

## WAR, MARRIAGE, TOURNAMENT: SCOTTISH POLITICS AND THE ANGLO-FRENCH WAR 1448-1450

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Scotland has long been recognised as an active participant in the series of conflicts between the French and English realms known as the Hundred Years War. From the 1330s onwards, Scotland's external relations, even the kingdom's survival, were defined by this wider warfare which drew in most of the lands of north-western Europe.<sup>1</sup> However, this significance appears to have declined during the final phase of the conflict. Unlike the fourteenth century, the period from the 1420s to the early 1450s witnessed little major conflict on the Anglo-Scottish border.<sup>2</sup> Scotland's major contribution in these years was to provide large contingents of soldiers to sustain Charles VII's cause during its lowest ebb between 1419 and 1429.<sup>3</sup> While, as will be discussed, this had a legacy in later decades, after 1429 Scotland would appear to have been marginal to Anglo-French warfare. The final, decisive campaigns from July 1449 to 1453 which saw Charles's armies win control of Normandy and Gascony from the English king, did not involve the direct participation of Scots in any numbers.

Nevertheless, the later 1440s have been identified by a number of historians as a period which illustrated Scotland's connections with continental elites. In July 1449, weeks before the resumption of war in northern France, the eighteen-year-old King James II of Scotland married Marie, daughter of Duke Arnold of Guelders and great-niece of Philip the Good duke of Burgundy.<sup>4</sup> The match and the events which accompanied it demonstrated Scotland's contacts with princes like Duke Philip and also showed the ongoing value of the French alliance. Charles VII assisted in negotiations for the wedding and in arranging

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<sup>1</sup> J. Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War in the Fourteenth Century', in J.R. Hale *et al* (eds), *Europe in the Middle Ages* (London, 1965), 184-216; A. MacDonald, *Border Bloodshed: Scotland, England and France at War 1369-1403* (East Linton, 2000); C. Rogers, *War, Cruel and Sharp: English Strategy under Edward III* (Woodbridge, 2000) 27-126; A. Curry, *The Hundred Years War* (London, 1993), 137-50; M. Brown, 'French Alliance or English Peace? Scotland and the Last Phase of the Hundred Years War, 1415-1453' in L. Clark (ed.), *The Fifteenth Century*, vii (Woodbridge, 2007), 81-100.

<sup>2</sup> The only major campaign in the marches in the thirty years from 1417 occurred in 1436 (M. Brown, *James I* (Edinburgh, 1994), 160-66.

<sup>3</sup> B.G.H. Ditcham, 'The employment of foreign mercenary troops in the French royal armies, 1415-70' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1978), 14-52; B. Chevalier, 'Les Ecosais dans l'armée de Charles VII jusqu'à la bataille de Verneuil', in *Jeanne d'Arc: une époque, un rayonnement* (Paris, 1982), 85-94; M. Brown, *The Black Douglases: War and Lordship in late Medieval Scotland* (East Linton, 1998), 214-24.

<sup>4</sup> F. Downie, *She is but a woman: Queenship in Scotland 1424-1463* (Edinburgh, 2006), 66-80; D. Ditchburn, 'The place of Gueldres in Scottish foreign policy, c.1449-c.1542', in G.G. Simpson, *Scotland and the Low Countries, 1124-1994* (East Linton, 1996), 59-75, 60-6; C. McGladdery, *James II* (Edinburgh, 2015), 70-81.

marriages for several of James's sisters. His interest derived from the marriage of his own son, the Dauphin Louis, to James II's eldest sister, Margaret, in 1436.<sup>5</sup> Though Margaret had died in 1445, Charles deployed her sisters in his own efforts to forge alliances.<sup>6</sup> Scottish participation in this world of European court culture was further displayed by the ceremonial which accompanied the marriage and by the visit of a party of Burgundian knights to Scotland in February 1449 to engage in deeds of arms with their Scottish counterparts. These events have generated a cluster of excellent discussions which strengthen our sense of the kingdom's interactions with princely and noble society on the continent.<sup>7</sup>

However this focus on marriage and tournament has overshadowed other events and contacts in the year and a half leading up to King James's marriage and the outbreak of Anglo-French war in July 1449. This article will show that there was a high degree of engagement between politics in Scotland and the actions of rulers across north-western Europe. Moreover this engagement was not simply with the kings of France and England but included a much wider group of rulers. Above all this meant the dukes of Burgundy and Brittany, princes of France but also powerful and independent players in the politics of north-western Europe. Like these two dukes, the Scottish king and his government participated in an increasingly fluid and multi-centred world. While not suggesting that Scotland possessed the influence or power to initiate major changes between these rulers in isolation, it will be argued that the negotiations for the king's marriage were only one of a range of objectives pursued by the Scottish government and that their role was neither passive nor as satellites of richer rulers. There will be three focal points; the warfare between Scotland and England in 1448 and 1449, the movements and activities of the embassy sent from Scotland to the continent in the summer of 1448 and the internal politics of Scotland in these months whilst its young king was on the cusp of personal power. As well as being parallel in time, these developments were also interlinked in their courses and outcomes.

From September 1448 until August 1449 the Scots were engaged in a period of open warfare with England along the marches between the two kingdoms. This was the most

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<sup>5</sup> E. Bonner, 'Charles VII's dynastic policy and the 'Auld Alliance': The marriage of James II and Marie de Gueldres', *Innes Review*, 54 (2003), 142-85.

<sup>6</sup> F. Downie, "'La voie quelle menace tenir': Annabella Stewart, Scotland and the European marriage market, 1445-56', *Scottish Historical Review*, 78 (1999), 170-91.

<sup>7</sup> K. Stevenson, 'Contesting chivalry: James II and the control of chivalric culture in the 1450s', *Journal of Medieval History*, 33 (2007), 197-214; D. Ditchburn, 'Rituals, space and the marriage of James II and Mary of Guelders, 1449' in F. Andrews (ed.), *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the 2009 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford, 2011), 179-96.

intensive border conflict for at least thirty years.<sup>8</sup> It began in September with a Scottish foray into Northumberland and then, after an English counter attack which drove off 500 cattle, another Scottish force burned the suburbs of Carlisle.<sup>9</sup> This provoked a major response. An English army led by Henry Percy son of the earl of Northumberland advanced into Dumfriesshire but was routed by a Scottish host drawn from across south-west Scotland under Hugh Douglas earl of Ormond. Recorded in English, Scottish and French chronicles, this battle of Lochmabenstane or Sark was the Scots' only significant victory on the marches during the fifteenth century.<sup>10</sup> In an attempt to avenge the defeat, the English march warden, Richard earl of Salisbury, mustered a larger army and invaded Scotland in November. While one English account claimed Salisbury burned 'the greet part of the marches of Scotland', another said 'he returned with shame, having achieved nothing', allowing the Scots to claim victory.<sup>11</sup> During the winter both sides prepared for further warfare. Ormond's brother, William earl of Douglas issued a military ordinance for the borders in December while the English government excused northern magnates from attending parliament to guard against the 'malice' of the Scots in the daily 'hurt ... of our marches'.<sup>12</sup> Renewed fighting began in the spring. According to the near-contemporary account in the Auchinleck Chronicle, Dunbar was burned by the recently-released Henry Percy in May and in June the earl of Salisbury sacked Dumfries. However on 3 June a Scottish host led by Douglas, Ormond and the earls of Angus and Orkney burned the Percies' town of Alnwick and in mid-July, after James II's wedding, Douglas led a force even further south to burn Warkworth, at the gates of a second Percy castle.<sup>13</sup> By the time of this last campaign a short truce had already been agreed to begin on 10 August. It was only to run for six weeks but was then lengthened to November when the truce was extended at the pleasure of both king to end on 180 days' notice.<sup>14</sup>

As in the 1380s and 1400s, the war was a series of cross-border campaigns led by major magnates aimed at causing material damage to the enemy.<sup>15</sup> Evidence from the English

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<sup>8</sup> It was more sustained that the campaign of James I against Roxburgh in 1436 and, perhaps, on a par with the warfare of 1416-7.

