

**The Elliots and Robert Bruce's recolonization of Liddesdale:
a Scots-Breton clan with lands in Angus, restored as the thanage of Alyth following
their resettlement in the Borders.**

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Introduction.

Around a thousand Breton mercenaries fought at the battle of Hastings in 1066, and many were awarded with lands in England. An unknown number of their descendants later received lands in Scotland. In the opinion of a leading authority on the history of the Anglo-Saxons, Sir Frank Stenton, 'the lords who came from Brittany were more numerous (than the Flemings), and on the whole more important as individuals.'¹ Few efforts were made by nineteenth century historians, insistent on describing the conquest as 'Norman,' to identify and locate Breton settlements and settlers, other than the leading magnates like Breton counts Brien and Alain, the sons of count Euzen (Eudo). Descendants of Hawise of Normandy, daughter of duke Richard I, they received preferential treatment when infested with extensive landholdings, Brien as lord and possibly earl of Cornwall, and Alain ar rouz (the Red) as lord of the vast honour of Richmond, to which were attached numerous estates, scattered throughout eastern and southern England. In due course only the honour of Lancaster would exceed it in size and numbers of estates. Another Breton, Judicaël (Juhel) was awarded the lordship of Totnes, covering the larger part of Devon, and containing no less than seventy knights' fees.² As a whole, however, the Bretons, counts, barons and knights, found themselves lower down the pecking order, sitting on modest lands.

Thanks to Professor Michael Jones and Dr. Katharine Keats-Rohan, more is now known about post-Conquest Breton settlement in England. Jones paints a picture of the Breton social milieu from which emerged many of the Breton settlers, when describing the authority exercised by the dukes of Brittany, and by their close relatives, the counts of Cornouaille and Nantes:

'this authority came to be shared more widely with an aristocracy of great castellan families, whilst the same period also saw the appearance of large numbers of lesser knightly lineages, gradually brought under the sway of the duke or his great vassals.'³

Among the Bretons were those who, unlike many others, had taken up the Norman habit of using surnames. These names included that of d'Aliot, spelt also in England and Brittany, as d'Eliot, and alongside them were companions whose uncorrupted Breton surnames were Allegoët and Elegoët, names now found in smaller numbers, mainly in Finistère in the Aliot

¹ Sir Frank Stenton, *Anglo Saxon England*, (Oxford, paperback ed., 1971, p.629.

² Stenton, p.629.

³ Michael Jones, *The Creation of Brittany, a Late Medieval State*, (London, 1988), p.3.

(Eliot) ancestral homelands. The English versions of these names, whose pronunciation was not far removed from the Breton, were Elligott, Ellacott and Ellicott. A Henry Ellacott was the Elizabethan sheriff of Exeter who contributed twenty-five pounds to the fund established for the purposes of opposing the Spanish Armada.

All these names fall into a discernible pattern of progressive French corruption of the old Breton tribal name Hallegoët, which in P-Celtic Breton translates roughly as ‘the willow folk.’ The Welsh translation of the Breton *haleg* (willow) is *helig*. The shortest variants are undoubtedly the result of phonological evolution described by French historians and linguists as ‘déformation par francisation,’ a corruption from which few Breton surnames escaped, particularly in francophone Haute Bretagne, or ‘Gallo-Brittany,’ colonized by Celtic Bretons. The variants fall into an unmistakable pattern which would have been almost impossible to detect without the modern facility of rapid electronic search, in this instance, of digitized French birth records. (See Appendix B).

The name Eliot, spelt correctly also as Elliot, Eliott or Elliott, is now well established in considerable numbers in England, Scotland and Ireland, and has migrated to the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other anglophone countries. Thought wrongly to be of Norman origins, its Breton pedigree remained unknown for many years, despite its appearance in Breton registers of birth, and for that matter in Breton telephone directories. The insistence by a French friend of Breton birth that my second name was Breton, was soon to be corroborated by the results of y-chromosome research, in which nearly three hundred male Elliots, of traceable British ancestry, participated. The results of the Elliot DNA project reveal a remarkably tightly knit kinship of Celtic-Brittonic origin; one which qualifies in every sense of the word as a ‘clan.’ (See table, page 2).

The name Aliot, alias Eliot, makes no appearance in early post-Conquest sources, and, like many Breton and Flemish knights, service in garrisons and magnates’ households as *menies*, may have delayed the acquisition of lands by some, with many becoming sub-tenants holding single or fractional knights’ fees. Based on his review of the *Cartae Baronium* of 1166, Michael Jones was able to note

‘le nombre très considerable de Bretons tenant par service militaire, au cours du siècle qui a suivi la conquête. Ce sont, en majorité, des seigneurs avec des fiefs très petits, souvent même une fraction.’⁴

Many would undoubtedly have continued to serve as mercenaries favoured by both William II ‘Rufus,’ (1087-1100) and Henry I (1100-35), who, according to William of Malmesbury, ‘poured out large sums to the Bretons.’⁵ The main post-Conquest Breton settlements established by Dr. Keats-Rohan were in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, where many Bretons would undoubtedly have held lands from the Breton count Alain, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Gloucestershire, Devon and Cornwall.⁶ More Bretons, along with western Normans from either side of the Breton marches, were brought to England by Henry I,

⁴ Michael Jones, *The Creation of Brittany, a Late Medieval State*, (London, 1988), p.75.

⁵ Wm.Malm., *HN* 483 (p.41), cited by Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225*, (Oxford, 2000), p.267.

following his victory against his older brother, Robert Curthose at the battle of Tinchebray, a king mistrustful of the great Norman magnates favoured by his father. Among Henry's 'new men,' were the fitzAlans of Dol in Brittany, awarded lands in Shropshire, whose younger son, Walter, was made the hereditary Steward (Stewart) infefted (enfeoffed) with extensive lands in Scotland south of the Forth, by David I (1124-65).

It is not my intention here to rehearse the introduction of military feudal tenure, firstly to southern Scotland, and later to eastern Scotland north of the Forth, in the hands of scores of migrant knights awarded lands by David I and his grandsons Malcolm III (1153-65) and William I 'the Lion,' (1165-1214). This phase in Scottish history is covered more than adequately by several distinguished historians, including particularly Geoffrey Barrow in his *Kingdom of the Scots*. (See bibliography). If the conquest of 1066 had been undertaken 'for the sake of gaining land to dispense as patronage to 'men who could hope to establish in England the patrimony they lacked in their homelands,' it may also be said that the later introduction of knight service into Scotland served the same purpose for men, often younger sons excluded from inheritance, some of whom, perhaps especially Bretons and Flemings, followed the profession of arms and may still have been fighting for pay.

The Elliots of the sixteenth century Borders came to earn notoriety as one of the more powerful, troublesome and recalcitrant of the Border reiver clans, at one time in the pay of Queen Elizabeth, known to have described them as 'stout Elliots,' during a feud with the Scotts of Buccleuch, supporters of Mary Stuart. Following the lynching by James V of John Armstrong of Gilnockie in July, 1533, the Elliots, Armstrongs and other Border allies were not well disposed towards the Stuart monarchs.

In 1566, a leading Elliot collateral, John (Little Jock) Elliot of the Park, descended from a much earlier cadet branch of the clan, shot in the thigh by Patrick Hepburn, earl of Bothwell, and retaliating with his two-handed sword, had laid low the earl, admitted in a poor state grudgingly by the Elliots' Armstrong allies to Hermitage Castle, to which Mary came at haste to be at his side. Later retaliation by Bothwell failed, when he and his forces were outnumbered by Elliots led by the formidable Martin Elliot of Braidley.

During his old age, the former teenage runaway Walter Scott of Satchells who had joined the mercenary regiment raised by Walter Scott, the first earl of Buccleuch and serving in Holland in the pay of the States General, recounted that his 'good-sir' had claimed that the Elliots were brought by Robert Bruce into Liddesdale, from a 'town called Eliot' in Angus. The question as to why historians should have either overlooked or dismissed this story is puzzling, since a series of sixteenth to early eighteenth century maps held by the National Library of Scotland, now digitized and accessible online, proves that Scott's claim was correct. The name Alyth, hidden away in old charters, made its first appearance in late eighteenth century maps. During several centuries Alyth was known more commonly as Eliot, and had the maps been studied at any time in the past by any scholar, in no way should the exclusively Breton name Eliot have been thought to be an alternative spelling of Alyth.

⁶ Keats-Rohan, *The Bretons and Normans of England*, p.20.

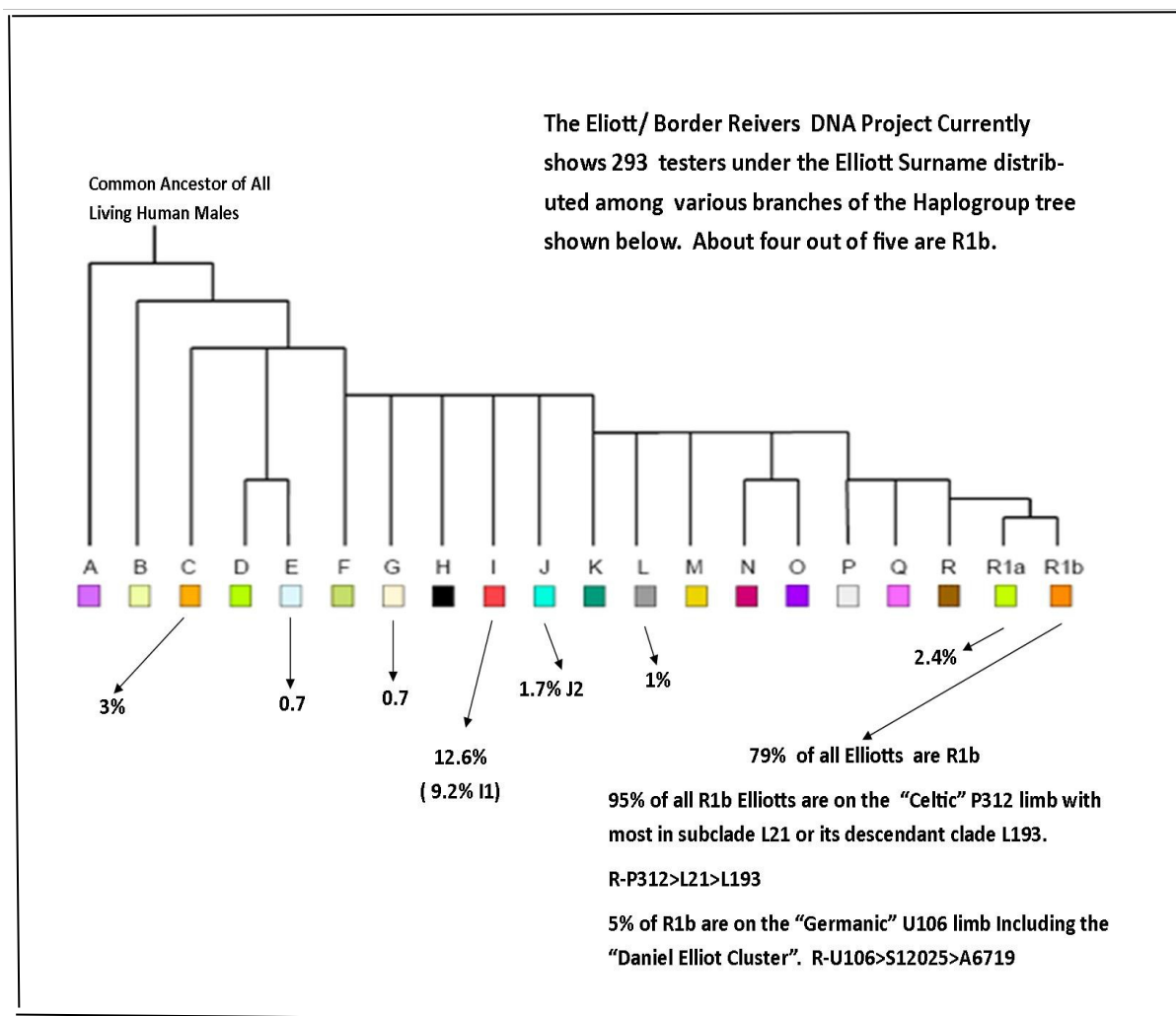


Table: the Elliot Y-DNA Project.⁷

[This is Y-DNA which traces the direct male Elliot surname line rather than autosomal DNA (atDNA) which compares us to others anywhere in our family trees].

