

TWEED VALLEY SESSION 4 – One Nation or Two?

Kingdom to Earldom

MAP – KINGDOM OF NORTHUMBRIA C800AD

The Golden Age of Northumbria was coming to an end by the time of the first recorded Viking raid on English soil, at Lindisfarne in 793AD.

Frequent raids continued until 867AD, when a huge fleet of perhaps 400 longships landed in East Anglia. The so-called “Great Host” of Norsemen then moved overland into Northumbria and Aelle, the last king of an independent Northumbria, was put to death after York fell to the invaders.

Northumbria was once again divided into two parts. The old Bernicia, now renamed Northumberland, became a client state to the Viking kingdom of York, the Deira of earlier Anglian times.

Symeon, a Durham monk, recorded in his History of the Church of Durham: “The thanes appointed Egbert as king over such of the Northumbrians as survived, limiting his jurisdiction to those only who resided upon the north of the River Tyne”.

Two years later the Northumbrians rebelled and drove out the puppet king Egbert. The Norsemen retaliated and there followed more than a decade of ravaging by rival Viking warbands.

The Evacuation of Lindisfarne

In 875AD, Bishop Earwulf decided to evacuate the monastery of Lindisfarne, taking what treasures could be carried to safety.

The body of Cuthbert, together with the head of King Oswald and relics of Aidan and other saints, were packed carefully into a linen sack, placed in Cuthbert's coffin, which in turn was placed in a wooden chest wrapped in ox-hide.

Carrying their precious burden, the Congregation of St Cuthbert left Lindisfarne on an odyssey that would last over 100 years before they found a permanent resting place for Cuthbert's remains at Durham.

Ragnal and the Irish Norsemen

Pressure from Wessex and Mercia eventually undermined Viking domination in the north. However, in 914, Norsemen from Ireland under Ragnal invaded Northumberland and defeated a combined force of Scots and Northumbrians at Corbridge.

By 927, the authority of Athelstan, King of Wessex, was spreading northwards through England. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recorded: "In this year fierce beacons of light appeared in the northern sky and Sitric (Ragnal's brother), King of York, died, and King Athelstan assumed the kingdom of the Northumbrians and he brought into submission all the kings who were in the island. First Hywel, King of the West Welsh and Constantine, King of the Scots, and Owain, King of Gwent and Ealdred, son of Eadulf of Bamburgh, and with pledges and with oaths they confirmed peace in the place which is called Eamot (in Cumbria), on the 6th of the Ides of July and renounced every kind of idolatry, and after that departed in peace."

In 954, the York folk expelled the last Norse king of York, Eric Haraldson – "Bloodaxe" – who was pursued and killed on Stainmore.

From that time, Northumbria was divided into two earldoms – Deira and Bamburgh. They were governed on behalf of the Bretwalda by a succession of earls and ealdormen, selected from the old houses of Bernician and Deira.

The Creation of the Tweed Borderline

After a period of some 50 years of strong rule from Wessex, Scandinavian attacks on the Northumbrian coast became more frequent again.

In 993, during the reign of Ethelred the Unready, a large Danish fleet landed an army in eastern Scotland, which moved southwards and sacked Bamburgh. The Vikings found support in Yorkshire, leaving Northumberland cut off from the rest of England.

Until the mid-10th century, Northumbria still spread northwards to the Firth of Forth, however, by 926, Edinburgh had been retaken by the Scots and in 1006 Malcolm II of Scotland penetrated southwards as far as Durham.

The Congregation of St Cuthbert had only recently established itself there and the newly built church and shrine of St Cuthbert was only saved by an army gathered by Uhtred, son of Waltheof the elderly earl of Bamburgh. King Ethelred was so pleased with Uhtred's success that he made him earl of both Bamburgh and Deira, and also offered him his daughter's hand in marriage.

Following Ethelred's death, the Danish adventurer Cnut took the throne. Seeing that Uhtred with his traditional support based in old Bernicia, north of the Tyne, posed a real threat to his control of northern England, Cnut arranged to have the earl assassinated in 1016.