<sup>9</sup> 'John Benet's Chronicle for the years 1400-62', ed. G.L. and M.A. Harriss, *Camden Miscellany XXIV*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, 9 (London, 1972), 151-233, 194; *Six town chronicles of England*, ed. R. Flenley (Oxford, 1911), 123.

<sup>10</sup> 'Benet's Chronicle', 194; *Six town chronicles*, 123; 'Auchinleck Chronicle', in C. McGladdery, *James II* (Edinburgh, 2015), 270-1; Jean Chartier, *Chronique de Charles VII*, 3 volumes (Paris, 1858), ii, 87-9.

<sup>11</sup> 'Benet's Chronicle', 194; *Six town chronicles*, 123-4. Chartier presents this as a second Scottish victory (Chartier, *Chronique*, ii, 89-90).

<sup>12</sup> 'George Neilson: The March Laws, Part II', ed. T.I. Rae, in *Stair Society Miscellany I* (Edinburgh, 1971), 11-77, 40-46; *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, 7 volumes (London, 1834-7), vi, 65.

<sup>13</sup> 'Auchinleck Chronicle', 276.

<sup>14</sup> *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae ...*, ed. T. Rymer, 20 volumes (London, 1704-35), xi, 229, 231-3, 236-40, 247-55; National Records of Scotland (NRS) SP6/18.

<sup>15</sup> A. MacDonald, *Border Bloodshed: Scotland, England and France at War 1369-1403* (East Linton, 2000).

marches reveals the destruction caused by Scottish attacks and, while the Scottish borders probably suffered similarly, the balance of fighting and especially the victory at Lochmabenstane allowed the Scots to claim the advantage.<sup>16</sup> English chronicles state that the impetus for the fighting came from the Scottish side who chose to break a truce which was due to run until 1454.<sup>17</sup> However, if this was the case, Scottish motives are hard to judge. Unlike the most recent Scottish campaigns in 1417 and 1436, there was no attempt to capture Berwick or Roxburgh, the final English-held outposts in Scotland but the scale of the fighting suggests it was not just an escalation of border raiding. Nor do these attacks seem directly connected to continental warfare. In the autumn of 1448 the truce between Charles VII and Henry VI was still holding. A year later, when the Scots accepted truces with England, Charles's armies were breaking into Normandy. The war has been linked to the ambitions of the Black Douglases. The leading role they played suggests a continuation of the family's use of warfare as a means of displaying their significance. However, warfare of this scale which clearly involved the royal government and other leading figures was probably not driven by the Douglases in isolation.<sup>18</sup>

English chroniclers also associated the outbreak of warfare to the presence of their king in the north of his realm.<sup>19</sup> In September 1448 Henry VI travelled to York and Durham, visiting northern England for the first time in his twenty-six year reign. While this exceptional progress has been related to concerns about the Scots, there is no evidence of either military or diplomatic preparations before the king's journey.<sup>20</sup> Warfare only seems to have started after Henry had reached the region. Instead the journey's political purpose was probably linked to the recent violent feuding between the earl of Northumberland and the king's councillor, Archbishop Kemp of York.<sup>21</sup> In a letter written by Henry to his old teacher and doctor, John Somerset, the king described the journey as a 'pilgrimage' and dwelled, characteristically, on the state of the northern church and on the faith and loyalty of the

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<sup>16</sup> H. Summerson, *Medieval Carlisle: the city and the Borders from the late eleventh to mid-sixteenth centuries*, 2 volumes (Kendal, 1993), ii, 435-6; A.J. Pollard, *North-eastern England during the Wars of the Roses* (Oxford, 1990), 46.

<sup>17</sup> *Foedera*, xi, 58; *Calendar of documents relating to Scotland*, 5 volumes (Edinburgh, 1881-1986), iv, no. 1167. This truce preceded the Anglo-French treaty at Tours by a month.

<sup>18</sup> Brown, *Black Douglases*, 276-7; M. Brown, 'Rejoice to hear of Douglas': The house of Douglas and the presentation of magnate power in late Medieval Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review*, 76 (1997), 161-84. The decision of the Aberdeen council to strengthen the burgh's defences 'because of perile apperand' suggests a kingdom-wide involvement in the war (*Aberdeen Guild Court Records 1437-1468*, ed. E. Gemmill, Scottish History Society (Edinburgh, 2003), 140-1.

<sup>19</sup> 'Benet's chronicle', 194; *Six town chronicles*, 123.

<sup>20</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 409-10; B. Wolfe, *Henry VI* (London, 1981), 367; J. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996), 240-1.

<sup>21</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 577-9.

people.<sup>22</sup> If relations with Scotland were not behind the royal progress, the coincidence between Henry's visits to York and Durham and the first Scottish incursions is striking. The presence of the English king in the north would also have heightened the impact of the Scots' incursions in England and beyond the island of Britain.

The desire to make such an impact can be connected to the contemporaneous activities of the Scottish king's councillors on the continent. Before the onset of the war and lasting almost its whole course, groups of Scottish envoys were moving between the princely courts of northern France. The instructions given to these envoys reflected the wider aims of the royal government. Such contacts were hardly new. In particular, since the Franco-Scottish treaty of 1428 and the match between the dauphin and Princess Margaret in 1436, the marriage of James II's other sisters and the king himself had brought the Scots into ongoing negotiations with European courts.<sup>23</sup> Most recently, in 1447, Charles arranged the betrothal of Eleanor Stewart to the Habsburg prince, Sigismund duke of Austria-Tyrol. In doing so Charles swatted away James II's suggestion that Eleanor should marry the widowed dauphin and in September the Scottish king consented to the Habsburg match.<sup>24</sup> However, from January 1448 there was a new impetus to Scottish diplomatic plans. At the root of this was the question of the king's own marriage. This could hardly be left in the hands of the French king. The matter was introduced by James in a letter to Charles VII sent on 9 January. This announced that 'we plan to send our ambassadors to your most serene highness, both for the choosing of a consort for us, for the marrying of our sisters and for other difficult matters concerning us and the *res publica* of our realm'.<sup>25</sup> 'A heavy tax ... on the whole kingdom, both clergy and people' was levied 'for an embassy sent to France for the marriage of the king' probably on the authority of a general council which met in January to discuss the matter.<sup>26</sup> This first royal taxation for seven years was a mark of the importance of the venture to king and council.

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<sup>22</sup> P. Sanderson, *The Antiquities of the Abbey or Cathedral Church of Durham* (Newcastle, 1767), 141.

<sup>23</sup> L.A. Barbé, *Margaret of Scotland and the Dauphin Louis* (London, 1917), 15-19, 75-82; Downie, *Queenship in Scotland*, 53-60.