The existence of a thanage of Alyth is established in only one surviving source, a charter issued by Robert I in 1319, granting lands in his thanage of Alyth to Coupar Angus Abbey. From this some historians have assumed that Alyth was always a thanage. It was not. A more careful and closer examination of the maps reveals that lands held by Elias d'Alyth, the Breton commonly known as Elias d'Aliot, were sufficiently extensive to merit the description by Geoffrey Barrow of one of his descendant chieftains as a man of middling rank.

The purpose of this essay is therefore to establish that Elias d'Alyth, a Breton, more commonly known as Elias d'Aliot, was inferted, almost certainly by William I, with the thanage of Alyth, excluding the king's forest of the same name, of which Elias as 'of Alyth,' was very probably the keeper. Further, that any settlement which may have existed at the time of Elias's infertment became the site of a new town which became more popularly known as Eliot, as discovered by sixteenth to early eighteenth century cartographers during

⁷ Reproduced with the kind permission of Robert Elliott, of Priest River, Idaho, USA, a member of the DNA project team.

surveys undertaken in situ. Most of what is known about Elias, who made only one appearance in the historical record as a witness to a charter of the bishop of Dunkeld, has been the result of the several appearances made by his descendants who went to battle at Dunbar in 1296, underwent terms of imprisonment in England, but later played a role in local administration before their appearance in the earl of Atholl's retinue at the coronation of Robert Bruce in 1306 led to the forfeiture of their lands. At some time probably around the year 1309 or 1310 an exchange of lands took place, which saw Walter d'Aliot and the whole of his clan resettled by Robert I at Redheugh, close to the castles of Hermitage and Liddel. The old Elliot lands in Angus were not granted away as a fief to any other beneficiary by Robert I, but were restored by him as a king's thanage. Edward I had awarded the confiscated Aliot/Eliot lands to Adam Brunyng, but there is some doubt as to whether he was ever able to set foot on them.

Research into the history of the Elliots, reinvigorated by the results of Y-chromosome research and the discovery of the presence today, not only of the name Eliot and its co-variant Aliot, but other now anglicized co-variants, has led to findings of general historical significance, overlooked or misinterpreted by historians, and one serious error in relation to the translation of the late thirteenth century English chancery version of the name Aliot, as Alyth. In much more consistent English chancery spelling, and according to the chancery conventions of the day, the correct translation of the English versions *Alight (or Alyght)* is *Aliot*.

The findings go beyond the narrow confines of clan or family history into an area of general historical interest. The unprecedented transfer of a whole clan to new lands, and the circumstances in which this took place, shed further light on the early seizure and retention of Liddesdale by Robert Bruce as part of his long term planning and military strategy. One issue is the imprecise and general use of the description, 'the Forest,' and whether it was presumed when used by chroniclers and administrators to extend to and encompass the actual border running through Liddesdale and a lordship to which knight service was not attached. By tracing the subsequent activities and whereabouts of its keeper, Sir Simon de Lindsay, following a brief report relating to the flight of his tenants into the forest of Inglewood in 1307, it is certain that this was the result of Bruce's seizure of the lordship, and de Lindsay's abandonment of it. Liddesdale was still in the grip of Bruce and his lieutenants, especially James Douglas, when he returned to it during or before 1310, in preparation for his devastating chevauchée in East Lothian, and for cross border, penetrating chevauchées undertaken from 1311 onwards, on a much larger scale than in 1307. The raiding carried out in 1307 may not, however, have been on such a small scale, and as sporadic, as previously thought.

Sources

The bibliography critical to this effort necessarily includes the works of Geoffrey Barrow, Michael Brown and Michael Penman, listed at the end of this paper. The People of Medieval Scotland database has also been essential, although major sources such as *The Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland (CDS)*, in all five volumes edited by Bain, and *The Calendar of Letters and Papers relating to the affairs of the Scottish Borders*, and several other

important edited primary and secondary sources found in American university collections, have been digitized and may now be searched online. One database, *The Medieval Soldier*, provides access to Hundred Years' War muster rolls, in which the name Eliot or Elyot makes no less than sixty-seven appearances, reveals something of an early post-Conquest scattering of English Eliots freebooters and a migration of many of their dependants. English-speaking Elliots now scattered across the globe vastly outnumber their now very distant Breton cousins. Among the fighters were Eliot men-at-arms and mounted archers, who appear at one time or another on campaign in France, and occasionally in Scotland. There can be little doubt that lands first occupied by Eliots were modest in size, and that many of their descendants' inclusion in the so-called 'rise of the gentry' was due, as in so many other cases to considerable fortunes which some made during the Hundred Years' War.

A combination of the digital revolution and y-chromosome research is always likely from time to time to remove obstacles to further historical studies, alter assumptions and point research in another direction. The thanage of Alyth, thought wrongly by at least one historian to have had an unbroken history, and the early history of the Elliots is a case in point.⁸

CHARTERS ISSUED AT, AND RELATING TO, ALYTH, and other records, 1165 – 1249:

William I issued a charter at **Alith**, 1165 x 1170, (*RRS*, ii, no.110): a grant to St Andrews Cathedral Priory; of the donation made by King David and King Malcolm IV of the church of Longforgan (PER).

William I granted to William Giffard tofts in various places including a 'full toft at the castle of **Alith**, 2 March, 1196 x 1199. (*RRS*, ii, no.410): Witnesses were [Hugh of Roxburgh, bishop-elect of Glasgow \(d.1199\)](#); [Humphrey Barclay, son of Theobald](#); [John \(I\) Hastings, sheriff \(12/13C\)](#); [Philip de Valognes, chamberlain \(d.1215\)](#); [Roger de Mortimer \(d.1217×27\)](#); [William Hay \(I\), lord of Errol \(d.c.1201\)](#).

William I issued two charters at **Alicht**, 26 March, 1201 x 1205) . : King William to Arbroath Abbey; has granted donation which Gilchrist, earl of Angus, made of church of Monifieth (ANG) and King William to Arbroath Abbey; has granted donation which Gilchrist, earl of Angus, made of that land which his father had granted to establish a hospital (or inn) at Portincrag (ANG), with fishery, with common pasture and all kinds of easements of Monifieth (ANG).⁹

William I issues a charter at **Alith**, 24 August, 1203 x 1207: King William to Brice, bishop of Moray; has granted bishopric of Moray, and also, he grants in augmentation church of Elgin (MOR), saving tenure of his chaplain, Walter [of St Albans], and also church of Auldearn (NAI).¹⁰

William I issues a charter at **Alect**, 6 March, 1208 x 1210: King William to Gilbert, earl of Strathearn; has granted quitclaim which Walter Olifard made to the said Gilbert, his mother's brother, of right of 'avocation' [advowson] of church of Strageath (PER), which is 'founded' in free marriage, which Earl

⁸ See Grant, Alexander, "Thanes and Thanages, from the eleventh to the Fourteenth Centuries" in A. Grant & K. Stringer (eds.), *Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community, Essays Presented to G.W.S. Barrow*, (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 39–81.

⁹ *RRS*.ii, 455 and 456.

¹⁰ *RRS*.ii, 465.

Ferteth gave to Walter Olifard, father of said Walter, with Christian, his daughter and mother to said Walter. It is king's will that said Earl Gilbert shall enjoy free gift of the church peaceably without any contradiction.¹¹

William I issues a charter at **Alicht**, 5 July, 1209 or 1210: King William to Arbroath Abbey; has granted concession which John the abbot, son of Malise, made of [licence to take] charcoal in his wood of Edzell (ANG), with easements of lodging and pasture.¹²

Alexander II – charter to the burgh of Aberdeen, issued at **Alith**.¹³

Alexander II grants to Coupar Abbey a right of way through his **forest of Alyth**, 6 September, 1234, issued at Forfar.¹⁴

In none of these charters is there mention of a thanage of Alyth, a fact which points to its conversion as a feudal tenure, confirmed by the disappearance of the name in favour of Eliot, the name by which the town of Alyth became more commonly known. The earliest surviving mention of a thanage in fact relates to a grant dated 8 February 1319 to Coupar Abbey by Robert I of lands in his thanage of Alyth.¹⁵ It can now be established that this charter followed the resettlement of the Elliots in Liddesdale around the year 1309, and the resurrection of the old thanage by Robert I. The confusion of spelling evident in these charters, by clerks who seem to have had little problem with the consonant *eth* begs the question as to whether this was the result of a confusion of names. This will be discussed further at page 13.

Elias d'Alyth, alias Elias d'Aliot, and the thanage of Alyth.

As already mentioned, more is known about the first Scots-Breton Elliots from the several appearances in the historical record of Elias's descendants during the Wars of Independence, and particularly from the English chancery spelling of the name d'Aliot (see below). Known only to Scottish clerks as Elias d'Alyth, his existence and settlement, probably during the period immediately following the Treaty of Falaise (1174), is known from his appearance as a witness to a charter dated between 1182 and 1203 in which John, the bishop of Dunkeld gave the land of Adbreck to Coupar Angus Abbey.¹⁶ Although, as Matthew Hammond has shown, certain names favoured by members of one particular ethnic group were in due course adopted by those of another, Elias and other biblical names had since long before the Conquest been favoured Breton names, as, for example, were the names Brien and Bernard.

¹¹ *SHR*, vol.86 (2007), pp 314-318.

¹² *RRS*, ii, no.487.

¹³ *RMS*, vi, no.1233.

¹⁴ *RRS*, iii, no. 212.

¹⁵ *RRS*.v, no.145.

¹⁶ People of Medieval Scotland database : PoMS, no. 3413 (<http://db.poms.ac.uk/record/person/3413/>; accessed 06 February 2018). See also, for post-treaty migrants, G.W.S.Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots*, (Edinburgh, paperback 1988), 291.

Some interest in possible Breton origins arises when both the latter appear within one family, as with Bernard, son of Brien, lord of Hadden.¹⁷ The map shown below reveals a considerable landholding stretching from what became more commonly known as the Water of Elyeht (Appendix A: map drawn by Timothy Pont), across to the banks of the river Isla in the west, where the highly respected cartographer, John Adair (1660-1718), engaged by the Scottish Privy Council, gave the name Auchtereleot to what may have been a hamlet or steading. The alienation of thanage lands and the formal assignation of the name d'Alyth to Elias suggests keepership, as sole and only obvious candidate, of the king's forest of Alyth, covering an extensive area to the north of what had undoubtedly been a settlement from which the now alienated thanage had been administered. There is no surviving record by name or otherwise of a thane of Alyth, and the lands at the disposal of William I may have formed part of a thanage of the defunct or vacant earldom of Gowrie, in which the parish of Alyth was situated.

