This Feature of the Month is about the recent discovery of a complete text of a letter from Robert I to Edward II. (An edition and translation are given at the end.) It has previously been known only as a copy in the letter-book of Richard of Bury, a clerk in the household of the future Edward III.[2] Under Edward III he was promoted to high office, finally becoming chancellor in 1334; by that stage he was already bishop of Durham, a position he held until his death in 1345. In 1324–5, while still a humble clerk of the future king, he copied out many hundreds of items of diplomatic correspondence from recent decades which he obtained through his contacts in English royal administration.[3] These were chiefly in the original or, in the case of chancery letters, drafts.[4] It is a personal collection, and survives only in Richard of Bury's own manuscript written in his expert hand.[5] It has been plausibly suggested that he intended it as a resource for what he hoped would be a career as a chancery clerk, when he would have needed to be familiar with a very wide range of forms of official correspondence.[6] He also took an interest in letters written in particularly stylish prose.[7] He appears to have worked at speed and inevitably made mistakes.[8] It is not surprising, therefore, that errors can be found in his copying of Robert I's letter to Edward II.[9] It was also his habit to omit the dating clause at the end of a document: he was interested in form and style, so he was not inclined to spend time on detail that was only relevant to a particular letter. The date of a letter and place where it was produced is, however, exactly the kind of information a historian needs, of course. The most important aspect of the discovery of another copy of this letter from Robert I to Edward II is that it includes the dating clause. This means that it can now be identified as written on 1 October 1310 at Kildrum (which is now part of Cumbernauld).

Robert I's letter to Edward II is likely to have been copied by Richard of Bury because of its highly calibrated prose. Reading the translation, the choice of high-flown words and phrases is readily apparent. It is only by reading the Latin out loud, however, that the full force of the language can be appreciated. In the middle ages it was normal to read aloud (even when reading on your own). This meant that prose was punctuated according to where you could take breath while maintaining the sense of what was being said. Particular attention was paid to the rhythm in the final five to seven syllables at the end of each breath. If this adhered to a code of practice known as ars dictaminis, then it was regarded as of the highest order. This top register of writing was mastered by only a few scribes: in England: special clerks were employed to produce documents in this style.[10] The only occasion when this would have been necessary in diplomatic correspondence was in writing to the papal curia, where this stylistic prose (known as Cursus Curie Romane, or 'cursus' for short) was used routinely. Professor Archie Duncan, in his discussion of Richard of Bury's copy of this letter of Robert I to Edward II, pointed out that it has a high incidence of cursus.[11] (An analysis is given below.) This is remarkable for a brief letter from one king to another seeking to open negotiations. This led Archie Duncan to argue that it was intended as much for papal eyes as the king of England's, and that it was associated with the letter of the barons of Scotland to Pope John XXII, dated 6 April 1320, known today as the Declaration of Arbroath.[12] The copy that has now come to light shows that this cannot be the case.[13] Instead, Robert I's letter to Edward I is precious evidence of Robert Bruce's attitude at a critical point in his reign, 1 October 1310, when he faced his first serious English invasion. It was not the only document written in this high prose style by a clerk of Robert I's in the early years of his reign.[14] The fact that cursus was used in this letter, however, is crucial in assessing the impact that Robert I hoped it would have on Edward II.

The manuscript

The manuscript in which the new copy of this letter is found, British Library MS Cotton Titus A. XIX, was written by a series of scribes, probably all monks of the Cistercian abbey of Kirkstall in Leeds, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[15] It has the appearance of a commonplace book, a manuscript where someone has, over a number of years, copied items that have caught their interest or noted information they wish to remember. Instead of being a personal collection, though, this seems to represent the activity of many monks over a number of decades, with probably more than one of them at a time contributing material—a commonplace book for the community, as it were.[16] Although it sometimes has the character of a scrapbook (with the difference that items have been copied rather than cut-and-pasted), the process was more complicated than simply having a blank volume that was filled in over the years. The addition of texts has sometimes involved expanding the manuscript with new gatherings. Some items may even have been physically removed from another book and inserted into this one. (The incomplete copy of the Life of Kentigern written for Herbert, bishop of Glasgow (1147–1164), could be an example.)[17]