<sup>24</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), MS Latin 10187, ff 8-10; *Letters and papers illustrative of the Wars of the English in France during the reign of Henry the Sixth*, ed. J. Stevenson, Rolls Series, 2 volumes (London, 1861-4), i, 194-6; Beaucourt, *Charles VII*, 366; C. Debris, 'Tu, felix Austria, nube': *La dynastie de Habsbourg et sa politique matrimoniale à la fin du Moyen âge (XIIIe-XVIe siècles)* (Turnhout, 2005), 44, 62, 171, 186-8.

<sup>25</sup> BNF, MS Latin 10187, ff. 9-10; Stevenson, *Letters and papers*, i, 197-8

<sup>26</sup> *Copiale Prioratus Sanctiandree: The Letter-Book of James Haldenstone, Prior of St Andrews (1418-1443)*, ed. J.H. Baxter (Oxford, 1930), 355; R. Tanner, *The Late Medieval Scottish Parliament: Politics and the Three Estates, 1424-1488* (East Linton, 2001), 118-9.

The significance of the embassy was also demonstrated by its membership. The senior figure was the chancellor of Scotland, William lord Crichton, who had been involved in diplomatic activity since the 1420s and had been one of the leading figures in the politics of James's minority. Of his companions, John Ralston was secretary of the king and had recently been promoted to the see of Dunkeld, and Nicholas Otterburn was official of St Andrews and a canon of Glasgow.<sup>27</sup> The letters carried by these envoys on 6 May 1448 confirmed the breadth of their duties. Most importantly they were granted powers to negotiate the king's marriage and arrange matches for his sisters, Eleanor and Joan. While Charles VII was asked for help with this, it was clear that the matter would be directly negotiated between the ambassadors and other princes. They were given full power to discuss the marriage of the princesses with Duke Sigismund, but also with the duke of Burgundy and the count of Armagnac.<sup>28</sup> However, the Burgundian link was more telling. Crichton and his partners had authority to arrange James II's marriage to a lady from the houses of Burgundy, Cleves or Guelders. This direct contact is not surprising. As David Ditchburn, Alexander Stevenson and Amy Eberlin have shown, there were centuries-old trading contacts between Scotland and the Low Countries.<sup>29</sup> These represented one of Scotland's key external relationships and made the short sea-journey from the Firth of Forth to the Flemish coast a very familiar route for merchants and others. Economic ties had also generated political contacts going back to the twelfth century.<sup>30</sup> It was natural for the Scots to seek a bride from the connections of Philip

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<sup>27</sup> Alan R. Borthwick, 'Crichton, William of that ilk, first Lord Crichton (d. 1453)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* (Oxford, 2004). [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6701, accessed 16 Oct 2017]; Alan R. Borthwick, 'Ralston, John (d. 1451/2)', *ODNB*. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23061, accessed 16 Oct 2017]; Alan R. Borthwick, 'Otterburn, Nicholas (c. 1400-1462)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6701, accessed 16 Oct 2017].

<sup>28</sup> For these letters see F. Autrand and P. Contamine, 'Remarques sur les alliances des rois de France aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles', in L. Bély and I. Richeford (eds), *L'Europe des traités de Westphalie* (Paris, 2000), 83-110, 107-8; *Der österreichische Geschichtsforscher*, ed. J. Chmel (Vienna, 1841), ii, 450; *Inventaires Sommaires des Archives départementales antérieures à 1790: Nord* (Lille, 1899), volume 1 part 1, 297; F. Downie, *She is but a woman: Queenship in Scotland 1424-1463* (Edinburgh, 2006), 63. A marriage, perhaps between Joan and the son of the count of Armagnac could well have been suggested by King Charles. Charles VII had forced the surrender of Count Jean IV of Armagnac in 1443 and retained a hold over his lands whose location on the borders of Gascony had a strategic value for the French king. Armagnac's unmarried son Jean V would succeed in 1450 and conduct an incestuous liaison with his sister (D'Escouchy, *Chronique*, iii, 116-43; Beaucourt, *Charles VII*, iii, 244-55).

<sup>29</sup> A. Stevenson, 'Trade between Scotland and the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1982); D. Ditchburn, 'Scotland, France and the Auld Alliance: Was there a Burgundian Alternative?', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, new series, no. 41 (2016), 81-100; A. Eberlin, 'Mechanisms of Foreign Trade: Re-evaluating the Power of the Scottish Mercantile Elite in the Late Middle Ages' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> A. Stevenson, 'The Flemish Dimension of the Auld Alliance', G.G. Simpson (ed.), *Scotland and the Low Countries, 1124-1994* (East Linton, 1996), 28-42. These political and economic connections were behind the recent marriage of James II's sister, Mary, and Wolfaert van Borselen lord of Veere in Zeeland (Ditchburn, 'Scotland, France and the Auld Alliance', 92-3).

the Good Duke of Burgundy, the ruler of most of the Netherlands. In 1446 the Scottish government had considered one of the daughters of Duke Arnold of Guelders for their queen, a match which would create an alliance with Philip of Burgundy, the great-uncle of the two noblewomen.<sup>31</sup> The envoys' responsibilities were not limited to arranging royal marriages. They were also instructed to seek an alliance with the duke of Burgundy and to conclude agreements with King Charles and perhaps also the duke of Brittany. The mission would last almost a year and had ambitious, multiple aims.

These different goals have been treated as separate or static expressions of Scotland's established connections with the continent. Instead, from January 1448 onwards, the use of this embassy and the actions of the envoys suggest a more fluid operation which was bound up with a rapidly shifting political world from the Scottish borders to the marches of Normandy. The dispatch of the embassy related to wider events in European politics. In the letters the envoys carried to Charles VII, the French king was informed that the negotiations which he had recently held with the king of England 'appeared to mean the breaking of the ... alliance' between France and Scotland.<sup>32</sup> From the outset, the presence of a well-funded embassy was designed to place the Scottish kingdom and its interests on the table, using royal marriages, past and present, and, from September, warfare as ways of influencing events on the continent.

It is not clear when the envoys departed. Crichton and Ralston had both witnessed royal charters in April and on 7 May but did not appear on the king's progress to Inverness in the second half of July.<sup>33</sup> On 16 May Crichton gave a gift of local property to St Anthony's Hospital in Leith.<sup>34</sup> This institution, founded in 1430, was patronised by merchants trading between Scotland and Flanders. In 1461 it would receive a donation from Duke Philip of Burgundy.<sup>35</sup> Crichton's charter was witnessed by his family but also by his fellow envoys. The charter may indicate that the embassy was about to depart and that Flanders and links to the Burgundian court were regarded the focus of their initial activity. In late August and mid-September they were entertained by Duke Philip and probably did not travel to Charles VII's court until late September.<sup>36</sup> The ambassadors were not present as planned for the marriage of

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<sup>31</sup> Downie, *Scottish Queenship*, 69.

<sup>32</sup> Autrand and Contamine, 'Remarques', 107.

<sup>33</sup> W. Fraser (ed.), *The Scotts of Buccleuch*, 2 volumes (Edinburgh, 1878), ii, no. 42; W. Fraser (ed.), *Memorials of the Family of Wemyss of Wemyss*, 2 volumes (Edinburgh, 1888), ii, no. 53; *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scottorum*, ed. J. Thomson and others, 11 volumes (Edinburgh, 1882-1914), ii, no. 1791; W. Fraser (ed.), *The History of the Carnegies, Earls of Southesk*, 2 volumes (Edinburgh, 1867), ii, no. 69.

<sup>34</sup> NRS CH2/716/229

<sup>35</sup> Eberlin, thesis, 60-1

<sup>36</sup> Downie, *Scottish Queenship*, 71.