Whilst a widespread scattering of English Elliots is revealed by later Hundred Years' War muster rolls, only one rather tenuous clue as to the English lands from which Elias d'Aliot came can be found. In a pardon of 8 July, 1310, the peace of Edward II was granted to one Thomas Elliot of Repewyk, near Hexham 'whose body had been taken from the gallows to the cemetery of the church of St John of Leye, because his name was on the roll of the Brethren of St John of Jerusalem in England, under their privilege for burial when he was found to be alive) as he had abjured the realm.'¹⁸ As the descendant of a Breton who had fought at Hastings in 1066, Thomas was probably a knight hospitaller, born some years before the resettlement of the Elliots in Liddesdale, but the pronunciation of Elliot as Elliot, whether in Brittany or the Borders suggests a family connection. This would not have been unusual, given the number of men of Northumbrian and liberty of Tynedale origin, barons and knights, who had acquired lands both south and north of the Forth. It has been pointed out that

'an informed observer from Scotland in about 1280 would have regarded many of the gentry, even residents, as members of the wider Scottish community. He would have noted correspondence in family names – Colville, Gourlay, Malherbe, Mowbray, Renfrew, Rule, Vaux, Vipont – between parts of Tynedale and parts of Southern Scotland.'¹⁹

These and other names, like Comyn, Umfraville and several others reveal the Northumbrian, and particularly the liberty of Tynedale origins of men holding lands to the north of the Forth.

The feminization of Elliot or Elliot as Elliota and Ellota, and the attachment of Scandinavian patronyms to the Breton name, producing Alletson and Elletson, was long ago noted in parish registers on the borders between north Lancashire and Westmoreland:

This surname (Allott) is derived from the name of an ancestor. 'the son of Alot'; query, a form of Eliot, **with Eliota** as fem.; v. Elliot In the Ulverston Registers,

¹⁷ PoMS, no. 855 (<http://db.poms.ac.uk/record/person/855/>; accessed 06 February 2018).

¹⁸ *Cal.Docs.Scot.*, iii, no. 153.

¹⁹ M.L.Holford and K.J.Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties, Northeast England, c.1200 to c.1400*, (Edinburgh, 2010), p.253.

Lancashire, the forms are Alletson, Aletson, Elatson, Elattson, Elletson, Eletson, all representing the same patronymic Eliotson; v. Alletson in Index of Registers of St Mary, Ulverston. In any case the surname, with its variants, is of fontal origin.²⁰

The settlement of Elliots on lands to the north of the Forth, in Angus, needs no further corroboration but the feminized Ellota, appears interestingly in this surviving quitclaim by tenant-in-chief, Gilbert of Cassingray:

‘Gilbert..... son and heir of Laurence and Ellota of Cassingray, has given, granted, and by this his present charter established, to Sir Nicholas de Haye, lord of Erroll, all his land of Cassingray (FIF), with all rights and all renders which he had in that land, holding it of the lord king, and making all custom and service for the land as he and his predecessors did.’²¹

Whether this amounts to a glimpse of an Elliot – de la Haye connection cannot be ascertained, but it is interesting to note that both Elias’s descendant Walter and Sir Gilbert de la Haye, lord of Errol in 1306, were both dispossessed of their lands, and may have been familiars within an Angus network established during resistance led by Andrew Murray and William Wallace. Whether their lands were ever seized or held for any length of time by the beneficiaries named by Edward I, in the light of the retention by de la Haye of his lordship at some stage before Bruce’s first parliament in April 1309, will be discussed below.

The witnessing by Elias of the bishop’s charter, taken together with other charters witnessed by Elias’s descendant, Walter, suggest the undertaking of a role in local or provincial administration required of a man with the rank of keeper of a royal forest, equivalent at least to that of sheriff. Whether or not Elias was to all intents and purposes a baron is a matter of speculation. Keats-Rohan describes the creation of an administrative class in England, consisting of men of lesser knightly origins who were sheriffs and local officials. ‘The territorial settlement (post-1066) was in large measure an exercise in the creation of “new men” whether as lesser tenants-in-chief, or as sub-tenants of major tenants-in-chief.’²² This was particularly so during the reign of Henry I, many of whose *probi homines* were settled in the north of England and provided those younger siblings who, like the first Bruce of Annandale, became instruments of the policy of David I and his grandsons. The tuition which David I had received as a virtual Norman, and undoubtedly the collusion of Henry I, can be seen in the creation of a similar administrative class in Scotland, consisting of the local officials of middling feudal rank, ‘who identified themselves with their sheriffdom.’²³

English scribes described his late thirteenth century descendant Walter as a squire, although they may have done so on learning that he owed the service of less than the minimum of the five knights which roughly qualified an English tenant-in-chief as a baron, without

²⁰ Charles Wareing Endell Bardsley, *A Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames*, 1872-1896.

²¹ PoMS, no. 12149 (<http://db.poms.ac.uk/record/person/12149/>; accessed 15 March 2018)

²² Keats-Rohan, *The Bretons and Normans of England*, p.8.

²³ Michael Brown, *The Wars of Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 2004), p.96.

considering whether Elias had held his lands in *liberam baroniam*. As Robert Bartlett has observed:

‘In the sense of ‘substantial tenant holding directly from a lord’, the term ‘baron was not just limited to those holding of the Crown.... The great churches also had their barons. ...Yet the term was used especially and increasingly exclusively to describe the greater tenants-in-chief of the Crown. Obviously the word ‘greater’ does not provide an exact measure and there may be some doubt as to where the line should be drawn between barons and non-baronial tenants-in-chief.’²⁴

It was only following Magna Carta in 1215 that in England a setting of the amount of relief payable on a barony began to separate baronial from non-baronial tenants-in-chief.

Katharine Keats-Rohan offers a highly plausible explanation for Elias’s ignorance of, or refusal to accept, his new charter name:

‘The Bretons are unusual among mediaeval peoples for having a highly developed awareness of their national and cultural distinctness, and this awareness was not confined to the predominantly Celtic Bretons of the west of Brittany. Eleventh-century seigneurs of north-eastern Brittany, not yet part of the Norman adventure but having contact with Normans and holding Norman lands, were apt to give charters referring to themselves as *Haimo, patria Brito, or Riualionius (Rivallon), Britannicus gente*.’²⁵

²⁴ Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1275*, (Oxford, 2000), p.212-213.

²⁵ K.S.B.Keats-Rohan, *The Bretons and Normans of England 1066-1154, the family, the fief and the feudal monarchy*, Nottingham Medieval Studies 36 (1992), 42-78, at 7.



D'Aliot lands : Map by John Adair, d.1727. (See Appendix A).

[The red line shows the distance between Elyeht Water (now Alyth Burn), named by Timothy Pont, and Auchtereleot, named by Adair: 5km. or over 3m].

Other Bretons, however, were late in catching up with the use of surnames, still something of a novelty even as late as the early fourteenth century. Michael Jones explains how Breton ancestry remains hidden behind British surnames:

‘En outre, comme les familles chevaleresques bretonnes étaient en général plus lentes à adopter l’emploi régulier de noms patronymiques ou géographiques et toponymiques que leurs voisins normands et angevins, l’emploi sans distinction, souvent sans l’épithète supplémentaire *Brito*, veut dire que beaucoup de ces familles sont masquées dans nos sources.’²⁶

While Elias’s ‘official’ Scottish surname, derived from the Gaelic *aileadh*, meaning a slope or brae, remained in modern parlance ‘on file,’ the French-corrupted Breton surname which Elias already possessed clearly and unarguably became the locally accepted name of a new town and ‘castle’ in whose development he was probably closely involved.²⁷ If the ‘castle’ of Alyth was indeed, as now thought, a fortified hunting lodge and a king’s lodging, Elias, as sole candidate, may have had its keepership in addition to that of the royal forest.²⁸ The

²⁶ Michael Jones, *The Creation of Brittany, a Late Medieval State*, (London, 1988), 83.

²⁷ The east-west extent of Aliot lands is revealed by the maps of Pont, Moll and Adair. In the extract from the list of forfeitures of 1306, below (p.16), Walter d’Aliot alias d’Alyth’s lands are described as ‘the Brae,’ suggesting perhaps a south to north extension of his holding into the ‘Braes of Angus’ to the north of Alyth.

²⁸ Thanks are due to Mr David Perry, an archaeologist of Perth, for his advice on the original use of the ‘castle’ of Alyth, of which very few traces now remain.

lending of a first name or surname to a town or other topographical feature was not confined to Bretons like Elias. Geoffrey Barrow drew attention to those Flemish tenants-in-chief who gave their names to places like Tankerton, the town of Tancard, and Wiston, the town of Wice.²⁹ The existence of a former thanage of Alyth, held by Elias, appears in no way to have prevented him or others from using or accepting his Breton surname as the name of a newly created community in which he was the sole figure of authority. No other alternative figure associated with the former thanage can be found. As the surviving maps show, the same surname became the commonly accepted name for more than one place or topographic feature within what had until recently been a thanage, royal or otherwise, at the disposal of William I. Elias's neighbouring fellow settlers, francophones like him, would almost certainly have seen nothing out of the way in this. At some time during 1192-96 William I granted to William Giffard a number of tofts in various places, including one at 'the castle of Alith.'³⁰ The availability of tofts which were centred on the so-called 'castle,' point to the existence of a newly founded town, on a site previously occupied by former thanes who, if any had existed, make no appearance in the historical record. There is no surviving source relating to any toft or tofts given to Elias, but it is difficult to imagine a bestowal of an exclusively Breton surname on the town without the exercise by Elias and his descendants of considerable authority at a local level, as well as the possession of a leading interest in a town which no doubt from an early stage became known more commonly as Aliot, spelt alternatively in Britain and Brittany and in due course by mapmakers as Eliot.

As will be seen below, Geoffrey Barrow described Elias's descendant Walter, whose name appears as Alight (Aliot) in a Ragman Roll and a later list of men dispossessed for their support of Bruce, as a man of middling rank. In no way can he be described as having been a 'minor tenant,' unworthy of the attention paid to him, twice by Barrow.

Walter d'Aliot, his brother Thomas and sons Walter and Thomas, and William d'Aliot, a burgess of Perth.

No better indication of the alienation of the thanage of Alyth by William I as a feudal tenure exists than the persistence with which Scottish clerks continued to use the surname d'Alyth and never referred to him as a thane: an unlikely office to be held by an incoming Breton. When, however, English chancery clerks had Elias's descendants before them, and asked for their names, they wrote these as Walter *d'Alight* and Thomas *d'Alyght*. This occurred on more than one occasion, when a different clerk used the same spellings. Any idea that an English chancery clerk would not have known how to depict the dental fricative *eth* of *Alyth* may be dismissed. 'The importance of the Chancery (was) its role in fostering the standardization of English, in handwriting, spelling and grammatical forms.'³¹ The *gh* was used consistently for some time to indicate the palatal semi-vowel *y* of *yield*, or its allophone *io* of *Aliot*, one of the values indicated by the abandoned Old English letter *yogh*.

²⁹ Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots*, 258.

³⁰ *RRS*, ii, no.110.

³¹ David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, (Cambridge, 1995), p.40.

Men at arms Walter and Thomas, taken prisoner at the battle of Dunbar in April 1296 found themselves assembled at Roxburgh castle ready for transportation to prisons in England. Here were men considered important enough to justify their removal from Scotland. Their names were listed, almost certainly by one of Edward I's itinerant chancery clerks:

Malcolm of Drummond, John of Clogstone, knights, **Thomas de Alyght**, Nigel of Kilpatrick, Reginald son of Reginald le Cheyne, Reginald Sinclair, esquires, to **Kenilworth Castle**.....

