question and the information contained over the following pages will support you in writing a powerful response.

Good luck!



Chapter 1

Alexander III and the succession problem in Scotland, 1286–92

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the nature of the succession problem in Scotland between 1286 and 1292. It will focus on the political disputes of those who thought they should be the next King of Scots. It will also set out the problems that this caused in Scotland.

LINK TO EXAM

Higher

Key issue 1: An evaluation of the reasons why there was a succession problem in Scotland, 1286–92

Background

King Alexander III's reign as King of Scots was known as a 'Golden Age'. It was a time of relative peace and economic growth in Scotland. However, Alexander died in 1286 with no surviving children. His death, and the political problems that followed, have become known in Scottish history as 'the succession crisis'.

This is not to say that Scotland was now ungovernable. Alexander's wife, Yolande, was pregnant when he died. To maintain stability until Yolande gave birth, Scotland was run by a group of Guardians. There is every indication that the government of the Guardians was successful. They brought in new legislation, negotiated treaties and quelled internal disputes. However, Yolande and Alexander's baby was **stillborn**. Following this, the next named heir to the throne, Margaret the Maid of Norway, died on her way to Scotland from Norway. Following Margaret's death, Scotland was launched into political crisis.

Competition between nobles with rival claims to the throne placed Scotland on the brink of civil war. To avoid conflict, Edward I of England was asked for aid. His actions and decisions at Norham and Berwick contributed to the succession crisis in the kingdom of Scotland and the rise of John Balliol II as the new King of Scots.

It is important to note that the government and society of Scotland in the late thirteenth century was structured around the political authority of the King. Kings had significant political and legal powers and were the ultimate authority in their kingdoms. However, they also needed to maintain the loyalty of **lords**, **barons**, nobles and the population more generally. Kings devolved powers to their nobles, and in return expected

loyalty and support. This was a complex political relationship, and powerful families often competed for the most prestigious roles within a kingdom. Status and position were often marked with land ownership, and **tenant farmers** paid rents and provided military service to the lords and barons who controlled the regions in which they lived. Scotland, like the rest of Europe, was a deeply religious place, and the Roman Catholic Church, with the Pope at its head, exercised significant power.

At the centre of this social and political structure was a King whose line would normally be extended through his eldest son. With this line threatened and eventually broken, Scotland was plunged into a so-called 'succession crisis'. Given that such power was centred in the King's hands, the question that emerged was: who should be the next King of Scotland? The resolution of this question, and the conflicts it raised, are the subject of this chapter's discussion.

It is helpful to think of this period in three distinct phases. The first was from April to November 1286. Alexander's wife, Yolande, was pregnant and so everything was on hold. If a boy had been born, there would have been no crisis of succession: there would have been a political challenge about how to govern, but the Guardians were already in place to deal with this challenge. The second phase was from November 1286 to October 1290. Yolande's stillbirth meant that Margaret the Maid of Norway was generally acknowledged as the heir. The only people who disagreed with this were the Bruces in the south-west of Scotland. Their short-lived rebellion did not really amount to a national crisis, but it was certainly a regional one. On the whole, while there were political problems, this period is not normally understood as a succession crisis. Finally, when Margaret's death became known in October 1290, there was definitely a crisis of succession. Civil war beckoned and help had to be sought from Edward I of England.

Why did Scotland face a succession problem between 1286 and 1292?

For the exam, it is important to understand the reasons why Scotland faced problems over the succession to the throne. In order to do this, it is necessary to understand the impact of the death of Alexander III and the competing aims of the Balliol and the Bruce families. Additionally, it is important to consider the role of Edward I before and during the Great Cause.

