

= Nicholas de Balmyle =

Nicholas de Balmyle (d . 1319 × 1320) , also called Nicholas of St Andrews , was a Scottish administrator and prelate in the late 13th century and early 14th century . A graduate of an unknown university , he served his earliest years as a clergyman at St Andrews , moving on to hold churches in Lothian as well as deputising (as Official) to two archdeacons of Lothian .

In the late summer and in the autumn of 1296 , between the death of Bishop William Fraser and the arrival of the new Bishop of St Andrews William de Lamberton , Nicholas was placed in charge of the diocese of St Andrews as Official . Nicholas thereafter can be found exercising a senior role in Scottish affairs , and by early 1301 he was Chancellor of Scotland . In his late 60s or (more probably) his 70s by this stage , Nicholas was an extremely old man , yet in 1307 he became Bishop of Dunblane . He held this position until his death in either 1319 or 1320 .

= = Background and early life = =

It is highly unlikely that Nicholas was born later than the 1230s , as he was styled Magister by 1259 , indicating that by that date he possessed a Master 's degree . It was rare for someone under twenty years old or even older to have such a qualification in this period . The university or universities he attended are not known .

Until 1295 , Nicholas was referred to as Nicholas of St Andrews (de Sancto Andrea) , but in February of that year he began to be called de Balmyle , one source referring to him as de Balmyll dictus de Sancto Andrea (de Balmyle called de Sanctoandrea) . It is probable that he adopted de Sancto Andrea when he finished training at St Andrews and went elsewhere , and that he dropped it in 1295 when he moved back .

Nicholas ' apparent surname , de Balmyle , points to an association with Balmyle near Meigle , in the region where Gowrie and Angus border , though that is only one of two possible locations .

= = Early career = =

As a graduate , Nicholas is first found active at St Andrews in the entourage of Gamelin , Bishop of St Andrews , in 1259 . He does not appear very often in any witness lists during the following few decades , but does appear along with other St Andrews clerics witnessing a charter of William , Earl of Mar at Falkland on 21 January 1268 .

He disappeared from the records until found as Official to the Archdeacon of Lothian (1283 × 1285) . It is possible that in this period he left Scotland for further study . The position of Official was held under the absentee Archdeacon of Lothian , Adam de Gullane , and afterwards , Archdeacon William Frere , and was probably held along with the post of vicar of Haddington ; the latter he definitely held by 1295 . Nicholas is found as Official in a document dating certainly between 1273 and 1285 , a document which can probably be more precisely dated to between 1283 and 1285 .

He was pastor of the church of Calder Comitis , Midlothian , by September 1296 . Both churches were indirectly under the patronage of the Bishop of St Andrews , William Fraser . The rector of Haddington was St Andrews Cathedral Priory and although the church of Calder Comitis was normally under the patronage of the Mormaer of Fife , at that point in time the wardship of the young mormaer 's lands was being held by the Bishop of St Andrews .

On 6 November 1292 , he acted as a substitute auditor on behalf of John de Balliol at Berwick in the Great Cause . The latter was the legal process by which Edward I , King of the English , mediated the succession dispute to the Scottish throne , the end result of which Balliol was selected by King Edward to be king on condition of open subordination .

Nicholas attended King John 's first parliament in February 1293 at Scone . He is found witnessing a charter at Newbattle Abbey on 20 November 1293 , as Archdeacon William Frere 's Official , and on 20 December is mentioned by Frere as a commissary of the Official of the diocese of St Andrews appointed to adjudicate on 4 January 1294 , a case involving Kelso Abbey . He witnessed a charter along with Archdeacon Frere and Bishop William Fraser at Inchmurdo on 13 February 1295 .

= = Nicholas and the wars of Scottish independence = =

In 1296 , the agreement that had followed from the Great Cause between King Edward I and the King of the Scots , John Balliol , broke down . King Edward resolved to depose King John , invading the kingdom and beginning the Wars of Scottish Independence . Nicholas , as pastor of Calder @-@ Comitis , swore fealty to King Edward at Berwick on 28 August 1296 . His lands were restored thereafter , on 2 September , Edward having notionally confiscated all the lands of the Scottish clergy earlier in the year pending homage .

In the following year , William Fraser , the Bishop of St Andrews , died , and it was Nicholas who was chosen to be Official of the diocese and to administer it during the vacancy . He performed this function until the return to Scotland from France of the new bishop , William de Lamberton .