Alan de Lascelles, Laurence de Longaver, John Page and **Walter Alight, esquires, to Tonbridge Castle**.³² (My bold print).

Scholars compiling the PoMS database appear therefore not to have consulted any linguistic authority, and to have mistranslated these names as Alyth. The digraph *gh* had two values: the velar plosive or hard *g*, or the palatal semi-vowel, /j/ of *year*, and its allophone, the *io* of Aliot, often spelt in England as Elyot. According to linguistic historians Thomas Pyle and John Algeo:

‘the Old English symbol ȝ was an Irish form; *g* entered English writing from the

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continent. In late OE ȝ had three values. In Middle English times it acquired a somewhat different form, **ȝ**, called yogh, and was used for two sounds that came to be spelt **as y and gh** later in the period. This symbol, which continued to be written in Scotland long after the English had given it up, has been mistaken for *z* – the symbol that printers, having no **ȝ** in their fonts, used for it – as in the pronunciation of the names *Kenzie* (compare *Kenny*, with revised spelling to indicate a pronunciation somewhat closer to the historical one) and *Menzies*’.³³

Pyles and Algeo are corroborated by Professor Crystal:

‘Following the Norman Conquest, the distinctively Anglo-Saxon symbols gradually disappeared at first because the French scribes preferred more familiar letters, and later because Continental printers did not have the sorts to print earlier symbols. Ash was replaced by *a*, thorn and eth by *th*, yogh chiefly by *gh*, and wynn by the new letter *ƿ*.³⁴

Despite the vagaries of medieval Scottish spelling shown in the charters outlined above (pages 6 and 7), and in the light of both Y-chromosome research and evidence provided by surviving maps, it is worth repeating that it is impossible for *Alight* or *Alyght* in the hand of

³² *Cal.Docs.Scot.*, ii, no.742.

³³ Thomas Pyles, John Algeo, *The Origins and Development of the English Language* (London, 1993), 137.

³⁴ David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, (Cambridge, 1995), 258.

an English chancery clerk to be his representation of Alyth. Again, Professor Crystal has observed:

‘The importance of the Chancery is its role in fostering the standardization of English, in handwriting, spelling and grammatical forms. ...Careful analysis of the manuscripts in the Early Chancery Proceedings has shown that the clerks imposed a great deal of order on the wide range of spellings which existed at the time, and that the choices they made are very largely the ones which have since become standard. The genealogy of modern Standard English goes back to the Chancery, not Chaucer.’³⁵

There can be no further doubt that Elias d’Alyth and his descendants were known more commonly by the surname d’Aliot, spelt also as Eliot. It is impossible to ignore the evidence provided by several surviving maps, without ignoring also the testimony of these historians of the English language. Further, it is not altogether clear that some confusion between these two names occurred during the drawing up of the charters listed above, in pages 6 and 7. By and large Scottish scribes appear themselves to have had no problem with the consonant *eth*, but the spellings *Alect* and *Alicht* may indicate a problem with the palatal semi-vowel *y*, solved by their English counterparts when using *gh*. Alyth no longer existed as a thanage, and incomers would have known it, in modern colloquial English, simply as ‘Aliot’s town,’ or in the French spoken by Elias and his incoming neighbours as ‘la ville d’Aliot.’ What is often overlooked when perhaps paying too much attention in the modern way to ranks and pecking orders, is the prowess which marked out any particular tenant and members of his kinship or clan as fighting men. By the late thirteenth century Elias’s descendant chief would undoubtedly have had a potential war band consisting mainly of his kinsmen, and men who had married into his kinship, at his disposal.

The first appearance of Walter, known more commonly by his Breton surname, d’Aliot, was as *Walter d’Alight*, listed in a roll of names of those swearing fealty to Edward I on 7 March, 1296. The hand of an English chancery clerk is seen here for the first time.³⁶

Both Walter and his brother Thomas were described as squires, but despite Walter’s status as a tenant-in-chief, from what is known about Walter’s sons, he and undoubtedly his brother were almost certainly Atholl followers and men at arms. The evidence for Walter’s inclusion in Atholl’s following is provided by one surviving document which reveals the fostering of his sons, Walter and Thomas, as valets in the Atholl household. As a condition of his release from imprisonment Atholl guaranteed their service to Edward I in France:

‘Letters patent by **John, earl of Atholl**, Alexander de Menzies and John de Inchmartine, guaranteeing that Sir Laurence of Strathbogie, Sir Henry of Inchmartine, Sir William of Moray, Sir Edmond Ramsay, Sir John Cameron, Sir William Hay, Sir Walter Barclay, knights, Simon de Hiskendy, John of Ireland, John of Strathbogie, Robert of Moncur, William Broun, David Cameron, Gregory Makenkert, **Walter ‘Dalith,’ Thomas ‘Dalith,’** Nicholas Dirlowenan, Malise of Logie, Walter de Buttergask, Robert of Inchtur, John Buterwan,

³⁵ *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 41,

³⁶ *Palgrave*, pp 194-197; *CDS*, ii, no.730.

Michael Scott [Lescot], and Andrew de Strathgartney, **valets**, shall serve the king in his army in France or elsewhere. Append their seals at Winchelsey.’³⁷ (My bold print).

Edward I’s campaign ended in fiasco, and the Scots contingent absented themselves and took ship directly to Scotland. The elder Thomas, however, was still imprisoned at Kenilworth Castle in June, 1298, when the sheriff of Warwick submitted a claim for expenses. The names of his co-prisoners and comrades in battle, Niall or Nigel of Kilpatrick, esquire. Reginald Cheyne, younger, lord of Duffus, and Reginald Sinclair, esquire, which would appear later during the Wars of Independence, provide a clue as to Thomas’s middling status as the brother of the Elliot clan chief.³⁸

On 8 August, 1296, William *Alight* (again mistranslated in the PoMS database as Alyth), was one of a number of burgesses of Perth who swore fealty to Edward I.³⁹ Matthew Hammond has drawn attention to what may have been a significant Breton settlement in Perth:

‘It is possible that personal names can expand our understanding of the cultural makeup of the city and place it within a broader geographical context. For example, Willelmus filius Johel suggests as a patronymic the Breton Judhael, often anglicised as Joel. Breton names were significant across Britain at this time. William son of Ketell gave his daughter the Breton name Wymarc. These names may suggest Breton cultural contacts not previously recognised in Perth.’⁴⁰

Walter appears again, twice in 1304, and again in 1306 when he was dispossessed of his lands. Along with certain others, Walter merited two observations by Geoffrey Barrow, the first relating to a list of those dispossessed in 1306, who had made their peace with Edward in 1304, firstly:

‘There are several names on the list which are worth remembering in the light of after events: Earl Malcolm of Lennox and John of Cremannan (noted by Barrow as a ‘considerable barony), **Walter of Alyth**, Walter Barclay, Sir John of Cambo, Sir John Cameron of Baledgarno, Sir William Fenton, Patrick Graham...’⁴¹ (My heavy print).

and secondly, when commenting that ‘it is particularly interesting to find among the *middling* men recorded as being with Bruce in 1306 several who had made their peace with Edward I only two years earlier.’

³⁷ *Cal.Docs.Scot.*, ii, no. 942.

³⁸ PoMS transaction factoid, no. 87651 (www.db.poms.ac.uk/record/factoid/87651/; accessed 15 January 2015).

³⁹ *Cal.Docs.Scot.*, ii, no.814

⁴⁰ Matthew H. Hammond: *A Prosopographical Analysis of Society in East Central Scotland, circa 1100 to 1260, with special reference to ethnicity.* (submitted for the degree of Ph. D. Department of History (Scottish History Area); Faculty of Arts, University of Glasgow; April 2005), p 112.

⁴¹ G.W.S.Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, (London, 1965), 188.

Walter also makes an appearance in 1304 as a witness to a charter which recorded the sale by Sir John of Pincerna of lands at Pitmiddle (Perthshire) to Sir John of Inchmartine. The main interest here is in the company kept by Walter when undertaking local administrative duties alongside the sheriff of Perth. Fellow witnesses were: [Richard Hay, knight](#), [Gilbert, son of Richard Hay, knight](#), [John Cameron of Baledgarno, knight](#), [Robert of Harcarse, sheriff of Perth \(d.1309\)](#), [Peter of Brunton, constable of Perth](#), [Michael Scott, the son \(14C\)](#), [Roger de Mortimer, lord of Wigmore \(d.1330\)](#), [Edmund Hay \(of Leys\)](#) and [Andrew of Monorgan](#).⁴² Brunton was a Northumbrian and Harcarse had lands in Berwickshire. Both were on the English side, as was the father of the earl of March, the future lover of Queen Isabella of England. Walter certainly cannot have been a lowly ranking ‘odd man out.’

Further interest arises from the appearance of three member of the Hay family alongside Walter, and a possible connection which may have been instrumental to the choice of Walter and his clan by Bruce, for a mission which they were set to accomplish in Liddesdale. As will be seen, Gilbert de la Haye was in possession of his forfeited lordship of Errol in Angus as early as 1309 and probably before that, by mid-1308.

The dispossession of Walter d’Alyth, alias Walter d’Aliot.

Further evidence of Walter’s attachment to the earl of Atholl’s following is provided by the dispossession of his lands following the coronation of Robert Bruce at Scone on the 25th of March, 1306, at which the earl was present.

Extracted from the list of those dispossessed of their lands as accessories to Bruce’s coronation are:

<i>Forfeited landowner</i>	<i>Lands</i>	<i>Petitioner</i>
Atholl, earl of	Atholl	earl of Gloucester.
Alyth of the Brae, Walter	in Perthshire	Adam Brunyng.
Innerpeffray, Malcolm of	in Perthshire	Adam Brunyng. ⁴³

The one mistake in this list, arising perhaps by oversight of the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1891, is the placing of Walter’s fee in Perthshire, rather than the county of Angus as it had existed before the re-drawing of county boundaries of that year. Walter nevertheless appears to have had a role to play associated with the sheriffdom of Perth.

Adam Brunyng, a Scot opposed to Bruce, had already been rewarded by Edward I for his participation in the capture of William Wallace.⁴⁴ His son John appears at some stage to have come into Robert’s peace, and was awarded lands in the north-east, and appointed as a

⁴² PoMS, H3/0/0 (www.db.poms.ac.uk/record/source/7139/; accessed 15 January 2015).

⁴³ Taken from a list ‘based on the roll printed in Palgrave, *Docs.Hist.Scot.*, 301-318, cited by Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, Appendix A, 447. Whether *Alyth* is yet again a mistranslation of *Alight* or *Alyght* has not been ascertained.