Eleanor to Duke Sigismund on 8 September where James II was represented instead by Thomas Spens, another cleric who had travelled out after 10 June, and by the captain of Charles's Scottish bodyguard, Nicholas Chalmers. That Spens and Chambers lacked the proper royal letters had caused a delay in the marriage from August.<sup>37</sup> The absence of Crichton, Ralston and Otterburn was probably a result of progress in the negotiations over the king's marriage. On 6 September Burgundy extracted the permission of the duke of Guelders to negotiate his daughter's marriage to the Scottish king and James II gave his envoys power to conclude the marriage and alliance in early November.<sup>38</sup> It was only on 29 September that the Scottish envoys presented themselves at King Charles's court at Tours, handing over letters from James whose contents suggest they were written in the spring.<sup>39</sup>

These movements may suggest that the Scots were operating independently from Charles in focussing their efforts on the Burgundian court. If so it is also significant that, a few weeks later, the Scottish ambassadors had travelled west to attend Duke Francis of Brittany at Vannes. On 22 October, a treaty was agreed with the duke and with his duchess, James II's sister, Isabella.<sup>40</sup> As well as agreeing mutual support and the inclusion of each party in other alliances made by them, the treaty recognised Isabella and Francis as heirs to the Scottish throne should James die childless.<sup>41</sup> From Brittany, Crichton and his companions returned to Tours where they met with King Charles's representatives over Christmas. On 31 December a renewed alliance was agreed between them which referred to the series of alliances back to the treaty of Corbeil between Robert I of Scotland and Charles IV of France in 1326 which had been made 'to forestall the enterprises which the English were accustomed to make against and to the damage of the kings, kingdoms and subjects of France and Scotland.'<sup>42</sup> Having secured this agreement, the Scottish envoys returned to Bruges in the New Year, perhaps in time to witness the departure of the Burgundian knights for Scotland in February. By 1 April the marriage of James II and Marie de Guelders had been agreed and, on that date, the Scots concluded an alliance with Philip duke of Burgundy. This recognised

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<sup>37</sup> *Österreichischer Geschicht.*, ii, 462-3; *Materialen zur österreichischen Geschichte*, ed. J. Chmel, 2 volumes (Vienna, 1837), i, part 2, 289-92; Beaucourt, *Charles VII*, iv, 369-70.

<sup>38</sup> *Inventaires Sommaires des Archives départementales: Nord*, volume 1 part 1, 297; Ditchburn, 'Guelders', 62-3.

<sup>39</sup> Stevenson, *Letters and Papers*, i, 221-3. In the letters James II was still asking for a bride from 'the most glorious house of France'.

<sup>40</sup> Isabella had married Duke Francis in 1442 (A. La Borderie, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 6 volumes (Rennes, 1896) iv, 303-13; *ER*, v, lvii-lviii, 118).

<sup>41</sup> NRS SP7/13/1. Isabella was James II's eldest surviving sister. After 1437 and until the birth of his first son in 1452, James was the only legitimate descendant of Robert II in the male line.

<sup>42</sup> Autrand and Contamine, 'Remarques', 105.



the earlier agreements of the Scots with the Breton duke and French king, but included mutual support in any future war embarked on by either party.<sup>43</sup> Charles VII gave his support to this alliance. On 15 April Crichton and Ralston wrote to Charles thanking him for his envoys' help during the talks and asking for permission to visit Paris to see the relics at Sainte Chapelle.<sup>44</sup> The two envoys had returned to Flanders in time to set sail with Marie de Guelders and her escort on 9 June. Despite fears of interception by English ships, the party arrived in Scotland and Marie was lodged in the hospital of St Anthony's in Leith, which Crichton had patronised prior to his departure.<sup>45</sup> On 25 June James II ratified the Burgundian alliance, gave promises about the lands to be assigned to his queen and renounced any claims on Guelders.<sup>46</sup> Four days later he confirmed that he had received the first instalment of the queen's dowry of 60,000 *écus d'or* and the wedding took place at Holyrood Abbey on 3 July.<sup>47</sup>

In the year from May 1448 Scottish envoys had negotiated treaties of alliance with the French king and the dukes of Burgundy and Brittany and arranged a marriage for their monarch. The efforts of Crichton, Ralston, Otterburn, Thomas Spens and others ran alongside the period of sharp warfare against England. News of this conflict may well have provided a backdrop to their discussions. There is evidence that such news was channelled through the envoys. The official French royal chronicler, Jean Chartier, included an exaggerated account of Scottish victories over the English in late 1448. This had been brought to his abbey of St Denis by three Scottish clerics one of whom was a canon and 'a well-known and reliable person' who swore his words were true on the relics of St Denis and was questioned by Chartier himself.<sup>48</sup> The canon may have been either Nicholas Otterburn or Thomas Spens and the episode suggests that the Scottish envoys were keen to propagate a positive view of their compatriots' exploits against the English. On 15 April 1449 William Crichton responded to the French king's request for 'the news and state of the realm of Scotland' after the envoys had left his court by saying that he had nothing to add to 'that which we have written to Nicholas Chalmers captain of your Christian majesty's guard'.<sup>49</sup> It seems likely that one of

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<sup>43</sup> *Inventaires Sommaires des Archives départementales: Nord*, volume 1 part 1, 233; NRS SP7/14.

<sup>44</sup> Stevenson, *Letters and papers*, i, 239-40.

<sup>45</sup> Matthieu d'Escouchy, *Chronique*, ed. G. du Fresne du Beaucourt, 3 volumes (Paris, 1863-4), i, 175-9; 'Auchinleck', in McGladdery, *James II*, 274-5; Ditchburn, 'Ritual', 184-5.

<sup>46</sup> *Inventaires Sommaires des Archives départementales: Nord*, volume 1 part 1, 233.

<sup>47</sup> Ditchburn, 'Ritual', 185-6; Downie, *Scottish Queenship*, 79; Ditchburn, 'Scotland, France and the Auld Alliance', 90-1. Ditchburn demonstrates the considerable additional expenses which the Duke of Burgundy covered in connection with the marriage (on ships, clothing and furnishings).

<sup>48</sup> Jean Chartier, *Chroniques de Charles VII*, 3 volumes (Paris, 1858), ii, 87-91.

<sup>49</sup> Stevenson, *Letters and papers*, i, 239-40.

the ambassadors' roles was to work via the French king's Scottish servants like Chalmers and the increasingly influential William Monypenny, to convey favourable 'news' from Scotland to the French court.<sup>50</sup>

If James II's marriage provided the main justification for the dispatch of a well-funded and prestigious embassy, the desire of king and council to engage with European politics was another part of the envoys' role from the outset. The letters of introduction which they carried to Charles VII made this clear. The matter of James's marriage was briefly mentioned before the Scottish king appealed to the 'ancient alliances between France and Scotland'. This was not just a formal reference to the connection between the realms but a product of recent events. James's letter stated that 'being informed about negotiations between your highness and the king of England ... (which) appeared to mean the breaking of the said alliance, we took care to dispatch our letters of exhortation and our envoys to your highness' to ensure the Franco-Scottish bond remained unbroken. Scottish concerns related to the apparent switch in Charles's relations with Henry VI.<sup>51</sup> In January and February 1448 Charles was on the point of besieging Le Mans which the English had failed to hand over under the terms of the Truce of Tours from 1444.<sup>52</sup> The English capitulation over Le Mans in March changed the mood. The truce was extended to 1451 and negotiations planned which might turn this into a 'final peace'.<sup>53</sup> During the summer and autumn discussions were held to consider a meeting between the French and English kings north of Paris to assist in this goal.<sup>54</sup> A permanent resolution of the Anglo-French conflict would threaten Scotland's security. Yet, if this was a major concern, it is striking that there was no evidence of the Scots envoys reaching Charles's court until September 1448. Was their arrival at that point timed to announce the renewal of open war between Scotland and England? One of the stated issues in the renewed alliance agreed in December concerned the position of one of the parties being at war with England while their partner was at truce.<sup>55</sup> The initiation of warfare would have vividly demonstrated this situation to the French.

