



Scots Language Centre

Crack About Politics



Document 1

The Privy Council of Scotland
1546-1550

Political Background

The Privy Council – also known as the Secret Council – originated in meetings of the nobles and barons called to advise the monarch regarding diplomatic matters and the day to day running of the kingdom. By 1545 the Privy Council had begun keeping a formal register of its meetings and enactments, extracts from which are given in the documents below. In 1542 King James V died leaving his infant daughter Mary as queen and so a Governor (as the Scots styled the regent of a child) was appointed to rule in her name in 1543. This was the queen's cousin James Hamilton earl of Arran (c.1516-1575) who ruled Scotland until 1554. Scotland was then at war with England whose king, Henry VIII (of the six wives), attempted to bully and bribe Arran into a treaty of peace based on a marriage alliance whereby Queen Mary would be betrothed to Henry's son and heir Prince Edward. Henry hoped this would bring Scotland under English control. At first Arran agreed to a treaty, but the pro-French faction at court, led by Cardinal David Beaton (1494-1546), won Arran over to their side, and when Henry VIII began seizing Scottish ships, this was the pretext for Scotland to repudiate the treaty. War was renewed, Scotland repeatedly invaded, and King Francis I of France became involved on Scotland's side. A truce was agreed with France in 1546 which included Scotland but Henry complained the Scots were still attacking his shipping and so the Privy Council attempted to put a stop to this (see **Extract 1**). Henry died in 1547 and was succeeded by his son Edward, who was also a child. The English regent's policy was to force the marriage treaty on Scotland and invaded that year. **Extract 2** is the issue by Arran's government of a proclamation of a muster of all men between 16 and 60 to attend the army and resist English invasion. In August 1547 Arran issued a proclamation that the heirs of those slain in battle would succeed to their estates free from the usual dues and payments (see **Extract 3**). On 10 September 1547 Arran's army suffered a major defeat at the battle of Pinkie Cleuch, the Scots becoming increasingly divided amongst themselves on political and religious grounds, and so English forces were able to seize and occupy a number of strategic places. The English had also prevailed on the Emperor Charles V – ally of England – to declare war on Scotland too, since France (rival of the Empire) had intervened in Scotland. In 1548 Arran agreed a new marriage treaty with France and Queen Mary was sent to France. Emperor Charles began to regret his war with Scotland because the Scots were inflicting significant damage on shipping and in **Extract 4** we read about the practical problems facing ambassadors from Scotland. Finally, in **Extract 5**, the Privy Council attempted to confine warfare at sea to certain of the Emperor's subjects while forbidding attacks on English and other states since Scotland had now made peace with England.

Language and Style

The Privy Council extracts are written in Middle Scots and technically belong to the language period known as Early Middle Scots (1450-1550). The language is quite typical of the formal phraseology used in acts, deliberation and proclamations, using as it does Latin words alongside vernacular (day to day) speech. The spelling system is also typical of Scots at that period. Some things to note are as follows:

And- endings

There are a whole class of words known as 'participles' that express actions and movement (verbs) but which can also be used to describe (adjectives). In the Privy Council we find *approchand* (approaching), *beand* (being), *considerand* (considering), *desyrand* (desiring), *dispensand* (dispensing), *dwelland* (dwelling), *gangand* (going), *havand* (having), *passand* (passing), *remanand* (remaining), *standand* (standing). We note the difference between Scots *-and* and English *-ing*. During the 18th century it became common, through English

influence, to spell the *-and* endings as *-in*, so, for example, *gangand* became *gangin* with an apostrophe because it was imagined that a letter was ‘missing’, though the pronunciation remained the same. This is why today we generally spell these endings in Scots with *-in* (with the ‘apologetic apostrophe’ now removed) rather than *-and*.

Ei

In the Privy Council we find the established custom of spelling an ‘ee’ sound in Scots with the letters *ei*. This appears in the words *compleit* (complete), *eild* (age), *greit* (great), *remeid* (remedy), *teind* (tithe) and *weir* (war). Note that the same sound coming at the end of a word was usually spelled *-ie*, though the stress on it probably varied. Some words in Scots today continue to be spelled this way, while some writers choose to apply these older rules consistently throughout their texts.

