

THE LAWLESS CLAN: THE ARMSTRONGS

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IN LIDDSDALE in Scotland, and in and around the "Debateable Land" that lay between the Kingdoms of Scotland and England, the most important clan in both numbers and notoriety was that of Armstrong. During the last century of their heyday in the Borders the Armstrongs became chief of all the raiders and despoilers, their specialty being the moonlight foray in great numbers. All were mounted on small active horses. It was over the Esk, across the Sark, or, farther east, "doon the Bailey" for them,—into the territory of the "auld enemy". For most of the 234 years of their supremacy they were uniformly lawless and turbulent in their home lands and tough, crafty, and redoubtable abroad. They were breakers of all truces between the sovereigns of Scotland and England, and in time came to be labelled officially as freebooters, robbers, murderers, and thieves. "The Thievis of Liddisdail" Maitland of Lethington called them in a poem by that name;¹ but they had their friends.

This clan certainly did not stem from the Picts, or from the Celtic Scots who came over from Ulster, or from the ancient Britons of Galloway. They must, therefore, have been Angles—the basic Lowland stock—and dwellers in the western part of the ancient Kingdom of Northumbria which once extended from the Humber to the Firth of Forth. Numerous place names prove their Anglican ancestry. Before 1376, persons bearing the name Armstrong were known around Edinburgh and in Berwick-on-Tweed, and from 1235 to 1342 in Cumberland, where the clan was mainly seated. It grew in numbers. Not until 1376 does one find the chief of the clan, Alexander Armystrand, located at Mangerton in Liddesdale. There the Lairds of Mangerton remained until 1610 under an ancient grant from an early Earl of Douglas, one of the Lords of Liddesdale.

The Armstrong country in Scotland may be roughly defined as a triangular area based for the most part on the river Liddel with its apex high up on the Tarras Water,² with the north-east angle above Kershopfoot and the south-west angle on Solway Firth in Annandale. In time the Armstrongs

occupied the greater part of Liddesdale, and of the Debateable Land, and they were settled also in Eskdale, Ewesdale, Wauchopedale, and even in Annandale. Many of the name remained in northern Cumberland north of the Leven (now the river Line), the ancient land of the clan, in what is now part of England. The boundary between England and Scotland was not fixed until 1552, and a little thing like a boundary line was never of much importance to the Armstrongs. A raid into Cumberland, which would get the armed reivers into the broad lands of the Dacres and of Lord Howard, was merely a raid into old clan territory. The wild clansmen knew their ways through the lands of their fathers. Their historian, R. Bruce Armstrong, sets the picture:

Mounted on their light and active steeds, and accoutred after the Border fashion they were accustomed to cross the frontier at night in considerable numbers, and avoiding the most dangerous localities by many bypaths, to conceal themselves and refresh their horses in the hollows or most sheltered places during the day. In the dead of night they approached the place of their destination and seizing on the booty they were in search of, endeavoured, by following the most circuitous and trackless ways, to reach their homes in safety. Those chieftains who could in the darkest nights or thickest mists guide their followers through the wastes, windings and precipices, were held by them in the highest repute.³

There are two or three theories as to how these people got the surname, Armstrong. James Telfer, a school teacher of Saughtree and an interesting writer of over a century ago, held that the original name was Fortinbras—strong-in-arm,—which was borne by a follower of William the Conqueror who, “considering his service ill rewarded . . . fled from the vengeance of that invader, and is said to have settled in the Border district of Mangerton, becoming the chief of the Armstrong clan”, a name which the clansmen assumed. Telfer prepared a genealogical tree showing a line of legitimate descent of Fortinbras to Mangerton from 787 to 1832. A recent writer on Liddesdale, John Byers, calls Telfer “an undoubted authority”.⁴

Another theory is that the ancient name of the clan was Fairbairn. The story goes that an early Scottish King, having had his horse killed under him in battle, was aided by one Fairbairn, an armour-bearer of the King, who immediately remounted the King on his own horse. For this assistance the King gave him considerable grants of lands in the Borders, and because of the effortless way in which Fairbairn had picked up the monarch, his royal master gave him the name Armstrong. This theory has to support it the fact that the Fairbairns have long been known as a sept of the clan and that an early grant

of arms to the chief of clan shows in the crest "an armed hand and arm, in the hand a leg and foot in armour, couped at the thigh, all proper".