The decision of the Scottish ambassadors to leave Charles's court and travel to Brittany in October must also be examined in light of wider events. The alliance agreed between the envoys and Duke Francis and Duchess Isabella emphasised the family bond

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<sup>50</sup> B.J. Coombs, '*Distantia Jungit*: Scots Patronage of the Visual Arts in France, c.1445 – c.1545', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2013, 11-22.

<sup>51</sup> Autrand and Contamine, 'Remarques', 107-8.

<sup>52</sup> Stevenson, *Letters and Papers*, i, 198-206; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 500-4.

<sup>53</sup> *Foedera*, xi, 198-201, 203-4.

<sup>54</sup> *Foedera*, xi, 210-1, 216.

<sup>55</sup> Autrand and Contamine, 'Remarques', 108-9.

between the houses of Montfort and Stewart, by acknowledging them as heirs presumptive to the Scottish throne.<sup>56</sup> Such terms were an overt recognition of Scottish obligations to the duke of Brittany at a time when he was under severe political pressure. During the summer of 1448 the English had begun re-fortifying places on the Breton border with Normandy and using them to raid into the duchy.<sup>57</sup> This aggression was linked to efforts to force Duke Francis to release his pro-English brother, Gilles, whom the duke had imprisoned in 1446.<sup>58</sup> The French king expressed his concern for the honour and safety of the duke and duchy and his representatives raised both issues with English envoys during the summer.<sup>59</sup> Charles was, however, unwilling to break the truce on these grounds.<sup>60</sup> The formal alliance between Duke Francis and James II went further than Charles could and linked the Bretons to a kingdom already actively at war with the English. The agreement may have offered only symbolic support to the duke but it contained a promise to include each party in future alliances made by the other which was recognised in the Scottish-Burgundian treaty the following year.<sup>61</sup>

These negotiations with Philip duke of Burgundy fulfilled the central purpose of the Scottish embassy. The marriage agreement secured a queen for James II on terms advantageous to Scotland. A large dowry and a bond with a ruler whose lands were far richer and more populous than the Scottish kingdom and included Scotland's most important trading partners were of obvious benefit to King James. As mentioned above, the treaty agreed between Philip and the ambassadors on 1 April went beyond the marriage. It promised mutual good service between king and duke which recognised, as well as Scottish obligations to the duke of Brittany, that the alliances between Scotland and France 'which are being renewed' prevented the Scots from joining in any war against King Charles. The duties of both princes to the duke of Guelders were also recognised. Mutual support clearly included military assistance. The treaty stated that, after the end of existing truces, if either party engaged in a new war the other would give assistance in the form of men, ships, food,

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<sup>56</sup> NRS SP7/13/1.

<sup>57</sup> D'Escouchy, *Chronique*, i, 132-3; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 508-9.

<sup>58</sup> A. Bourdeaut, 'Gilles de Bretagne entre la France et l'Angleterre', *Mémoires de la société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Bretagne*, i (1920), 53-145; M.H. Keen and M.J. Daniel, 'English Diplomacy and the Sack of Fougères in 1449', *History*, 59 (1974), 375-91; La Borderie, *Histoire de Bretagne*, iv, 327-35.

<sup>59</sup> *Mémoires pour servir de preuves à l'histoire ecclésiastique et civile de Bretagne*, ed. P.H. Morice, 3 volumes (Paris, 1742-6), ii, columns 1412-5, 1428-30, 1430-7.

<sup>60</sup> Morice, *Preuves*, ii, col. 1438-9.

<sup>61</sup> NRS SP7/13/1.

artillery or weapons. Once again, this promise was made by a continental prince, who was at truce with England, with the Scottish king whose realm was at war with them.<sup>62</sup>

The presence of Crichton and Ralston at the Burgundian court in the summer of 1448 and again in early 1449 can also be connected with the well-known passage of arms between Scottish and Burgundian knights before James II at Stirling. As David Ditchburn has observed, the occasion was one of major symbolic significance in relation to the ongoing negotiations.<sup>63</sup> The attention the event received in contemporary works and the absence of other similar exchanges point strongly to a direct link between the chivalric contest and discussions over an alliance. The challenge was delivered in July 1448, just after the arrival of the envoys in Flanders and the Burgundian party crossed to Scotland in February 1449 perhaps once Crichton and Ralston had returned there from the French court.<sup>64</sup> Ditchburn has also pointed to the direct role of Duke Philip in sponsoring the venture and to the links of service between the duke and the Burgundian knights who took part.<sup>65</sup> Such men would have been able to convey useful impressions of Scotland and its king back to Philip. These impressions may have encompassed military potential. As well as courtiers and officials, the three knights were soldiers who would play important roles in the duke's war against the rebellious city of Ghent in the early 1450s.<sup>66</sup> In this light, the emphasis which all accounts of these events place on the house of Douglas is significant. The challenge was issued to William earl of Douglas's brother, James master of Douglas, the earl was nominated as judge over the combat should the king be unable to perform this role, and comment was made about the retinue which Earl William brought to Stirling.<sup>67</sup> According to D'Escouchy, the earl 'had fittingly in his company, from the account of those who knew the truth, four to six thousand men', an impression repeated by Georges Chastellain, Lalaing's biographer.<sup>68</sup> This display of the family's reputation and military resources may have been for the benefit of the visiting Burgundians and drawn their attention to the recent warfare in the marches with England.<sup>69</sup> It may also be linked to the military character of the alliance agreed by the Scottish embassy

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<sup>62</sup> *Inventaires Sommaires des Archives départementales antérieures à 1790: Nord*, volume 1 part 1, 233; Bonner, 'Charles VII's dynastic policy', 161; J.H. Baxter, 'The marriage of James II', *SHR*, 25 (1928), 69-72.

<sup>63</sup> Ditchburn, 'Ritual', 181-2.

<sup>64</sup> *Oeuvres de Georges Chastellain*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 8 volumes (Brussels, 1866), viii, 164-7.

<sup>65</sup> Ditchburn, 'Ritual', 182-4.

<sup>66</sup> Simon de Lalaing was commander of the key Burgundian garrison at Oudenarde. His nephew, Jacques, commanded the duke's scouts and was killed at the siege of Poeke in 1453. Hervé de Mériadoc carried Duke Philip's standard at the battle of Gavere (R. Vaughan, *Philip the Good* (London, 1970), 317-20, 321-2, 328; P. Brugière de Barante, *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne de la Maison de Valois*, 18 volumes (Paris, 1824), v, 84).

<sup>67</sup> *Oeuvres de Chastellain*, viii, 164, 166-7, 173.

<sup>68</sup> D'Escouchy, *Chronique*, i, 150; *Oeuvres de Chastellain*, viii, 173.