It endings

In Scots in the 16th century (as also today) many words ended in *-it*, as in *acceptit* (accepted), *advertisit* (notified), *assemblit* (assembled), *chasit* (chased), *comprehendit* (included), *convenit* (convened), *divisit* (devised), *enterit* (entered), *informit* (informed), *mervellit* (marvelled), which are, of course, equivalent to the custom of ending in *-ed* in English. All these forms are found in the Privy Council register.

Ou

Generally pronounced as ‘oo’ in Scots. In the Privy Council extracts we find *counsall*, *governour* (governor), *our(e)*, *ourlordis*, and *persoun*, pronounced with an ‘oo’. There are also a number of Latin words (which came by way of French) with this ending, such as *ambassadour*, *comprehensioun*, *destructioun*, *proclamatioun*, *subscriptioun*, and *sustentatioun* (sustenance). Today in Scots both spellings ‘oo’ and ‘ou’ can be found, as in *oot* (out) and *toun* (town), all pronounced as ‘oo’.

Quh-

The spelling *quh*, which had once also been used in Northern English, was by this period considered peculiar to Scots and would remain common in writing until the 18th century. *Quh-* was pronounced as either a ‘k’ or ‘wh’ depending on the word. In the Privy Council we find *quha* (who), *quham* (whom), *quhat* (what), *quhatsumever* (whatsoever), *quhilk* (which) and *quhill* (until). We still see this spelling today in some Scots words and place-names, such as *quaich*, originally *quhaich* (a drinking cup), or the village of Kilconquhar (pronounced Kinuchar) in Fife.

Sch- Spellings

Sch- was once a common spelling in Scots (in common with German) but has since disappeared. In the Privy Council we find *schawand* (showing), *schippis* (ships), *schereffis* (sheriffs) and *schore* (shore).

U/V/W

These three letters could be used interchangeably in Scots which is why we find *now* (now), *nowmer* (number) and *townis* (towns), each pronounced with an ‘oo’. In the Privy Council we find the form *have* (pronounced *hay-v*, which later became *hae*), but it could also be written as *haue*, while the form *haif* also appears in the Privy Council. In other Scots texts from this

period we can find spellings such as *uar* (were), *wse* (use) or *uith* (with) and words such as *cou* and *toun* might also be spelled as *cov/cow* and *tovn/town*.



Cognates

Cognates are words that are clearly derived from a common origin with closely related tongues. In the Privy Council we find many Scots words with clearly related English equivalents, such as *alanerlie* (only), *ane* (one), *auld* (old), *awin* (own), *baith* (both), *burgh* (borough), *fordwart* (forward), *forsamekle* (forasmuch), *fra* (from), *haill* (whole), *lauchfull* (lawful), *maist* (most), *mercat* (market), *meriage* (marriage), *nane* (none), *nocht* (not), *officiar* (officer), *peax* (peace), *samyn* (same), *sik* (such), *thaim/thame* (them), *wappynnies* (weapons), and *weir* (war).

Various

We also see in the Privy Council register a variety of words more particular to Scots usage, such as *allya* (allies), *ay* (always), *barnis* (children), *brether* (brothers), *eild* (age), *myance* (influence or power), *stanching* (check or restrain), *tinsel/tynsell* (loss, or to lose). The forms *do* and *to* (with *ta*) were standard in this period but would give way to the modern *dae* and *tae* in the 19th century.

Extract 1: August 1546: Truce and warfare at sea

The quhilk day, that forsamekle as thair is ane pece taikin betwix the maist cristine King of France on that ane pairt, and the King of Ingland on that uthair pairt, into the quhilk oure Soverane Ladye, hir realme and subjectis, ar comprehendit, quhilk comprehensioun is acceptit be oure said Soverane Lady, with avise of the three estaitis of this realme.

