

1333- HALIDON HILL

On June 15th in 1327 a raiding Scottish army headed by James Douglas with support from the Earls of Mar and Moray broke a peace treaty agreed in 1323 with nine more years to run.

They laid waste the North of England threatening the new regime formed by Roger Mortimer and Queen Isabella who had deposed Edward the II and placed a very young Edward III on the throne of England.

Power had gradually shifted away from the king of England and into the hands of the powerful leading barons in England, whilst the Scottish king was determined to free Scotland from subjection by any means available.

Since 1311 the Scots had raided English lands in the North what made the raids complex was the Scottish lords held lands in both England and Scotland being Norman lords.

This created tensions on both sides of the border and led to split loyalties between the elites who held lands in both kingdoms.

These conflicts were known as the wars of independence they started in 1290 A.D. when Scotland was left without a heir due to the death of the maid of Norway the young queen of Scotland.

What followed was a free for all with no less than thirteen challengers all seeking the throne and the kingdom of Scotland.

Many Scottish warrior were killed in the civil wars that followed between the varied rivals for the throne and power.

Robert the Bruce had widowed just as many Scottish rivals as English during his lifetime and reign.

When John Balliol rebelled in 1296 Edward the first looked to rule Scotland directly and so the bitter fighting increased, and this led to the battles of Dunbar, Stirling Bridge a year later.

With the Scottish forces led by William Wallace and the Earl of Moray who was killed in the heat of battle.

During the battle of Dunbar, the Bruce's father and son fought for Edward the first against the Comyns who supported John Balliol as King Of Scotland.

They repelled the Scottish forces led by the Comyns their hated rivals in Scotland.

With the Bruces being Norman landowners, they had a duty to support their liege lord in battle.

Wallace was captured at Falkirk in 1299 and the rebellions driving force was halted in its tracks.

However, the Scottish continued to conduct guirilla style tactics with lightning type raids against the forces sent by Edward the I to control Scotland.

Robert the Bruce and John Comyn controlled the Scottish rival forces at this time and during a meeting held at Selkirk Bruce was badly beaten in a fight with Comyn after which he resigned his position as commander and guardian.

Bruce again pledged his fealty to Edward I.

With his father giving up his lands in Scotland and retiring to his lands in England Robert the Bruce became the landowner of Carrick and so the pressure of serving his family or Scotland was looming large he would soon need to decide between them and which path to walk.

With all the unrest and uncertainty in Scotland he was perhaps right to take a back seat biding his time before taking arms again. In 1304 Robert Bruce senior died and Robert agreed an alliance with his hated rival John Comyn.

Fate had made the decision for him due to his hatred for his rival John Comyn,.who had revealed their joint alliance plans to Edward the first forcing Robert the Bruce to flee for his life from the forces sent to arrest him.

Robert the Bruce arranged a meeting with Comyn, still burning with hatred for his rival they met in the church of the Grey Friars Dumfries in February 1306 and inside the church both argued and exchanged insults.

Robert the Bruce drew a concealed dagger and stabbed out at his hated rival beneath the high altar.

From that point on he was branded a traitor by Edward the first for turning against him and murdering John Comyn who refused to take up arms against Edward the first.

Robert the Bruce headed for Scone where he was crowned Robert the first of Scotland on March 25th 1306.

Robert continued to be a thorn in the side of England throughout his reign and this resulted in the weakening of English power hastened by the defeat of Bannockburn suffered under Edward the II in June 1314.

Edward II was later deposed in 1327 by his queen Isabella and Mortimer her lover and imprisoned before being murdered whilst held prisoner.

England headed to meet the Scottish raiders in the field however the confidence was not high, and the resulting campaign known as the Wearside campaign was a

failure that a young Edward III aged just fifteen had to endure with great sorrow at its outcome.

Soon afterwards Mortimer and Isabella in 1328 were forced to accept peace terms with the Scots that granted them independence.

The treaty of Northampton officially known around England as the shameful peace.

Robert the Bruce passed away in 1329 and the Scottish suffered the loss of James Douglas whilst campaigning in Spain against the Saracens in 1332.

Scotland soon after lost Thomas Randolph Earl of Moray the last experienced military leader that again weakened them and led to disputes and conflicts within the Scottish ranks.

England by comparison saw the return of the barons who had opposed Mortimer's rise to power and with the popular young king Edward III leading them the tables would soon be turned on the Scots on the field of battle also.

