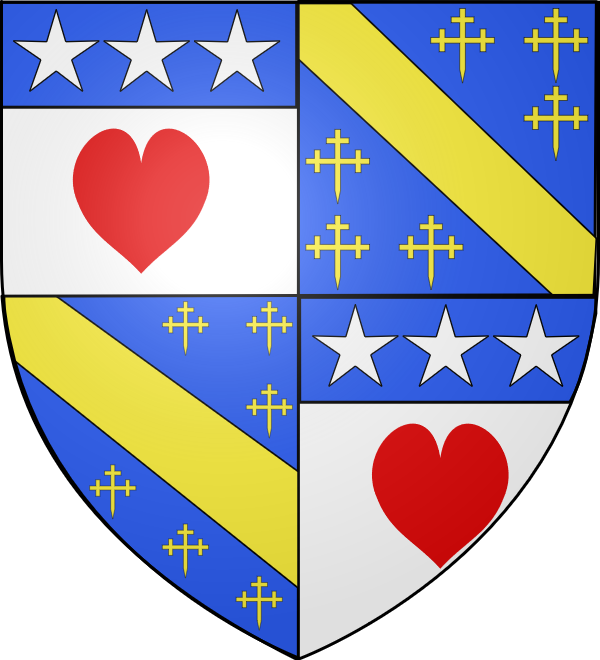
**The Battle of Otterburn – Dramatis Personnae**

**The Scots**

**James, 2nd Earl Douglas**



**Arms of James 2nd Earl Douglas.**

Born c. 1358, the eldest son and heir of William Douglas, 1st Earl of Douglas and Margaret, Countess of Mar. By the time his father had made over lands in Liddesdale to him in 1380, he had been knighted, being known as Sir James Douglas of Liddesdale. Earlier his father had been in dispute with King Robert over the latter's succession to King David II, but returned to royal favour by concluding a marriage contract between his son and the Princess Isabel, thus binding the Douglas family close to the throne.

In May 1384, the 1st Earl of Douglas died from a fever, and his son inherited. Around the same time a French embassy arrived in Scotland to negotiate a truce between the Franco-Scots Allies and England. While deliberations were taking place in Edinburgh, a further party of French knights arrived at Montrose. The new Earl of Douglas, and Sir David Lindsay mustered their men and joined forces with the French knights. They then led a raid into England where they ravaged lands belonging to the Percy Earl of Northumberland, and the Mowbray Earl of Nottingham. While this was happening, the Scots agreed to a truce which was to last until May the following year. The French knights returned to France but promised to Douglas that they would return as soon as possible.

In 1385 when the truce expired, Douglas made war on the English. The French were as good as their word and had previously arrived at Leith with a contingent of knights, armour and monies. Finding that the army of Richard II of England was numerically superior to the Franco-Scots, Douglas allowed the English to advance to Edinburgh, wisely refusing battle.

In 1388 Richard II had domestic troubles with his recalcitrant barons and was occupied far to the south, and the time seemed right for invasion to avenge the destruction of 1385. The Scots, following an agreement made between the nobility at [Aberdeen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aberdeen), mustered at [Jedburgh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jedburgh) in August, including the levies of the earls of Fife, [March](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_I,_Earl_of_March), [Moray](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dunbar,_Earl_of_Moray) and those of Archibald the Grim. Upon finding from an English spy, that the English warden Percy was aware of the muster, and was planning a counter strike, the Scots command decided to split the army, with Fife leading the main body into Cumberland, while a smaller mounted force under Douglas was to go east and despoil Northumberland. Douglas' force entered England through [Redesdale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redesdale) and proceeded south laying waste to the countryside. From there the turned east to encircle [Newcastle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Castle,_Newcastle).

Newcastle was held by Northumberland's sons, [Sir Henry Percy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Hotspur_Percy), known as "Hotspur", and his brother Sir Ralph Percy. Northumberland himself remained at [Alnwick Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alnwick_Castle), hoping to outflank Douglas should he attempt to return to Scotland.

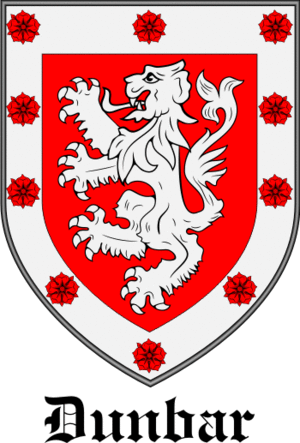
The Scots, without the siege equipment to invest the Castle, encamped around it. The week that followed saw constant skirmishes and challenges to single combat between the two sides.

Eventually the Scots struck camp and marched to [Ponteland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponteland) where they destroyed its castle, and then on to [Otterburn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otterburn,_Northumberland) just 30 miles from [Newcastle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newcastle_upon_Tyne) where they camped.

The battle of Otterburn followed when Hotspur caught up with the Scots. Douglas was mortally wounded during the fight, but because of the confusion of fighting in darkness this fact was not transmitted to his men who carried on the battle. Douglas' body was found on the field the following day. His body was then removed back across the Border and he was interred at [Melrose Abbey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melrose_Abbey).

Douglas married Isabel, a daughter of King Robert II of Scotland. He left no legitimate male issue. His illegitimate William and Archibald became the ancestors of the families of Douglas of Drumlanrig and Douglas of Cavers.

