

= John of Brittany , Earl of Richmond =

John of Brittany , called in French Jean de Bretagne (c . 1266 ? 17 January 1334) , 4th Earl of Richmond , was an English nobleman and a member of the Ducal house of Brittany , the House of Dreux . He entered royal service in England under his uncle Edward I , and also served Edward II . On 15 October 1306 he received his father 's title of Earl of Richmond . He was named Guardian of Scotland in the midst of England 's conflicts with Scotland and in 1311 Lord Ordainer during the baronial rebellion against Edward II .

John of Brittany served England as a soldier and as a diplomat but was otherwise politically inactive in comparison to other Earls of his time . He was a capable diplomat , valued by both Edward I and Edward II for his negotiating skills . John was never married , and upon his death his title and estates fell to his nephew , John III , Duke of Brittany . Although he was generally loyal to his first cousin Edward II during the times of baronial rebellion , he eventually supported the coup of Isabella and Mortimer . After Edward II abdicated in favour of his son Edward III of England , John retired to his estates in France and died in his native Brittany in 1334 with no known issue .

= = Early life = =

John was the second surviving son of John II , Duke of Brittany , and his wife Beatrice , who together had three sons and three daughters who survived to adulthood . Beatrice was the daughter of Henry III of England , which made John the nephew of Henry 's son and heir Edward I. His father held the title of Earl of Richmond , but was little involved in English political affairs . John was raised at the English court together with Edward I 's son Henry , who died in 1274 . He participated in tournaments in his youth. but never distinguished himself in his early roles as a soldier .

= = Service to Edward I = =

When in 1294 the French king confiscated King Edward 's Duchy of Aquitaine , John travelled to France but failed to take Bordeaux . During Easter of 1295 he had to flee the town of Rions . In January 1297 he shared defeat at the siege of Bellegarde with Henry de Lacy , Earl of Lincoln . After this defeat , he returned to England .

Despite his poor results in France he remained highly regarded by his uncle King Edward I , who treated him almost as a son . After his return to England John became involved in the Scottish Wars . He was probably at the Battle of Falkirk in 1298 . He was certainly at the Siege of Caerlaverock in 1300 . The nobles who joined Edward I at the Siege of Caerlaverock , including John of Brittany , were commemorated in the Roll of Caerlaverock which named each noble and described their banner . In this roll , the banner and description of John of Brittany immediately follows that of his uncle King Edward I

His father , the Duke of Brittany , died in 1305 , and was succeeded as Duke by John 's elder brother , Arthur . The following year Edward I invested John with his father 's other title , Earl of Richmond . In addition Edward I appointed him Guardian of Scotland , a position which was confirmed upon the accession of Edward II in 1307 .

= = Service to Edward II = =

The English court viewed John of Brittany as a trusted diplomat . He was a skilled negotiator , and his French connections were a useful asset . By 1307 he was also one of the kingdom 's oldest earls . As the relationship between Edward II and his nobility deteriorated , Richmond remained loyal to the king ; in 1309 he went on an embassy to Pope Clement V on behalf of Edward 's favourite Piers Gaveston . John was allegedly Gaveston 's close personal friend , and did not share the antagonistic attitudes held by certain other earls .

= = = Lord Ordainers = = =

By 1310 the relationship between Edward II and his earls had deteriorated to the point where a committee of earls took control of government from the king . The earls disobeyed a royal order not to carry arms to parliament , and in full military attire presented a demand to the king for the appointment of a commission of reform . At the heart of the deteriorating situation was the peers ' opinion of Edward II 's relationship with Piers Gaveston , and his reputedly outrageous behavior . On 16 March 1310 , the king agreed to the appointment of Ordainers , who were to be in charge of the reform of the royal household . John of Brittany was one of eight earls appointed to this committee of 21 , referred to as the Lords Ordainers . He was among the Ordainers considered loyal to Edward II and was also by this time one of the older remaining earls .

John then travelled to France for diplomatic negotiations , before returning to England . Gaveston was exiled by the Ordainers but later made an irregular return . Gaveston was killed in June 1312 by Thomas of Lancaster and other nobles . It fell upon John , together with Gilbert de Clare , Earl of Gloucester , to reconcile the two parties after this event . In 1313 he followed Edward II on a state visit to France , and thereafter generally remained a trusted subject . In 1318 he witnessed the Treaty of Leake , which restored Edward to full power .

= = = War with Scotland = = =

In 1320 he again accompanied Edward II to France , and the next year he carried out peace negotiations with the Scots . When in 1322 Thomas of Lancaster rebelled and was defeated at the Battle of Boroughbridge , Richmond was present at his trial , and when Lancaster was sentenced to death . After this , the English invaded Scotland only to have their army starved when Robert the Bruce burned the country before them . The Bruce brought his army into England and crossed the Solway Firth in the west , making his way in a south @-@ easterly direction towards Yorkshire ; he brought many troops recruited in Argyll and the Isles . The boldness and speed of the attack soon exposed Edward II to danger , even in his own land . On his return from Scotland , the king had taken up residence at Rievaulx Abbey with Queen Isabella . His peace was interrupted when the Scots made a sudden and unexpected approach in mid @-@ October . All that stood between them and a royal prize was a large English force under the command of John of Brittany . John had taken up a position on Scawton Moor , between Rievaulx and Byland Abbey . To dislodge John from his strong position on the high ground , Bruce used the same tactics that brought victory at the earlier Battle of the Pass of Brander . As Moray and Douglas charged uphill a party of Highlanders scaled the cliffs on the English flank and charged downhill into John of Brittany 's rearguard . Resistance crumbled , and the Battle of Old Byland turned into a rout . John himself was taken prisoner and given a tongue lashing for his cowardice by Robert the Bruce . John remained in captivity until 1324 , when he was released for a ransom of 14 @,@ 000 marks .

After his release , he continued his diplomatic activities in Scotland and France .

= = Final Years = =

In March 1325 John of Brittany made a final return to France , where for the first time he made himself a clear opponent of Edward II . His lands in England were confiscated by the Crown . In France , John aligned himself with Queen Isabella , Edward II 's wife , who had been sent on a diplomatic mission to France , and had disobeyed her husband 's orders to return to England . . Later when Edward II was forced to abdicate and his son Edward III ascended to the English throne , John of Brittany 's English lands were restored . He spent his last years on his French estates , and he remained largely cut off from English political affairs . He died on 17 January 1334 , and was buried in the church of the Franciscans in Nantes .

John of Brittany never married and as far as is known had no issue . He was succeeded as Earl of Richmond by his nephew John (Arthur 's son) .

= = Ancestry = =