The discussion in this chapter will be divided into the following areas:

- 1.1 The succession problem
- 1.2 The Guardians
- 1.3 The Treaty of Birgham
- 1.4 The death of Margaret the Maid of Norway
- 1.5 The Scottish appeal to Edward I – the decision at Norham
- 1.6 Bruce versus Balliol
- 1.7 The Great Cause and Edward I's decision

1.1 The succession problem

On 19 March 1286 Alexander III was found on the beach under the cliffs at Kinghorn in Fife, his neck broken. The night before, against the better advice of his court nobles, Alexander had travelled in poor conditions from his court in Edinburgh to visit his young wife, Yolande of Dreux, in Fife. It is thought that at some point during the journey he was separated from his party, went missing and fell from his horse. Alexander was found dead the next morning. This started the chain of events leading to the succession crisis in Scotland because Alexander died with no living male heir to the throne. His children from his first marriage had died before him – Alexander (1284), David (1281) and Margaret (1283) – and his wife, Yolande, had not yet given birth. This meant that there was no surviving male heir following the male line of succession and so Scotland entered a brief political crisis until the Guardians were elected.

Prior to his death, Alexander had tried to prevent a situation in which there was no male heir to the throne. Ten years after the death of his first wife, Margaret, and the year after the death of his last son, Alexander, he married Queen Yolande with the intention of having another son to continue his bloodline. When Alexander III died, Yolande was already pregnant. Leading Scottish noble families waited in anticipation for the baby to be born, as the child would be the heir to the now vacant throne. Political leaders, known as the Guardians, gathered at Clackmannanshire to witness the birth in November 1286. However, the child was stillborn. This was an important part of the succession crisis because, when news of the stillborn child circulated, it caused tension within some elements of the political community. As the last hope of a male heir had been lost, the political rulers of Scotland were faced with a difficult question: who should be the next King of Scotland?

Figure 1.1 This image shows the inauguration of King Alexander III on the Moot Hill, Scone. From manuscript of the *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower, written in *c.*1440. Alexander III ruled Scotland during its golden age, and when he died, Scotland was left without a monarch for many years.

1.2 The Guardians

In the interim period between Alexander III's death in March and the end of Yolande's pregnancy in November, a group of Guardians was chosen. This was a council selected to govern the country and continue the monarchy until an heir could be determined and placed on the throne. The first group of Guardians were elected by the nobility of Scotland in a parliament at Scone on 28 or 29 April 1286. In the absence of a King these men essentially governed Scotland until 1291.

Figure 1.2 This is a cast of the seal of the Guardians of Scotland. On one side it depicts St Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland. The writing around the edge reads: 'Saint Andrew be the leader of the compatriot Scots'. On the other side it shows the lion rampant, symbol of the Scottish crown, with the writing: 'the seal of Scotland appointed for the government of the kingdom'. Royal seals were special because they were double-sided. Unlike normal seals, they had a picture on each side to show off different sides of the monarch's personality. The seal mould was destroyed on 11 June 1291 when the Guardians resigned and were reappointed by Edward I.

These Guardians were 'appointed by and governed in the name of the community of the realm'. In other words, they were chosen by the nobility (their peers) and were charged with ruling Scotland for the benefit of the whole rather than to advance their personal agendas. This was particularly relevant in terms of political crisis as the interests of powerful families were often in competition, and without this legitimacy Scotland could descend into war.

The men chosen were: William Fraser, the **Bishop** of St Andrews; Robert Wishart, Bishop of Glasgow; Duncan, **Earl** of Fife; Alexander Comyn, Earl of Buchan; James Stewart, 5th High Steward; John Comyn of Badenoch; and recently historians have discovered the presence of a seventh Guardian, Bishop William of Dunkeld. These men were deemed the most politically and socially important in Scottish society. The Guardians were to be peacekeeping caretakers, tasked with running the kingdom until the new monarch was enthroned.

Aside from giving away royal land and granting inherited titles, the Guardians collectively shared the powers that the King had exercised. This was an important part of the succession crisis because the Guardians were tasked with protecting the 'community of the realm' in the absence of the King. The Guardians ran Scotland highly effectively on their own from mid-1286 until Edward I's overlordship was acknowledged in June 1291 and their **seal** was broken. After 1291 they governed under Edward I's authority as his appointees.