Northumberland rebelled against the Danish overlord and the disorder following Uhtred's death gave Malcolm another opportunity to invade Northumberland.

In 1018, Uhtred's brother Eadulf Cudel, now earl of Northumberland, engaged the Scots in battle at Carham on the Tweed. The Scots were victorious and Eadulf was forced to cede the Lothians to the King of the Scots and the River Tweed became the border between the Scots and English.

Siward, Earl of Northumberland

In 1033 Siward, a Dane, was made earl of York by King Cnut. Five years later, he engineered the assassination of Ealdred, earl of Northumberland, one of Uhtred's sons.

In 1041, another of his sons, Eadulf, was killed by Siward leaving the Dane in total control from the Humber to the Tweed, as earl of a reunited Northumbria. By the time of his death in 1055, Siward had restored much of Northumbria's military and political power.

Malcolm Canmore

IMAGE - MALCOLM CANMORE

To secure his northern and western borders with the Scots, Siward had supported Malcolm Canmore in his struggle against McBeth. Within three years of Siward's death, Canmore had taken the throne of Scotland as King Malcolm III and turned on his former allies in Northumbria.

Siward's successor as earl of Northumbria was Tostig who, despite his Danish name, was a son of the House of Wessex and brother of the future King Harold. This was an attempt by the southern overlord kings to impose their direct rule upon Northumbria.

With no power base in the region, Tostig was unable to raise support to fight the Scots invaders and he was forced to come to an accommodation with King Malcolm.

Tostig's ineffective defence of Northumbria, together with the harsh taxes and his involvement in the murder of Gospatric, Uhtred's last surviving son, led to the Northumbrians rebelling and driving him into exile.

The Northumbrians pressed Edward the Confessor to replace Tostig with Morcar, a Mercian and a known rival of the House of Wessex. Under Morcar, Northumberland was ruled by Osulf, Uhtred's grandson.

In 1066, Tostig returned with the Norwegian King Harald Hardrada's ill-fated invasion and he was killed at Stamford Bridge. Within weeks, England was in the hands of William the Conqueror.

The Norman Conquest

At first, the Norman invasion of 1066 brought little change to Northumbria. William the Conqueror was just another southern king who was content to leave control of Northumbria in the hands of a local man. He sold the Earldom of Northumbria to Gospatric, another of Uhtred's grandsons.

In 1069, the Northumbrians revolted against their Norman overlords. In revenge, King William laid waste the whole countryside from York to Durham. For the moment, he was too occupied to deal with troublemakers north of the Tyne and, although Earl Gospatric had been involved in the rebellion, William allowed him to continue as Earl of Northumberland.

Malcolm Canmore took advantage of the chaotic situation to invade Teesdale from Cumbria, intending to cut off Northumbria and create a new Anglo-Scottish frontier along the Tees/Stainmore line.

As the Northumbrians hated their Norman overlords, Malcolm may have been able to win hearts and minds and gain a permanent hold on the region. Instead, he lost control of his army and caused the Northumbrians to revolt. Canmore returned to Scotland, ravaging Northumberland as he went. Symeon of Durham recorded that every household in Scotland had English slaves as a result.

Two years later, King William retaliated by invading Scotland with a massive army. The Scots withdrew before the overwhelming Norman might and Malcolm carefully avoided a pitched battle. Eventually the two kings met at Abernethy, where Malcolm was forced to sign a peace treaty and do homage to William as his feudal overlord.

On his way back through Northumberland, William drove out Gospatric and gave his title of Earl of Northumberland to Siward's son Waltheof.

In 1075, Waltheof led one last unsuccessful attempt to gain Northumbrian independence. Waltheof was captured and executed.

Eathelwin, the last Anglo-Saxon bishop of Durham, was removed and replaced by Walcher, a Norman monk who was also given the title and temporal power of Earl of Northumbria.