Finally, one turns again to R. Bruce Armstrong, who writes simply that "the name . . . was no doubt conferred at a remote period on some person who had been endowed with unusual strength, or to commemorate some noted act of daring".⁵

There were other clans in Liddesdale between 1376 and 1610. A clan of equal importance, although perhaps not so numerous, was that of Elliot, a name of many spellings. The early Chief of the clan was of Redheuch, and arms granted were to "Elwat of Reidheuch". The Elliot clan has no septs, but the Nicksons and Olivers usually adhered to it. There is no record of any feud between the Armstrongs and the Elliots, and in many major forays the two most powerful clans of the dale acted in concert.

The Armstrongs had many adherents. One of these clans was that of Crosar, later Crozier (meaning cross-bearer or bearer of a bishop's crook or pastoral staff). This clan, which was settled in Upper Liddesdale from 1376 on, had no known chief, and Mangerton "answered" for it to the Wardens of the West Marche. The Croziers are a sept of the Armstrongs and were ever with them as "doers of evil".

Another Liddesdale clan was that of the Nicksons (Nixons), most of whom lived in the Bewcastle area south of the modern border line, with some of them in Upper Liddesdale with or near the Elliots. They had no known chief. Mangerton answered also for them to the Lords of Liddesdale and to the Wardens of the West Marche. Always active in clan forays deep into Cumberland, they too became a sept of the clan Armstrong.

Other adherents of the clan were, as occasion arose, the Rutledges (anciently "Reddleche"). One division of this clan lived at "Whisgills", in Liddesdale along the Tinnes Burn, the dividing line between the shires of Roxburgh and Dumfries, in the midst of the Armstrong lands. The remainder of them lived at Kershopfoot, along the Bailey burn (a slow moving, red-coloured stream from which they surely took their name), and along the banks of the Leven (Line) in Cumberland. These also were a "broken" clan—that is, one that had no chief. A Report to the Privy Council of June 12, 1543, signed by the Duke of Suffolk, declared Mangerton, the "Chief of the Arme-stranges", to be the "Chief of the Rowteleages and of the Nycsones".⁶ Mangerton, on several occasions, filed claims for them for damages done by English

raiders into Liddesdale. The Rutledges are also considered a sept of the Armstrongs.

There were also the Beatons (who are reported to have had a clan chief in 1596 residing at Scoir), the Littles (another clan with a chief of their own, the laird of Meikledale), the Glendinnings, the Irvings (a branch of the large Ayshire clan of Irvine), some Thomsons of Eskdale, Bells, Carlyles, Wighams, Henricsons (Hendersons), and Moffats, all of whom in the region were classed by the authorities as "adherents".⁷ Nearly all these clans adopted and were granted amorial bearings, an official act which tends to prove that their marauding practices, although condemned by their rulers, were not regarded by them as base or ignoble.

R. Bruce Armstrong states that "at one time, 1528, the Armstrongs with all their adherents numbered upward of 3,000 horsemen".⁸ Sir Herbert Maxwell called the Armstrong-Elliot force of Border reivers "the very best and hardiest light horsemen in Western Europe". This was the marauding force that confronted Lord Dacre and the other English Wardens of the West Marche throughout that century. The activities of no other Border clan are so much referred to in state documents. No other clan gave the Scottish sovereigns, James IV, James V, Mary, and James VI, so much concern as did the Armstrongs. All of Rob Roy's exploits and the unprovoked attack of the Macgregors and the MacFarlanes on the Coloquhouns, for which the clan Macgregor was proscribed, were small indeed compared with the centuries of depredations of the Armstrongs. They not only raided the English in times of peace and of war but also made forays into nearby territory in Scotland, principally incursions against the Johnstons, with whom they were long in feud, but also into Teviotdale and farther afield. Simon Armstrong, senior cadet and chieftain of the Whithaugh branch of the clan, once confessed to burning thirty churches and chapels in Scotland.