Although the Guardians were effective in their ruling of Scotland, there were some problems inherent in the Guardians' rule. For example, Guardians William Fraser, Alexander Comyn and John Comyn of Badenoch all had political ties to John Balliol and the Comyn family, whereas Robert Wishart and James Stewart were more politically aligned with the Bruces, another powerful Scottish family. Moreover, the Guardians were not replaced when they died. This meant that when there was an even number of Guardians alive, it would be harder for them to reach collective decisions. Finally, the Guardians were meant to be 'caretakers' until the next monarch was enthroned. Their powers were extensive, but they did not have the same political authority as a King. Therefore, while there is no doubt the Guardians were highly effective in their rule, and governed in the name of the community of the realm, it was known that they could not be a permanent feature and they did not remove political instability in the same way an enthroned monarch would have.

1.3 The Treaty of Birgham

In 1284, after the death of his son Alexander, Alexander III had named his granddaughter, Margaret the Maid of Norway, as his heir were he to die childless. The Maid of Norway was the daughter of King Eric of Norway and Alexander's daughter, Margaret. Naming her as heir was done to give the greatest chance for the continuation of the line of succession, particularly important given the death of his sons. To name a female heir was unusual as it was more common at the time for rulers to be male. Alexander III had hoped that naming the Maid of Norway next in line to the throne would mean that if he died without a male heir, there was a good chance she would be allowed to become Queen. Then, when she married, her husband would rule with her and together they would have more children, which would secure his lineage.

Alexander III held a parliament at Scone in 1284 where the nobles and bishops of Scotland sealed a treaty acknowledging that Margaret the Maid of Norway would be the next in line to the throne. Honouring their **oath** after Alexander III's death in 1286 and Yolande's stillbirth, the Guardians referred to Margaret as 'heir' or 'lady' and began the process of installing her as Queen to maintain peace and avoid further political issues.

The Guardians, Edward I of England and Eric of Norway began negotiations to have Margaret travel to Scotland from her home in Norway. Discussions between Scotland, England and Norway resulted in the Treaty of Salisbury and the Treaty of Birgham. These treaties should have secured Scottish independence and returned the heir to the Scottish throne back to Britain. This would have moved the political challenge caused by Alexander III's death away from who should succeed him, and on to the next phase: governing while the monarch was underage.

As Margaret was only three or four years old when Alexander died, she could have lived in Norway for several years until she was able to rule Scotland herself. However, Eric of Norway, keen for his daughter to sit on the Scottish throne, sent an envoy to Edward I around 21 September 1286, asking him for a loan of up to £2,000. He asked for this because the Scots had not paid the £700 annual **dowry** to Margaret's mother, Margaret, for four years. Edward I put pressure on the Guardians to pay Eric back and, in return, gained a say in her future. This was an important factor in the succession crisis as Edward I's funding enabled the negotiations to bring Margaret to Scotland, with Edward acting as arbiter between Scotland and Norway. The financial and diplomatic contribution made by Edward gave him an important position in deciding what would happen to the Scottish throne. Edward and Eric were discussing this as parents, so there was no necessity for them to involve the Guardians except to make sure the Guardians would hand over the kingdom to the couple. The Guardians' negotiating position was weak because it was difficult for them to justify a refusal of the legitimate heir of Alexander III whom they had already acknowledged. This gave them less control over Scottish affairs and added to the crisis. Edward and Eric used the Guardians' weak bargaining position very skilfully to their own advantage.

The consequence of negotiations was the Treaty of Salisbury, which was concluded on 6 November 1289. The treaty stated that Margaret was to travel from Norway to either Scotland or England by 1 November 1290. She was not to have any marriage contracts and was to make her way from Scotland to England and live with Edward I. A.A.M. Duncan suggests that all three kingdoms were identified in the treaty with an appreciation that when Margaret sailed she would most likely land in Scottish waters, before going south. The treaty ensured the Guardians provided promises that Scotland would remain peaceful and that Edward would send Margaret back up to Scotland when she was old enough without marrying her to anyone in England. Then, if she were to be married, both Edward and Eric of Norway should approve the match. Edward would provide £2,000 for the unpaid dowry that Eric of Norway demanded to facilitate this treaty. All of this was highly significant, as it meant Edward would have leverage over the future heir to the throne of Scotland and so could increase his own power in Scotland. Paying such a huge sum to secure Margaret's arrival in England perhaps reveals Edward's intention to become increasingly involved in Scottish affairs.

