



THE COUNTESS OF BUCHAN – RAILWAY POSTER BY DORIS ZINKEISEN

REFERENCE: BA/W/6 | SUGGESTED AGE GROUPS: KS2, KS3, KS4, LIFELONG LEARNERS | TOPIC AREAS:
CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

THE COUNTESS OF BUCHAN

Although this is a railway poster from the 1930s, it shows the punishment of Isabella, Countess of Buchan, in the 1300s. She was sentenced by Edward I (“The Hammer of the Scots”) to be imprisoned at Berwick Castle for her part in the coronation of Robert Bruce as King of Scotland in 1306.

According to tradition, the Scottish king had to have the head of the

Macduff family (or clan) at his coronation. The actual head of the clan, the Duke of Fife, was in England and unable to attend; Isabella was his sister and therefore the next best thing. Although she arrived the day after the coronation, the role of a Macduff was so important that the ceremony was re-staged so that she could take part.

Edward I captured Isabella later that year and was so enraged that she had helped to crown his enemy that he sentenced her to imprisonment in a cage at Berwick Castle. There are many stories about the cage; some say that it was in the shape of a cross and some in the shape of a crown. It is most likely that the “cage” was a construction in the castle wall so that Isabella’s prison cell was open to view. Edward I intended that she was to be a spectacle to be looked at and a warning to anyone else who might consider helping the king’s enemies. (See links below for more about Isabella.)





MEDIEVAL RECORDS

There are only a few records from the Middle Ages (before 1500) in county archives. The oldest record at Northumberland Archives dates from 1156: <https://northumberlandarchives.com/exhibitions/treasures/14.html>. Like the other medieval documents at Northumberland Archives, it is a charter. Charters recorded the sale and exchange of land or other types of property. They don't tend to contain evidence about crime and punishment.

The National Archives hold the official archives of the English and Welsh governments. They preserve records from the Domesday Book (1086) <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday/> to the present day.

One of the types of records that they hold from the Middle Ages are "Ancient Petitions". The petitions were documents that were sent to the king asking for his help. They might be from individual people or from a group, even a whole county. The petitions fall into two categories: asking the king for a favour or asking the king for justice. In this second category, people or groups looked to the king as the highest judge in the country. If they weren't happy with the decision of local courts or if local law officers (such as sheriffs) were not doing their job properly, they appealed to the king. The petitions are described in a lot of detail and can be searched by keyword – why not try a place in Northumberland or even a family name? The National Archives catalogue website, page for Ancient Petitions: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C13526>

OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

ISABELLA, COUNTESS OF BUCHAN

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography website, page for Countess of Buchan (subscription site):

<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-54144>

Saltire Society website, page about Countess of Buchan: <https://www.saltiresociety.org.uk/awards/outstanding-women/outstanding-women-of-scotland-community/2015-celebration/isabella-mcduff/>

Berwick Times blog, page about Countess of Buchan: <https://berwicktimelines.tumblr.com/post/44859470048/countess-of-buchan-a-tale-for-international>

Education Scotland website (via Way Back Machine), page about Countess of Buchan:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20161121201558/http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scotlandshistory/warsofindependence/isobeloffife/index.asp>



DORIS ZINKEISEN

National Portrait Gallery website, page for Doris Zinkeisen: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp10367/doris-clare-zinkeisen>

Red Cross website, blog about Doris Zinkeisen: <https://blogs.redcross.org.uk/world-war-two/2019/04/doris-zinkeisen-frontline-artist-who-painted-the-liberation-of-bergen-belsen-concentration-camp/>

LEARNING ACTIVITIES – COUNTESS OF BUCHAN

TOPIC: MEDIEVAL CRIME AND PUNISHMENT
SUBJECT AREAS: HISTORY; ART; DESIGN TECHNOLOGY



Background	Activity	Resources
<p>The Countess of Buchan was sentenced to imprisonment at Berwick Castle by Edward I for her role in crowning Robert Bruce as King of Scotland in 1306.</p>	<p>See: Who was the Countess of Buchan?</p> <p>See: Who punished the Countess of Buchan?</p> <p>See: Why was the Countess of Buchan punished?</p> <p>See: How was the Countess of Buchan punished?</p> <hr/> <p>Think: Why would Edward I punish the Countess of Buchan in this way?</p> <p>Think: What effect would this type of punishment have on others?</p> <hr/> <p>Do: In groups, debate the punishment of the Countess of Buchan. Did she commit a crime? Should she have been punished? Should she have been punished in this way?</p> <p>Do: Can you find any other evidence of people being imprisoned in cages in England or Scotland up to the Seventeenth Century?</p>	<p>https://berwicktimelines.tumblr.com/post/44859470048/countess-of-buchan-a-tale-for-international</p> <p>https://web.archive.org/web/20161121201558/http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scotlandshistory/warsofindependence/isobeloffife/index.asp</p> <p>https://www.saltiresociety.org.uk/awards/outstanding-women/outstanding-women-of-scotland-community/2015-celebration/isabella-mcduff/</p>
<p>The Countess of Buchan was imprisoned in a “cage” at Berwick Castle for four years. There are different stories about the shape of</p>	<p>See: How is the Countess of Buchan imprisoned in the poster?</p> <p>See: What other types of cages do stories say the Countess of Buchan might have been imprisoned in?</p>	

<p>the “cage” and the location of the cage in the castle.</p>	<p>Think: What types of materials might have been used to make the cage? Write a shopping list of the materials needed to make a cage.</p> <p>Think: Why might people suggest that the Countess of Buchan wasn’t imprisoned in a cage like the one shown in the poster?</p> <p>Do: Design a cage that could be used to hold a prisoner. Think about the materials needed, where it would be located in a castle, how it would be suspended, and how it would hold the weight of the prisoner.</p> <p>Do: Create a cage based on the design.</p> <p>Do: Based on what you have learned about the Countess of Buchan’s story, discuss where you think her cage was most likely located. What would be the benefit of this location compared to other potential locations?</p>	
<p>Although the events shown in the poster took place in the 1300s, the Countess of Buchan Railway Poster was created in the 1930s. There are few archive records from the Middle Ages.</p>	<p>See: What is the earliest record held by Northumberland Archives?</p> <p>See: What is the earliest record held by the National Archives?</p> <p>See: When did the British government begin keeping records and what types of records were they?</p> <p>See: When do the first written history records date from?</p> <p>See: What are the Ancient Petitions?</p> <p>Think: Why is it important to keep records?</p> <p>Think: Why is written evidence important to History?</p> <p>Think: What other ways was history recorded before written records were made?</p>	<p>https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/big-history-project/agriculture-civilization/first-cities-appear/a/recordkeeping-and-history</p> <p>https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/cultural-collections/archives/history-of-record-keeping/</p> <p>https://northumberlandarchives.com/exhibitions/treasures/14.html</p>



	<p>Think: What might have prevented people from making written records?</p>	<p>https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday/</p>
	<p>Do: Use the National Archives Ancient Petitions catalogue. What is the earliest record you can find?</p>	
	<p>Do: Use the National Archives Ancient Petitions catalogue. What reasons did people petition the king for?</p>	<p>https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C13526</p>
	<p>Do: Use the National Archives Ancient Petitions catalogue. What can you learn about justice and injustice?</p>	