

III.

INEDITED NOTICES, FROM THE ROTULI SCACCARII REGUM SCOTORUM,
OF JOHN BARBOUR, ARCHDEACON OF ABERDEEN, AUTHOR OF "THE
BRUCE." BY JOSEPH ROBERTSON, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Archdeacon Barbour has himself marked in so far the date of the composition of his poem of "The Bruce." In speaking of King Robert II. he writes—

“ And in the tyme of the compiling
Off this buk, this Robert wes King ;
And off hys kynrik paffit was
Fyve yer ; and wes the yer off grace
A thousand, thre hundyr, fevynty
And fyve ; and off his eld fexty.”¹

The passage which thus bears to have been written in the year 1375, occurs in an advanced portion of the work—within less, indeed, than a third part from the end.

Now, about two years after this time—or, more precisely, between the 5th of February 1376–7 and the 14th of March 1377–8—we find a sum of ten pounds paid to the author by command of the King, the same Robert II. of whom he had spoken. The collectors of the customs of the burgh of Aberdeen, in accounting to the Exchequer for the period I have named, take credit to themselves for this payment :

“ Et Domino Archidiacono Abirdonenfi de mandato Regis per literam
oftenfam super comptum . x . libre . ”²

It seems no unreasonable conjecture to infer that this gratuity was bestowed by the Sovereign upon learning that Barbour had completed his great poem ; and, if this conclusion be entertained, the date of that work is circumscribed within sufficiently narrow limits.

The sum which I have mentioned was not the only reward which King Robert II. conferred upon the poet who sang the achievements of the heroic founder of his dynasty. By a charter, which is printed in the Register of the Bishopric of Aberdeen,³ the King granted to Archdeacon Barbour, from the crown rents, or

¹ Dr Jamieson's Bruce and Wallace, vol. i., p. 274.

² Comptum Customariorum burgi de Aberdene, 5. Feb. 1376.—14. Mar. 1377. (Rot. Scaccarii, 82.)

³ Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis, vol. i., pp. 129, 130.

burgh mails, of Aberdeen, a pension of twenty shillings, payable at Martinmas yearly, not for the poet's life only, but for ever—the grantee receiving the unusual power of bequeathing the pension in mortmain. The King's grant is dated at Kyndroucht in Marr, or Castletown of Braemar, on the 29th of August 1378, a short time, it will be observed, after the date of the first donation of ten pounds. Availing himself of the permission contained in the grant—applying the grant, indeed, to the purpose for which it had obviously been made—the Archdeacon of Aberdeen made over the annuity in mortmain to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Aberdeen, for a yearly mass to be celebrated for his soul there, upon the Wednesday after *Quasi Modo* Sunday, or the first Sunday after Easter. The deed by which the pension was thus mortgaged is printed in the Register of the Bishopric of Aberdeen:¹ it is dated, from the Archdeacon's parsonage of Rayne in the Garioch, on the 24th of June 1380. It does not reserve the poet's liferent of the pension, and took effect at once. At the same time we learn from the Records of Exchequer that the grant was paid to Barbour himself for the fifteen years that he survived.² The first payment that followed upon the royal charter is thus entered in the account of the baillies of the burgh of Aberdeen from the 13th of March 1377-8 to the 31st of March 1379:—

“ Et Domino Johanni Barbar Archidiacono Aberdonensi percipienti per cartam hereditariam pro se et quibuscunque assignatis suis eciam ad manum mortuam viginti solidos de firmis dicti burghi per annum / que quidem carta ostensa fuit super comptum vt patet per literas dicti Archidiaconi de recepto eciam ostensas super comptum . xx . solidi . ”³

The terms of the last payment made to Barbour himself, I need not recite, as they have already been published in the Selections from the Exchequer Rolls printed for the Bannatyne Club.⁴ The date of that payment is between the 25th of March 1393-4, and the 5th of April 1395. As the pension was due at Martinmas, it must have been last paid to Barbour on the 11th of November

¹ Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis, vol. i., pp. 129, 130. The Archdeacon's mortification was confirmed by a charter under the Great Seal of King Robert III., between April 1390 and April 1396. (Compota Camerariorum Scotiæ, vol. ii., pp. 379*, 380*; Robertson's Index to the Missing Charters, p. 138, No. 21.)

