

= Boulogne agreement =

The Boulogne agreement was a document signed by a group of English magnates in 1308 , concerning the government of Edward II . After the death of Edward I in 1307 , discontent soon developed against the new king . This was partly due to lingering problems from the previous reign , but also related to issues with Edward II himself . Particularly his abandonment of the Scottish Wars and his patronage of the unpopular Piers Gaveston caused discontent . Drawn up in Boulogne @-@ sur @-@ Mer during the king 's nuptials , the document vaguely asserted the signatories ' duty to guard the rights of the Crown . Three months later , the agreement was the basis for another document , justifying opposition to the king . This latter document , the so @-@ called Declaration of 1308 , is notable for its use of the " doctrine of capacities " : the distinction between the person of the King and the institution of the Crown .

The document today exists only in a 17th @-@ century transcript by the antiquarian William Dugdale . The Boulogne agreement was largely unknown to modern historians up until the 1960s , but it is now considered significant because it is the first documented expression of the conflict between king and nobility , which was to dominate so much of the reign of Edward II . Though historians agree on the document 's importance , there is still disagreement over its interpretation , particularly whether the signatories should be seen as oppositional or loyal to the king .

= = Background = =

Edward II succeeded as king of England on 7 July 1307 , on the death of his father Edward I . The expectations of the new king were high , and he initially enjoyed a good relationship with the leading magnates of the realm . There were , however , some issues of contention remaining from the reign of his father . Edward I 's incessant wars had put a great fiscal burden on the country , and his confrontational style had led to conflict with some of the leading lay and ecclesiastical lords . This had culminated in the drafting of the so @-@ called Remonstrances in 1297 , a set of complaints about royal government . By Edward I 's death in 1307 , most of these issues had been resolved . It was nevertheless in the interest of the leading men of the country to make sure that the new king did not act the way his father had , and ignored the opinions of his councillors .

There were also certain personal issues regarding the new king that caused concern . Shortly before his death , Edward I had exiled Prince Edward 's favourite and possible lover Piers Gaveston , whom the king believed had too much influence over the prince . At his deathbed he had supposedly exhorted some of his closest followers ? Henry de Lacy , Earl of Lincoln , Guy de Beauchamp , Earl of Warwick , Aymer de Valence , Earl of Pembroke and Robert Clifford ? to keep watch over his son , and particularly to make sure that Gaveston did not return . One of Edward II 's first actions as king was nevertheless to recall Gaveston from exile . He also gave him the title of Earl of Cornwall ? a title normally reserved for members of the royal family ? thereby furthering the aggravation against the favourite . Another source of discontent was Edward II abandoning the Scottish Wars pursued by his father . This left the way open for Robert the Bruce to regain land the English had conquered , to the detriment of many English magnates .

On 22 January 1308 , Edward II left England for France , leaving Gaveston behind as Regent . By the Treaty of Montreuil in 1299 , it had been agreed that Edward should marry Isabella , the daughter of Philippe IV of France . Accompanying the king were several great nobles , including Lincoln , Pembroke , Clifford , John de Warenne , Earl of Surrey and Humphrey de Bohun , Earl of Hereford . On 25 January Edward and Isabella were married at Boulogne @-@ sur @-@ Mer , and on 31 January Edward performed homage for the Duchy of Aquitaine , which the English king held of the French king . On that same day , the nobles mentioned above , with others , gathered to sign the document that has become known to history as the Boulogne agreement .

= = Document and interpretation = =

The document was signed and dated at Boulogne on the 31 January 1308 . At the top of the list of

signatories was Antony Bek , Bishop of Durham and Patriarch of Jerusalem . He was followed by the four earls Lincoln , Pembroke , Surrey and Hereford , and five men of baronial families : Clifford , Payn Tybetot , Henry de Gray , John de Botetourt and John de Berwick . The document today exists in the Bodleian Library in Oxford , as a transcript made by the 17th @-@ century antiquarian William Dugdale . Dugdale 's transcript is believed to be based on an older document , which was probably lost in the Cotton library fire of 1731 .

The text of the document is rather vague and noncommittal . The signatories were concerned with guarding the king 's honour and the rights of the Crown (garder son honeur et les dreits de sa Coroune) . There was also a promise to address and correct both the things that had been done against that honour and those rights , as well as the past and present oppression of the people (les choses que sont faites avant ces houres countre soen honour et le droit de sa Coronne , et les oppressiouns que ount estre fait et uncore se fount de jour en jour a soen people) . Nothing is said about what specifically these things were , but it must be assumed that the target was Gaveston . Bek was given the authority to excommunicate whoever broke the terms of the agreement .

Because of the vague language of the document , there has been much scholarly debate over how it should be interpreted . John Maddicott saw the wording as a hostile warning to the new king to avoid the mistakes of his father , or face the consequences . J. R. S. Phillips , on the other hand , took the signatories to be positively inclined towards Edward II . There were others who were more intrinsic in their opposition to the king and Gaveston , primarily the Earl of Warwick . The purpose of the document , in Phillips view , was to present the king with a warning , and hopefully protect him against the more antagonistic members of the nobility .

= = Aftermath and transmission = =

The Boulogne agreement had little immediate impact , and is notable mostly for its influence on a later document presented in parliament in April that year . In the meanwhile , on 25 February , the king had been crowned . Before the coronation , the king had been forced to include an additional clause in his coronation oath . The king obliged himself to abide by the law , but this exact meaning of this promise was ambiguous . The clause referred to laws the people " shall have chosen " (aura eslu) , which left it unclear whether it also included future enactments . At the coronation ceremony that followed , Gaveston acted with such presumption and arrogance as to further alienate the leading magnates .

The document from the April parliament , today referred to as the Declaration of 1308 , contained three articles and was presented by the Earl of Lincoln . The first article invoked the so @-@ called " doctrine of capacities " : that the subjects of the realm owed allegiance to the institution of the Crown , not to the person of the King . If the King abused his position , it was his subject 's duty to correct this , thereby upholding the pledge of the Boulogne agreement to protect the rights of the Crown . The second article was an attack on Gaveston ? though he was not mentioned by name ? implicitly demanding his renewed exile . The third article referred to the additional clause from the coronation oath . It was here taken to mean that the king had obliged himself to abide by any decisions made by his subjects ; past , present or future . The king initially held out against the opposition , but the earls also received support from Philippe IV , who was offended by Edward 's apparent preference of Gaveston over Isabella . On 18 May Edward agreed to once again send Gaveston into exile .

Dugdale both transcribed the Boulogne agreement and made a reference to it , in a footnote in his 1675 Baronage of England . After this the document was absent from history writing for almost three centuries . Dugdale 's footnote was mentioned by certain historians , but it was not until 1965 that the document itself was again used as a source , when Noël Denholm @-@ Young quoted a few lines from it in his History and Heraldry : 1254 ? 1310 . In 1972 , J. R. S. Phillips printed a complete transcription of the Boulogne agreement in his book Aymer de Valence , Earl of Pembroke 1307 ? 1324 .