

= Walter de Coventre =

Walter de Coventre (died 1371 or 1372) was a 14th @-@ century Scottish ecclesiastic . There is no direct evidence of his birthdate , his family , or his family 's origin , although he may have come from the region around Abernethy (in modern @-@ day Perth and Kinross) , where a family with the name de Coventre is known to have lived . Walter appeared in the records for the first time in the 1330s , as a student at the University of Paris . From there he went on to the University of Orléans , initially as a student before becoming a lecturer there . He studied the arts , civil law and canon law , and was awarded many university degrees , including two doctorates . His studies were paid for , at least partially , by his benefices in Scotland . Despite holding perhaps more than five benefices at one stage , he did not return to Scotland until the late 1350s .

Following his return to Scotland , Walter soon became Dean of Aberdeen Cathedral . From there he became engaged in high @-@ level ecclesiastical affairs with the Scottish church and political affairs with the Earl of Mar. Sometime before June 1361 , the cathedral chapter of Dunblane elected him Bishop of Dunblane . He went to France to secure confirmation from the Pope at Avignon , who authorised his consecration . Walter was bishop for 10 years after returning home to Scotland . Records of his episcopate are thin , but there are enough to allow a modest reconstruction of his activities : he presided over legal disputes , issued a dispensation for an important irregular marriage , attended parliaments , and acted as an envoy of the Scottish crown in England . He died in either 1371 or 1372 .

= = Background = =

Walter de Coventre was typical of a new class of men in 14th @-@ century Scotland , the university @-@ educated career cleric from the lower nobility . Such men often acquired university education through their family resources , through the patronage of more substantial nobles , or through church influence , particularly support from the pope and his court . Patronage gave access to the resources needed to finance the considerable expense of a 14th @-@ century university education , particularly through the presentation of benefices , gifts of land or income made by the church .

Scotland had no universities in de Coventre 's time , requiring travel either to England or Continental Europe to acquire a university education . Continental Europe , particularly France , was the favoured destination , partly because of bad relations between Scotland and England . After their university education , some Scottish graduates chose to remain abroad and teach at a foreign university or to serve the papacy ; most returned to Scotland and offered their services to the king , a magnate , or an ecclesiastical institution . The ultimate reward for such services was a bishopric , which brought wealth , prestige , and a " job for life " .

Walter de Coventre 's life is not well documented . There are no biographies , and no histories or chronicles devote any space to him . His activities can be traced only through a small number of incidental references in legal deeds , church documents and papal records . No modern historian has written a monograph about him , and the most extensive attempt to reconstruct his life in modern literature is a two @-@ page entry in D. E. R. Watt 's Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to A.D. 1410 (1977) . James Hutchison Cockburn , in his Medieval Bishop of Dunblane and their Church (1959) devoted seven less extensively sourced pages , but they emphasized the analysis of a few events during de Coventre 's episcopate , and the events of his time .

During most of de Coventre 's recorded lifetime Scotland was ruled by King David II . Coming to the throne at age five , King David was driven into exile in France at the age of ten . In the 1330s , civil war raged in Scotland as those loyal to David fought Edward Balliol and his English backers . In some sense , the conflict became a side @-@ show of the Hundred Years ' War , and David resided at Château Gaillard in northern France for much of his exile , until he could return to Scotland in 1341 . In 1346 , in response to a plea from France to come to its aid , David led an army into England only to be taken prisoner at Neville 's Cross ; he remained in captivity until he was ransomed in 1357 . David 's exile in France corresponded with Walter 's own period in that country , prompting one historian to suggest that Walter was part of David 's court while both were in northern

France , and that Walter subsequently benefited from the relationship .

= = Biography = =

= = = Origins and personal background = = =

James Hutchison Cockburn , a historian of Dunblane 's medieval bishops , assumed that Walter 's surname derived from the town of Coventry in England . D. E. R. Watt has suggested that the medieval settlement of Coventre or Covintrie near Abernethy in the diocese of Dunblane was the origin of the name .

There is no direct evidence of de Coventre 's family , but two other men bearing the name " de Coventre " are known to have been active during Walter 's lifetime . A " John de Coventre " is found registered as a student at the University of Paris on 21 January 1331 . Before December 1341 , when he resigned , John de Coventre held the parish church of Inverarity , Angus , in the diocese of St Andrews . On 7 December 1345 , a William de Coventre , also from the diocese of Dunblane , held a canonry and prebends (a cathedral priesthood with stipends) in the diocese of Ross and the Collegiate Church of Abernethy , when he was granted the church of Inverarity that had previously been held by John de Coventre . William thus appears to have succeeded John (and later Walter succeeded William) to all of these benefices .

Watt suggested that all three were brothers , John the first @-@ born , William the second @-@ born , and Walter the youngest of the three . He further suggested that the family was probably closely connected to Margaret de Abernethy , heiress of the old lay abbots and lords of Abernethy . Margaret had patronage over both the church of Abernethy and , as probable owner of the barony of Inverarity , the church there .