² Compota Camerariorum Scotiæ, vol. ii., pp. 153, 250, 325. Comptum Ballivorum burghi de Abiriden, reddit. apud Perth, 10. Feb. 1389. (Rot. Scaccarii, 102.)

³ Comptum Ballivorum burghi de Aberden, 13. Mar. 1377.—31. Mar. 1379. (Rot. Scaccarii, 85.)

⁴ Compota Camerariorum Scotiæ, vol. ii., p. 325.

1394. The next account rendered in Exchequer by the bailies of Aberdeen, extended from the 5th of April 1395 to the 25th of April 1396; and here the pension—due, it will be remembered, at Martinmas 1395—is paid, in terms of Barbour's bequest, to the Dean and Chapter of Aberdeen. This account has also been published in the Selections from the Records of Exchequer printed for the Bannatyne Club.¹ Taken together with the account of the bailies of Aberdeen, in the immediately preceding year, and with the accounts of the collectors of customs of that burgh, to be adverted to hereafter, it fixes in so far the date of the death of the venerable author of "The Bruce," which Lord Hailes² was the first to approximate, from another source—an inquest in the Register of the Bishopric of Aberdeen.³ That document is dated, at what was Barbour's benefice of Rayne in the Garioch, on the 10th of August 1398; and it sets forth that his death happened more than two years and a half before—"scilicet per duos annos cum dimidio et ultra"—that is, some time before the 10th of February 1396-7.

The pension thus transferred, on the death of Barbour, to the dignitaries of his cathedral church, continued, so far as appears, to be paid to them with sufficient regularity;⁴ nor is there anything requiring notice in the yearly record of the payment, until about thirty years after the poet's demise, when we find him described as the person "who compiled the Book of the Acts of the most illustrious prince, the sometime Lord King Robert Bruce." The account of the bailies of Aberdeen rendered in Exchequer for the period between Whitsunday 1427 and the 30th of April 1428, has this passage:—

"Et Decano et Capitulo ecclesie cathedralis Abirdonenfis percipientibus annuatim viginti solidos de firmis dicti burgi ex infeodacione quondam Regis Roberti secundi ad manum mortuam perpetuam vt patet in rotulis compotorum precedencium pro anniuersario quondam Magistri Johannis Barbare Archidiaconi Abirdonenfis qui compilauit Librum de Gestis illuftriffimi principis quondam Domini Regis Robert Bruys · sub periculo computancium de anno computi · xx · folidi · " ⁵

This passage is repeated without change in the next account which was rendered in Exchequer by the bailies of Aberdeen, for the period, namely, be-

¹ *Compota Camerariorum Scotiæ*, vol. ii., pp. 379*, 380*.

² *Annals of Scotland*, vol. ii., p. 3, *note*, edit. 1779; vol. ii., p. 3, *note*, edit. 1819.

³ *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, vol. i., pp. 201, 202.

⁴ *Compota Camerariorum Scotiæ*, vol. ii., p. 402, 403, 467, 468, 527, 582, 667; vol. iii., p. 170.

⁵ *Computum Ballivorum burgi de Abirdene, Pentecost. 1427.—30. April 1428.* (*Rot. Scaccarii*, 177.)

tween the 30th of April 1428 and the 18th of April 1429.¹ The terms of the immediately following account, for the period between the 18th of April 1429 and the 21st of March 1429-30, show a slight alteration: the grant is now described as having been given to Barbour "for compiling the Book of the Acts of the sometime King Robert de Brus:"

"Et Decano et Capitulo ecclesie cathedralis Abirdonenfis percipientibus annuatim viginti solidos de firmis dicti burgi ex infeodacione Regis Roberti secundi pro anniuersario quondam Magiftri Johannis Barber pro compilacione Libri de Gestis quondam Regis Roberti de Brus sub periculo computantis de anno computi . xx . solidi ."²

These terms continue to be repeated for many years without any material alteration. The account of the year 1434 is published in the Selections from the Records of Exchequer printed for the Bannatyne Club;³ and I may here transcribe the entry in the account for the year 1455-6:

"Et Decano et Capitulo ecclesie cathedralis Abirdonenfis percipientibus annuatim viginti solidos pro anniuersario quondam Magiftri Johannis Barberii pro compilacione Libri de Gestis Regis Roberti Bruys in plenam solucionem dicte pensonis de anno computi . xx . solidi ."⁴

This perpetual annuity of twenty shillings was, then, the King's reward for the poem of "The Bruce." But Barbour wrote another poem of which the chief subject was "The Stuart." Thus Wyntown says—

"The Stewartis orygenale
The Archedekyne has tretim hal
In metyr fayre, mare wertwfly,
Than I can thynk be my stady,
Be gud contynwatyown
In succefflyve generatyown."⁵

And again—

"This Nynus had a fone alfua
Sere Dardane Lord de Frygya,

¹ *Computum Ballivorum burgi de Abirdene*, 30. Apr. 1428.—18. Apr. 1429. (*Rot. Scaccarii*, 178.)

² *Computum Ballivorum burgi de Abirdene*, 18. Apr. 1429.—21. Mar. 1429. (*Rot. Scaccarii*, 179.)

³ *Compota Camerariorum Scotiae*, vol. iii., p. 269. This account is erroneously cited by Dr Jamieson as of the year 1424. (*The Bruce and Wallace*, vol. i., p. viii.)

⁴ *Computum Ballivorum burgi de Aberdene*, 28. Jul. 1455.—25. Oct. 1456. (*Rot. Scaccarii*, 224.)

⁵ *Wyntownis Cronykill*, book viii., chap. vii., ll. 143-148; vol. ii., p. 67.

Fra quham Barbere futely
 Has made a propyr genealogy
 Tyl Robert oure fecownd Kyng,
 That Scotland had in governyng.”¹

The work seems to be referred to by Blind Harry, as extant in his time;² and it is quoted and commented upon in more than one copy or continuation of the *Scotichronicon*.³ Let us see, then, if any trace can be found in the Exchequer Records of recompense bestowed upon Barbour for this second poem.

“The Bruce,” as we have seen, was completed in the year 1377 or 1378. The gift of ten pounds, and the perpetual pension of twenty shillings, granted in these years, did not exhaust the royal bounty. Between the 29th of July 1380, and the 24th of October 1381, King Robert II. bestowed upon Barbour the wardship of William of Tulydeff, the heir of a third part of the lands of Ledyntuche and Rothmase, in the Archdeacon’s own parish of Rayne, in the Garioch. The pecuniary value of this gift is uncertain—we know only that the lands of which the minor was heir were rated at 43s. 4d. a-year—but whatever the grant might be worth, Barbour not only enjoyed it for his own lifetime, but was able to bequeath it, for two or three years at least, to another. All this appears from the inquest in the Register of the Bishopric of Aberdeen,⁴ already referred to, as first cited by Lord Hailes. The next notice of Barbour which presents itself is in February 1382–3, when we find him officiating as one of the Auditors of the Exchequer held at Perth between the 6th and 17th days of that month.⁵ This was not the first time that he acted in this capacity: a roll published in the Selections from the Records of Exchequer printed for the Bannatyne Club, shows that on the 18th of February 1373–4, John Barber, Archdeacon of Aberdeen, was both Clerk of Audit of the King’s Household—“Clericus Probationis domus Domini nostri Regis”—with a fee of ten pounds,⁶ and one of the Auditors of the Exchequer sitting at Perth at that time.⁷ He appears in this last capacity yet a third time, as one of the Auditors of the Exchequer which was held at Stirling from the 7th till the 17th of March 1384–5.⁸

¹ Wyntownis Crodykill, book ii., chap. i., ll. 130–135; vol. i., p. 26.

² Dr Jamieson’s *Bruce and Wallace*, vol. ii., p. 2, l. 34.

³ *Johannis de Fordun Scotichronicon*, vol. ii., pp. 60, 542, 543, edit. 1759.

⁴ *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, vol. i., pp. 201, 202. Barbour’s ward, it appears, lived to man’s estate, and fought and fell at Harlaw. (*Id.*, vol. i., pp. 214, 215.)