⁴⁴ www.db.poms.ac.uk/record/person/11084/; (accessed 11 August 2016)

substitute justiciar.⁴⁵ Despite Anglo-Scots occupation of the Perth garrison, and powerful local opposition to Bruce which included earl John of Atholl's son David, Brunyng, himself a man of middling rank, would surely have needed a strong force to intrude his own steward and expel Walter d'Aliot and his clan from their lands. The position of, and the consequences for, the dispossessed supporters of Bruce is surrounded in mystery and open to competing assumptions, given the absence of any detailed accounts of how and when any single occupation was enforced by its new tenant. Suspicions are aroused of possible resistance by the supposed dispossessed men, by firm evidence of the retention of their lands as early as 1308. In order to retain the loyalty of such men or their surviving heirs, Bruce would have undoubtedly had restitution of their lands or compensatory grants as a major priority, but by 1309 Bruce was in a position to award lands which he had seized to his supporters. 'From 1306 both Bruce and his English rivals used lands in order to secure allegiance and reward support.'⁴⁶ No systematic study of the fates of all those dispossessed by Edward I, appears to have been attempted. Many whose lands were in Scotland south of the Forth may have stood their ground, and in any case they would have been secure in their lands during the summer of 1307. The systematic expulsion from their forfeited lands of men with substantial fighting retinues would have been beyond the resources of all but the most powerful men, when Edward I's main aim was to reinforce garrisons and allocate forces to the pursuit and capture of Bruce and the defeat of his supporters, while those awarded forfeited lands were no doubt left to their own devices when attempting to take possession of them. This was to happen again following the victory of those later dispossessed by Bruce, at Dupplin Moor in 1330, leading to failure in the face of local resistance and the expulsion of Edward Balliol. The Aliot/Eliot clan would almost certainly have grown considerably in numbers during a century and a half and as a royal forest keeper commanding mounted rangers or constables, and all other kinsmen, under his control, had the run of the extensive royal forest. Brunyng, another man of middling rank, would have had great difficulty in dislodging what was probably a formidable, paramilitary clan. Here may be a clue as to why, within two or three years, Bruce turned to the Elliots when aiming to recolonize the virtually empty lordship of Liddesdale, for the first time with men owing knight or archer service.

While some of the dispossessed of 1306 may have been languishing in English prisons, nothing emerges from the historical record pointing to a critical mass of footloose suffering or starving dispossessed landholders. Both before and after the success at Inverurie, many men with lands situated between the Forth and north of the Mounth had rallied to Bruce's side, and two instances of retention or speedy restoration stand out. John of Luss was dispossessed of lands in Lennox, but had recovered them by 1308, when his charter was inspected by Bruce.⁴⁷ In instructions issued under Privy Seal, dated 19 June, 1306, Aymer de Valence was ordered to 'burn, destroy and strip the lands and gardens of Sir Michael de Wymes's manor.... Likewise to do the same or worse, if possible, to the lands and possessions of Sir Gilbert de la Haye, to whom the King did great courtesy when he was last

⁴⁵ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 414.

⁴⁶ M. Brown, *Bannockburn, The Scottish War and the British Isles, 1307-1323*, (Edinburgh, 2008), 59.

⁴⁷ PoMS transaction factoid, no. 68738 (<http://db.poms.ac.uk/record/factoid/68738/>; accessed 28 November 2017)

in London.⁴⁸ Whether, or to what extent these instructions were carried out is unclear, but Gilbert's attendance at Bruce's first parliament at St. Andrews during March, 1309, indicates either the forceful retention or fairly speedy recovery of his lordship of Errol, probably during organized rampages which would surely have followed Bruce's crushing of Comyn power. A bald assumption that all of Edward's beneficiaries of 1306, based solely a very few known instances of seizure and occupation, met no resistance when the intrusion of new stewards and bailiffs was attempted, when the nature of various territories and the history of resistance on previous occasions are contemplated, seems to be untenable. By the autumn of 1307, following the death of Edward I, Anglo-Scots forces withdrawn into garrisons, would certainly have been in no position to enforce such a high number of forfeitures. Every man of substance had his mounted yeomen messengers, and a reinvigoration of the networks established by Andrew Murray and William Wallace seems entirely feasible. Little wonder that Adam Brunyng's son John gave up the idea of expelling Walter from his lands before entering into Bruce's peace. He had almost certainly never set foot on Aliot (Eliot) lands, before his own much later infetment by Bruce, as a substitute justiciar, with lands in the north east.⁴⁹ Other dispossessed men were not, however, in a position to resist, or to retake their lands during the months following Bruce's success at Inverurie. Hugh Lovell (Hawick) suffered long term incarceration, as shown by his inclusion in a list of payments to various sheriffs:

‘The sheriff of Gloucester, £4 4s. 4d. for Sir Hugh Lovel, knight, in Gloucester castle from 5 November 1307 till 16 July 1308 – 203 days at 3d. and £6 20d. for same from 30 September 1308 till 29 September 1309 – 365 days; and from the morrow of Michaelmas till Easter day, 19 April 1310 – 202 days, 67s. 4d.’⁵⁰

Other dispossessed men were similarly imprisoned: Sir David Lindsay at Devizes, William Giffard at Corfe Castle, Walter Oliphant at Winton and Andrew Wishart at Hereford. The names of many make no further appearance in the historical record, but several may have been as fortunate as John of Luss, given that many of the forfeited lands were situated in territories which soon came to be controlled by Bruce and a rapidly growing number of adherents during the summer of 1307 and throughout 1308. Barrow observed that ‘within a year Bruce had under his control a wide belt of territory stretching from the Ayrshire coast to the neighbourhood of Roxburgh and Jedburgh,’ and much of the territory both to the north of the Mounth and to its south, where his opponents were cooped up in defensible burghs and castles.⁵¹

The seizure by Bruce during 1307 of the lordship of Liddesdale.

⁴⁸ *Cal. Docs. Scot.*, ii, 1787.

⁴⁹ Barrow, *Bruce*, p.414.

⁵⁰ PoMS, no. 18583 (<http://db.poms.ac.uk/record/person/18583/>; accessed 28 November 2017)

⁵¹ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 253.

Use of the description ‘the Forest,’ even when qualified as that ‘of Selkirk,’ is vague when attempting more accurately to name the localities and specific territories which it encapsulated. Richard Oram describes it as a northern extension of what William Kapelle had labelled a ‘free zone,’ frequented by outlaws and brigands, encapsulating the whole of the middle marches, including Liddesdale, that had earlier formed part of the kingdom of Strathclyde, or a ‘greater Galloway.’⁵² Scant references to Liddesdale, and the castles of Liddel and Hermitage-Sules may therefore mean that its inclusion in territory described as the Forest (of Selkirk) was taken for granted by the chroniclers of that period. Geoffrey Barrow wrote that ‘as early as 1307 Gallovidians and the cattle inseparably associated with them were sheltering from Bruce in Inglewood Forest, along with men from Liddesdale.’⁵³ In the same year Thomas de Multon and four other local Cumbrian lords were appointed as Keepers of the Peace ‘to meet the damages and wrongs sustained by the men of those parts, owing to the thievish incursions of Robert de Brus.’⁵⁴ What surely may now be contended is the continued occupation, as a strategic necessity, by forces loyal to Bruce, of Liddesdale from 1307 onwards. The impact of the cross-border incursions of summer, 1307 may have been under-estimated by historians, even though those of 1311 and subsequent years were undertaken on a grander scale. Although the surviving details of a report by Gilbert de Umfraville, earl of Angus, to the Edward II and his council are undated, there is little doubt that it was made at the time of the raids of 1307, some of which must have been in considerable strength. The earl reported that his castle of Hirbodell (Harbottle) was ‘so “abattu” by the Scots that prisoners (could) no longer be safely warded there.’⁵⁵ Gilbert died during late 1307 or 1308 and was succeeded by his second son, Robert.

There is no evidence that Liddesdale was ever held as a lordship owing knight service. In 1307 its keeper was Sir Simon de Lindsay, described below, and no sub-tenant appears to have held lands in return for knight or other service. All were obliged instead to render common or forinsec service. (See textbox below). The most recent account of the history of Hermitage Castle is by Richard Oram, which may be accessed and downloaded online.⁵⁶ Until the late thirteenth century the principal stronghold in Liddesdale was Liddel castle situated some six kilometres away from the present Hermitage Castle, at the confluence of the Liddel with Hermitage Water. The castle of Liddel is sometimes confused with the Peel of Liddel, in the Cumbrian lordship of the Wakes in the parish of Kirkpatrick at the confluence of the Liddel and the Esk near Longtown, some fifteen miles downstream from the hills and wilder lands of the upper reaches of the Liddel. A letter of Edward II of June, 1310, to all the King’s servants not to meddle with the Earl of Hereford’s people in

⁵² R. Oram, *Domination and Lordship: Scotland 1070-1230*, (Edinburgh, 2011), 228. W.Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, (London, 1979) 7, 144-46, 205-8.

⁵³ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 281

⁵⁴ C. McNamee, *Robert Bruce, Our Most Valiant King and Lord*, (Edinburgh, 2006), citing 51 *CPR 1307-13*, pp. 3-4; *CCR 13107-13*, p.42; *Guisborough*, p.384 during the resurgence of Scottish raiding to 1308. Kindle loc. 1154.

⁵⁵ *Cal.Docs.Scot.*, v, no.1973.

⁵⁶ Richard Oram, *Hermitage Castle, A Report on its History and Cultural Heritage Significance*, (February, 2012) at <http://www.gorrenberry.org.uk/ROfinaldraft.pdf> (accessed 15 February, 2018).

Annandale included ‘the warden of the Piel of Ledel.’⁵⁷ The failure to address the warden by name, as in other instances, is perhaps telling, and together with the known whereabouts of Sir Simon de Lindsay in 1310 and 1311 (page 24, below), it points to Bruce’s already well established possession at least of upper Liddesdale, with James Douglas gathering and leading Middle March forces. It is perhaps to these years that the Douglases later traced their jealously guarded special relationship with Liddesdale and its tenants, particularly when the Bruce connection, exemplified by the resettlement of the Elliots, ended with the death of their lord, Sir Robert Bruce at Dupplin Moor in 1332.

The further construction of what was yet to become the stone fortress at Hermitage, adjacent to Redheugh and those held in the sixteenth century by the Elliots of Gorrenberry, whose forebears would have been undoubtedly members of Walter d’Aliot’s immediate family, was probably initiated during the 1240s. Access to digitized archives reveals that both the castles of ‘Lydel’ and ‘Eremitage-Soules’ were under the control of Sir Simon de Lyndsay. Clearly no Anglo-Scots garrison or force was based in upper Liddesdale and its defence was left in the hands of Lindsay and whatever forces he could muster. According to Professor Oram,

‘A castle called Hermitagehad come into existence before the end of the thirteenth century and, from its designation as “Hermitage Sules”...it was clearly also the possession of the family that had controlled Liddesdale since the first half of the twelfth century. Why they felt that they needed two residences so close together is not entirely clear, but it is most likely that Hermitage had its origins as a hunting lodge associated with the de Sules baronial forest of Liddesdale, rather than as a man or regular place of residence for the entire family and household of a lord of de Sules’s status.’⁵⁸

Anglo-Scots castle garrisons appear in a lengthy entry of muster rolls in Bain’s third volume of the *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, listed in pages 393 to 412. Neither ‘Hermitage-Sules’ nor Liddel Castle is included and they must therefore have been garrisoned only by as many of his Wauchopedale and Liddesdale tenants as de Lindsay could muster. Given accounts of the Bruces’ activities at this time, there is little doubt that any forces that were, or could have been, led by de Lindsay, would have been outnumbered and overrun. His Redheugh tenant, with lands adjacent to Hermitage, was not present, since the muster rolls reveal the presence in Bothwell Castle of one Alexandri Redheuid, at a time when Liddesdale was already in Bruce’s hands, and had been so since 1307.⁵⁹ The Bothwell garrison did not capitulate until after Bruce’s victory at Bannockburn. Despite the need for

⁵⁷ *Cal.Docs.Scot.*, iii, 219.

⁵⁸ *Hermitage Castle*, 17.

⁵⁹ *Cal.Docs.Scot.*, vol.iii, p.408.