After his return in August 1299 , Lamberton was Guardian of Scotland and Nicholas became his close associate . Nicholas can be seen to have benefited as a result . He became Chancellor of Scotland by 30 January 1301 . Balmyle 's pension for being Chancellor was to be paid by Arbroath Abbey , for which the abbey later fell into arrears .

Later in the year , in April , he was one of four Scottish envoys sent to Canterbury for abortive talks with the English and French . In the next few years , Nicholas ' activities are difficult to trace , but he was probably involved in much diplomatic activity , including perhaps having a hand in drawing up the brief which Baldred Bisset would later deliver to the pope in the interests of Scottish independence . It was probably in this time too that Nicholas became a clerk at Arbroath Abbey and perhaps a canon of Dunblane Cathedral .

Nicholas may have remained as Chancellor until 1305 . His accession as Chancellor by 1301 corresponded with a renewed emphasis on the authority of King John in government documents . Becoming Chancellor by 1301 , in the words of Geoffrey Barrow , meant that he became " one of the handful of key men who directed the national struggle " .

= = Episcopal election = =

Following the death of his namesake Nicholas , Bishop of Dunblane (and former Abbot of Arbroath) , Nicholas de Balmyle was among the canons of Dunblane with the responsibility of selecting a successor . Bishop Nicholas had died sometime between 1306 (after his last attestation on 26 January) and late 1307 . The election was done by compromissarii (a short @-@ list of canons delegated to perform election) , with John , Abbot of Arbroath excluded from the vote , perhaps because of his known pro @-@ English tendencies .

The seven compromissarii were the dean (name not known) , Maurice , Abbot of Inchaffray , William , Abbot of Lindores , Michael , Abbot of Cambuskenneth , William de Eaglesham , Henry de Stirling , and Nicholas de Balmyle . They were instructed to elect from among themselves , and their decision was the promotion of Nicholas de Balmyle . Nicholas , Bishop @-@ elect of Dunblane , travelled to the Apostolic See along with proctors of the cathedral chapter . After the election was confirmed by Pope Clement V , Nicholas was consecrated by Nicholas , Cardinal @-@ Bishop of Ostia at Poitiers on 11 December 1307 .

It was Geoffrey Barrow 's belief , supported by Donald Watt , that their decision was the result of pressure from the new Scottish king , Robert de Brus , who may have valued Balmyle 's experience and trusted his political record . The usual secular patron of the diocese was the Mormaer of Strathearn , but the incumbent Maol Íosa III was at that stage a prisoner @-@ exile at Rochester in England , thus allowing Robert to take his place .

= = Bishop of Dunblane = =

When Nicholas returned to Scotland , and the exact nature of his activities over the next few years , remain unclear matters . His episcopal rank makes it likely that he attended the parliaments and took part in the affairs of the kingdom during the early years of his episcopate , but direct proof is

lacking .

He witnessed a charter of Cambuskenneth Abbey along with John de Kininmund , Bishop of Brechin , on 12 September 1311 . He is found witnessing many ecclesiastical and royal documents through 1312 , 1313 and beyond . He witnessed royal acts at Inchtute and Dundee in April 1312 , at Ayr on 27 May 1315 , at Edinburgh on 9 March 1317 , at Scone on 14 June that year , at Melrose on 24 July 1317 , again at Scone on 3 December 1318 and at Arbroath on 8 February 1319 .

On 6 October 1312 , he came to an agreement with Bernard , Abbot of Arbroath , which resolved Nicholas ' complaints concerning the non payment of his pension as well as more official disputes between the bishopric of Dunblane and the abbey . In the following year he was in a dispute with Dunfermline Abbey regarding the church of Logie @-@ Atheron in Stirlingshire , a dispute which was never resolved during Nicholas ' episcopate .

On 9 May 1315 , he is found at Perth assisting William de Sinclair , Bishop of Dunkeld , in a judgment regarding Donnchadh de Strathearn . On 27 March 1318 he was named as papal mandatory to oversee the provision of the Italian Robert Barducci of Florence to the deanery of Glasgow Cathedral .

It is not known exactly when Bishop Nicholas died . The see of Dunblane is first known to have been vacant on 30 January 1320 and Bishop Nicholas ' last appearance in the records was witnessing a charter of Coupar Angus Abbey at Arbroath on 8 February 1318 : his death therefore fell between these two points .