<sup>69</sup> Brown, *Black Douglases*, 276-7; Stevenson, 'Contesting Chivalry', 206-7; McGladdery, *James II*, 76-7

with the duke of Burgundy on 1 April after the return of the knights. Despite English fears of an attack on Calais in early 1449, Philip chose not to break his truce with England.<sup>70</sup> He did, however, give a sign of his value as an ally to the Scots by sending a consignment of military equipment, including armour, shields, swords, crossbows and gunpowder artillery to Scotland. These were dispatched in five galleys, probably at the time of the royal marriage in July 1449. They were included in the gifts which accompanied the occasion and were delivered to a kingdom still at war with England.<sup>71</sup>

Scottish diplomacy in 1448-9 has been seen as operating in conjunction with the interests of Charles VII.<sup>72</sup> From the autumn of 1448 there was certainly a growing alignment between the French and Scottish kingdoms expressed in the renewal of the alliance. By August Charles was exasperated with the behaviour of the English and especially Edmund duke of Somerset, the new lieutenant of Normandy. Somerset was accused of sponsoring the harassment of the Breton frontier, of refusing compensation and threatening French envoys, and of failing to accord Charles his royal title as previous lieutenants had done.<sup>73</sup> Against this background the alliance between the Scots and the duke of Brittany in October could have served as a means for Charles to provide Francis with support without breaking his own truce with Henry VI. Similarly, on 15 April, the Scottish envoys thanked Charles for the help of his own representatives in their negotiations with the duke of Burgundy.<sup>74</sup> These discussions occurred following the conclusion of negotiations between representatives of Charles VII and Philip the Good at Paris in January which resolved a range of issues between the king and the duke, mostly in favour of the latter.<sup>75</sup> When Somerset ordered the seizure of the Breton town of Fougères in late March it led Charles to prepare for the formal resumption of warfare. Duke Francis was obviously engaged in warfare already and, although Philip still refused to enter the conflict, he recognised the justice of the French king's position and agreed to allow men at arms from his lands to serve in Charles's armies.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 522-4.

<sup>71</sup> J. Garnier, *L'artillerie des ducs de Bourgogne d'après les documents conservés aux archives de la Côte-d'Or* (Paris, 1895), 130-1; R.D. Smith and K. DeVries, *The Artillery of the Dukes of Burgundy, 1363-1477* (Woodbridge, 2005), 349-50.

<sup>72</sup> Bonner, 'Charles VII's dynastic policy', 161-2.

<sup>73</sup> Stevenson, *Letters and Papers*, i, 209-20.

<sup>74</sup> Stevenson, *Letters and Papers*, i, 239-40.

<sup>75</sup> Beaucourt, *Charles VII*, iv, 375-84; Downie, *Scottish Queenship*, 74-5.

<sup>76</sup> Keen and Daniel, 'Sack of Fougères', 388-91; C. Taylor, 'Brittany and the French Crown: The Legacy of the English Attack upon Fougères (1449)', in J.R. Maddicott and D.M. Palliser, *The Medieval State: Essays presented to James Campbell* (London, 2000), 243-58, 252-7; Beaucourt, *Charles VII*, iv, 385.

The Scots king was clearly regarded as part of this alignment. On 3 June 1449 Charles VII instructed his envoy to inform the English that their aggression towards the Duke of Brittany touched both his own honour but also that of the king of Scots and the duke of Burgundy ‘who are near kin, friends and allies of my said lord of Brittany’.<sup>77</sup> However, Scotland’s engagement with the French king and the dukes of Brittany and Burgundy which the embassy of 1448-9 had shaped need not be regarded as simply fitting in with King Charles’s consistent policy. On the embassy’s departure for the continent in May 1448 the Scots had expressed anxiety, even discontent, about the French king’s relations with Henry VI.<sup>78</sup> Their initial contacts had been with Burgundy and by September they had clearly reached a preliminary agreement with the duke for the Scottish king’s marriage without any identifiable input from Charles.<sup>79</sup> The agreement with the duke and duchess of Brittany and especially their recognition as the Scottish king’s heirs presumptive suggests distinct motives were at work. Most importantly, Scottish warfare against England from September 1448 until the following summer cannot be linked to Charles VII’s position at that time. Instead it must have reflected the judgement of the Scottish king and council. As will be discussed, the timing of the warfare may indicate internal interests but it was probably exploited by Crichton and his companions to demonstrate Scotland’s military credentials to continental audiences and to encourage a wider resumption of warfare against England. According to the chronicler Matthieu D’Escouchy, Charles cited the war of the English against the Scots as one justification for his own formal renunciation of the truce on 31 July 1449.<sup>80</sup>

Reports of the Anglo-Scottish war served another purpose. The Scots retained a reputation as a source of ‘men, brave and strong’ who had fought in large numbers for Charles VII.<sup>81</sup> Smaller contingents had found their way into Burgundian service and Duke Philip’s father had been keen to recruit more.<sup>82</sup> Bloody defeats at Verneuil and elsewhere did not end the interest of continental rulers in Scotland as a source of troops. The alliance of 1428 between Charles VII and James I, which brought the Scottish king not just the marriage

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<sup>77</sup> D’Escouchy, *Chronique*, iii, 234.

<sup>78</sup> Autrand and Contamine, ‘Remarques’, 107.

<sup>79</sup> This is indicated by the letters of Arnold duke of Guelders to the duke of Burgundy giving permission for the latter to negotiate the marriages of his daughters to the king of Scots and duke of Austria on 6 September and the letters issued by James II on 5 November giving Crichton and Ralston powers to agree his marriage with a lady from the house of Guelders and alliances with the dukes of Burgundy and Guelders (*Inventaires Sommaires des Archives départementales: Nord*, volume 1 part 1, 297).

<sup>80</sup> Autrand and Contamine, ‘Remarques’, 105; D’Escouchy, *Chronique*, i, 184-5.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Basin, *Histoire de Charles VII*, ed. C. Samaran, 2 volumes (Paris, 1965), i, 92-3; B. Chevalier, ‘Les Ecossais dans l’armée de Charles VII, 82-94; Ditcham, ‘Employment of foreign mercenary troops’, 14-52.

<sup>82</sup> R. Vaughan, *John the Fearless* (London, 1966), 260.

of his daughter to the Dauphin Louis but also promised possession of the county of Saintonge, was linked to the dispatch of another Scottish army, of 6,000 men, to serve Charles.<sup>83</sup> In the event this force was never sent. By the time the marriage was celebrated in 1436, the French king did not need a Scottish army. While he continued to keep his personal guard of Scots and employed others in his ordonnance companies, after 1430 Charles did not want a force of the size or independence of the earlier Scottish armies. However, other princes may have been interested.<sup>84</sup> In the 1460s Duke Francis II of Brittany and Philip of Burgundy's son, Charles, would negotiate for the support of the Scottish government in the form of sizeable contingents of soldiers.<sup>85</sup> It is possible that in 1449 Duke Philip was exploring the possibility of obtaining such support in the manner of both his father and son. His alliance with James II specified mutual military aid in unequivocal terms. While, as stated above, the terms excluded Scottish assistance to Burgundy against Scotland's ally the French king, the duke's military concerns in the early 1450s were with German princes and with the growing hostility of the city of Ghent.<sup>86</sup> Against these enemies, Scottish soldiers could have proved useful.