Sir Simon de Lindsay

‘Sir Simon de Lindsay, *de jure* fourth laird of Wauchope, was a younger son of Sir John, the Chamberlain. In his father’s lifetime, and as early as 1278, he had the lands of Arthuret in Cumberland, as a vassal of Sir John de Wake, lord of Liddell. The great barony of Liddell lay on the English side of the...border, and Sir John de Wake also held from Sir Nicholas de Soulis the lands of Liddesdale and Hermitage on the Scottish side. **The freeholders in the barony held by cornage**, which in this case meant that those holding by this tenure were required to serve in the van of the English army when invading Scotland and to form the rearguard on its return. When war broke out ...Sir Simon fought on the English side, and in 1298 King Edward, “having confidence in the loyalty and discretion of his beloved and faithful Sir Simon de Lindsay,” put him in chief command of the district of Eskdale; and on 30th Oct. 1300, as a matter which concerned him in his official capacity, he was notified of the condition of the truce made with the Scots. About this time, Sir John de Wake being dead and his heir a ward of the English crown, Sir Simon was given the keeping of his barony, with the two fortresses of Hermitage and Liddell.

Public actions of the Clan Lindsay Society, vol.ii, ed.John Lindsay MA.MD. (Edinburgh, 1920), 178-9.

caution in translating this entry as Alexander of Redheugh, no other name for which it could be mistaken can be found in the index of any volume of the *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*. A search of Scottish place names reveals none which is proximate to this name. There is therefore little doubt that ‘Redheuid’ was Redheugh, a tenancy with which Walter d’Aliot (Eliot) was to be infefted by Robert I, probably like several of his grants, owing mounted archer service. In any event by 1308 the whereabouts of de Lindsay can be located elsewhere. He appears initially to have taken up with Patrick Dunbar, earl of March. His movements are confirmed by a roll of imprests for the period July 1308 to July 1309, along with the earl and ‘Edmund de Convers, John de Wallibus and Gilbert de Clincarny’ he was awarded £26.13s.4p. for ‘staying in that march for the keeping of the truce between the king and Robert Brous.’⁶⁰ In 1310 x 1311, he was, however, described as a knight of Sir Ingram de Umfraville, present in London in a deputation when paid 100s., by the Bishop of Worcester.⁶¹ He had not, therefore, been with Umfraville at the battle of the River Dee on 29 June, 1308, and must have joined him at some time during late 1309 or early 1310, at a time when Anglo-Scottish opponents of Bruce were increasingly bottled up in southern castles.

In sum, there is little doubt that the forces available to Bruce overran most of Liddesdale in 1307, and the lordship was still held by or for him on his return to it, prior to the launching of the first of his great raids of 1311 into northern England. The need for Bruce to have had to fight for repossession of Liddesdale before launching his devastating raids into East Lothian

⁶⁰ *Cal.Docs Scot...*v, no.528.

⁶¹ *Cal.Docs.Scot.*, iii, no.66.

in 1310, followed by raids conducted on a large scale into England in 1311 would not have escaped comment or notice of a reaction in various quarters, in the Chronicles of Lanercost or in any other English account. Strategically the possession of Liddesdale would have been critical for at least two reasons. Firstly, it would have been impossible for Douglas to have retained control of much of the territory described as ‘the Forest’ with Anglo-Scots forces established in some strength, behind him in Liddesdale. and secondly, English patrol of the extensive and challenging wilderness country of the Middle March to a level required was beyond even the resources of an English king already distracted by other problems in his own country. It was to provide either a route or a rendezvous for invading Scottish forces and future riding clans for years to come, and it is to the ineffectual reign of the new king of England, Edward II, particularly following the death of his father, that we look for reasons as to the ease with which Liddesdale was seized and held by Bruce and his adherents, pending his return from campaigns in the north. The circumstances were fortuitous.

The resettlement of the Elliot clan in Liddesdale.

Not yet sixteen years old, Walter Scott of Satchells ran away from home to join the mercenary regiment which his Border heidsman and kinsman, Walter, the first earl of Buccleuch, had raised and transported to Holland in 1629, in the service of the States General. In 1688, in his old age, Satchells published his *‘True History of several honourable families of the right honourable name of Scot, in the shires of Roxburgh, Selkirk, and others adjacent, gathered out of ancient chronicles, histories, and traditions of our fathers.’*⁶² In another publication he recounted in poetic form a claim by the earl that the Elliots had come to Liddesdale with Robert Bruce, from a town called Eliot in Angus to Redheugh in Liddesdale:

‘For the Elliots brave and worthy men,
 Have been oppressed as any name I ken,
 For in my own time I have seen so much odds,
 No Elliot enjoyed any heritage but Stobs,
 A beloved sister to the family of Buckcleugh;
 Yet in the border-side the Elliots did remain,
 Since King Robert the First, they with him from Angus came,
 The town of Elliot was their antiquitie,
 Which stands in Angus in the foot of Glenshie;

⁶² Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: Henry Paton, *‘Scott, Walter, of Satchells (b. 1613, d. in or after 1688)’*, rev. Alexander Du Toit, first published 2004, see www.oxforddnb.com/index/101024927/Walter-Scott-of-Satchells.

With brave King Robert they hither came,
 Which is three hundred and eighty years ago;
 In West Tiviotdale* these gentlemen did dwell, (*an old description of
 Liddesdale)
 There were twelved great families, I heard my good-sir tell;
 Their chief was a baron of renown,
 Designed Reid-heugh, which is now called Lariston;
 Stobs and Dunlibyre is of the antient kind,
 Cobshaw, Brugh, Prickinhaugh and Gorrinberrie's gone,
 Yet there's more Elliots by other stiles that supplied their room;
 Erckletown (Arkleton) it was long out of the Elliots' name,
 But now it is returned to the self-same again;
 Elliot of Bewlies (Bewlie), some say, he's not a gentleman;
 But I protest they do him wrong to his ninth generation.'⁶³

Extracts from this rhyming account have usually been confined to Elliot origins, but the longer one above discloses with some accuracy more about the historical context in which the story of the first Redheugh chief of the Elliots could be told. Interestingly, Scott honoured the reputed insistence by Robert Elliot the 17th of Redheugh that the letter (*i*) should be reinserted in his name, following news of the death in the Tower of London in 1632, of Charles I's prisoner, Sir John Eliot, the rebellious member of parliament for St Germans in Cornwall. Scott wrote that he himself was a 'Gentleman by parentage' but that his father 'having dilapidated and engaged in their Estate of Cautionary, having many children, was not in a capacity to educate us at school after the death of my Grandfather, Sir Robert Scot of Thirlstone.' So 'I gave them the shortcut at last and left the kine in the corn, and went as a soldier to Holland under Walter, Earl of Buckcleugh in the year 1629.' His verses are a series of reminiscences beginning with his entry into the earl's service at the age of fifteen, when therefore disqualified, until the age of sixteen, from fighting in the ranks. He therefore 'waited on a gentleman in his Honour's own company.' From this it may probably be gathered that he had been eavesdropping on a private conversation, and the topicality at that time of the subject, Robert of Redheugh and his Liddesdale tenants, suggests that the conversation was between the earl and the officer on whom Scott waited. Given the long association between the Scotts and the Elliots, notwithstanding the particularly violent and

⁶³ Captain Walter Scot(t) of Satchells, *Metrical History of the Honourable Families of Scot and Elliot In Two Parts*, (1688, Scottish Literary Club reprint, 1892), part 2, p.40. (Accessed 19 February, 2018 at <https://archive.org/details/metricalhistoryo00scot>).

destructive mid- sixteenth century Scott-Elliot feud which was finally composed by a Scott-Elliot marriage, it was probably the earl who disclosed Bruce's resettlement of the Elliots.

Scott of Satchells was correct in locating 'the town of Eliot,' known today by the older name of Alyth, in the county of Angus, since the boundary between Angus and Perthshire was redrawn in 1891. Even without the corroborative evidence offered by several surviving old maps, Scott's report was still credible, since any conversation in whatsoever circumstances in 1629 about Robert Elliot would have been highly topical, given the tense state of relations which existed during the 1620s between Robert Elliot, the chief of the Elliots and 17th of his name of Redheugh, and the earl, who held the lordship of Liddesdale. The earl had inherited from his father a dispute with Robert dating back to 1608, when Lord Scott, 'the bold Buccleuch,' had ordered the removal of Robert from his lands on grounds of mistreatment of his tenants. In no way, it should be noted, did this affect the close relationship between the earl's father and his 'lovit friend,' Gilbert Elliott of Stobs and other Elliots of Teviotdale who had been in old Buccleuch's following when he rescued William ('Kinmont Willie') Armstrong from imprisonment in the castle of Carlisle on 7 April, 1596. Anna Groundwater has described the difficulties faced by any member of a Border allegiance when instigating action, whether or not ordered by the king, against his tenant and co-member of a long standing alliance.⁶⁴ The rupture the Scott-Redheugh alliance was undoubtedly due to the enticement into government, with lands and titles, by James VI of hitherto fractious Border lords, on whom the king now relied to break the power of the more recalcitrant Border clans. Robert Elliot, his Hamilton relatives, Buccleuch and John Murray, were all members of a Border alliance, amounting to what may be described today as a clique. Robert was married to Lady Frances Stewart, daughter of Francis Stewart, earl of Bothwell, by Mary Douglas, widow of Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch, daughter of David, the seventh earl of Angus and niece of Regent Morton. Robert's father had married Mary Hamilton, and his grandmother was Jean Scott, the earl's aunt. Sir William Fraser (see below) wrote:

'..... Walter, the first Earl of Buccleuch, charged him (Robert) by letters of horning to remove from the lands; and Elliot, in consequence of his disobedience, was denounced rebel and put to the horn, and letters of caption and possession procured thereupon. Apprehending his danger, Elliot endeavoured, through the influence of his friend Francis Hamilton, and John Murray of Lochmaben, afterwards Earl of Annandale, with the Earl of Buccleuch, to be reponed in the above-mentioned lands, and to obtain a discharge of all bygone profits thereof. The Earl of Buccleuch, who was then at Court, was prevailed upon by the Earl of Annandale; and upon his return to Scotland, he granted to Elliot an heritable right to the land with a discharge of all bygone violent profits.'⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Anna Groundwater, *The Scottish Middle March 1573-1625, Power, Kinship and Allegiance*, (RHS Studies in History, London, 2010), chapter 2, *The Socio-Political Structure of the Middle March*.

⁶⁵ Sir William Fraser, *The Scotts of Buccleuch*, vol.I, (Edinburgh, 1878), p 246-7.

At this juncture the Armstrongs had been stripped of all their lands, and the Grahams, and not a few Elliots, had been transported to Ireland. Unlike Martin Elliot of Braidley and William Elliot of Larriston, during the pacification of the Borders, Robert had escaped the noose, but had earlier been sent away by the Privy Council, with Walter Scott of Goldielands, to Cupar in Fife.⁶⁶ Reponed, (restored to his lands) and furnished with a new charter, he was later charged by the earl with adding forged additions, theft of cattle and encompassing or attempting the assassination of the earl, but a failure to bring him before the Privy Council is held by the authors of *The Elliots* to have been the result of weak evidence, and the suspicion that the charges had been concocted.