**George Dunbar, Earl of March and Dunbar**



**Arms of the Dunbar family**

George Dunbar’s personal history is obscure but he seems to have been the cousin of the previous Earl of March and was one of the most powerful of the Scottish nobility. He was noted as a military commander and accompanied James Douglas, 2nd Earl of Douglas in his incursion into England in 1388 where he played a major role in the Scots’ victory. After Douglas’ death at Otterburn, where Harry ‘Hotspur’ Percy and his brother were defeated and captured, he took command of the Scots whom he conducted safely home. His daughter Elizabeth was betrothed by contract to David Stewart, Duke of Rothesay, son of King Robert III and heir to the throne, but Archibald Douglas, 3rd Earl of Douglas, 'The Grim', protested against the match, had the contract annulled, and had the prince married to his own daughter Marjory, instead. In consequence of this slight upon his family's honour, George renounced his allegiance to Robert III and retired into England, placing himself under the protection of King Henry IV. He fought alongside his former adversary, Harry Hotspur, at the battle of Homildon Hill in 1402 against Archibald, 4th Earl of Douglas, the son of his great rival.

When the Percys rebelled against the king in 1403 George remained loyal to Henry IV and fought against Hotspur again at the battle of Shrewsbury where he acted as adviser to Henry IV. Archibald, 4th Earl of Douglas who was still a prisoner after the battle of Homildon Hill also fought on the king’s side and was killed in the battle. George was rewarded by the king with valuable gifts of lands confiscated from the families of some of the rebel lords.

Reconciliation with the Douglases was effected in 1408, and George was allowed to return to Scotland the following year, taking possession of his earldom of March. He died of a contagious fever, in 1420, at the age of 82.

**The English**

**Henry Percy, called ‘Hotspur’**

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**A bronze statue of Henry Percy, called ‘Hotspur’ at Alnwick, Northumberland.**

Henry Percy, son of the 1st Earl of Northumberland, is better known by the name given to him by his enemies due to the eagerness (and impetuousness) with which he would ride into battle: Harry ‘Hotspur’. Hotspur is the most famous character in the history of the Percy family, and is one of the most famous knights in English history. However, he never became Earl of Northumberland due to predeceasing his father. Many of the details of Hotspur’s life remain a mystery. Even the year and place of his birth are unknown; he may have been born in either Northumberland or Yorkshire, in either 1364 or 1366. He did describe himself as being 'of Alnwick' during his lifetime, however, and it is known that he died at the Battle of Shrewsbury on 21 July 1403.

Conflict and battle were intertwined with Hotspur throughout his life. He fought the Scots on the Borders and Welsh rebels in Wales, made trouble in Calais with his brother Sir Ralph, and finally died fighting Henry IV in England. His most famous battle against the Scots was at Otterburn in 1388. Two forces led by members of the Douglas family attacked England’s border regions on the west and the east, one aiming for Carlisle and the other Durham and Newcastle. When James, 3rd Earl of Douglas took Newcastle, Hotspur and a force of soldiers rode to meet them. After a skirmish which may have included hand-to-hand fighting between Hotspur and Douglas, Douglas captured Hotspur’s pennant (a flag with great family pride attached to it) before riding west to join the rest of the Scottish army.

Hotspur was advised to wait for reinforcements, but pursued Douglas regardless, marching his men 32 miles before reaching the Scottish camp at Otterburn as night fell. Douglas was killed in the ensuing battle, but the Scots won decisively, and Harry and Sir Ralph Percy were both taken prisoner.

Similarly famous was the Battle of Homildon Hill in 1402, one of Harry’s greatest victories, which took place near Wooler in Northumberland. Like the 2nd Lord of Alnwick’s defeat of the Scots in 1346, archers were essential in obliterating the Scottish forces, allowing Hotspur to take prisoners of his own – a situation that would eventually lead to his rebellion against the king, and his death.

Before Homildon Hill, Hotspur had been leading a campaign for the king to try to put down the forces of the famous Welsh rebel, Owain Glyndwr. However, Hotspur's soldiers were not being paid. When Hotspur’s letters to Henry IV asking to rectify this were not answered to his satisfaction (the Crown claimed to be short of funds), he returned to Northumberland and Scottish border warfare.

Following Homildon, when Hotspur had taken prisoners for ransom, Henry IV demanded that the ransom money should go to him rather than Harry, which led Hotspur to London to confront the king about the matter. The result of their altercation (which reportedly ended with the king slapping Hotspur across the face and drawing a dagger on him - 'not here, but in the field!' is said to have been Hotspur’s reply) was a full-blown rebellion led by Hotspur against Henry IV.

At the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403 Henry IV dressed several of his knights in his attire and used them as a form of decoy; each time Hotspur killed one, he would think he had killed the King, only to find he hadn’t. Harry Hotspur was killed by an arrow to his eye during the battle. He and his men had stayed in a small hamlet the night before, and due to the swift arrival of the king’s son, the Prince of Wales, on the battlefield, Hotspur was effectively rushed into battle not fully prepared, and apparently left his sword behind on the morning of the battle.

Hotspur was buried near the battlefield, but then exhumed, and his head was displayed on the walls of York as a warning to other potential rebels of what would happen to those who went against the king. His body was quartered, and the four pieces displayed in Newcastle, London, Bristol and Chester, again as a warning to others.

Hotspur’s final resting place is believed to be an unmarked grave in York Minster.