For a long time after the year 1376 there was relative quiet along the banks of the Liddel, in an area where there was no boundary between England and Scotland. Carlisle had been a royal burgh of David I, King of Scotland, and the Scots claimed land deep into Cumberland. The English, on the other hand, were always pushing their claims for a boundary high into the northern hills, so that a large no-man's land called The Debateable Land came into being. The clan was based on the family and this land, wherein no sovereign could make an effective grant to a favourite lord, became a veritable breeding place of clans. The Mangertons grew rapidly in numbers, and by the begin-

ning of the sixteenth century the Armstrongs, compelled to seize on any waste lands in their neighbourhood, occupied the greater part of The Debateable Land and spread into Eskdale, Ewesdale, Wauchopedale, and Annandale.

The united clansmen of all Liddesdale first showed their strength in November, 1493, by invading Northumberland in the interest of the impostor, Peter Warbeck, who wanted to be King of England. But they were dispersed. Who had set them in motion can only be guessed at, but since in those times either a Douglas or a Hepburn was overlord of Liddesdale one can draw one's own conclusions.

Two years later there is a record of eighty-four malefactors having raided the estate of Quitmuir in Cumberland. These were clansmen from along the Leven, including some Turnbells, Routlisches, and Symsones (Simpsons). The foray netted them one hundred cows and oxen. Their sureties were fined £10 Scots from each of the reivers.

Although the raids into England were more frequent as population increased and available land became more scarce, the occasional raids out of England into Liddesdale and The Debateable Land were the more devastating. The one was for horses, sheep, and cattle, the other by way of revenge and having for its object not only the retrieving of animals but the burning of dwellings and destruction of crops. This was so all along the Border and in Scotland generally, but particularly so in The Debateable Land. One instance was the punitive invasion sent by Lord Dacre in 1513 when he reported first having taken and brought away four hundred head of cattle, three hundred sheep, some horses, and "verey miche insight" (very much furniture). Of later expeditions under him and also under his brother, Sir Christopher Dacre, it was reported that "for oone cattel taken by the Scotts, we have takyn, won, and brought away out of Scotland cth; and for oone shape ccth of a surity". It was also related that Sir Christopher's force had burned every township of the Western Marche—thirty-four of them and "noo man dwelling in any of them in this daye".

But the West Marche in the following decade remained in a disturbed state. In 1525 Henry VIII complained of the borderers of both countries being accustomed to ride in great numbers with displayed banners and committing great robberies and depredations, and the Earl of Angus, at the King's request, swooped down on the "Armestrangges", capturing "the gretteste and Mooste chief capitayns, Sym the Lorde and Davy the Lady" (who were the laird of Whithaugh, chieftain, and his brother David Armstrong). Angus carried away

six hundred cattle, three thousand sheep, five hundred goats, and many horses. But all this only left a void that King Henry's subjects would later have to fill.

Angus made six punitive raids into Liddesdale. He burned and destroyed crops, leaving famine, destitution, and misery in his wake, and increasing the wrath and wretchedness of the people. Not only did the governments harass and harry the dalesmen; the Church also turned its artillery on them. Gavin Dunbar, a great friend of the Earl of Angus, was then Archbishop of Glasgow. In 1525 he placed the doom of excommunication upon the Armstrongs in his "Monition of Cursing."⁹ This published document, long, sweeping, and bitter, perhaps the most severe of its kind on record, was calculated to strike terror into the stubborn hearts of the freebooters. But it failed to intimidate them. They had to live.

Around these years appeared on the scene an Armstrong to whose name there still clings the same kind of affectionate association as endears that of Robin Hood to Englishmen. Johnny Armstrong's story has been romantically and pathetically woven into the ballad history of the time.

John Armstrong was a brother of the laird of Mangerton, the chief. He had established himself on the right bank of the Esk in Eskdale a little below Langholm on a deed of manrent from Lord Maxwell, the head of the Maxwell clan. He built himself a stronghold called "Gilnockie", said to have been on a point of land just below the present bridge at that place, and he built nearby the Hollows Tower, still standing and in fair repair. Johnny headed the Eskdale branch of his clan which lived around the river Esk, and grew in prosperity.