The manuscript contains a variety of historical texts, mainly of local interest or relating to Britain. They range from poems to prosaic lists, and include legends of Arthur, Merlin, or the giants who first inhabited Britain, as well as documents and chronicles.[18] There are also occasional notes, for example on sayings and on cures for ailments. This extraordinary mix of material is also reflected in the range of handwriting: some texts have been copied neatly, but many have been written in what looks like a hurried scrawl. The ext block (the area of the page used for writing texts) can vary markedly even within a single text. The poor presentation adds to the personal feel of the manuscript: had they intended the book to stand proud in the abbey's library, they would presumably have had the skill and resources to produce something more orderly and legible. It may, instead, have been stored with the abbey's charters as a source of information about the past, in the same way as monastic chronicles are known to have been kept with charters.[19]

Dossier of letters

The letter from Robert I to Edward II appears in a series of correspondence between Edward III of England (1327–1377) and Pope Benedict XII (1334–1342), Philippe VI of France (1328–1350), John Stratford, archbishop of Canterbury (1333–1348), the emperor Ludwig of Bavaria (1328–1347), and Pope Clement VI (1342–1352) (fos 82r–96v). The task of copying these letters has been undertaken by two scribes, with the second taking over from the first at the top of fo.92r, in the middle of an item. The second scribe used significantly more of the page for writing than the first scribe, whose outer and inner margins are quite generous. The final item is a letter of Pope Clement VI dated 28 August 1433: on the face of it, it is likely that the collection copied by these two scribes ended here. The watermarks of the paper, however, show that the same batch (dated to 1473) was used up to fo.99. It was also his habit to omit the dating clause at the end of a document: he was interested in form and style, so he was not inclined to spend time on detail that was only relevant to a particular letter. The date of a letter and place where it was produced is, however, exactly the kind of information a historian needs, of course. The most important aspect of the discovery of another copy of this letter from Robert I to Edward II is that it includes the dating clause. This means that it can now be identified as written on 1 October 1310 at Kildrum (which is now part of Cumbernauld).

The letter not originally part of the dossier

Robert I's letter appears early in the series, following a letter of Philippe VI to Edward III. In the catalogue of Cotton manuscripts published in 1802 it was identified as a letter of Robert II (1371–1390) to Edward III.[22] Given that all the other letters in the collection are to or from Edward III, this was a natural assumption. ([The most recent detailed description of the manuscript inexplicably refers to the letter as from Robert II to Richard II.[23] The appearance of the letter in Richard of Bury's letter-book, datable to 1324–5, of course, establishes beyond doubt that it is a letter of Robert I, not Robert II.]

Why does it appear in a dossier of Edward III's correspondence? The explanation is revealed on the next folio. Let us first consider the page in which Robert I's letter appears. It is the second letter on fo.87r, and is not in the handwriting of any other scribe who copied letters: the hand has not been traced elsewhere in the manuscript. The first item on fo.87r is a letter of Philippe VI to Edward III. Curiously, Philippe VI's letter has been written by the scribe who took over from the first at fo.92r. Not only is it in the second scribe's hand, but it has the narrower outer and inner margins that are characteristic of his work on the dossier: this stands out here
next to the first scribe's generous margins in the neighbouring folios. Another puzzle concerns the couple of lines that are immediately above Philippe VI's letter on the page. These are the last two lines of the previous item, Edward III's response to Pope Benedict XII's letter concerning Edward III's claim that he, not Philippe, should be king of France. This is also written by the second scribe. The exact same two lines that conclude Edward III's letter to Benedict are found on the recto of the next folio (fo.88r), in the first scribe's hand. There, however, they have been scored out. How can all this be explained? What has happened is that fo.86v was originally followed by fo.88r. The first scribe then followed Edward III's letter to Pope Benedict with the next item on fo.88r, letters between John Stratford, archbishop of Canterbury, and Edward III. By the time the second scribe had take over the task of copying the dossier it was realised that Philippe VI's letter to Edward III had been omitted. It concerned Edward III's claim to France, and naturally belonged immediately after Edward III's reply to Benedict XII on this question. It was decided to insert a folio so that Philippe's letter would appear in the appropriate place.[23] This also required the last two lines of Edward III's response to Pope Benedict to be copied at the top of the new folio (fo.87), otherwise the end of Edward's letter on fo.88r would be separated from the rest of the text on fo.86v. This meant, of course, that the top two lines of fo.88r made no sense and served no purpose. The solution was to score them out.[25]