Scottish martial activities dovetailed with diplomatic objectives in a way which was far from unique. In the decade after 1450 James II continued this approach. His letters to Charles VII repeatedly informed the French king of his military plans and actions, urging him to participate in a common conflict against England.<sup>87</sup> Charles had, by then, expelled the English from Normandy and Gascony and refused to embark on further campaigns but James may have been trying to repeat the tactics employed by him or in his name in 1448-9. However, if the Scottish king's envoys sought to encourage Charles to make war in July 1449, why did the Scots then enter their own truce with the English a few weeks later? The most obvious reason is that, by summer 1449, the Scots had achieved their goals by securing their king's marriage, removing immediate concerns about an Anglo-French peace, and proclaiming their value as an ally. The costs and damages of the war with the destruction of southern burghs and wider plundering by English forces may have outweighed the benefits of continued warfare. Though the initial truces were for a few weeks, there was no desire to

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<sup>83</sup> RPS1428/7/3-4; Archives Nationales (France) J678 no. 27.

<sup>84</sup> Ditcham, 'Employment of foreign mercenary troops, 64, 112-5; P. Contamine, 'Scottish Soldiers in France in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century: mercenaries, immigrants or Frenchmen in the making?', in G.G. Simpson, *The Scottish Soldier Abroad* (Edinburgh, 1992), 16-30.

<sup>85</sup> Morice, *Preuves*, iii, columns 159-60; *Mémoires de Philippe de Comynes*, ed. Godefroy et Lenglet du Fresnoy, 4 volumes (Paris, 1747), ii, 460-3.

<sup>86</sup> Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, 293-6, 306-12.

<sup>87</sup> Stevenson, *Letters and Papers*, i, 301-3, 315-8, 319-22, 326-7, 328-9, 330-1; M.K. Jones, 'Edward IV, the earl of Warwick and the Yorkist claim to the throne', *Historical Research*, 70 (1997), 342-52, 349-50.

renew the conflict despite reports of Charles VII's successful conquest of upper Normandy in late 1449. It is also striking that, while James II ratified the alliance and agreements with the duke of Burgundy before his wedding, the alliances with Charles and the dukes of Brittany and Austria were not finalised until late December.<sup>88</sup> There was clearly no rush to confirm these apparently important alliances, let alone participate in a military coalition against England.

Given the efforts of the Scottish envoys during the preceding twelve months these delays may have appeared duplicitous. However the timing of the ratification and the motives behind Scottish decisions during the previous two years were also bound up with the kingdom's political life. Central to this was King James II himself. James had turned seventeen in October 1447. A month earlier a letter in his name to Charles VII, James had reported that 'at the present time ... we enjoy bodily health and, with the happy days of youth passing, we hold our kingdom in the tranquillity of peace'.<sup>89</sup> Any peace had only occurred after a politically-disturbed minority in which James's person was used as the basis for the authority of a shifting group of councillors.<sup>90</sup> By 1447-8 there are signs that the young king was, as he stated, moving out of tutelage and shaping royal policy on certain matters. The issue of James's own marriage was central to this, as a vital concern for both the king and his subjects. As the Breton alliance demonstrated, James lacked an heir who was male and resident in Scotland. Without these, the stability of dynasty of realm was in question.

Moreover, between November 1447 and June 1448 there were significant changes in the offices held by James's councillors. In November 1447, following the death of the incumbent, William lord Crichton had resumed office as chancellor of Scotland. He had held this post from 1439 until 1445, using it to direct royal policy.<sup>91</sup> Crichton had been stripped of the office as part of his surrender in the summer of 1445 during a period of civil war which left William's rivals, the Livingstons and Douglasses, as the dominant figures around the king.<sup>92</sup> Crichton's rehabilitation may represent a gradual rapprochement with his former enemies but, given the trust and favour which James II would later show to William's family, it could also suggest the will of the young king at work. This is more explicit in a second shift in office-holding. At some point between early May and late June 1448, James Livingston's

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<sup>88</sup> *RMS*, ii, nos 294, 296; Autrand and Contamine, 'Remarques' 107-8; Chmel. *Materialen*, i, part 2, 294

<sup>89</sup> Stevenson, *Letters*, 194-5.

<sup>90</sup> A.R. Borthwick, 'The King, Council and Councillors, c. 1430-1460', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh (1989), 56-186; Brown, 'Vile Times': Walter Bower's last book and the minority of James II', *SHR*, 79 (2000), 165-88, 178-80.

<sup>91</sup> Borthwick, 'King, Council and Councillors', 27, 57, 82, 125-43, 145.

<sup>92</sup> McGladdery, *James II*, 53.



position as keeper of the king's person, which he had held for three years, was terminated.<sup>93</sup> This did not signify the eclipse of the Livingston family. James Livingston was appointed royal chamberlain in late June and with his father, Alexander, and other kinsmen continued to witness royal charters.<sup>94</sup> However at the point when his marriage was being negotiated and just before he made his first royal progress into northern Scotland in July 1448, the end of James's formal tutelage was being signalled.<sup>95</sup>

This period of emerging royal will and authority was one of risk and opportunity for the king's councillors. Crichton's successes on the embassy probably heightened his standing with the king. By contrast, the Livingstons were caught up in the consequences of the marriage as the king's financial officers. The need to supply adequate resources to support Queen Marie created strains. In August 1449 James acknowledged that the royal comptroller, Robert Livingston, was owed nearly £1000 by the crown which James undertook to pay from the queen's dowry.<sup>96</sup> The following month the comptroller was arrested along with James and Alexander Livingston and other members of the family, in part as a way of wiping out the king's debts and resuming possession of royal properties.

There was another powerful influence on these relations. William eighth earl of Douglas and his brothers were the most powerful lineage in Scotland beneath the king. The earls of Douglas and Ormond took leading roles in the account of recent Anglo-Scottish warfare in the 'Auchinleck Chronicle' and the family was the focus of the encounter with the Burgundians at Stirling. Both events reflected the status of the Douglas reputation beyond Scotland. In this context, the stress which chronicle accounts placed on the strength of Earl William's retinue would have triggered memories. Archibald fourth earl of Douglas and his sons had fought for Charles VII between 1419 and 1424 at the head of armies of Scottish soldiers.<sup>97</sup> This earl had previously concluded an agreement with Philip duke of Burgundy's father, in which Douglas had promised to serve Duke John with 4,000 men in Flanders or Artois.<sup>98</sup> From early 1448 Earl William sought to reclaim his uncle's continental role. He was probably involved in the planning of the embassy of Crichton and Ralston and, typically, used the mission to push the rights of his house.<sup>99</sup> As well as his credentials, Crichton also

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<sup>93</sup> *RMS*, ii, nos 618, 1791; W. Fraser, *History of the Carnegies: Earls of Southesk and their kindred*, 2 volumes (Edinburgh, 1867), ii, no. 6. Livingston had held the office since 1445 (*RMS*, ii, no. 286).

<sup>94</sup> *RMS*, ii, no. 691; NRS GD124/1/1; NRS GD212/box 6/page 46.

<sup>95</sup> Fraser, *Carnegies*, ii, no. 69.

<sup>96</sup> W. Fraser, *The Stirlings of Keir* (Edinburgh, 1858), 224-5.

<sup>97</sup> Ditcham, 'Employment of foreign mercenary troops', 16-52; Brown, *Black Douglasses*, 217-24.

<sup>98</sup> Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 260.