⁵ *Rot. Scaccarii*, 93.

⁶ *Compta Camerariorum Scotiæ*, vol. ii., p. 32.

⁷ *Id.*, vol. ii., p. 19.

⁸ *Rot. Scaccarii*, 95.

At length, on the 5th of December 1388—about ten years after the completion of “The Bruce”—another yearly pension of the considerable amount of ten pounds is conferred upon Barbour by King Robert II., as a recompense—I think we may safely conjecture—for the composition of “The Stuart.” Wyntown tells us explicitly that the poem conducted its genealogy only to King Robert II., and it is by this King, and within about two years of his death, that Barbour’s second pension is granted. The charter is in these terms:—

“Robertus Dei gratia Rex Scottorum Omnibus probis hominibus fuis ad quos presentes litere peruenerint Salutem Sciatis quod concessimus dilecto nostro Johanni Barbar Archidiacono Abirdonenfi pro suo fideli seruicio nobis impenso decem libras sterlingorum annuatim percipiendas per manus Camerarii nostri qui pro tempore fuerit de magna custuma burgi nostri de Abirden / Tenendas et habendas ac percipiendas eidem Johanni pro toto tempore vite sue ad duos anni terminos consuetos Pentecostes et Sancti Martini in yeme per equales porciones Quare Camerario nostro qui pro tempore fuerit tenore presentium damus firmiter in mandatis quatenus eundem Johannem in predictis decem libris singulis annis integraliter faciat deferui . quam summam sibi in comptis suis annuis inde reddendis visis ipfius Johannis literis de recepto volumus et precipimus per presentes plenius allocari . Datum sub testimonio nostri magni sigilli apud Edynburgh quinto die Decembris anno regni nostri Octodecimo.”¹

The first payments made under this grant were between the 26th of February 1388–9 and the 11th of February 1389–90. They are thus entered in the account rendered in Exchequer by the collectors of the customs of the burgh of Aberdeen for that period:—

“Et Domino Johanni Barbar Archidiacono Abirdonenfi percipienti pro tempore vite decem libras de dono Regis vt patet per literas Regis de precepto et ipfius Domini Johannis de recepto ostensas super comptum . x . libre . ad duos scilicet anni terminos . scilicet . Pentecostes et Sancti Martini in yeme per equales portiones sub magno sigillo figillatas de concessione Regis cuius tenor videatur a tergo rotuli .”²

The pension appears to have been duly paid throughout the seven years that Barbour survived its grant.³ The last payment occurs in the account of the collectors of the customs of Aberdeen, rendered in Exchequer, for the period between

¹ Rot. Scaccarii, 102.

² Comptum Custumariorum burgi de Abirdene, 26. Feb. 1388.—11. Feb. 1389. (Rot. Scaccarii, 102.)

³ Compota Camerariorum Scotiæ, vol. ii., pp. 123, 230.

the 25th of March 1393-4 and the 3d of April 1395.¹ The pension was paid for both terms, Whitsunday and Martinmas, of that year—showing that Barbour survived the 11th of November 1394. Had he lived till Whitsunday 1395, a farther sum of five pounds would have been paid to him; but the account of the collectors of the customs of Aberdeen, rendered in Exchequer, for the period from the 3d of April 1395 to the 25th of April 1396,² shows that no such payment was made. The date of Barbour's death is thus circumscribed within the six months between Martinmas 1394 and Whitsunday 1395. The precise day was probably the 13th of March—the day on which his soul mass was celebrated yearly in the Cathedral of Aberdeen until the ecclesiastical revolution in the middle of the sixteenth century.³ Barbour himself had appointed the commemorative service to be performed on the Wednesday after the first Sunday after Easter; but it was no uncommon practice, on the death of the founder, to shift the service from the day observed in his lifetime, to the anniversary of the day of his death.