As a consequence of inserting fo.87 for the sake of putting Philippe VI's letter in its proper place in the sequence, the rest of fo.87r and all of fo.87v would have been left blank. In due course a wholly unrelated document (a testimonial declaration that Edward I was the firstborn son of Henry III) was copied into fo.87v. The space left in the bottom half of fo.87t, following Philippe VI's letter, was used to copy Robert I's letter. The hand is from the same era as the scribes engaged in writing the dossier into the manuscript. It is likely, therefore, that Robert's letter was copied too long after the others. There is no reason to think, however, that it was part of the dossier.

How did the letter survive?

It is very unusual for a letter like this, written as a part of what was intended to be a long-distance dialogue, to survive. Unlike the letters in the dossier, it does not include an explanation or assertion of rights that could be referred to in defending the king of England's claims. There must have been a large number of letters of this kind sent by Robert I. None survive. The nearest are the detailed terms for the truces of 1319 and 1323, and the Treaty of Edinburgh in 1328—much more substantial documents than the letter we have here.[26] Unlike these documents, however, it was written in highly stylised prose. This alone is reason enough for it to have attracted attention and been kept and copied. It is impossible to know, of course, how either a copy or the original itself ended up in Kirkstall. It was a stroke of extraordinary good fortune that the monks there in the late fifteenth century had a lively interest in British history, spotted it, and thought it worth copying into their manuscript. Perhaps it was thought to be addressed to Edward III, and therefore considered appropriate for inclusion in the dossier. There is no obvious indication in the letter itself that Edward III was not the recipient. The greatest stroke of luck, however, was the omission of Philippe VI's letter when the dossier was copied. The decision to insert a folio so that Philippe's letter would appear in sequence created a space on the page that was not originally intended. We can be sure that, were it not for this accident, Robert's letter would not have been copied.

The letter's immediate context

The letter is a passionate plea by one king to another for peace between their peoples. It is striking how Edward is addressed in the most exalted terms, while Robert refers to himself with conscious humility. The writing is eloquent in its appeal for the restoration of what is presented as normal relations. Robert and his people, it claims, are ready to do anything in their power and give anything they can to achieve this. What needs to happen is that Edward stops persecuting Robert and ceases from devastating his kingdom. The letter is meant to show that Robert sincerely wishes to open negotiations, and is willing to discuss anything that would lead to establishing peace. This is not, however, an abject capitulation. One matter is not up for debate. The negotiations would be conducted between kings. Robert's status as king, and the Scots' existence as a people, is taken for granted throughout the letter. Unfortunately this was the issue which lay at the heart of the conflict. The vividly conciliatory words speak simultaneously of peace and of a steely determination to vindicate Robert's claim to be king of an independent kingdom. It is an exceptionally well crafted explanation of Robert's position in the face of English aggression.

There is a context that matches this precisely. The date given at the end of the text is 1 October 'in the fifth year of our reign'—i.e., 1310. On 1 October 1310 Edward II was in Biggar, where he had arrived a few days earlier in his first major campaign against Robert Bruce.[27] The letter is dated at Kildrum, now part of Cumbernauld, not quite 35 miles from Biggar—a day's horse-ride away. The place and time fits for Robert to have learnt of Edward II's advance from Roxburgh (near the border) to Biggar, and then to have sent the letter to Edward II within a couple of days.[28]

The early years of Robert I's reign[29]

