

# The Parliament of Scotland

*The only known illustration of The Scottish Parliament before its adjournment in 1707, as published in Nicholas de Guedville's Atlas (Paris, 1721). The procession from Holyrood House is depicted, along with the scene at Parliament House itself.*

A New  
Verse To  
Ane Auld  
Sang

*Reprinted in facsimile in 1999 to commemorate the re-opening of The Parliament of Scotland after almost 300 years without a National legislature.*  
*Scotland Lives !*

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CHART REPRESENTING A GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF SCOTLAND; THE ORDER OF THE CAVALCADE OF ITS  
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY, AND THE CONVENING IN SESSION, OF  
THIS ILLUSTRIOUS BODY.

Some General Remarks

Scotland's Governance [a Parliamentary system] is not too dissimilar to that which prevails in England, in its association of Civil Law, Royal Edicts and Acts of Parliament which are called Municipal Laws. Royal Authority in Scotland enjoys a similar range of prerogatives to those which apply in England; in adjourning, proroguing or dissolving Parliament, and in increasing or diminishing the number of members who sit therein. The Sovereign is the spirit of justice and of the Law. The power to wage war and make peace lie solely in his hands: all naval officers and officers of the army are subject to his authority; thus it is for all the forces of the Realm. He can establish Bishoprics, levy tax and duty on every manner of merchandise entering or leaving this Realm. He can also command of his subjects that they raise for him 20,000 foot soldiers and 2,000 cavalymen.

The Parliament represented in the chart is composed of four orders, to wit: the Nobility, the Clergy, the Commissioners representing Provinces, and the representatives [Commissioners] appointed by the Cities and Burghs.

The Clergy is represented by the Archbishops of St. Andrews and Glasgow, and by the several Bishops of the Realm. The Archbishop of St. Andrews is Primate of all Scotland; the bishops are Peers of the Realm and, like their English counterparts, have [special] privy courts in which they are sole judges, in which all instruments are proclaimed in their name and not in the name of the king: [additionally] they preside over provincial synods which sit twice a year in April and October for the reformation of moral standards.

The Nobility is divided into two distinct classes; those of the first order are the Lords or Peers of the Realm, to wit: the Dukes, Marquises, Earls, Viscounts and Barons; they are almost as numerous as those in England.

The lesser rank of Nobility is comprised of the petty landowners [Lairds], certain of whom are mandated to sit in Parliament in order to represent the diverse Provinces. These Provinces [Counties] were formerly allocated a number of places in Parliament along with the obligation to send the prerequisite representatives, but the great expense incurred caused them to petition James I to dispense them of such a burden: this was duly granted to them in an Act of 1430, by which the King accorded them the Freedom to sit in person or to send suitable deputies without having to comply with a fixed number. They later lost this privilege either through their own negligence or through the misfortune of civil conflict; so much so that in order to re-establish this old usage, James VI ordered that each province would choose two nobles according to a majority of votes, and that the deputies thus elected would have the rank and dignity of Petty Barons [Baronets] and would be called County Commissioners.

The [ordinary] people are represented in Parliament by the deputies [Commissioners] of the Cities and the Burghs.

When it pleases the King to convene - Continuation of Remarks - Parliament, the deputies having travelled to Edinburgh, the Capital of Scotland, congregate at the Abbey of Holyrood House in order to proceed with the march or cavalcade as depicted here. Having thus proceeded to Parliament Hall in ceremonial order, the High Commissioner seats himself on his Throne of State, the Great Officers of the Crown at his side, flanked on both sides by the Prelates and secular Peers: Provincial [County] Deputies to the right and Burgh Deputies to the left. The Royal Honours [The Honours of Scotland] are placed on a table by the High Constable and by the Earl Marischall. The Bishop of Edinburgh having said the [opening] prayers, the list of deputies is then read out. Next, the Lord Chancellor, on approaching the throne, kneels to receive the King's Commission from the hands of the High Commissioner. This is presented to a secretary for reading [aloud]. The protocols [of procedure] are then duly read, setting out the manner and order of the assembly, after which time the Lyon King of Arms descends from [his position by] the throne and places the Lords and Deputies according to their rank. The High Commissioner then declares the King's intentions which are more fully explained by the Lord Chancellor; the Deputies are sworn in and [specific] Commissioners appointed to draft the response to the King's Letter [of Legislative Agenda].

There then follows the election of the [specific body of] commissioners, called 'The Lords of the Articles', who will draw up the Acts which are [to be] put before Parliament. For this task, 8 Bishops, 8 Peers of the Realm, 8 lesser Nobles, and 8 Burgesses will be chosen, representing the four orders of The Realm. The election is conducted thus: The Bishops choose the Lords, made up of one Duke, one Marquis, and six Earls. The Lords [then] appoint the ecclesiastical members, who are ordinarily the two Archbishops accompanied by six Bishops. These 16 commissioners together with the Great Officers of The Crown, who are Commissioners for all affairs, choose the 16 others, to wit: 8 for the Provinces [Counties] and 8 for the Burghs.

These preliminaries completed, the High Commissioner retires in the same processional order. On the following days the coming to Parliament is conducted without ceremony.

There is still a sedentary Parliament in Edinburgh which was established by James V. Before this, there was a travelling one which went from town to town rendering justice and interpreting the Laws. The Scots still have a number of sovereign courts of Lord Justices for the criminal matters of each province. Aside from these officers in ordinary, there also exists a hereditary viscount who judges in civil and criminal cases.

M.C.L., May 1999: this is a close translation of the text, strictly adhering to the integrity of the original, which amplifies the only known illustration of the pre-union Scottish Parliament, and accompanies its first reprint since it was published in Nicholas de Coudville's 'Atlas Historique' (Chateaufort, Paris, 1721).

Modern punctuation and paragraphing are the only additional features, added to assist the reader. All extra interpretative words, not in the original French, are offered thus: [Counties].