<sup>99</sup> Earl William had witnessed royal charters in January and April 1448 suggesting he was in attendance on the king as the embassy was prepared (National Library of Scotland [NLS] C VI, 1, B55 no. 11; W. Fraser, *The*

carried a letter for the Douglases on his travels. This letter was written to Charles VII in the name of the elderly Margaret Stewart dowager countess of Douglas, James II's aunt and the widow of the fourth earl of Douglas. Margaret was also the grandmother of Earl William's own wife. The letter asked that the French king hear the dowager's claim to a share of the French estates which he had given to her husband 'considering how very dearly I have bought them by the blood of my ... husband and of my children in your service'.<sup>100</sup> Earl William's hand was behind this request for part of the rich duchy of Touraine.<sup>101</sup> It may have been employed as a means of reminding Charles of his debt to the Douglas family rather than in serious hope of securing the province. Charles VII's response was courteous but firm. The French king recalled his 'good love' and 'remembrance' of the fourth earl and named Earl William as 'his good kinsman in his singular recommendation'.<sup>102</sup> He pointed out that Touraine had been granted as an apanage on terms which precluded claims by women, either as heiresses or dowagers. Moreover the fourth earl's son had never done homage for the lands and his male line was now extinct, justifying Charles's resumption of possession.<sup>103</sup>

The French king also replied to another approach by Earl William. 'Concerning the service which my lord of Douglas offered to do for the king, the king thanks him and if it happens that he has need to seek the said lord of Douglas for people or other things, he would always follow the terms of the alliances between him and the king of Scots, his brother and ally'.<sup>104</sup> This suggests that Earl William had followed the fourth earl in making a direct offer of military service to Charles VII as a means of securing his predecessor's French lands. Charles, whose situation had changed greatly since 1424, had no interest in this offer but Douglas may have made a parallel approach to Philip of Burgundy. Though there is no evidence of an agreement between the duke and the earl, in autumn 1450 Douglas travelled to the Netherlands. On 12 October at Lille 'the earl of Douglas and many knights and squires of the kingdom of Scotland' dined with Philip duke of Burgundy and 'many other great lords of the household of my lord'.<sup>105</sup> This gathering was part of the earl's pilgrimage to Rome to mark the Papal jubilee. The meeting at Lille also represented another retracing of the fourth earl of Douglas's steps, perhaps in hopes of a similar contract with the duke of Burgundy. His

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*Scotts of Buccleuch*, 3 volumes (Edinburgh, 1878), ii, no. 42; W. Fraser, *Memorials of the Family of Wemyss of Wemyss*, 2 volumes (Edinburgh, 1888), ii, no. 53).

<sup>100</sup> Stevenson, *Letters*, i, 20-1.

<sup>101</sup> The letter was written, not at Margaret's normal residences in Galloway, but at Douglas Castle.

<sup>102</sup> Fraser, *Douglas*, iii, no. 305.

<sup>103</sup> Fraser, *Douglas*, iii, no. 305.

<sup>104</sup> Fraser, *Douglas*, iii, no. 305.

<sup>105</sup> *Inventaires Sommaires des Archives du Nord*, viii, 112.

predecessor had sought to create a career on the continent prior to James I's return to Scotland in 1424. In his offer to Charles VII and meeting with Duke Philip, Earl William may have been seeking the same.

If so, Douglas's efforts misfired. Charles VII, who had long experience of independent vassals, made clear that he would only deal with Scotland via her king rather than individual lords however powerful. The prospect of Douglas in Burgundian service or nurturing claims on Touraine would have been unwelcome to Charles. There is an intriguing letter to the French king from William Turnbull the new bishop of Glasgow and close councillor of James II in July 1450. Turnbull reported that Charles had asked the bishop to assist James with regard to the matters which he has sent to Scotland.<sup>106</sup> While this is obviously vague, the early sixteenth-century Scottish chronicle composed by John Law named Turnbull and Crichton as the councillors who would persuade James to harry Douglas's lands whilst the earl was on pilgrimage in late 1450.<sup>107</sup> Both bishop and chancellor had their own reasons for hostility to the earl, but there is the possibility that Charles VII, to whom James II would remain closely attached, provided a means of pushing the Scottish king to violence against the pilgrim earl by revealing Douglas's search for continental service.<sup>108</sup>

James II's attack on the lands of the Douglasses altered everything. It proved to be the first of three conflicts between the king and the magnate family which would see James kill Earl William in 1452 and, in 1455, finally bring about the downfall of the dynasty. During these clashes James would keep Charles VII informed of his actions, perhaps recognising the French king's direct interest in events.<sup>109</sup> King James's initial attack on the earl in late 1450 probably put paid to any co-operation between Douglas and Burgundy. On his side, Duke Philip would hardly have wished to antagonise his recent ally and his great-niece's husband. As with Charles VII, Burgundy put his faith in the Scottish king over his greatest subject.

The events of 1448 to 1450 marked the end of the continental ambitions of the Douglasses. The evidence suggests that the family used its influence with the royal government to push its own agenda during these years.<sup>110</sup> However, these goals were only part of a web of individual and collective interests behind Scottish military and political

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<sup>106</sup> Stevenson, *Letters*, i, 305-6.

<sup>107</sup> *E.R.*, v, lxxv-vi. For John Law's chronicle see J. Durkan, 'St Andrews in the John Law Cronicle', in *Innes Review*, 25 (1974), 49-62.

<sup>108</sup> McGladdery, *James II*, 101-2.

<sup>109</sup> J. Pinkerton, *History of Scotland from the Accession of the Stewarts to Queen Mary*, 2 volumes (London, 1797) i, 486-8; Stevenson, *Letters*, i, 315-6.

<sup>110</sup> This was also evident in northern Scotland (M. Brown, 'The Great Rupture: Lordship and Politics in North-east Scotland, 1435-1452', *Northern Scotland*, 5 (2014), 1-25)

activities in these years. These illustrate that, as Lazzarini observes, there was no easy gap between ‘diplomacy’ and ‘internal’ politics’.<sup>111</sup> The marriages of the king and his sisters with their consequences for the future of the realm and the royal dynasty, as well as the connections they formed with continental princes, were one obvious example of this. The possibility, as stated in the treaty of 1448, of Duke Francis of Brittany ascending to the Scottish throne provides one, unfulfilled consequence of such connections. The French alliance with its established importance for Scotland’s security and status represented a second deep bond between Scotland and the wider world. It allowed Scots like Nicholas Chalmers and William Monypenny to make careers at the French royal court and, in turn, use their positions to support the continuance of this bond.

Though apparently removed from the centre of war and politics in the late 1440s and early 1450s, not necessarily a bad thing if Scotland’s position is compared with that of Brittany, the kingdom was in no sense remote from events in northern France. Scottish politics, like those of Burgundy, Brittany, France and England, cannot be understood in terms of a distinct, insulated bloc. The multiple goals of the envoys sent from Scotland in 1448, the complicated link between warfare in the Anglo-Scottish borders and the tensions on the frontiers of Normandy, and the shifting relations between the rulers of England, France and Burgundy were the shape of things to come. From 1450 onwards, Scotland’s kings and their councillors found themselves part of an increasingly interconnected world which extended from the Mediterranean to Scandinavia and in which old certainties of friendship and enmity could not be relied upon. Internal conflicts could not be contained but became ongoing factors in relations between realms. James II’s conflict with the Douglasses, whose origins were not unconnected with external relationships, would leave the exiled earl of Douglas as a valuable asset for the English in their dealings with Scotland. The parallel flight of Henry VI, his queen and his heir into Scotland would make Scotland a focus of international diplomacy in 1461-3. For the Scots the years after 1450 would prove a period of greater opportunity and risk. With hindsight, the activities of the Scottish king, his council, envoys and servants, in 1448 and 1449 in shaping Scotland’s external links and contacts may be regarded as the start of this new era.

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<sup>111</sup> I. Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350-1520* (Oxford, 2015), 13