= = = Early life = = =

= = = = Education = = = =

De Coventre received a B. A. under John de Waltirstone from the University of Paris by Lent , 1333 . Although he had probably completed a Licentiate in the Arts and a Master of Arts by 1335 , because of gaps in the Paris records it is not certain that he was a Master until April 1345 .

He moved on to study civil law at the University of Orléans , and by 24 March 1337 , he was serving as the proctor of the Scottish Nation in Orléans . By 7 December 1345 , he had received a Licentiate in Civil Law . On 20 December 1348 he was at Avignon as an envoy of his university , and while there he obtained a grace regarding his own benefice holding from Pope Clement VI . On 7 October 1349 , Pope Clement granted an indult to Walter allowing him to be absent from his cure while he continued his studies at Orléans .

He may already have been a Doctor of Civil Law by that point , because in the following year , on 22 November 1350 , he is found as such acting as the Regent of Orléans presenting a candidate for licence . Having studied civil law for the highest qualification available , de Coventre moved on to canon law . By 28 March 1351 , he possessed a Bachelorate in Decrees (canon law) . This was perhaps why on 16 April 1353 , he obtained from Pope Innocent VI another grace for himself . Precisely when he obtained his doctorate is unclear , but he was D. U. J. (doctor utriusque juris) , Doctor of Both Laws , by 4 September 1359 .

= = = = Benefices = = = =

Walter 's first known benefices were a canonry (with prebend) in the Collegiate Church of Abernethy and a prebend in the diocese of Ross , northern Scotland , which he was holding by 12 April 1345 . None of these benefices , neither parish nor office , are known by name . While Walter

would retain his Ross benefice until becoming Bishop of Dunblane , he lost his Abernethy benefice at some point between 20 December 1348 and 28 March 1351 . During that period he obtained another unnamed prebend in exchange for the Abernethy prebend . Walter is only the second known canon of Abernethy Collegiate Church .

On 12 April 1345 , he was granted a canonry in the diocese of Dunkeld with expectation of a prebend , but does not appear to have obtained this in practice , although he did obtain a different Dunkeld canonry with prebend on 12 May 1352 . This he retained until his consecration as Bishop of Dunblane in 1361 . Walter also obtained a fourth prebend in this period . He had been pursuing a benefice in the diocese of St Andrews , and while he was granted this on 28 March 1351 , the grant was still not effective by 16 April 1353 , when he was granted a prebend in the diocese of Moray instead . This was not effective either , but Walter did eventually obtain a St Andrews diocese benefice , namely the church of Inverarity in Angus , which had become vacant on the death of its incumbent , William de Coventre , probably Walter 's older brother . On 7 December 1345 , Walter was appointed (provided) as Archdeacon of Dunblane , his most substantial benefice to date , but the appointment does not appear to have been carried through .

Walter obtained one more benefice during this period . On 20 December 1348 , he was made Dean of Aberdeen Cathedral , a high @-@ ranking office which Walter was not technically eligible to hold without a papal grace , being only a sub @-@ deacon in orders . The deanery had been made vacant by the death of the long @-@ serving Gilbert Fleming . Although in July the Pope had given it as an extra prebend for Annibald de Ceccano , Cardinal Bishop of Tusculum , this had been cancelled by 20 December , when it was given to Walter instead .

These benefices provided an income without the obligation to perform any pastoral services . Their revenues were assigned to pay for his studies , leaving poorly paid vicars to carry out the pastoral work . Walter remained as a teacher and official at Orléans , perhaps without returning to Scotland at all , until the late 1350s , by when he would have been absent from his native country for more than 25 years . In an Aberdeen document dated 12 July 1356 , it was noted that he was still absent from his post .

= = = Bishop of Dunblane = = =

= = = Return to Scotland and episcopal election = = =

Walter cannot be traced back in Scotland with certainty before his appearance as a witness to a charter of Thomas , Earl of Mar , on 9 July 1358 . He may have returned a year earlier , as a document dated sometime between November 1357 and April 1359 records him in the sheriffdom of Forfar (royal demesne in Angus) assisting a justice ayre . He appears again on 4 September 1359 , witnessing another charter of Earl Thomas at the latter 's residence of Kildrummy Castle .

Following the death in 1361 of William de Cambuslang , Bishop of Dunblane , Walter was elected by the Dunblane cathedral chapter to be the new bishop . On his election , Walter possessed no benefices in the diocese , and had had none since giving up his Abernethy prebend a decade before . However , it was probably the diocese of his birth , and he had almost become archdeacon of the diocese in 1345 .