Let me allude, before parting, to the controversy⁴ as to the interpretation of three passports granted to Barbour for journeys to Oxford in 1357 and 1364, and to France in 1368.⁵ The object of these journeys is expressly stated in the passports to be the sake of study (*causa studendi*). But the poet was already Archdeacon of Aberdeen; and “what dignitary of the church,” it has been triumphantly asked, “ever thought of returning to his scholastic exercises, or of subjecting himself a second time to academical discipline?”⁶ To this question—setting aside what might be adduced from the usage of other countries⁷—it may be sufficient answer to show that, a century after Barbour's death, when two universities had been established in Scotland, and a third was beginning to rise from its foundations, a Scottish bishop was found in the schools of Paris. The account of the collector of the customs of Dunbarton, Irvine, and the

¹ *Compta Camerariorum Scotiæ*, vol. ii., p. 302.

² *Comptum Custumariorum burgi de Aberden*, 3. Apr. 1395.—25. Apr. 1396. (*Rot. Seaccarii*, 116.)

³ *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, vol. ii., pp. 201, 212.

⁴ Warton's *Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. ii., p. 110, edit. 1840. Lord Hailes' *Annals*, vol. ii., p. 3, *note*, edit. 1819. Irving's *Lives of Scottish Poets*, vol. i., pp. 254, 255. Jamieson's *Bruce and Wallace*, vol. i., pp. 3, 7. J. Bruce's *Lives of Eminent Men of Aberdeen*, p. 3. G. L. Craik's *Sketches of Literature and Learning in England*, vol. ii., pp. 101, 102.

⁵ *Rotuli Scotiæ*, vol. i., pp. 808, 886, 926.

⁶ Irving's *Lives of Scottish Poets*, vol. i., p. 255.

⁷ In France, for example, it was ruled so lately as 1616, that a stripling of fourteen might be a cathedral dignitary. (*Van Espen, Jus Ecclesiast. Univ.*, par. ii., sect. iii., tit. ii., cap. i.; *Opera Omnia*, vol. i., p. 671.)

Western Lakes, for the period between the 24th of January 1499–1500 and the 7th of August 1501, records the remission by King James IV. of the customs duty of sixteen lasts of herrings belonging to the Bishop of Argyll, then studying in the French capital :—

“ Et allocatur comptanti de custuma sexdecim lastarum allecum spectantium Episcopo Lismorensi nunc studenti Parisiis sibi concessa per literas Domini Regis ostensas super comptum . ix . libre . xij . solidi . ”¹

Nor was this by any means a solitary instance. Alexander Stewart had been Archbishop of St Andrews and Chancellor of Scotland for more than three years before he fell at Flodden at the age of twenty, or less—“ viginti ferme natus annos,” as his illustrious preceptor informs us without a blush or a sigh.² In 1524, King Henry VIII. of England writes to Pope Clement VII. beseeching, not unsuccessfully, his good offices in securing the dignity of Abbot of Paisley to “ a religious man, Dene John Hamilton, a monk of that place ”—the devout recluse, as we learn from another letter to the same Pope from King James V. of Scotland, being a lad in his fourteenth year,³ of whom we are farther told that he was no sooner promoted to his abbacy than he repaired to the schools of Paris, “ where he pursued his studies in the canon law and theology.”⁴ In an earlier age and a humbler rank of life, one of Barbour’s neighbours and contemporaries is addressed by the Sovereign Pontiff, in 1331, as at once a cathedral dignitary and a student of canon law—“ Willelmo de Rothryglen canonico Rossensi studenti in jure canonico.”⁵ The first name which was inscribed in the roll of

¹ *Comptum Wilelmi Cuninghame costumarii de Dunbretane Irwin et Lowis, 24. Januarii 1499.—7. Augusti 1501. (Rot. Scaccarii, 320.)*

² *Erasmi Adagia, voce “ Spartam nactus.”* The juvenile Primate appears on record as Archbishop, Chancellor, and one of the Lords Auditors of Exchequer, on the 2d of August 1510. (*Rot. Scaccarii, 344.*) His immediate predecessor in the metropolitan see appears to have become Archbishop in his twenty-second year. (*Crawford’s Lives of the Officers of State, pp. 58, 59.*)

³ *Transcripts of Documents in the Vatican regarding Great Britain, vol. xxxvii., pp. 155–157. (MS. Brit. Mus.)*