The quhilk day, forsamekle as thair is ane pece takin and standand betwix oure Soverane Lady and hir derrest uncle the King of Ingland, quha hes writtin to hir Grace, schawand that thair is certane Scottis schippis in the est seis and utheris places, that dailie takis, rubbis, and spulzeis his schippis and liegis of his realme pasand to and fra, desyrand thairfor hir Grace to put remeid thairto for keping of the said pece, tharfor ordanis letteres to be direct to officiaris of the Quenis, Schereffis in that pairt, to pass to the mercat croces of Edinburgh and Kingorne, Disart and Pettynveme, Kirkcaldy, Inverkeithing, Quenisferrie, pere and schore of Leith, Dundee, Aberdene, Montrose, Are, Irwyne, Dumbertane, Glasgu, and uthair places neidfull, and thair be oppin proclamatioun command and charge all and sindry, oure Soverane Ladyis liegis, that nane of them tak upoun hand to pas furth in weirfare, unto the tyme thai cum to my Lord Governour and Lordis of Counsall, and have his Graces licence, under our Soverane Ladyis preive seill, or greit signett, and subscriptioun of my Lord Governour, with sik restrictionis as salbe gevin to thame under the pane of tinsel of life, landis, and gudis; and gif ony schippis happinis to depairt, that nane of thaim tak upoun hand to invaid, tak, truble, or molest ony Inglis schippis, under the pane forsaid.

Extract 2: July 1547: Proclamation against English invasion

The quhilk day, my Lord Governour and Lordis of Secreit Counsele, and the maist part of the haill nobillis of this realme, beand convenit and assemblit togidder, havand respect to the greit and mony incursionis dayle and continewalie maid upoun this realme be our auld ynemeis of Ingland, and surlie informit of the greit preparationis and tyranny divisit and ordanit be our saidis auld ynemeis for the destructioun of this realme this nixt harvist approchand, hes, for substantious resistance thairof willinglie of thair awine curaige, offerit thaim selffis reddy to defend thair auld liberte with thair bodyis and substance, and to wair the haill nobilite thairupoun. Thairfor ordanis lettres to be direct to all Schereffis, Stewartis, Ballies, alsweill regalite as ryalte, and thair Deputis, Provestis, Aldermen, and Ballies of Borrowis, and uthairis officiaris of the Quenis, Schereffis in that part, chargeing thame to pas to the mercat croces of all the borrowis and townis of this realme, and uthairis places neidfull, and thair be oppin proclamatioun command and charge all and sindry our Soverane Ladyis liegis betuix sixty and xvj, and uthair fensabill men, baith to burgh and land, alsweill regalite as ryalte, alsweill dwelland upoun spirituale mennis landis as temporall mennis landis, that thai and every of thame be in reddynes weill bodin in feir of weir in thair maist substantious maner, with armour and wappynnys efter the forme of the Act of Parliament, to cum forward at the first day of August nix to cum, as thai salbe chargeit and advertesit, upoun viij dayis warning, for resisting of our saidis auld ynemeis, defens of this relame and liberte thairof, under the pane of tynsell of lyf, landis, and gudis, nochtwithstanding the actis and ordinances maid of befor for rasing and lifting of ane furnist man of every vij merk of auld extent furnist upoun the expenssis thairof, for the space of twa monethis, lik as the said act at mair lenth proportis; quhilk act and ordinance my Lord Governour and lordis forsaidis hes dischargeit, and be the tennour heirof discharges the samyn.

Extract 3: August 1547: The heirs of those slain in battle

The quhilk day, my Lord Governour, with avise of the Lordis of Counsale, hes statute and ordanit that quhatsumever persoun of personis that happynnis to be slane, hurt to deid, or takis seiknes in our Soverane Ladyis army, now ordanit in reddyne to pas fordwart for defens of this realme, and resisting of our auld ynemeis of England, now gadderit to invaid the samyn, and deis in the said seiknes, gangand, remanand, or cumand thairfra; that thair air or airis sall haif thair ward, nonentres, releif, and mariage fre of our Soverane Lady, dispensand with thair minorite and less aige, quhat eild that ever thai be of, without payment of ony teind penny; and siclik of all uthair ourlordis, spirituale and temporall, baith of vassallis and subvassallis, providing that the airis forsaidis persew and obtene entres of thair ourlordis within thre termes efter the deceise of thair faderis or of quhatsumever uthair personis quhaim to thair ar to succaid, for the caussis forsaidis; and gif the saidis airis be of less aige, within tutory, and beis nocht enterit to thair landis and heretaige befor thair aige of xiiij yeris, quhilk may be throw negligens of thair tutoris and uthairis freyndis, oure Soverane Lady privelegis and grantis to thaim that thai may enter within thre termes nixt efter thair compleit aige of xiiij yeris as said is, and this to be extendit to the mediat air that is to succaid to the persoun that happynnis to deceis in our said Soverane Ladyis army in maner forsaid, and becaus it may happin the said persoun that happynnis to deceis in the said army, may haif ma lauchfull barnis of his body by his air, Thairfor ordains that the proffitt of his ward landis to be tane up be thair moderis gif thair be na tutoris testamentar, als lang as schö remains wedo, and failyeing thairof, the nerrest and lauchfull tutoris of the saidis barnis, to be distribut for the sustentatioun of the said air, and to the utilite and proffitt of the remanent of his brether and sisteris, to the perfect aige of the said air or airis, that is to say, gif thai be maill, of xxj yeris, and gif they be femell, of xiiij yeris, the proffitt of the said airis meriage being ay fre to him selff...