Walter , bishop @-@ elect , travelled to the papal court at Avignon , and was provided (appointed) as bishop by Pope Innocent on 18 June 1361 . The papal letter of provision expressed displeasure that the chapter (by electing) and Walter (by accepting the election) were ignoring a previous papal reservation of the bishopric . Pope Innocent quashed the election , but nevertheless agreed to appoint (provide) Walter to the bishopric .

Walter may have been consecrated soon after , probably by 23 August . It was on that date that he presented a roll of petitions to the Pope on behalf of several Scotsmen , including Michael de Monymusk , future Bishop of Dunkeld . On 20 September , Bishop Walter made a " promise of services " to the papacy , the first payment of which was delivered to Avignon in 1363 by Walter 's proctor .

= = = = Early episcopate = = = =

Walter had returned to Scotland by 30 June 1362 , when his presence is attested at Partick near Glasgow . The document in which Walter is mentioned recorded that William Rae , Bishop of Glasgow , along with his cathedral chapter , agreed to put a dispute to arbitration .

The remainder of his episcopate is not well documented . His only surviving episcopal deed was issued at Abernethy on 8 February 1365 . The deed authorised the reduction of canons at Abernethy Collegiate Church from ten to five , adding the consent of the patroness Margaret , Countess of Angus . These details are also recorded in a papal letter to the Bishop of St Andrews in 1373 :

Recently a petition of the secular Prior and Chapter [of Abernethy] for confirmation described how the [Collegiate] Church was founded by lay patrons for a prior and five canons . At a later date some of the patrons were eager to augment its rents , and the number of canons was hopefully raised to ten . No such augmentation took place , and because of wars , fires and ruin the Prior and Chapter were brought to straits . Bishop Walter , therefore , with the assent of the patrons and King David , reduced the canons to five .

The changes were confirmed by the Pope on 31 October 1375 , several years after Bishop Walter 's death .

A document of Inchaffray Abbey , preserved in the original (as opposed to a later copy) , recorded that Bishop Walter had been involved in settling a dispute involving Inchaffray , an abbey which lay in his diocese . Inchaffray 's dispute was with Naomhán Mac Eóghainn (Nevin MacEwen) and his wife Mairead (Mariota) . Under Abbot Symon de Scone , previous Abbot of Inchaffray , the abbey had given some lands in exchange for 40 marks to Mairead 's father Maol Mhuire (Malmoran) of Glencarnie .

Under the new abbot , Abbot John , the abbey sought the return of those lands . The case appears to have gone to Bishop Walter 's consistorial court , which he held at the chapel of Innerpeffry . Here Naomhán and Mairead agreed to accept a payment of 40 marks in exchange for returning the documents of ownership given to them by the abbot and for acknowledging the abbey 's ownership . The couple pledged to honour the agreement by swearing an oath on the chapel 's Gospels . The case then proceeded to a hearing held under Robert Stewart , Earl of Strathearn and High Steward of Scotland (later King Robert II) , at Perth , where the couple were forced under the threat of severe penalties to swear again never to renew their claim . The decision was sealed by the witnesses , including Bishop Walter , at a Perth church on 30 November 1365 .

= = = = Final years = = = =

On 13 March 1366 , Walter was commissioned by the papacy to authorise dispensation for the irregular marriage between John Stewart , Earl of Carrick (much later King Robert III) and Annabella Drummond .

Bishop Walter attended at least five meetings of the Scottish national parliament during his episcopate . He was present at the Scone parliament of 27 September 1367 , which discussed royal revenues and relations with the English crown . He was also present at the Scone parliament of June 1368 , and the Perth parliament of 6 March 1369 ; the latter discussed royal business , relations with the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Norway , and law and order in the Scottish Highlands . Robert Stewart , Thomas , Earl of Mar , Uilleam III , Earl of Ross , and other Highland lords , were ordered to impose greater control in their regions . Bishop Walter took part in two parliamentary committees , the first a clerical committee devoted to general business , and the second a judicial committee authorised to review earlier legal judgments in the kingdom .

The parliament 's discussions on Anglo @-@ Scottish relations preceded peace negotiations later in the year , at which Bishop Walter was one of the Scottish envoys . There was some urgency behind the matter , in view of the impending end to the five @-@ year Anglo @-@ Scottish truce agreed by King Edward III of England on 20 May 1365 . King David travelled to London , where he

resided in May and June , in order to take part in the negotiations . Walter and the rest of the embassy , which included four other bishops , were in London by June 1369 , the month in which Edward agreed to a new truce . When it was ratified by the Scots at Edinburgh on 20 July , Bishop Walter was again present , as a witness .

Walter attended the Perth parliament of 18 February 1370 , and was named as one of the members of a special committee " for the deliberation concerning the consideration of common justice " . He is mentioned for the last time swearing fealty to the new king , Robert II , at his accession parliament at Scone on 27 March 1371 . Walter de Coventre must have died later in 1371 or in very early 1372 , because on 27 April 1372 , the Pope appointed Andrew Magnus to the vacant bishopric of Dunblane .