Lord Dacre with an English army of 2000 men failed to take Gilnockie Tower and was driven back. The Armstrongs retaliated by burning Netherby Hall (seat of the Graemes) on the English side.

Johnny Armstrong, who was said to be the most notorious marauder of his day, had devised a new form of revenue, that of blackmail. It is said that a large part not only of Cumberland but of Northumberland was under his sway. Payments to him by landowners ensured the safety of their livestock, their crops, and their barns, for Johnny had a way even with crops. On returning from a despoiling expedition he made his famous address to a haystack: "Gin yuh had four legs under yuh, you'd no stand there for lang".

But the sad day of reckoning came. In July, 1530, at a time when the English government was threatening war, young King James V came with a large force of between 8,000 and 12,000 men to the West Borders. The King

began by imprisoning Lords Bothwell, Maxwell, and Home, Walter Scott of Buccleuch, and other border lairds, because they had "winked at the willanies" of the dalesmen. On the King's arrival in Teviotdale it is said that there was put forth a royal proclamation that the lives of such clansmen who would submit to the King's will should be spared.

Gilnockie rode into the King's camp to make obeisance accompanied by his habitual following of twenty-four well mounted men "verrie richlie apparaelled" and some others. He came fearlessly before the King, who pointed to Johnny and to his well-appointed retainers and exclaimed angrily, "What wants yon knave that a King should have?" Gilnockie protested that he had never hurt the King's subjects and had harmed Englishmen only. He vowed to serve the King with his twenty-four men at arms anywhere and to bring him any Englishman, alive or dead, within a given day.

But the King showed no mercy. There was no trial, and according to Sir Herbert Maxwell, "Gilnockie and thirty-one others were hanged on trees at Carlinrig chapel, about ten miles from Hawick on the Langholm road". A few escaped to Gilnockie tower to tell the tale. Sir Herbert laments, "No better means than the gallows could be devised for the disposal of Johnnie Armstrong of Gilnockie and his moss-troopers, the hardiest cavalry in Europe".¹⁰

For a while the peace of desolation reigned in the Debateable Land and in Liddesdale. Crops were planted, dwellings were erected and thatched, and life went on. In 1552 the Border line was established. But in time reiving began again.

When Mary, Queen of Scots, was on her throne and Elizabeth I was Queen of England, the time-honoured complaints came in, and in 1561 and again in 1569 the Regent, the Earl of Moray, invaded the Borders. Home, Cessford (Ker), Buccleuch, and Ferniehirst (Ker) were in favour with the Scottish government, and the latter two were appointed to burn and destroy all of Liddesdale. Moray stayed one night at Mangerton Tower and in the morning caused the tower to be blown up. Then he went to Whithaugh, home of the senior chieftain and blew it up also.

But these strongholds were rebuilt after a fashion, and it was not long before there were those who could again say, in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, "I have shaken a spear in the Debateable land and shouted the slogan of the Elliots",—"wha daur meddle wi me'."

In 1584 something took place that had never happened before. There

is on record a letter from Lord Scroope, the English Warden, to Walsingham that contains the following reference to the Laird of Mangerton:

This man is the chief and principal of his surname and also the special evildoer and procurer of the spoils in this March. . . . His taking is greatly wondered at here, for it was never heard of that a laird of Mangerton was taken in his own house either in peace or war without the hurt or loss of a man. Now I have him, I trust it will be to good effect and keep the others quiet.¹¹

But this was not the end of the redoubtable Chief, whose motto was *invictus maneo* (I remain unvanquished).

In 1596 Lord Scroope, the English Warden, sent 2,000 men, most of them Queen's soldiers, into Liddesdale. They burned houses and carried away goods. One reads in a contemporary report that "the men they apprehended and coupled two and two, likewise dogs, and the women and children three or four score stripped of their clothes and sarks leaving them naked in that sort exposed to the injuries of time and weather by which nine or ten infants perished."¹²

In 1597 King James VI made a vigorous personal effort to put down the normal brigandage of the Border. He held a Court at Dumfries. In four weeks "he hangit fourteen or fifteen limmers and notorious thieves"¹³ and took thirty-six hostages from the Armstrongs, Johnstons, Bells, Batesons, Carlyles, and Irvings, who were charged the modest sum of 13s. 4d. a week for their keep, and were to be hanged if any further outrages took place. This drastic action quieted things for a while, but raids by the Border clans in this area took place even after James VI became also King of England in 1603.