When Robert Bruce was inaugurated king in March 1306 he will have known that the king of England would inevitably arrive in Scotland at some point at the head of an army. He will also have known that, if he survived the first campaign, he would inevitably face another, and another. But the situation was not hopeless. As each wave of English military might came and went, King Robert's position was likely to improve. The king of England's army on campaign was too large and expensive to be kept in the field indefinitely. The English strategy depended crucially on holding castles. If King Robert could withstand the pressure until another and yet another wave of English military force receded, the English garrisons—especially those far from the border—would lose heart that Scotland would ever be restored to English control. The more isolated they were, the more difficult it would be for the English administration to keep them paid and supplied. Once these garrisons fell, the hopes of Robert's enemies in Scotland would also fade. There were probably many who were outraged at his ruthless audacity in killing his rival, John Comyn, and seizing the throne. When Robert returned in 1307 after fleeing for his life, his immediate priority had been to defeat his leading Scottish opponents—a task he accomplished in a breathtaking cross-country campaign in the following year. His enemies were left pinning their hopes on English power. If this ebbed away, they would have to brace themselves for life under a Bruce king, and either come to terms or flee. All in all, the longer that Robert I could hold his nerve, keep the discipline of his much smaller forces, and ride his luck, the better his chances were of emerging victorious.

Fortune smiled on Robert when the first English campaign fizzled out after Edward I's death in July 1307 on the south bank of the Solway Firth within sight of Scotland. Edward II came quickly from London to take command, but reached no further than Cumnock before returning south. He had spent little over a month in Scotland. It was just over three years later before Edward II again crossed the border in September 1310. By then Robert Bruce had begun to assert himself as king: he started issuing charters in late 1308, and held his first parliament in 1309. As yet, however, nearly all the key castles were in English hands, not only in the south near the border, but also places such as Ayr, Banff, Dundee, Edinburgh, Perth and Stirling. There were signs that Robert Bruce was winning the battle for the hearts and minds of people at large: the English garrisons, driven to raiding those living nearby in order to get supplies, were becoming deeply unpopular. In 1310 Robert I's position was, however, far from secure. A determined and well organised campaign by Edward II could use the strongholds in English power to reach at least as far as Perth and Dundee, if not further north as far as Banff on the Moray Firth. When Edward I got that far north in 1296 and 1303–4 Scotland was conquered. This remained a possibility in 1310. But fortune smiled again on King Robert. Edward suffered poor luck. A force from Ireland was ready to land in English-controlled Ayr: had it attacked the west, Edward II would have been free to march north. But the weather was never good enough for the fleet to set sail. Edward was also handicapped by problems of his own making. This centred on his devotion to Piers Gaveston, who he treated like a brother. His first major act as king had been to promote Gaveston to the exalted position of earl of
The letter and Edward II's campaign of 1310–11

Robert I's letter of 1 October was written at the beginning of Edward II's advance deep into Scotland. It reveals that, not surprisingly, he tried (at the very least) to play for time. Robert will, no doubt, have recalled that Edward in 1306 had responded to Robert Bruce's request for talks behind Edward I's back. It was not unrealistic to imagine, therefore, that Edward might have been willing to open talks. Playing for time would certainly have made sense: the campaigning season was almost over. If he could hold out for a couple of months, the immediate threat would fall away. Edward advanced in October as far as Renfrew before heading east to Linlithgow (presumably passing Kildrum on the way), reaching Edinburgh by the end of the month. By 11 November he was back in Berwick, where he remained until the end of July 1311 (except for an excursion into Lothian following an attack there by Robert I).

It is known that, by December, Edward II had instructed negotiators to meet King Robert at Selkirk. A follow-up meeting was arranged at Melrose, but Robert failed to appear: it is said that he feared treachery. It has been assumed that these talks were initiated by Edward, and that perhaps he hoped to strike a deal that could have allowed Gaveston to find refuge with Robert. The letter of 1 October shows that the initial approach for talks came from Robert I. There is no way of knowing how Edward responded: he may only have contacted Robert after returning to Berwick. At the very least, Edward would have known then, from Robert's letter, that the king of Scots was willing to negotiate—albeit without conceding anything on the core question of Robert's status. By mid-December, however, Robert is unlikely to have regarded Edward II as an imminent threat. He could afford to break off the talks. Edward II's campaign was effectively over. True: Gaveston was later sent with a force of 200 knights to Dundee and Perth. This was not, however, a determined assault with the potential to re-establish English power, such as Robert may have feared in late September when Edward led a force estimated as consisting of 1,700 cavalry and 3,000 infantry—smaller than Edward I's great armies, but significantly greater than anything Robert I could have mustered at this time. If we see, in the letter of 1 October, Robert I facing the prospect of an irresistible English advance, then maybe we can also see, in his breaking off of negotiations in the week before Christmas, his realisation that the storm had been weathered. He would know that another English campaign was inevitable in the years to come. The failure of Edward II to reduce Robert's power in 1310, however, was followed by the surrender of garrisons and taking of castles. As soon as Edward II headed south from Berwick, Robert launched raids into northern England in August and another in September. The tide had turned.

