

Greatness thwarted

## **Maurice Murray**

**d.1346**

Maurice emerged during the Second War of Independence of the 1330s–50s, supporting the child king David II against the forces of Edward Balliol and his English backers.

He was among the leaders in the successful siege of Perth in 1339 and became a favourite of David II when he returned from exile in France.

Offices and titles mounted up, like the guardianship of the great royal castle at Stirling.

Indeed the king valued Maurice as an ally to help check the growing authority of the mighty Robert the Steward.

The two were at loggerheads in court power struggles, especially after Murray was granted the earldom of Strathearn in 1343, where the Steward had high ambitions as Lord of Methven.

The earl's course seemed set – as one of David's inner circle of advisors, he would be among the most powerful men in the land. .

But political power in the Middle Ages also demanded the willingness to take personal risk in warfare.

Maurice was among the many who fell at the battle of Neville's Cross in 1346. David was captured, the Steward fled the field, and by 1357 he had secured Strathearn, later becoming Robert II, the first Stewart king.

- Read the Oxford DNB biography here: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/dnb/54300.html>.