‘It is doubtful whether the case would ever have reached the stage of an actual trial in view of the clear reluctance of the Privy Council to allow the evidence to be tested in open court. ... (footnote): It scarcely needs saying that the principal charges against Robert – of falsifying his Charter and of attempting to assassinate Buccleuch – would never have stood for a moment in a modern court of law.’⁶⁷

Today’s defence would perhaps be that of ‘agent provocateur.’ Further credence is attached to Scott’s doggerel account by a sorrowful and wistful tone, in relation to the ‘oppression’ of the Elliots of Liddesdale, in contrast to the good fortune of the cadet branch of Stobs. By 1625, following the death of James VI and I, Robert the 17th of Redheugh and the Elliots of Liddesdale had survived the pacification of the Borders, but only at great cost. The forced sale of the greater part of his Liddesdale lands by his grandson, Robert Elliot of Larriston, meant that ‘Redheugh was lost and by 1720 all of Liddesdale had passed out of Elliot hands.’⁶⁸ Many Elliots fell on hard times and into dependence on other kinsmen elsewhere. Scott was clearly offended by the way in which one representative, Elliot of Bewlie, had come to be regarded as no longer a gentleman.

The chieftainship of the clan passed to Gilbert Elliott of Stobs, son of the friend and tenant of old Buccleuch, and his wife Jean Scott. Gilbert was knighted in 1651 and created first baronet of Stobs in 1666, and became chief of the Elliot clan following the death of Robert of Redheugh in 1673.

The Scott version of the dispute can be found in Volume 1 of *The Scotts of Buccleuch* by Sir William Fraser, (Edinburgh, 1878), pages 244-247, which may be accessed and read at www.archive.org/stream/scottsofbucleuc11fras#page/n3/mode/2up. Robert was examined at Holyrood House on 17 and 19 July, 1624, in the presence of the Lord Chancellor, the Treasurer, and the Earls of Morton, Roxburgh and Melrose. His deposition is reproduced in Volume II of Fraser’s history, also accessible at: www.archive.org/stream/scottsofbucleuc22fras#page/108/mode/2up.

⁶⁶ *The Elliots*, pp.71, 72.

⁶⁷ The Dowager Lady Elliott and Sir Arthur Elliott, 11th baronet of Stobs, *The Elliots, the Story of a Border Clan*, (Chippenham, 1974), 74.

⁶⁸ *The Elliots*, p.75.

Bruce's recolonization of Liddesdale.

Neither the survival nor the entry of William de Soules, the young lord of Liddesdale, into the peace of Robert I, following his victory at Bannockburn in 1314, could have been foreseen by Bruce during his seizure of the lordship in 1307, and its undoubted use from 1311 onwards as a rendezvous and return route for forces taking the same routes into Redesdale and Tynedale, via Redeswire, or across Bewcastle waste, as those taken by sixteenth century reivers. There is no surviving record of the resettlement of the Elliots on the lands of Redheugh, but the evidence that it took place can no longer be doubted. It is impossible to otherwise explain away the appearance of a uniquely Franco-Breton name, particularly on the maps of Angus and Perthshire drawn by Pont, Adair and Moll, in the light of Scott of Satchells' account, and its turning up in Liddesdale. Despite lack of a surviving source it is highly unlikely that a king still determined to retain the loyalty of the men of his old guard, and unsure about the fidelity of more recent marcher recruits or turncoats, would have arbitrarily transplanted a whole kinship, merely for the sake of restoring a former thanage. The attachment of the Elliots to Robert's cause was after all to be marked by the permanent baptism of all future Elliot chiefs as Robert. This mark of honour was to last until 1673.

The closeness of Liddesdale to the border would have made it easy for any doubters yet to prove their loyalty, to cross over and change their allegiance, if things were going badly for Bruce. As already indicated, Liddesdale was not held for knight service; such tenants as existed – cornage freeholders according to the account already shown (p.20) – had fled into Inglewood forest, and had they returned they would have been of limited use to Bruce. The lordship of Liddesdale was almost certainly an empty one which needed to be filled by men proven in battle, with a permanent stake in it. The known whereabouts of Simon de Lindsay from 1308 onwards, already outlined, and his post-Bannockburn exile in the Carlisle garrison suggest that the men of his lordship of Wauchopedale had deserted him. That lordship itself remained in the hands of those de Lindsays loyal to Bruce, and their descendants, until 1707.⁶⁹ Douglas and his adherents were on watch throughout the Forest for English counter-attacks from Berwick and Roxburgh, and during the summer of 1307, and throughout 1308 territories to the south of the Forth were held by forces raised in the south and south west. Campaigning in the north, Bruce was in no position to bring any northern men down with him in any organized way until 1309 during a truce or 1310. The whole of Angus was under his control when he held his first parliament at St Andrews in March, 1309, attended by Gilbert de la Haye, lord of Errol, and the shift of focus in 1310, to Lothian and men still owing allegiance to Edward II, and in 1311, with the beginning of his heavily manned raids into England, suggests that the resettlement of the Elliots took place at some time in 1309, or 1310, at the earliest. Whether or not Walter d'Aliot as captain of a war band composed largely of his own kinsmen was with Bruce at Inverurie or the Pass of Brander cannot be confirmed, but there was surely no way in which he would have placed his trust in an untested force of whatever size.

⁶⁹ G.W.S.Barrow, *Scotland and its Neighbours*, (London, 1992), p.186.

That the Elliot clan consisted of ‘twelve great families’ may have been a guess, but taking account of medieval life spans and the number of generations descended from Elias d’Aliot down to the year 1300, this figure cannot have been too far from the mark. Sixteenth century Elliot demographics and the several Elliot ‘graynes,’ reported in 1583 to Lord Burghley by Thomas Musgrave to be ‘all under the commaundement’ of the chief of the Elliots, suggest a high level of genetic fecundity when compared to other lineages which came to an end through lack of a male heir, as in the case of the first de Percy family in Yorkshire. The number of collateral Elliot lairds in the sixteenth century indicates almost certainly an early fourteenth century transfer of an already numerous kinship to Liddesdale. Similar birth rates are evident in the remarkable growth of the Douglas family and its own several cadet and collateral branches. The Elliots of the Park, whose notorious descendant of 1566, John (‘Little Jock’) took his two-handed sword to Patrick Hepburn, the earl of Bothwell, were already well established when the Redheugh lineage reappeared in surviving sources. By the end of the sixteenth century several substantial Elliot cadet lines, of which Stobs was the senior, led by lairds owing loyalty to their chief, began to appear in many surviving sources edited and now appearing in the *Calendar of Letters and Papers relating to the Affairs of the Borders of Scotland and England*. These various lines of descent, and the histories of their cadet progenitors are described and charted in great detail in Lady Eliott and Sir Arthur Eliott’s history. Sixteenth century Elliot chieftains found themselves able to put several hundred men into the saddle at short notice. The great raid into Tynedale of 1593 by around a thousand riders, drawn from several clans, was, as reported by Lord Scrope the English Warden to Lord Burghley, was led by William Elliot of Larriston. By taking into account the availability in each of the purported twelve families of two, or occasionally three, generations of able-bodied men, fathers and sons and uncles and cousins, it may be concluded that in or around 1309 chieftain Walter was the captain of a sizeable and formidable war band, and if, as seems probable, keeper of the king’s forest of Alyth, with badly needed horses and brood mares at his disposal. Later Elliot enthusiasm, like that of other Borderers, for horse racing, may have been rooted in a more distant past.

The proximity of Redheugh and Gorrenberry to the castles of Liddel and Hermitage, which according to Richard Oram was probably at the start of the fourteenth century a fortified hunting lodge, tells its own story. Cumbrian Armstrongs were installed probably in some numbers at on lands further down the valley, at Mangerton and Whithaugh, and whilst a lack of any surviving charter means that a precise date at which both Elliots and Armstrongs were awarded with lands in Liddesdale cannot be fixed, the conclusion must be that the Elliots were the first incomers to be given lands attached to the keepership of Liddel and Hermitage, which, as a later fortress, would be captured by fifteenth century Elliot chieftains as Red Douglas ‘familiar squires.’

Robert Elliot, ‘chieftain of the south.’

‘In the Stodart MSS of the Blackadder family supplied by the Lord Lyon’s office, there is a record of an Elliot of Redheugh, called ‘Chieftain of the South,’ who was killed in battle with three of his sons. According to the Pedigree, this Chief had a daughter, Mary, who married Cuthbert Blackadder of that ilk and who had three sons. The eldest of these, Andrew Blackadder, was alive in 1447.’

The Elliots, p.11.

The Elwalds, no longer ‘of Eliot,’ nor of ‘Alyth.’

On arrival in Liddesdale, Walter, probably the last or penultimate of the Elliot chieftains to have been popularly described as d’Aliot or d’Eliot, was no longer either ‘of Alyth’ or ‘Eliot.’ In the eyes of Bruce’s chancellor or other clerk, he needed a new name. Whether or not memories of the origin of his surname were still alive, the name Aliot or Eliot had, through its acceptance as a place name, probably become a petard on which Walter had been hoisted by his ancestor, Elias. The hand of a punctilious administrator may perhaps be detected here. That formally he was also no longer of Alyth, needs no explanation. Whether or not Bernard, the abbot of Arbroath and since 1308 Bruce’s chancellor, or any other clerk in his writing office, had drawn attention to the need for a new name, is unknown, but the search for a similar name may be suspected from the retention of the *El* of *Eliot*, and the appendage of a common English name suffix, *wald*, changed later to *wold* or *wood*, despite the other older English use of the suffix, as in *Aethelwald*, to signify rule or control, which later underwent semantic weakening. The idea, however, that the Breton origins of the Elliots could be negated by a Germanic suffix, found also in medieval Flemish (for example, *Berowald Flandrensis*, the progenitor of Clan Innes) is of course preposterous, as is another older idea that somehow the name Elwald had morphed into Elliot, the short form of the name which still appears also in Brittany today. Attention has already been drawn (page 8) to the Northumbrian Thomas Elliot, the knight or servant hospitaller of 1310.

The reinsertions of the *i* in Elliot at the insistence of Robert Elliot, the 17th of his name of Redheugh, following the death in The Tower of Sir John Eliot has already been mentioned. There is ample evidence of the survival, until then, of the shorter British and Breton *Ellot* through its appearance in several documents along with that of Elwald. A report of 17th May, 1518, by the young Bothwell’s tutor, the Master of Hailes, demonstrates incidentally an early disassociation between Teviotdale Elliots and their Liddesdale cousins:

‘Have gotten pledges for the *Elwandes* of Reidheugh and their band like as I had before and for *the Elliots* of the other gang of Gorrenberry, except so many as win (dwell) in Teviotdale on Mark Ker’s lands and are servants to the warden, who say they will remain in Teviotdale and not come to Liddesdale and therefore they will enter no pledges.’⁷⁰ (My italics.)

The use of both names in single documents persisted until the 1560s as shown in this extract from the Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, which suggests that the name Elwald was reserved for the older Elliot lairds, like Martin of Braidley, named as ‘of Redheugh’ during Robert’s minority and Archibald of Falnash, while the young Robert and ‘young William’ are named as Ellots (Elliots):

‘Quenis Grace and Counsale, with certificatioun and he failye, he sall incur the Quenis indignatioun. Memorandum, that lettres be direct charging thir personis underwritin to compeer befor the Quenis Grace and Lordis foirsaidis, theday of

⁷⁰ *Report to the Privy Council, following their reprimand of him, by the Master of Hailes, dated 17 May 1518, cited by The Dowager Lady Eliott of Stobs and Sir Arthur Eliott 11th baronet of Stobs, cited in The Elliots, 20.*

December next to cum, for 29ith29 advyse to be gevin in materis concerning the weil of the Bordouris: that is to say, Williame Cranstoun of that Ilk, Knycht, Adame Scot of Alanehauch, Adame Scot of Burnefute, Sym Scot of Fynnisk, Archibald *Elwald* of Fallinesche (Falnash), Martine *Elwald* of Reidheuch, Robert *Ellot* of Reidheuch, Williame *Ellot* callit young Williame, David Turnbull of Wauchop, Thomas Hoppringle of Murecleuch, Williame *Ellot*, callit Archeis Will, Walter Ker of Dolphinstoun, Johne Gledstanis of that Ilk, Richard Rutherford of Edgaristoun, Nichole Rutherford of Hundolie, Knycht, Johne Rutherford of Hunthill, Adame Kirkstoun, John Hoppringle of the Bentis, James Ker of Corbet, Andro Ker of Graden.⁷¹ (My italics.)