The significance of the letter

The letter of 1 October gives us a rare sight of Robert I at a critical moment when he was still vulnerable to being overpowered by English might. It also offers us a glimpse of the combination of political acumen, bold inventiveness and steely determination that made him such an awesome opponent for the hapless Edward. A study of the letter's Latin prose shows that it was not only designed to be an overtly reasonable appeal for peace without yielding anything on the core issue of Robert's status as king of an independent kingdom; it was also intended to impress and even unnerve Edward II and his entourage. It was written in cursus rhythm that was a particular feature of diplomatic correspondence with the pope. The Declaration of Arbroath, sent to Pope John XXII in the name of numerous barons and the 'community of the kingdom of Scotland', is the most famous example of cursus writing from Scotland in this period. Other examples include the declaration in support of Robert I at the parliament of St Andrews in 1309, repeated by the clergy assembled in Dundee in 1310.

The letter of 1 October 1310 was not, of course, addressed to the pope. The clerk who read it out to Edward II is bound to have recognised its display of cursus pro se. This would surely have been quite unexpected. We can only guess what Edward II and his staff would have made of it. At the very least Robert Bruce must have hoped that Edward II would understand that, even though Robert had no intention of taking to the field of battle to defend his realm, he was no rebel skulking in the woods, but saw himself as a king in the fullest sense. Writing in the cursus, however, may also have been intended to emphasise that the conflict was not merely a domestic affair, but was worthy of the attention of Latin Christendom as a whole, and the papacy in particular. A copy, indeed, could readily have been kept by Robert's clerks for this purpose. It may have been Edward II's hope that Robert II, recognising this, would hear in the letter's cursus rhythms its potential echo in the Curia, and consider how his response—or lack of response—would appear to 'God and public decency' (to use the letter's own phrase). In this context the letter's striking reference to Robert I's humility (humilitas) and Edward II's eminence (sublimitas—rather extreme word) could be read as placing the onus on the king of England to use his authority for good or risk appearing to display a haughty disregard for righteousness. All in all, the letter shows, through and through, the skill and resourcefulness of Robert I and his chancellor, Bernard of Linton, in using every tool at their disposal so that, despite the vulnerability of their position, they could project a powerful image of kingship and a compelling sense of the reasonableness of their cause. It is conceivable that the letter's rhetoric and high register prose contributed to Edward II's decision to open discussions with Robert Bruce no more than a couple of months later.

Analysis of rhythmic endings in the letter's prose

A crucial difficulty in analysing cursus—the rhythmic endings found in the highest register of Latin prose in this period—is identifying where the author intended the endings to be. This is frequently obscured if the text is punctuated for a modern reader. The policy adopted here is to use the manuscript's punctuation as a guide. This reveals 15 endings where cursus would be expected. (Nos 5 and 6 overlap; the analysis of no. 14 depends on which manuscript reading is preferred.)
8. sánquiniis Christiáni  velox
9. seruici corpórum  trispondacius (with irregular word division)
10. facère potérimum  tardus
11. redempcióne bone pácis  trispondacius
12. perpétuo pró-ceoránda  velox
13. perélícere puro córde  trispondacius
14. présenti<um> pórtítorem  velox
[14. présentiis portítorem  trispondacius]
15. kyndrómyn’ in leuenax  tardus

One point that emerges from this analysis is that there is only one instance of cursus planus. It may be assumed that this was deliberate, and was intended to make the ending with this rhythm stand out from the rest of the letter. The ending is no. 7, cessáre curétis, ‘you [Edward II] would take pains to cease’. This can readily be recognised as the letter’s central message, and would have been entirely appropriate for special emphasis.