SOURCE 1

The King of England has promised that if the lady comes free of all contracts of marriage, when the kingdom of Scotland is in good and secure peace he will be required by the good men of Scotland to send her to the kingdom of Scotland, also free of all contracts of marriage, just as he received her, under the condition that the good people of Scotland make sufficient promises to the King of England … that they will not marry her without his order, desire and advice, nor without the approval of the King of Norway, her father.

From the Treaty of Salisbury. This was agreed between Edward I, King Eric of Norway and the Scottish Guardians on 6 November 1289 and confirmed by an assembly of 106 Scots at Birgham on 14 March 1290.

The Guardians agreed to the Treaty of Salisbury because they were not in a position to pay Eric of Norway the money that he was demanding for the dowry and because he made comments about concerns over the turbulence of Scottish political life, which could have prevented Margaret's return to Scotland (although it is likely these comments were exaggerated to try to push the case for his daughter coming back as Queen). Therefore, the Guardians agreed to the treaty as it meant that Margaret would be brought to the British Isles more quickly and peacefully, and that they overwhelmingly kept control of their domestic political affairs. However, it arguably added to a growing succession crisis as this choice gave Edward I more authority in Scotland's domestic affairs and in deciding the next King or Queen.

Indeed, ten days later, on 11 November 1289, a **papal bull** was received that stipulated the Pope's approval of the marriage between Margaret and Edward II, Edward I's son. Edward I would have requested this before any documentation was signed with Eric. According to **canon law**, children could not be engaged to be married until they were 7. Although Margaret was 7 at this time, Edward II was not. Marriage normally did not happen until the girl was at least 12 and the boy at least 14. The bull also permitted a marriage but did not contract one. A.A.M. Duncan argues that it was the general understanding and agreement between the negotiating parties that, although Margaret would come to Britain unbetrothed, she would eventually marry Edward II. However, this shows how a crisis was developing as Edward I's choice to seek a papal bull reveals he was intent on bringing Scotland under his control. The marriage of his son to the Scottish heir meant that Scotland and England would be ruled by one monarch, similar to Edward I's land of Aquitaine in France.

In April 1290, the Guardians sent envoys to Edward I seeking guarantees of Scottish independence if, in light of the papal bull, Margaret married Edward II. This led to an agreement between the Guardians and Edward I's envoys at Birgham on 18 July 1290: a document which has become known as the Birgham letter, or the Treaty of Birgham. One clause stated that if Margaret married Edward II, Scotland would remain an independent kingdom with its rights, customs and laws preserved and maintained. For example, Scotland would continue to have an independent **chancellor** and would run its own parliament. If they married, both Edward II and Margaret would have to swear an oath to 'govern the country according to the laws and customs of the land' and that Scotland was 'free in itself, and without subjection from the kingdom of England, as has been observed heretofore'. This is highly significant as it demonstrated that Edward I, by agreeing to this on 28 August 1290, was recognising Scotland's independence. He went this far to ensure that he would gain political control over Scotland through the royal marriage for his son Edward II. This would not be the same as governing Scotland directly, but Margaret and Edward II would have followed English interests diplomatically and the threat of France allying with Scotland against England would have been removed.