The Tyne Frontier

In 1079, Malcolm invaded Northumberland again. Walcher proved inadequate as a military leader, so the Norman counter-attack was led by King William's son Robert, who drove the Scots back across the Tweed and forced Canmore to re-ratify the Treaty of Abernethy.

To strengthen the Norman hold on the region, Robert built a new castle on the River Tyne and other fortresses at Tynemouth and Prudhoe.

IMAGE - NEW CASTLE RECONSTRUCTION

However, Norman control north of the Tyne was weak, and the lordship of Northumberland remained debateable.

Canmore made two more expeditions into Northumberland, in 1091 and in 1093. The second invasion proved fatal, when Canmore and his eldest son Edwin were surprised and killed near Alnwick. The spot is marked today by "Malcolm's Cross"

PHOTO – MALCOLM'S CROSS, ALNWICK

Squabbling broke out between rivals to the Scottish crown and Canmore's daughter Matilda and his youngest son David were sent for safety to the court of William II of England, William "Rufus".

With King William's support, David's older brothers Duncan then Edgar were established as vassal kings in Scotland.

Henry I Takes the Throne of England

IMAGE - HENRY I

In 1100, Henry I took the throne of England and soon afterwards he married David's sister Matilda.

Peaceful conditions along the Border allowed Henry to take control of Northumberland and create Norman baronies between the Tyne and the Tweed. Castles were built at Norham and Wark to protect the frontier along the Tweed.

Meanwhile, Henry I had gained Normandy and granted to Prince David the lordship of the Cherbourg peninsula, an area of France that included estates belonging to a number of families that would play a significant role in Scottish history, such as the Brus family

David I of Scotland

In 1106, Edgar King of Scotland died and was succeeded by his brother Alexander I.

IMAGE - DAVID I

Edgar had bequeathed the lordships of Tweeddale, Annandale and Nithsdale to his youngest brother, David, who soon created baronies in the Borders for the Anglo-Norman friends he had made during his time at the English court.

In 1114, Henry I bestowed on David the hand of Matilda, widow of the Earl of Huntingdon, Bedford and Northampton, granddaughter of Siward and daughter and heiress of Waltheof, the murdered earl of Northumberland. Through this marriage, David acquired rich estates in the English midlands, but King Henry kept the Earldom of Northumberland for himself.

END OF PART ONE

King David I of Scotland

IMAGE - DAVID I

In 1124, David succeeded his brother Alexander as King of Scotland.

Culturally and politically he was a Norman and he set about doing what Norman kings did - he built castles, churches and monasteries, and established the feudal system in southern Scotland. He also established the first royal mints in Scotland, at Berwick and Roxburgh. His silver pennies were the first Scottish coins to be produced.

King David had close links with the Church.

In 1113, David had invited 13 monks from Tiron, near Chartres, to found a new monastery at Selkirk. The charter that David granted to Selkirk Abbey had 24 signatories, of whom more than half were Anglo-Normans with names including de Brus, Umfraville, Bolbec, Moreville and Muschamp. Also among the signatories was Gospatric, the deposed Earl of Northumberland, whom David had made Sheriff of Roxburgh.

Among the estates granted for the upkeep of Selkirk Abbey were 'A plowgate of land in Berwick, one house below the church of St.Lawrence, extending to the Tweed, the one half of a fishery, the seventh part of a mill and forty shillings out of the yearly revenue of the town".

David was keen to build trade links with the Continent. He created Scotland's first royal burghs at Berwick and Roxburgh. Burghs were given the privilege of holding a market, the right to engage in export and import trade and some degree of self-government. In return, they generated substantial revenues for the King's treasury from rents, tolls and customs duties.

Berwick and Roxburgh became the centres for business conducted with merchants from Flanders and Germany.

The Flemish weavers, in particular, were desperate to obtain new sources of wool to meet the demand from their expanding markets in Europe. They found a ready and reasonably priced supply in the Scottish Borders, much of it produced on the extensive estates belonging to the monasteries founded through King David's patronage. The export of cloth from the port of Berwick was the foundation of the burghs prosperity in the 12th and 13th centuries.