⁴ *Crawford’s Lives of the Officers of State, p. 376.* When Hamilton, then Archbishop of St Andrews, resigned the abbacy of Paisley in 1553, he was succeeded by Lord Claud Hamilton, then in his fourteenth year, as Pope Julius III. was made to believe; but in reality, it is said, only in his tenth year. (*Registrum Monasterii de Passelet, p. xxiv. note; Spottiswood’s Religious Houses, chap. viii., in Keith’s Catalogue of Scottish Bishops, p. 413, edit. 1824.*)

⁵ *Reg. Litt. Commun. Papæ Joannis XXII., ann. xvi. epist. 1406.* I derive my knowledge of this letter and of the letters which I am about to cite of the same Pontiff and his immediate successor in the chair of St Peter, from the MS. Collection in the British Museum of Transcripts of Documents in the Vatican regarding Great Britain.

students in the Faculty of Arts in the University of Glasgow, founded in 1451, was that of a canon of the neighbouring cathedral; and the names of more than a dozen dignitaries of the church may be recognised in the catalogue before it arrives at the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹ In 1505 we find the Archdeacon of Glasgow placing his name upon the books: next year he proceeds to his bachelor's degree; and two summers after, having gone through the accustomed examinations, he is enrolled among the masters of arts.²

The author of "The Bruce," then, may have been an Archdeacon not only before he bade a final farewell to Oxford and Paris, but before he entered the gates of either university. I may add that he may have been an Archdeacon before he was a priest. Thus, we learn from a letter of Pope Benedict XII., that Alan, Archdeacon of Aberdeen, in 1341, was elected Bishop of Caithness, being then only in deacon's orders.³ A letter of Pope John XXII., in 1332, shows that Nicholas, then Bishop-Elect of the same see, had attained no higher grade than that of subdeacon.⁴ From a letter of the same Pontiff, in 1330, it appears that Nigel of Carruthers, then a canon of Glasgow, had, while under the years of puberty, been presented by the lay patrons and instituted by the Bishop, to the rectory of the parish church of Ruthwell, in the rural deanery of Annandale; and that he reached the age of twenty-one, in the enjoyment of his benefice, without any ordination beyond that of the minor orders.⁵ So rife was this kind of abuse in the previous century, that the Scottish Church enjoined by a special canon, "ut rectores ecclesiarum ad primos ordines veniant ordinandi ita quod quam cito fieri poterit commode ordinentur."⁶ But the

¹ *Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis*, vol. ii., pp. 179, 198, 203, 212, 214, 215, 236-8, 241-2, 249-50, 268-70, 272.

² *Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis*, vol. ii., pp. 120, 282, 284.

³ *Reg. Litt. Commun. et de Curia Papæ Benedicti XII.*, ann. vii., epist. 212. Bishop Keith—whose Catalogue of Scottish Bishops is more than usually defective about this period, and in this see—knew nothing of the election either of Alan in 1341, or of Nicholas in 1332. The former was chosen to succeed Bishop David: the latter was a nephew of a Cardinal.

⁴ *Reg. Litt. Commun. Papæ Joannis XXII.*, ann. xvi., epist. 1474.

⁵ *Reg. Litt. Commun. Papæ Joannis XXII.*, ann. xiv., epp. 713, 714. "Sane petitio pro parte tua nobis exhibita continebat"—it is thus the Pope addresses the boy parson—"quod dudum tu tunc clericali caractere insignitus, et infra puberes annos existens, ad parrochiam ecclesiam de Rivel Glasguensis diocesis tunc vacantem, per quosdam laycos veros ejusdem ecclesie patronos, ad quos presentatio rectoris ejusdem ecclesie pertinebat, ad dictam ecclesiam diocesanam loci presentatus fuisti, et per ipsum diocesanum institutus in rectorem ecclesie memorate, quam quidem ecclesiam extunc quousque ad vicesimum primum etatis sue annum vel circa pervenisti, possedisti sicut adhuc possides, pacifice et quiete, ad superiores ordines non promotus."

⁶ *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, vol. ii., p. 34.

practice was too inveterate to be easily eradicated ; and in 1559, the last council of the Scottish Church held in the obedience of Rome is found reiterating the vain injunction, " quod beneficiati compellantur ad receptionem sacrorum ordinum."¹