

The Political Parties: the Country Party

Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, MP, politician and commentator (c.1653–1716)



Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, 1653-1716 by an unknown artist after William Aikman.
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Andrew Fletcher was born near Haddington. As a young man, he lived in London and Europe. He returned to Scotland, published several pamphlets on the country's declining economy and entered Parliament in 1703.

Fletcher did not believe that either the Scottish or the English Parliaments would accept an incorporating union. He opposed the treaty and did not join in the public debate.

In 1708, he was arrested on suspicion of involvement in the Jacobite rising. Released due to lack of evidence, he returned to Europe and his love of books, architecture and travel. He died in London.

John Hamilton, 2nd Baron Belhaven, soldier and politician (1656–1708)

John Hamilton was born in Edinburgh. He entered politics and represented East Lothian in the Scottish Parliament of 1686. Belhaven was one of the Scottish nobles who invited William of Orange to rule the country in 1689. He fought against the Jacobites at the battle of Killiecrankie.

Belhaven remained a privy councillor after the accession of Queen Anne. He was an outspoken opponent of the treaty of union and gave several impassioned speeches against it in Parliament. In 1708 he was taken to London on suspicion of backing an attempted French invasion and was examined by the English Privy Council. He died shortly afterwards.



John Hamilton, 2nd Baron Belhaven, by an unknown artist after Sir Godfrey Kneller.
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The Union of 1707

William Johnstone, 1st Marquess of Annandale, politician (1664-1721)

William Johnstone entered politics during the reign of James VII. He handled the inquiry into the massacre of Glencoe in which King William was exonerated, and received the title of Marquess in 1701.

Annandale allied himself with the dukes of Argyll and Queensberry. In 1705, he was appointed joint Secretary of State in Scotland. His administration soon failed and he was dismissed from his post. Angered by this, he joined the opposition and spoke out against the union.

After 1707, he sat as one of the 16 Scottish peers in the House of Lords. In later years, he travelled in Europe and defended areas of south-west Scotland against the Jacobites. He died in Bath and was buried in the family kirkyard in Dumfriesshire.

James Douglas, 4th Duke of Hamilton, politician (1658-1712)

James Douglas was born in Hamilton Palace. He served James VII as Commander of a regiment of horse. When William came to the throne, Douglas was sent to the Tower of London for his Jacobite sympathies. He inherited the family title and became 4th Duke of Hamilton in 1698.

He entered the Scottish Parliament in 1700. The Duke of Hamilton led the opposition to the union in 1706 and spoke against every article of the treaty. After the Act was passed, he moved to London and sat in the House of Lords as one of the 16 elected Scottish peers. He never returned to Scotland again. The Duke was killed in a duel and was buried in Hamilton parish church.



James Douglas, 4th Duke of Hamilton, 1658-1712, by an unknown artist after Sir Godfrey Kneller. Copyright: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, reference PG 840

George Lockhart of Carnwath, MP for Midlothian (1681-1731)

George Lockhart entered politics in 1702 when he was elected member for Midlothian. He was appointed as one of the Scottish commissioners to negotiate the treaty of union. Lockhart was a Jacobite and firm supporter of the Stuart claim to the throne. He opposed the union, sided with the Duke of Hamilton and spoke out against it in Parliament.

He stood for election to the British Parliament in 1708 and was elected MP for Midlothian. He retired to his estates in 1715 and took up writing. He died in Edinburgh and was buried at Carnwath.