Extract 4: April 1550: Peace negotiations with the emperor

Item, the occasioun of the sending of the herald to the King, quha wes directit to the Empriour be this motive, Monsieur D'osell, the Kingis ambassadour here, schew the Quenis Grace, my Lord Governour and the Counsel, that the King mervellit that we continewit the weris with the Empriour, havand actualle were with England and nicht have had peax of him, desyrand us to sek ane honorable peax of the Empriour, be the Kingis avise and myance, rather than to procure fether were be ony oure occasioun; upone the quhilk, we direct the said herald to the King with speciale writingis to our ambassadour, giff he had bene present, desyrand his Majestie to send to the Empriour for ane conduct to certane ambassadouris of Scotland to cum and trete upoun peax with the Empriour, quhilk ambassadouris first suld have cumin to the King for his avise and informatioun, and thairefter to have departit to the Empriour for the said peax and the Kingis ambassadouris with thame to that effect. The absence of our ambassadour wes the cause that the King wes nocht so amplie informit of our desyris as our directionis wes unto his Majestie.

Item, it is to be desyrit of the King that he will send his amabssadouris towart the Empriour to procure ane peax to the Quenis Grace oure Soverane Lady, hir realme and subjectis, in semblable maner as hes bene accustomat of befor, always referring the tyme to his Majesteis discretion, with abolution of all thingis past becaus ane honorable peax wes takyn be the King, quham God assolze, and the Empriour for ane hundreth yeris, quhilk pece without occasioun maid be us wes violat and brokyn be the Empriour and his subjectis, in takyn and withhaldyn of ane grete nowmer of the schippis of Scotland at the desyre of England, to the

grete hurt and dampnages of the liegis of this relame, like as our amabassadouris the bischop of Ross, and the Maister of Erskin, or athair of thame, can declare at lenth, togiddir with the maner of the tretie last takyn, quhilk hes been alswa to the grete hurt and dampnage of baith the Empriouris subjectis as ouris.



Extract 5: July 1550: Regulating warfare at sea

The quhilk day, the Lordis of Secretit Counsale, considerand the gret enormiteis dalie done to our Soverane Ladyis legis, als wele within hir awin watteris and firthis as in uthair places, be schippis of Holand, Flussing, and uthiris the Lawlandis of Flandaris, subjectis of the Empriour; hes thocht expedient to licence the weire schippis of this realme, sa mony as ar now in ordiner, to pas furth in weirfar for stanching thairof; providing alwayis that befor thair departing that the maisteris, awneris, and capitanis of ilk schip comper befor Thesaurar Clark, and ressave sey borrow, and find sufficient cautioun, that tha sall pass na uthair way bot upoun the cost and throw the watteris of Scotland, quhill tha have owthir takyn or chasit the saidis piratis furth of the boundis forsaidis, and that tha sall do na hurt, harm, nor violence to na uthair of our Soverane Ladyis freindis, allya, and confideraris, and specialie to the Franchmen, Ingilismen, Denismen, Swadynmen, Emdein, Danskinmen, Hamburch, nor nane of the stedis, nor to na uthair natioun bot to Holland, Flussing, and Lawlandis of Flanderis, subjectis to the Empriour alanerlie.

Source: John Hill Burton (ed), *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Volume I 1545-1569, (Edinburgh, 1877), pp.39, 75, 78, 89, 104.