Edition of Robert I's letter to Edward II. Kildrum (parish of Cumbernauld), 1 October 1310.

A = London, British Library MS Cotton Titus A. XIX, fo.87r.

Text in A[41]

Punctuated as in the manuscript (including use of capitals): punctus elevatus is represented by a semi-colon, punctus with a point, and line-breaks with a slash.

Where a reading in B is preferred to A, this is indicated by angled brackets.


Translation[66]

To the most serene prince the lord Edward by God's grace illustrious king of England, Robert by the same grace king of Scots, greeting in Him through whom the thrones of those who rule are governed. When, under the sweetness of peace, the minds of the faithful find rest, then the life of Christians is adorned with the splendour of Christian blood may henceforth stop. Naturally, everything which we and our people will be able to do by bodily service, or to bear by giving freely of our goods, for the redemption of good peace and for the grace of your good will for all time, which must be earned, we are prepared and shall be prepared to accomplish in a suitable and honest way, with a pure heart. And if it accords with your will to have a discussion with us on these matters, may your royal eminence send word in writing to us, by the bearer of this letter. Written at Kildrum in Lennox, the Kalends of October in the fifth year of our reign [1 October 1310].

[1] I am grateful to Amanda Beam for her comments on an earlier draft.
[2] The Liber Epistolarius of Richard de Bury, ed. N. Denholm-Young, The Roxburghe Club (Oxford 1950), no. 463. I have not yet established the current location of the manuscript (Brogyntyn MS 21: Brogyntyn is also known as Porkington.). Denholm-Young identified it as a letter to Edward I. It was recognised as a letter from Robert I to Edward II in A. A. M. Duncan (ed.), Regesta Regum Scottorum, vol. v, The Acts of Robert I King of Scots 1306–1329 (Edinburgh 1988) [hereafter RRS, v], 698–9, where it is published (as no. 569) by Denholm-Young’s edition. It has been translated in G. W. S. Barrow, Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland, 3rd edn (Edinburgh 1988), 314; 4th edn (Edinburgh 2005), 407–8 (reproduced in Seymour Phillips, Edward II (London 2010), 369). I am very grateful to Michael Penman for alerting me to these publications of the text.
[3] Liber Epistolarius, ed. Denholm-Young, xxii–xxv: a few may have been added early in 1326.
[4] Ibid., xxi and xxv, where evidence is identified that shows that Richard of Bury also derived material occasionally from booklets containing copies of a series of letters. Denholm-Young suggests that Richard of Bury collected the letters during the first quarter of the fourteenth century.
[7] Ibid., xx, where Denholm-Young notes that some of these seem ‘verbose and almost meaningless’.
[8] Ibid., xx.
[9] The most obvious example is the misreading of siue pati as sum propati. There are two places where Richard of Bury’s copy seems to be more accurate than the copy that has recently come to light (Bury’sprorerenda as against prouerenda, and presentium as against presentis). This depends in large part on the assumption that the reading which yields a cursus prose rhythm is to be preferred. This approach has been criticised in Sten Eklund, ‘The use and abuse of cursus in textual criticism’. http://documents.irvues.inist.fr/bitstream...2004/3361/02%2520TEXTE.pdf (accessed 8 July 2013)
so bold as to manage to negotiate with our traitors without our knowing?’, and would not talk of it’.

[17] It is conceivable, indeed, that the current manuscript was only put together in the form we have it as a way of preserving and transporting some unbound material when the abbey's library was dispersed after the monastery's dissolution in 1539.


[20] Stones, Kochalis and others, The Pilgrim’s Guide. A Critical Edition, vol. i, 128, where the watermark of a crown is identified as Biquet no. 4646. I have not verified this. The paper of fo.100 has a different watermark (the top of a bull's head).


[22] [Joseph Plant]: A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library, deposited in the British Museum (London 1802), 513–14. The manuscript is not one of those that have recently been given a fresh detailed description in the British Library's on-line catalogue of manuscripts. Essential information is provided at http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primobylibrari/fb/web/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-001103510&k=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&bbrVersion=&docnt=1&frbg=&scp.scps=scope%3AL(B)l&tab=local&d&tmp=1369905071 titus.axivd=IAMS_VU2 (accessed 30 May 2013).

