

One Last Malcolm, a William, and Two Alexanders

Malcolm IV was the last of his name, perhaps because of his regale nickname: The Maiden. He succeeded David I in 1153 at the tender age of twelve. He was renowned for his deep religious beliefs and keen interest chivalry and warfare (although he did not participate personally in either).

Malcolm's major contribution to Scottish history was his acceptance of the English Earldom of Huntingdon from Henry II in 1157. The Earldom was an extremely wealthy one and produced more revenue for the Scots King than all the rest of his Scottish properties combined! The problem was that Malcolm swore a fealty oath to Henry for the Earldom. Henry (also known as "The Plantagenet" and founder of that English dynasty) was a true Norman and believed that Malcolm had sworn totally fealty ... meaning that Scotland was now a fief under Henry. This was to prove to be a major point of contention between Scotland and England for the next 200 years.

Malcolm died, unmarried, in 1165 at the age of 24.

If Malcolm was The Maiden, the same cannot be said about his successor, William I who earned the moniker of "The Lion". William was Malcolm's younger brother but as different as can be imagined. William reigned for almost 50 years; the second longest of any Scottish King. He was a big, strong man who actively and joyfully engaged in battle.

It was William who made the Lion Rampant the heraldic royal emblem, replacing the Boar, but it was not for this reason that he is known as The Lion. Rather it was because he was called "The Lion of Justice" by one of his chroniclers after his death.

William supported rebels against Henry II and was captured by the English in 1174 during a battle in Northumbria. He was held in Normandy until the Scottish nation could raise his ransom. The ransom, in addition to money, required William to acknowledge Henry as his feudal overlord. This was confirmed in the Treaty of Falaise which was in effect until the reign of Richard the Lionheart 15 years later.

William married a granddaughter of Henry I of England and had three daughters and a son. He died in 1214 and was buried in Arbroath Abbey, which he had founded and was to be the sight of the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath.

Alexander II became King of Scots upon the death of his father, William I, in 1214. His rather long reign (35 years) was marked by almost continuous warfare. He spent much of his time bringing various regions of Scotland under royal control, most notably Argyll in 1235. He was not as successful in his many attempts to secure the Western Isles from Norway although he tried bribery, battle, and even outright purchase.

His relations with England were varied depending on who was King of England. He supported the Barons in their revolt against John; even bringing a Scottish army all the way to the south coast of England in 1215 (when the *Magna Carta* was signed at Runnymede). He had better relations with John's son Henry III., even marrying Joan, the sister of Henry. The marriage was happy but without children: she died in 1238.

Alexander second marriage, to Marie de Coucy, in 1239 produced a male heir: the future Alexander III. Alexander II died of fever in the Inner Hebrides while attempting once again to bring the Isles under his control. He was buried at Melrose Abbey in 1249.

Alexander III was only eight years old when he began his reign under a regency of competing factions. At age ten he was married to Margaret, daughter of England's Henry III, who proceeded to demand that his son-in-law pay him homage for the Scottish kingdom. Alexander and all the regency factions united to deny the claim.

When he turned 21 in 1262, he truly became his own man. He released all the members of the regency council from any further involvement with his government, much to their surprise and consternation. He then declared that he would finish his father's incorporation of the Western Isles. He faced the King of Norway, Haakon, in battle readiness but was able to convince the older warrior that negotiations were to the advantage of both. He managed to keep the negotiations going until the sailing season was almost past. Following the Battle of Largs in 1263, Haakon left with his fleet of long ships for Norway. Haakon died in the Orkneys before getting home and his successor, Magnus the Law-Mender, signed the Treaty of Perth in 1266, effectively giving up the Inner and Outer Hebrides to Scotland.

He and Margaret had three children but none survived Alexander. Margaret died in 1274 and Alexander did not remarry for over a decade. He finally remarried the 20 year old Yolande de Dreux in 1285. The story goes that he was so in love with his young bride that one evening he raced his horse ahead of his escort in his rush to get back to her for the evening. His horse slipped over an embankment and Alexander was killed. The child that Yolande was bearing at his death was still-born and so the crown fell to his grand-daughter Margaret, known as the Maid of Norway due to her marriage to the King of Norway. Margaret was on her way to Scotland when her ship sank and she died. Scotland was without a monarch.

NEXT: The *Interregnum* and John Balliol "Empty Cloak"

--- Jeffrey E Kelso, FSA Scot

For Further Reading:

Nigel Tranter has written many books covering this time period: *Lord of the Isles*, *Tapestry of the Boar*, *Sword of State*, *Envoy Extraordinaire*, *Crusader*, and *True Thomas*. My personal favorites are the first and last of these.