But to a lighter story. In 1594, Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch had been appointed keeper of Liddesdale—no sinecure, seeing that it involved keeping in order the turbulent dalesmen. Among these, Willie Armstrong of Kinmont, better known as "Kinmont Willie"¹⁴, was one of the boldest and most dreaded. Willie had seven stark sons, who commanded a following of 300 horses, and were incessantly raiding over the English border. On a day of truce in 1596, a warden court was held at Dayholm of Kershope. Willie Armstrong attended in the train of Buccleuch, and after the meeting had dispersed was riding quietly home along the banks of the Liddel with three or four attendants—for, despite the long score against him for his misdeeds, he considered himself safe from arrest during the truce—when a party of Englishmen captured him and took him to the prison at Carlisle. Buccleuch, in great anger at the violation

of Border laws, applied to Lord Scroope, the English Warden, for redress. Scroope declared that Willie was such a great malefactor that he could not be released without express commands from Queen Elizabeth. King James VI then made application through his ambassador, but without result. Willie was too good a prize to be let slip.

Buccleuch resolved on peremptory action. His spies measured Carlisle's prison walls. He assembled a chosen band, including Willie's seven sons, the Chief of the Elliots (Elliot of Stobs), and Scott of Harden, eighty horsemen in all.

At night they swam the Esk and the Eden, heavy waters, and arrived two hours before daybreak. The band broke through the wall near a postern gate, Buccleuch being among the first to enter. The gate was opened and that part of the castle secured. Diversionary noises with trumpets and shouts were made by the main body between castle and town. Lord Scroope thought that the castle was in possession of five hundred Scots.

The inside party got to Kinmont Willie's cell, got him and his heavy irons, and started homeward. An English force contested their re-crossing of the Eden, which had to be swum a second time, and two hours after sunrise Willie of Kinmont was again on Scottish soil. At a roadside cottage standing between Longtown and Langholm a blacksmith was found to knock off Willie's fetters, his "cumbrous spurs". After this exploit fire flew between the neighbouring sovereigns, although not all that happened is part of the Armstrong story, and Buccleuch had gained a new title, "the bold Buccleuch".

The nemesis of the Armstrongs and their adherents was drawing near. In 1603, on the death of Queen Elizabeth, James VI became James I of the United Kingdom, and there could no longer be any playing of the English Court against the Court of Scotland. James set out on a policy of extermination and scattering of the clansmen, by one means or another. In Andrew Lang's tale of Tam Armstrong, for example, poor Tam was said to be a "proper young man",¹⁵ against whom there was no evidence at all. But he came from a bad clan, and he was suspected of knowing too much about the stealing of a horse. The Lords, at the trial, ordered him to be hanged, "merely", says Lang, "*pour encourager les autres*". A horse had been stolen, its owner went to Peebles to testify that Tam was innocent, yet the gallows got him. In April 1606 we find some forty proper men hanged—surely the worst use to make of them; and about fifteen others, including a bastard of Kinmont Willie, were hanged in November."

By 1609 the Borders were said to be tranquil. In the following year the chief fled the country. Here, briefly, is the reason, quoted from the charge against him:

In January 1610 Archibald Armstrong of Mangerton, accompanied by twenty-four persons "all bodin in feir of weir, with swordis, gantillatis, plait slevis and utheris wappinis and with jackis, lances, haobutis and pistolletis" went to the lands of Gretna and Holme, where certain stocks of corn were standing, and carried 240 "thravis" of the said corn.