[23] Stones, Kochalis and others, The Pilgrim’s Guide. A Critical Edition, vol. i, 146, where it is described as 'Robert of Scotland to Richard II, 1382. The date 1382 must arise from a curious misunderstanding of 'in the fifth year of my reign' (in the dating clause at the end of the letter) as referring to Richard II's reign, even though Richard is the recipient, not the declared author.

[24] Fo.87 comes from the same batch of paper as the other folios in this section of the manuscript.

[25] This could also explain why there is no catchword on fo.87v. The first part of the dossier (fos 82r–86v and 88r–91v) is in one hand, and always includes a catchword in the bottom margin of each verso—the catchword being the first word in the following recto. The main function of catchwords was to make it easier to establish the order in which folios should appear. (This would have been particularly important if the manuscript was kept unbound in a box or wrapped up.) If the top two lines of fo.88r were only scored out at a later stage, and not as part of the process of adding fo.87, then it might be expected that a catchword would have been added at the bottom of fo.87v. It cannot be regarded as certain, however, that a catchword would necessarily have been added.

[26] RRS, v. 159 for comment, and nos 162, 232 and 342–5 (pp. 433–7, 499–503, and 591–603). No. 162 (1319) survives in two copies written shortly afterwards; the others survive only as enrolled copies: all were produced for the British royal administration.

[27] Phillips, Edward II, 170, has Edward II arrive in Biggar about 26 September. According to C. H. Hartshorne, The Itinerary of King Edward the Second (published privately, 1861), 7, documents were issued from Biggar in Edward II's name between 29 September and 10 October.

[28] Archie Duncan found reason to see the letter's content as appropriate to spring 1320, but this is unconvinced: see nn. 12 and 13, above.


[33] Sir Thomas Grey, Scalacronica, ed. and tr. A. King (Surtrees Society, 2005), pp. 54–5. I am very grateful to Matthew Strickland for alerting me to this and providing this reference. When Edward I learnt the following day that his son and heir had had talks with Robert Bruce, 'he was almost demented ... demanding, "who has made so bold as to manage to negotiate with our traitors without our knowing?", and would not talk of it.'


[35] Phillips, Edward II, 170–1, who expresses some doubt that these contacts amounted negotiations at all.

[36] The figures for Edward's army are from Brown, Bannockburn, 40.

I am grateful to Professor George Henderson for pointing out to me that *sublimitā* was used when addressing the Doge of Venice.

As a result this differs from the analysis summarised in RRS, v. 165. I have not regarded the one instance of *punctus elevatus* as indicating an ending (*Regi Ánglie illústri*), although it is possible to analyse this as an irregular form of *cursus trispondaicus*.

I am very grateful to David Carpenter for his help in resolving some difficulties in the transcription.

Sincerissimo, BC.

The scribe of A began by writing *ir* (with long r), and then scored this out.

R., BC.

Scotorum, BC.

*Amended* to *Quoniam*, C.

requiescunt, BC.

BC have *regnorumque* for *Regnorum quia*.

*Humilitas duxit*, BC.

*Ceilitudinem vestram*, BC.

*Quod domini, BC, for quatinus deum*.

*Nostra, BC*.

per added in C.

sum propati, C; sum propati dismissed in B as a ‘misleading and misplacing of parali sumus in the next line’ (RRS, v. 698, no. 569 n.b); it can now be seen as a misreading of *siue pati*.

*Redemcione, B*.

*Pacis bone*, BC.

BC have *pro anima beniuolencie perpetue* for *pro gracia vestre beneuolencie perpetuo*.

*Prouierenda, A; promerenda, B; promouenda, C. B’s reading means the clausula has the rhythm of *cursus velox*.*

* Cedit, BC*.

*Voluntas, BC*.

*Presentis, A; presentium, BC. B’s reading means the clausula has the rhythm of *cursus velox*.*

The second o is a little squashed in A.

* From *Scriptis to the end is absent from BC*. 

*Suspension stroke above –yn in A.*

Nostri is not apparently what was actually written in A, which looks like two minims (the second elongated) with *superscript stroke*.

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