Now Henry Beaumont Thomas Wake and David Strathbogie, all stood beside Edward the third the young king had restored pride in 1330 taking the throne in a daring coup from Mortimer and his mother Queen Isabella.

In 1332 the Dupplin moor campaign saw the clash of an eager new invigorated English army driving back on Scottish soil.

Henry Beaumont, Thomas Wake along with the other disinherited lords now set out to retake their lands by force allied together they had in their ranks Walter Mauny one of Edward III trusted household knights.

Edward Balliol was ransomed from his French prison cell by Henry Beaumont and the disinherited now had a Scottish figurehead and they intended to push forward with arms, his claim to the throne of Scotland.

They gathered in Yorkshire with the king well aware of their plans he could not openly back them due to the treaty of Northampton.

Two Scottish forces awaited the arrival of the disinherited and Balliol on Scottish soil.

Arriving by sea they held the threat of catching their rivals by surprise they could land near Edinburgh or Stirling.

Aboard circa eighty ships they sailed for the firth of forth in confident mood with an array of military elite leaders eager for battle and the recovery of lost lands.

Figures such as Richard Talbot, Ralph Stafford, Henry Ferrers, Thomas Ughtred, Gilbert De Umfraville and Fulk Fitzwarin along with Walter Mauny would become

famous military men by their actions and many victories in the heat of battle.

After six days on the seas they landed and formed up in good order and prepared to engage their bitter rivals.

They had landed at Kinghorn then decided to march towards Dunfermline reaching the Earn river on August 10th 1332.

Now the two forces stood facing each other over the river Earn both forces waited to see who would blink first in the face off.

The Scottish army heavily outnumbered the smaller invading English forces and they relaxed that night and drank wine and ale confident of their numerical position of strength.

They expected many of the English forces would flee under the cover of darkness, but they had made a fatal error by underestimating their rivals resolve and bravery.

Just before midnight the English crossed the river and attacked the Scottish forces whilst they slept on Dupplin moor.

The morning light revealed they had only encountered part of their rivals forces the main body was now advancing towards them in full battle armour their shields glinting in the morning sunshine.

Estimates put the Scottish force in the region of circa 30,000 to 40,000 strong and it's said they outnumbered the English force under Henry Beaumont by at least ten to one.

Seeing the advancing ranks before them the elation of the night attack was soon lost as the reality of the task and endless lines of battle marched towards them.

Fulk Fitzwarin rallied the English men at arms and infantry asking them to stand tall and think only of defeating those marching towards them and to be bold of heart.

Disputes broke out between the Scottish battle leaders who accused each other of being supporters of Balliol and traitors to Scotland.

Bizarre though it was that in the heat of the moment such insults should be exchanged perhaps it was an indication of the shock and anxiety the river crossing during the night and bold first strike had created anxiety and doubt among the Scottish ranks.

They appeared to be very eager to join battle without maintaining good order as they advanced mistakes made in position would leave them open to counter attacks by the English archers posted on the flanks of the men at arms and infantry in their newly formed battle lines.

What followed was a huge crush which initially pushed the English front lines backwards, but this crush also left the Scottish frontlines open to the archers posted on the English flanks who could now fire at will into their rivals unprotected sides and rear from close range.

Bodies piled upon bodies as the Scottish soldiers fell in the melee and were crushed by their fellow soldiers as they advanced behind them.

HALIDON HILL THE CAMPAIGN Edward the third was twenty years old in 1333 and having been elected king after deposing Mortimer and his mother in 1330 he was eager to put right the Wearside campaign in 1327 which was a failure that led to the peace treaty known in England as the "SHAMEFUL PEACE," being agreed with the Scots.

Jean Le Bell the chronicler had served on the Wearside campaign a soldier under Jean Count De Beaumont and alongside Edward and was to be the voice of the early years of the Hundred year war with France.

Edward was a boy of fourteen during that ill -fated campaign now Edward was an adult who carried the hopes of England already viewed a heroic figure after his bravery in overcoming the much loathed Mortimer and his men in a daring and was more importantly backed by trusted battle- hardened warlords who had been bitter enemies and rivals of the past regime led by Mortimer and Queen Isabella.

Edward held the destiny of the kingdom and it's people within his hands going forwards and he was determined to restore the lost glory and reputation England held during his Grandfathers Edward the first's reign.

He had the full support of the kingdom and the barons due to his eagerness to rebuild the credibility and loss of pride and fighting spirit suffered first under his

father's regime later Mortimer's and his mother's regime.

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