To answer for this conduct, Mangerton was ordered to appear before the Council on March 19; he failed to do so, and was consequently denounced as a rebel and was "put to the horn".¹⁶

Mangerton fled—most probably over the Border to the highlands of Bewcastle where he would find friends and fellow clansmen. There is no record that he was heard of again. Who was his heir-at-law, or who by the Scottish law of arms is entitled to the Arms of Chief of the Armstrongs¹⁷, does not seem to be known to anybody, but James Telfer, the erudite teacher, traced the line of the chief down to 1832. He must have then known the whereabouts of the head of the clan. The clansmen scattered, some—relatively few—to other parts of Scotland, most of them to Cumberland, where their descendants today are fairly numerous, and some in time to the Plantations of Ulster, to which place James's policy of extradition sent many of the clansmen and their families. Clan Armstrong today is far flung and persons of that name and of the septs of the clan are found throughout the English-speaking world and in every walk of life.

As for the lands of the Chiefs, which they had held for upwards of two and one-half centuries, Francis Scott, a natural son of the first Earl of Buccleuch, was enfeoffed of them on September 7, 1629, "along with the castle, tower and fortalice thereof as well as the lands of Flott, Abbotshaws, Shortbutholm and Thorlieshope in the Lordship of Liddesdale".¹⁸ The chieftains of Whithaugh, Harlaw, Kirkandrews, Kinmont, Gilnockie, Langholm, and other places were also stripped of their lands, and they and their heirs disappeared. "Many", says Sir William Fraser, "were mercilessly hanged and punished with death by pit and gallows on the very spot at which they were apprehended". The Buccleuchs, noted for their faculty of usually guessing right in the troubled history of Scotland, were on their upward march to the Dukedom. Today, substantially all of the Armstrong lands are part of the

vast domain of 240,000 acres of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry. According to John Byers, not one of the name of Armstrong now owns a rood of land in all the area from Copshaw Holm to Sark, and from Kershope to Erkinholm, so complete has been their liquidation.¹⁹

There is one more exploit sufficiently remarkable to be set down here. William Armstrong, called "Christie's Will", a lineal descendant of Johnnie Armstrong, occupied the old tower of Gilnockie. He had got himself into trouble by stealing two tethers (halters) that had two colts attached to them, and was in prison at Jedburgh. The Earl of Traquair, Lord High Treasurer, who knew Christie's Will and liked him and his wit, saw him in the prison, interceded for him, and had him set free. Some time afterwards, in the reign of Charles I, Lord Traquair had an important lawsuit being heard, on appeal, in the Court of Session. How it would go depended on the casting vote of the presiding Judge, Sir Alexander Gibson, Lord Durie. His opinion was unfavourable to Traquair, and the point was therefore to keep this judge out of the way when the issue fell to be decided. In this strait the Earl had recourse to Christie's Will, who agreed to act out of gratitude for what the Earl had done for him. Will found that the learned Judge habitually took the air by riding on horseback, unaccompanied, on the sands of Leith. Waiting for his opportunity, Will ventured to accost the president and engage him in conversation. His address and language were so amusing that he decoyed the Judge into an unfrequented spot near the beach and, riding suddenly up to him, pulled him from his horse, muffled him in a large cloak, and rode off with the luckless Judge trussed up behind him. Going by paths known only to reivers of old, Christie's Will took his burden to an old castle in Annandale, called the Tower of Graham, near Moffatt, and safely deposited the Judge in the dungeon, where he remained for over three months, well fed through an aperture in the wall, but in solitary confinement. The Judge's horse had been found, his friends went into mourning, and a successor was appointed to the Bench. The lawsuit was decided in favour of Lord Traquair, and Will was directed to set the Judge free. He did this by trussing up the Judge as before, never speaking a word, conveying him on horseback to the exact spot on the sands of Leith and carefully placing him down in the place where he had been apprehended over three months earlier. Later the Judge appeared in his astonished Court to reclaim his office and honours. It is said that for a while he believed that he had been spirited away by witchcraft.

True enough, the Armstrongs and their adherents were a lawless lot, and

to the Scottish governments, bent on establishing law and order, a longtime nuisance. Perhaps the leaders of the clansmen even deserved excommunication, for they were undoubtedly at times the cause, or partly the cause, of trouble between England and Scotland. But to excommunicate at any time many men and their families, as the Archbishop of Glasgow did, was a mistake of a high order. It is hardly to be wondered at that eighty churches and chapels were burned in a short period by a band of Armstrongs. If the first function of government is to preserve law and order, there never was any reason for the rulers of Scotland to be blind to a secondary tenet of good government, namely, to care for the safety and welfare of all the people.