The Border Abbeys

King David was instrumental in the founding of the four great Border Abbeys:

In 1128, the Tironensian monks moved from Selkirk to Kelso, where they established the largest and richest of the Border abbeys.

Cistercian monks came to found the abbey at Melrose in 1136 and the Augustinians began building their abbey at Jedburgh two years later.

Dryburgh Abbey was the last to be established, by Premonstratensian canons brought from Alnwick in 1152.

The early Northumbrian Celtic monastery of Old Mailros had been destroyed in 859 on the orders of Kenneth Macalpine, King of Scots. When monks came from Durham to build a new priory on Lindisfarne, in about 1080, they also constructed a chapel at Old Mailros, dedicated to St. Cuthbert.

In 1136, King David had made a deal with the bishop of Durham to exchange St Mary's Church in Berwick for the old monastery site at Mailros, where St Cuthbert had begun his life as a monk. He granted Old Mailros and St Cuthbert's chapel to the Cistercians of Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire, which had been founded five years previously. However, the monks preferred to build their new monastery on an unoccupied site about 3 miles further up the Tweed, at a place that was then called Little Fordell

IMAGE - CISTERCIAN MONKS CULTIVATING

Gerald of Wales recorded: "Give the Cistercians a wilderness or forest and in a few years you will find a dignified abbey in the midst of smiling plenty."

The pioneering challenge may have been one reason for the change of location, but it is equally probably that the Cistercians wanted to stay clear of the old site to avoid being drawn under the control of the Benedictine abbey of Durham and the Cult of St Cuthbert.

Soon after Abbot Richard and 12 monks arrived from Rievaulx they began constructing their church and domestic buildings. By 28th June 1146 work was sufficiently advanced for the monastery church to be dedicated to St Mary.

As befitted a reforming order that followed a simple lifestyle, this first monastery was built to a typical plain Cistercian plan, with little fancy architecture or decoration.

Cistercians wore habits of undyed wool, hence they were known as the “white monks”. They wore no undergarments, even in the cold Scottish winter.

The monks ate no meat from four legged animals. Their diet was mainly vegetarian, supplemented occasionally with fish, cheese and eggs. However, as time went the regime became more relaxed and the monks enjoyed some treats. For example, in 1325, King Robert the Brus gifted money to the Abbey so the monks could have a daily dish of rice cooked in milk flavoured with almonds.

TIMETABLE OF THE MONKS' DAY

The monks followed a rigorous daily routine of work and prayer: Matins, the first service of the day, was held at 1.30 in the morning, Lauds followed at 3.00am. At 4 o'clock the service of Prime was followed by Mass and at 4.30am a meeting of the Chapter. From 7 to 9am the monks would work then attend the service of Terce. 11 o'clock signalled attendance at Sextus, followed by lunch and a rest period called "siesta". Another service, Nones, came before several hours of work in the afternoon. Vespers was observed at 6pm. After supper there readings took place in the cloister. Compline, the last service of the day, was held at 7pm and the monks retired to bed at 8 o'clock.

The working day was shortened during the winter months.

Like other religious houses, Melrose was the corporate centre of a great business empire and daughter houses were founded at Newbattle, Kinloss, Balmerino, Coupar Angus and Glenluce.

Kings and barons endowed the abbey with estates covering more than 17,000 acres, as far afield as Ettrick Forest, Lauderdale and the Lammermuirs, and the Abbey's 15,000 sheep produced about 5% of Scotland's total wool produce. Melrose also held tenements in Edinburgh, Lanark, Roxburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed and controlled the income from dozens of parishes scattered over southern Scotland.

Much of the labouring work was carried out by lay brothers, or "converse" - a peculiar feature of the Cistercian Order as the monks themselves were forbidden to do physical labour. Their daily routine involved more work and less prayer than the monks.

The lay brothers lived in their own buildings separated from the rest of the monastery. These included a dormitory, refectory, warming room, cellars and latrines.