On 28 August 1290, Edward I took an unusual step and appointed Bishop Bek as the 'lieutenant' for Margaret and the young Edward II. The other Guardians were told they should listen to Bek in all matters. In other words, Bek was to become the lead Guardian. Edward I's (politically charged) argument for this was that Bek would help keep peace and tranquillity in Scotland. This was a huge shock to the Guardians. Although the proposal identified that 'someone could be appointed to receive clerical election, receive **homages** and **fealties** in place of Margaret before she came of age', to appoint a lead Guardian in this manner was unprecedented. Again, this was perhaps an expression of Edward I's intention in Scotland. However, there is no evidence of the Guardians' reaction and this Guardianship did not go ahead due to later events. G.W.S. Barrow argues that:

SOURCE 2

Even before the Maid of Norway's death it appears that Edward I had set his mind against a voluntary and gradual progress towards union and was contemplating unilateral action. A mere six months after her death he was fully committed to a policy of imposing his authority upon the Scots by force, though without as yet abolishing the kingdom.

G.W.S. Barrow, 'A kingdom in crisis: Scotland and the Maid of Norway', *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 69, No. 188, Part 2: Studies Commemorative of the Anniversary of the Death of the Maid of Norway (October 1990), 136.

Edward I had demanded that, before the marriage, Scottish castles were turned over to him for safekeeping, exaggerating claims he was worried that peace in the kingdom would not be maintained without his help. The Guardians refused this but conceded on 28 August 1290 that, instead, they would surrender the castles Edward I wanted to Margaret the Maid of Norway and Edward II when Margaret landed in Scotland. From then on, they would refer to and obey Margaret and Edward II as their 'lady and lord'.

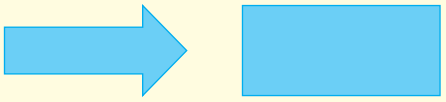
The importance of this clause in the growing political problems cannot be underestimated as it essentially gave possession of parts of Scotland to Edward I through his son. A.A.M. Duncan suggests that this had probably been Edward I's plan since the beginning of the negotiations for the return of Margaret. Although the Guardians stuck to their refusal of giving the land directly to Edward I, as they claimed it was something only a monarch could do, the demands reveal Edward I's intentions and the concessions point to a continuing crisis in Scotland in the future. Moreover, the confusing nature of the wording in this agreement would be used later by both Edward and the Guardians to justify their own positions.

One of the most important clauses was that only when Margaret and Edward II were married and had an heir would the symbols of Scottish **sovereignty**, such as Charters and Relics, the holy rood of St Margaret and the Stone of Destiny, be kept in Scotland. When Margaret was **inaugurated**, a new seal would be created, but it would only be for the Queen of Scots, not a joint seal for wife and husband, making it clear Scotland and England remained separate. This would change when she was married and had come back to Scotland with her husband, at which time the seal would also include her husband, who would be the King. In other words, all the legal and cultural symbols would be maintained for Scotland, an important spiritual and legal statement about its independence as a nation. This should have ended any concern in Scotland about the continuing independence of the nation.

However, news of Margaret's death came a few days later, around 26 September, and thus these discussions, which came to be known as the 'Treaty of Birgham', were never ratified. In fact no Treaty of Birgham ever existed. Edward I argued that, since there had been no ratified treaty as there had been no marriage, there was no legally binding acknowledgement or promise of independence. During discussions, there was no official promise of marriage, no date and no dowry, as would be expected in a treaty. According to canon law, as it was not **ratified**, it was not a treaty and so its claims of Scottish independence were not binding. Conversely, the Guardians felt differently as Edward I had given a written promise to recognise Scottish independence, which did not expressly stipulate that its claims were only valid through marriage. Disputes over the status of what was negotiated at Birgham on 14 July, and agreed in writing by Edward I on 28 April 1290, would inform the rest of the political crisis about overlordship and the succession crisis.

ACTIVITIES

1 Part of understanding this topic is understanding why there was a succession crisis in Scotland. Cut out ten arrows, like the one below, from paper or card. Now, cut up ten rectangles, as below. Follow the instructions:
   - **a** From this chapter, select ten events and people that you think helped to make the succession crisis in Scotland worse between 1286 and 1292.
   - **b** In the arrows, draw an image to represent each event/person.
   - **c** In the rectangles, write a one-sentence explanation of why the event/person helped eventually to cause a succession crisis. Your sentence should start with 'This helped to cause a succession crisis because…'
   - **d** Test yourself. Mix your arrows and rectangles up and try to rematch them as quickly as you can.
   - **e** Now, order your arrow and rectangle pairs from the most important reason there was a succession crisis to the least important.
   - **f** Explain why there was a succession crisis in Scotland in four sentences.