Liddesdale had not the capacity to feed its growing numbers of people, and the Debateable Land, an overcrowded region of desperate people, could do no better. Gathered there were the hardy, restless, adventurous men from the surrounding areas in an area that was mostly hilly, but with some quite fertile straths and braes at a time when no emigration was possible. The Armstrong Chief and his Chieftains furnished the leadership. On the principle that "the mousie maun live", all had to supplement what they could grow and raise by reiving—most of which was by way of blue bonnets over the Border.

Scottish governments were never at a loss to find vast tracts of lands for favourite lords, but in the period in question there does not seem to have been an acre granted to the inhabitants of those regions after the grant to Manger-ton by an Earl Douglas in 1376. That human material was there is attested by the success and distinction achieved in later years and happier lands by many of the descendants of families who were dwellers in the Debateable Land.

NOTES

1. Sir Walter Scott, *Poetical Works* (1821), Vol. I, Appendix III, p. clv.
2. "The Clans of Liddesdale, etc., when attacked by an overwhelming force, . . . retired to Tarris Moss, a morass of considerable extent and depth, in the centre of which some firm ground was to be found, the passes to which were only known to themselves. To this isolated spot they removed their families, cattle and moveable property, and were in comparative safety, unless betrayed by some treacherous borderer". Tarras water or stream runs into the Esk below Langholm.
 "In 1598 the Armstrong clan was brought to subjection after the passes leading to their fastness had been pointed out to the English warden and the approaches by his direction occupied" (*Carey's Memoirs*, p. 151).
3. Robert Bruce Armstrong, *History of Liddesdale, Eskdale . . . and the Debateable Land* (1883), Part I, p. 66.

4. James Telfer, "A Short Historical Notice of the Clans of the Armstrongs", *The Border Magazine*, May, 1832. See also John Byers, *Liddesdale, Historical and Descriptive* (1952), p. 116.
5. Armstrong, p. 175.
6. *The Hamilton Papers*, Vol. I, p. 543. See also Armstrong, p. 180. "Sir Christopher Dacre entered the Debateable land on the night of 25th of May 1528. This expedition, which was principally against the Routleges, called 'the Qwyskes' (from Whisgills) met with but little success, as they had retired, with their goods, to the shealings in the head of Terres, which was the uttermost part of the Debateable ground. Dacre failed to overtake them on account of the great strength of the woods and mosses but he succeeded in securing 80 nolt, 100 sheep and 40 goats" (Armstrong, p. 250).
"This was at Whisgills on the Tinnes burn formerly occupied by a branch of the Armstrongs and in the 18th century by one Thomas Murray, whose daughter Jean was born on the Whisgills farm. She was the grandmother of Bonar Law, onetime Prime Minister of Great Britain" (Byers, p. 126).
7. Armstrong, p. 178.
8. Sir Herbert Maxwell, *History of Dumfries and Galloway*, p. 161.
9. See Maxwell, p. 186, where the "monition of cursing" is set out in full.
10. *Wars of Scotland*, Vol. II, p. 246. See "The Ballad of Johnnie Armstrong" in Scott, *Poetical Works*, Vol. I, p. 107.
11. *Calendar of Border Papers*, Vol. II, No. 515, p. 259.
12. *Ibid.* Also see Byers, p. 15.
13. Andrew Lang, *History of Scotland*, Vol. II, p. 523.
14. Maxwell, p. 221.
15. Lang, Vol. II, p. 524.
16. Byers, p. 117, and Armstrong, p. 90.
17. The Ancient Arms awarded Mangerton were to Armstrang of Maingerton in King's and Nobilities Arms, pictured in a colour plate in Armstrong, p. 174. There was another coat of arms of Mangerton described in the shield as "Dexter, a chevron between 3 losenges, sinister or sword." See *Stoddard's Arms*, Vol. I, plate 788 and Vol. II, p. 254.
18. Byers, p. 119.
19. Byers, pp. 118, 147.