COMPARE PLAN OF LINDISFARNE PRIORY (BENEDICTINES) WITH PLAN OF MELROSE ABBEY (CISTERCIANS)

Civil War in England

Following the death of Henry I, King David became involved in English politics. He supported his niece Matilda's claim to the throne of England, which had been taken by Matilda's cousin, Stephen..

David invaded Northumberland and captured the castles of Norham, Wark and Alnwick.

However, in 1136, David met Stephen at Durham and agreed to hand back the captured castles in return for Stephen considering David's marital claim to the earldom of Northumberland.

The following year, Stephen rejected the claim. David invaded England again. But he was defeated at the Battle of the Standards, near Northallerton, and was forced to retreat back through Northumberland.

In 1139, desperate for Scottish support in the civil war with Matilda, King Stephen finally agreed to the earldom of Northumberland being held by David's son Henry. However, Norham and Islandshire were excluded from the deal and remained under the control of the Bishop of Durham.

Cumin's Coup in Durham

Scotland's border now effectively extended southwards to the Tyne. Only the position of the bishop of Durham remained as an obstacle.

William Cumin, one of King David's most favoured Norman barons, was made Chancellor of Scotland in 1136. He was also a trusted cleric in the household of Geoffrey Rufus, Bishop of Durham.

During the bishop's last illness, Cumin devised a plot to take over the bishopric and hold it for Matilda and King David.

News of the Bishop's death was kept secret for weeks, and the body was preserved until Cumin managed to get his own supporters into key positions so that he could have himself appointed as bishop by some of the leading clergy of Durham. Cumin even forged a letter of support from the Pope.

For two years, Cumin held the bishopric with ferocious cruelty. However, resistance was mounting. In 1141, the Convent of Durham elected William Barbara as their bishop and Cumin's coup collapsed.

Henry II regains Northumberland

In 1149, Henry of Anjou met King David at Carlisle to enlist his help against King Stephen and a treaty was signed in which Henry promised that David and his successors would have the right to hold all the land between the Tyne and the Tweed, including Newcastle.

IMAGE - HENRY II

Henry of Anjou came to the throne in 1154 as Henry II. Two years later, King David died and was succeeded by his grandson, the 15 year old Malcolm IV, known as “The Maiden”.

IMAGE - DAVID I AND MALCOLM IV “THE MAIDEN”

The Treaty of Carlisle lasted only one more year. In 1157, Malcolm was induced to do homage to Henry and relinquish his claim on Northumberland. King Henry quickly ordered the fortresses on the Tweed at Norham and Wark to be strengthened with massive stone keeps and curtain walls.

King Malcolm’s agreement with Henry II allowed Malcolm’s brother, William, to hold the lordship of Tynedale, but only as feudal subject to the Crown of England.

Treaty of Falaise

Northumberland was now firmly under the sovereignty of the King of England and the border was fixed in more or less its present position – with the exception of the growing Scottish royal burgh and port of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Malcolm was succeeded by his brother William, “The Lion” , who was determined to pursue his father’s claim to the earldom of Northumberland.

In 1174, the Scots invaded Northumberland and besieged Alnwick. King William was taken prisoner in the battle and incarcerated in the prison at Falaise in Normandy, where he was forced to sign a treaty of the same name.

The Treaty of Falaise subjugated Scotland to the feudal overlordship of the King of England and English garrisons were placed in the castles of Berwick, Roxburgh and Edinburgh. This humiliation came to an end only in 1189, when Richard I “The Lionheart” sold Berwick back to King William for the sum of 10,000 merks, to fund his crusade to the Holy Land.

In 1236, the Anglo-Scottish border was formally set in the Treaty of York between King Alexander II of Scotland and Henry III of England. Alexander renounced the Scots claim to the earldom of Northumberland but Alexander’s title to the lordship of Tynedale was confirmed.

A more peaceful period of relations between the two kingdoms was about to dawn, during which the Tweed valley would become the economic powerhouse of Scotland