2 Key to understanding this topic is understanding the role of Edward I. Follow the instructions:
   - **a** Make a list of all the actions of Edward I between 1286 and 1292 leading up to and during the succession crisis.
   - **b** Rank these into 'actions that promoted Scotland's independence' and 'actions that worked against Scotland's independence'.
   - **c** Using what you have found, summarise his role in one sentence.
   - **d** Make a set of at least ten quiz questions about the role of Edward I between 1286 and 1292.

3 Higher source handling requires knowledge and explanation of causes, events and impacts of different historical events. Use the information in this chapter to make a mind map with at least ten points explaining the causes of the succession crisis in Scotland. Include at least one detailed fact and use the word 'because' in each point to explain your answer.

GLOSSARY

Term	Meaning
baron	The lord of a local area who not only controls the land but has his own law court to enforce the law over the inhabitants.
betrothal	Formal engagement to be married; engagement.
bishop	A senior member of the Christian clergy who has authority over priests in local churches within a region (known as a 'diocese'). He controls the behaviour of priests and has the authority to make priests and authorise their appointment to a local church.
canon law	Ecclesiastical law, especially (in the Roman Catholic Church) that laid down by papal pronouncements.
chancellor	The senior legal official in royal government who controls the royal seal and authorises government documents.
claimant	A person who, through a legitimate or illegitimate inheritance, has a claim to a title or position.
damnation	Condemnation to eternal punishment in hell.
dowry (or tocher)	An amount of property or money brought by a bride to her husband on their marriage.
earl	The highest rank of the nobility in medieval Scotland.
fealty	A formal acknowledgement of loyalty to another person, similar to an oath.
homage	A ceremony of personal submission to a superior lord.
inaugurate	To enthrone the King or Queen in an official ceremony.
lord	Second highest rank of the nobility in medieval Scotland.
majority	A monarch's personal rule when they are old enough to take charge themselves, without the support of a regent.
minority	When a child is a monarch but is too young to rule the country themselves.
oath	A solemn promise, often invoking a divine witness, regarding one's future action or behaviour.
overlord	A ruler, especially a feudal lord.
papal bull	A formal document issued by a Pope.
parliament	'Parliament' was initially only one of a number of words to refer to an assembly of prominent men summoned by the King to pass laws, settle disputes and provide advice to the King. It became more formal during Alexander III's reign, requiring the summons to be made 40 days before it met. By 1286 'parliament' had become the regular term for these assemblies.
primogeniture	The right of succession belonging to the firstborn son (or their son, down the male line). If there are daughters instead of sons, the lands are divided between them.
propaganda	Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.
purgatory	(In Catholic doctrine) a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are making amends for their sins before going to heaven.
ratified	To ratify a document or treaty is to seal or give formal consent.
seal	A piece of wax with an individual design stamped into it, attached to a document as a guarantee of authenticity. Important individuals and groups in medieval society had their own seal.
sovereignty	The supreme power or authority of a person or country.
stillborn	A stillbirth is when a baby is born dead after 24 completed weeks of pregnancy.
tenant farmer	A person who farms rented land.
vassal	A holder of land on conditions of homage and allegiance.
vassal kingdom	A kingdom whose King is under the authority of another King. By the time of the Wars of Independence it was expected that a King would be the ultimate authority in his own kingdom (apart from in matters involving religion or canon law). John Balliol's position as King of Scots under the overlordship of Edward I was highly unusual, therefore.

The Wars of Independence 1249–1328

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What does the cover photo show?

A statue of King Robert I, 1274–1329 (also known as Robert Bruce, or Robert the Bruce), stands outside Stirling Castle. King Robert I secured Scotland's independence from England, fighting in the Wars of Independence alongside Sir William Wallace, whose monument can be seen in the background.

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