

The Political Parties: the Court Party

James Douglas, 2nd Duke of Queensberry, politician (1662–1711)



James Douglas, 2nd Duke of Queensberry, by an unknown artist. Copyright: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, reference PG 1171

James Douglas was born at Sanguhar Castle in Dumfriesshire. He served King William in 1689 and fought against the Jacobites. He entered the Scottish Parliament in 1692 and succeeded his father as 2nd Duke of Queensberry in 1695.

In 1703, he was joint leader of the Court Party in parliament and served as High Commissioner in the government. He was one of the Scottish commissioners who negotiated the treaty of union and made it law. He was rewarded with a British peerage and was created Duke of Dover in 1708. He died in London in 1711 and was buried near Drumlanrig in Dumfriesshire.

James Ogilvy, 1st Earl of Seafield, politician (1663–1730)

James Ogilvy became an advocate in 1685. He entered politics and represented Cullen, in Banffshire, in the Scottish Parliament between 1689 and 1695. In 1701 he was made Earl of Seafield and in 1702 he was appointed Chancellor of Scotland. In 1706 Seafield was selected as one of the Scottish commissioners to negotiate the treaty of union. He signed the Act under his title of Chancellor of Scotland.

After the union, he was chosen as one of the sixteen Scottish peers to represent Scotland in the House of Lords. In 1713, disillusioned with the outcome of the union, he introduced a bill for its repeal that was defeated by only four votes. Seafield died aged 67 and was buried at Cullen.



James Ogilvy, 1st Earl of Seafield, by Sir Jean Baptiste de Medina. Copyright: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, reference PG 1064

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The Union of 1707

John Erskine, 6th Earl of Mar, politician (1675-1732)



John Erskine, 6th Earl of Mar, by John Smith after Sir Godfrey Kneller.
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John Erskine was born on the family estate in Alloa, Clackmannanshire. He entered the Scottish parliament in 1696. Mar worked closely with the Duke of Queensberry. He was selected as one of the commissioners to negotiate the terms for the treaty and was appointed Secretary of State in Scotland. He spoke out in favour of union and sent regular progress reports to government ministers in London.

After the union, he was chosen as one of the sixteen Scottish peers to sit in the House of Lords. When George I came to the throne in 1714, Mar was dismissed from his post as Secretary of State. Unhappy with the situation and with the aftermath of the union, he changed sides and led the Jacobite rebellion in 1715. His political career came to an end at the battle of Sheriffmuir.

Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, politician and antiquary (1676-1755)

John Clerk was born in Edinburgh. He studied law in Leiden and travelled widely in Europe where he acquired an interest in music and antiquities.

He returned to Scotland, became a lawyer and entered politics as a firm supporter of the Hanoverian succession. He was MP for Whithorn in the Scottish parliament of 1703–7, and supported the 2nd Duke of Queensberry. In 1706, he was appointed as one of the Scottish commissioners to negotiate the treaty of union with England. He served as one of the 45 Scottish members in the first parliament of Great Britain in 1707. He retired from politics in 1708 and concentrated on his literary and cultural pursuits. He died at Penicuik House.



Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, by an unknown artist after William Aikman. Copyright: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, reference PG 1355

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The Union of 1707

Robert Dundas, 2nd Lord Arniston, lawyer and politician (1658-1726)

Robert Dundas studied law in the Netherlands and returned to Scotland as a supporter of William III. He was made a judge in the Court of Session in 1689, taking the title Lord Arniston, and he sat on the bench for thirty years. He served as MP for Midlothian between 1703 and 1707. He was a commissioner for the treaty of union in 1706. He did not sign the Articles and was absent from parliament for the final vote. His political career came to an end. His health declined during the last five years of his life.

Sir Hew Dalrymple, lawyer (1652-1737)



Sir Hew Dalrymple, Lord North Berwick, attributed to Sir John Baptiste de Medina.
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Hew Dalrymple studied civil law at Leiden University and followed his father and brothers into the legal profession. During the 1680s, he worked in Edinburgh as an advocate and judge in the commissary court.

Dalrymple entered parliament in 1690 as representative for New Galloway. In 1698, he was appointed president of the Court of Session. He was elected MP for North Berwick in 1706 and was an enthusiastic supporter of the union. Dalrymple continued his legal career after 1707 and remained president until his death.

David Melville, 3rd Earl of Leven, army officer and politician (1660-1728)

David Melville was born in Monimail in Fife. He began his career as a soldier on the continent. He returned to Britain with his regiment in 1688 as a supporter of William III. He fought against the Jacobites at the battle of Killiecrankie. In 1689, Leven was appointed keeper of Edinburgh Castle. In 1704, he was called to London to advise on Scottish affairs and in 1706, he was made Commander-in-Chief in Scotland.

Leven, a loyal government servant, was a keen supporter of the union. He was chosen as one of the 16 Scottish peers to sit in the House of Lords, a position he held from 1708 to 1710. On his death, he was buried in Markinch.



David Melville, 3rd Earl of Leven by Sir John Baptiste de Medina. Copyright: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, reference PG 1528