When subscribing to a band (giving pledges) the younger Ellots who needed no help from the notary, signed as Ellots. The abandonment of *Elwald* appears therefore to have been the result of a recently acquired ability to read and write, since only those whose signatures were made with the ‘guiding hand’ of a named notary were Elwalds.⁷²

‘.... In witness of the quhilk [the which] things we have subscrivit this present band 29ith our hands at the pen, the xxj day of Junij the yeir of God m.ve furty aucht yere, before thir witness, Johnn the Grayme (Graham) and Niniane Nyksone (Nixon) with uther divers..... **Robert Ellot**, younger *with my hand at the pen*. **Arschebald Ellot**, *with my hand at the penn*. Williame Elwald of Lauerokstanis [Larriston] with my hand at the pen, *led be (by) Sir John Scot*, notar publick, of my command.⁷³ (My bold print and italics).

Conclusions.

The quest to discover the earliest known history of the Elliots has been drawn to a conclusion, thanks to a conversation with a Breton friend leading to a search of French databases, the mapping of the human genome, the digital revolution and the works of those scholars whose works include numerous way signs. Had the opportunities arising from such developments been available to the Dowager Lady Elliott and Sir Arthur Elliott, they would undoubtedly have seized them with alacrity.

This essay revises and replaces all past presentations to the Elliot Clan Society and publications in the Society’s newsletter, and in my website at <http://independent.academia.edu/KeithHunter>.

There can be no further doubt that at some time, most probably during the period leading up to the first of the devastating raids into northern England undertaken by Robert Bruce in 1311 and subsequent years, Walter d’Alyth, known more commonly as Walter d’Aliot or Eliot, a

⁷¹ Scotland Privy Council, John Hill Burton, David Masson, Peter Hume Brown, Henry Paton, Robert Kerr Hannay, *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, (H.M. General Register House, 1877), vol I, 169.

⁷² The Fernyhirst mss. at Newbattle, vols 1537 to 1607, no.8, cited by Robert Bruce Armstrong, *The History of Liddesdale, Eskdale, Ewesdale, Wauchopdale and the debatable land*, vol. I, (Edinburgh, 1883, and Clan Armstrong Trust, 1992).

⁷³ Fernyhirst mss., nos. 15 and 16.

tenant-in-chief holding former thanage lands and loyal supporter of Robert Bruce, exchanged those lands for other lands at Redheugh in Liddesdale in the Borders. There is no trace of any charter relating to this exchange, but if one had been issued it must have been subsequently lost. Other Elliot archives were destroyed by fire at Stobs Castle in 1712.

The arrival of the Elliot northerners, virtual foreigners, in the Middle March may have caused a stir, and faint memories of it, passed from generation to generation, were still alive when the old soldier and genealogist, Captain Walter Scott of Satchells reported a conversation overheard in his youth, relating to Bruce's transfer of the clan from a town called Eliot in Angus, which is now known to have existed, under that name. The coincidental appearance of an identical Gaelic name may be ruled out, given its Breton exclusivity, and the appearance of Breton variants in both England and Scotland, especially the co-variants Aliot and Eliot.

The Breton origin of the Elliots, as now confirmed by Y-chromosome research and searches of French databases, should not come as too much of a surprise, since historians have seldom failed to mention the presence of Bretons among the medieval fighting men infested with lands in Scotland, most of whom are identified in surviving sources by the tag *brito*, but the Elliots already had a unique, French-corrupted surname. In no way would the first of them, Elias, assigned the name 'd'Alyth' by Scottish clerks, have abandoned a name which identified him as a Breton. Just as Satchells claimed, there was indeed a town called Eliot in Angus, and its existence is proved by a number of surviving maps, the most recent of which exhibit the modern spelling.

Sight of these maps, and a more careful examination of them which should have confirmed the substantial extent of Eliot lands, would have cast doubt on the view that the thanage of Alyth was never alienated as a feudal military tenancy-in-chief. No name of any thane can be traced, and the first mention of a thanage is that made in a charter issued by Robert I in 1319, following what could only have been its resurrection following the exchange of lands. The fact that no alarm bells were rung suggests, perhaps, that Eliot has been taken to be a misspelling of Alyth.

Alyth does not appear on surviving maps until the mid-eighteenth century, and the translation of the name *Alight (Alyght)*, as spelt by an English chancery clerk, as Alyth, is wrong.

The reaction of some scholars to earlier papers has been either tepid or somewhat 'knee jerk,' but this may have been due to a lack of clarity on my part. One suggestion was that the Elliots 'were only minor tenants,' despite Barrow's description of the earlier imprisoned and later dispossessed Walter d'Alyth as a man of middling rank, who at one stage in 1304 stood alongside members of the Hay family and Roger de Montgomery, lord of Wigmore, as a witness to a charter. A more careful examination of the maps, and the placement of names, would have confirmed the existence of an extensive Aliot/Eliot landholding, extending from today's Alyth Burn (Water of Elyeht) across to Auchter Alyth, (Auchtereleot), and probably up into the Braes of Angus. A contention that the Breton Elliots were always Borders can be made only if the maps are studiously ignored. The overnight conversion of disorganized men,

who had in 1307 fled from Bruce with their cattle into Cumberland, into one of the most feared of the Border clans, is beyond contemplation.

Precisely what fighting qualities the Elliots displayed, and exactly when and where, is unknown, but the facts point to Bruce's need to colonize Liddesdale for the first time with fighting men whose loyalty would be secured through the grant, for the first time in this territory, of lands in return for knight or archer service. Other lands in territories situated to the north of the Forth were available to Bruce had his sole intention been to restore the old thanage of Alyth, but he clearly intended to put leadership of the recolonization, and almost certainly the captaincy of Hermitage and Liddel castles, into the hands of men he had come to know and trust.

Appendices:

A: Surviving maps;

B: The Breton origins of the Breton names Aliot and Eliot.

Appendix A: Maps held by NLS showing the existence of 'a town called Eliot.'

1. Forest of Elycht, B. Elycht (burn?), Elycht.

Timothy Pont (1560 – 1614), *Glen Isla and Lintrathen; parts of Strathmore near Coupar Angus*, (1583 x 1596), shelfmark Adv.MS.70.2.9 (Pont 28).

(In the next map, Pont opts for the spelling Elioht.)

2. Elioht (the pen stroke completing the 'o' is faintly discernible).

Timothy Pont, *Middle Strathmore*, (1583 x 1596), shelfmark Adv.MS.70.2.9 (Pont 29).

3. Forest of Elycht, Elycht and Water of Elyeht, with a distinct 'e'.

Timothy Pont, *Strathardle, Glenshee and Glenericht*, (1583 x 1596), shelfmark Adv.MS.70.2.9 (Pont 27).

4. Forest of Elicht and Kirk of Elicht.

Robert Gordon (1580-1661), *'Glen Yla, Glen Ardle, Glen Shye, out of Mr T.Pon't papers yey ar very imperfyt,* (1636 x 1652), shelfmark Adv.MS.70.2.10 (Gordon 43).

5. Kirk of Elit and to the east near the River Isla, 'Achter Elit.'

Robert Gordon, *Brae of Angus, (and) The height of Anguss, M.T.P. Height of Anguss,* (1636 x 1652), shelfmark Adv.MS.70.2.10 (Gordon 42).

6. Forest of Elit.

Robert Gordon, Joan Blaeu (1596 x 1673), *Scotiae provinciae mediterraneae inter Taum flumen et Vararis aestuarium: Sunt autem Braid-Allaban, Atholia, Marria Superior, Badenocha, Strath-Spea, Lochabria, cum Chersoneso qui ei ad occasum praetenditur; cum singulis earundem partibus/ opera Ro.G.* (Amsterdam, Blaeu 1654), shelfmark WD3B/34. 28

7. (The town of) Eliot and to the east of it, Auchtereleot. (Below)

John Adair (ca.1650 - 1722), James Moxon (1671-1700), *The Mapp of Strathern, Stormount, and Cars of Gourie, with the Rivers Tay and Jern/ surveighed and designed by J.Adair; James Moxon sculp,* shelfmark EMS.s.320.

8. (The town of) Eliot.

Herman Moll, d.1732, *The Shire of Angus or Forfar by H.Moll,* (London, Bowles and Bowles, 1745), shelfmark EMS.b.2.1 (23). (See map below).

9. (The town of) Eliot.

Herman Moll, *The South Part of Perthshire Containing Perth, Strathern, Stormount and Cars of Gourie &c /by H.Moll,* (London, Bowles and Bowles, 1745), shelfmark EMS.b.2.1.

Appendix B.

French corruption ('déformation par francisation') of the Breton variants, Halegouët (Halgoët), Allegouët and Elegoët (Finistère).

Number of births registered in France between 1891 and 1991.

A.

1. **Breton variants before 'déformation' :**

Hallegoët : 6 (all in Finistère)

Allegoët : 32 (all in Finistère)

Ellegouët : 1 (Finistère)

Hallegot : 90 (all in Finistère)

Allegot: 90 (all in Finistère)

Elegoët: 143 (all in Finistère)

2. **Partial 'déformation' (elision of g):**

Alliouët : 9 (all Loire Atlantique)

Helleouët: 34 (all in Finistère)

Elliouët : 1 (Loire Atlantique)

Heleouët: 13 (Finistère)

Elouët : 29 (Finistère)

3. **Total 'déformation' (complete elision):**

Halliot : 34 (Loire Atlantique)

Alliot : 2,790 (mostly Loire Atlantique and Aisne)

Helliet: 125 (Côtes d'Amor)

Elliet : 3 (Côtes d'Amor)

Eliot: 1,484 (mostly in Morbihan and Seine Maritime)

Elliot: 211 (mostly in Morbihan)

Allot: 1037 (mostly in Loire Atlantique)

Elot : 14 (Loire Atlantique)

B. Anglo-Breton variants.⁷⁴

Allitt : 567, preponderant in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.

Ellitt/ Elyt, a small number in Yorkshire.

Alliott: 128, more dispersed in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire and Kent.

Allott: 2,169, most common in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Lancashire and Wales.

Ellett: 441, dispersed mainly in Middlesex, Somerset, Norfolk and Surrey.

Alletson: 194 , mostly in north Lancashire.

Ellott: 158, scattered throughout Devon, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Surrey.

Ellacott: 772, a variant of the Breton Elegoët, prevailing in the West Country.

Ellicott: 1,564, another variant of Elegoët or Allegot, found mostly again in the West Country shires, Hampshire and Kent.

Elligott: 43, a minor variant found in small numbers in England and Ireland.

MacElligott: 4,486 : a Gaelicised variant, with 824 in Ireland, 2,080 in the USA and 386 in Australia.

The variant **Ulliott** is found exclusively in Yorkshire and Northumberland. There were 282 Elliots recorded in Wales.

Abbreviations:

⁷⁴ Census 1881, database at www.forebears.co.uk (accessed 17 November, 2015)

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