

# Reivers - Hobbie Noble of the Crew in Bewcastle

## Notable English Reiver is Befriended by a Scottish Border Clan

Hobbie Noble of the Crew was an English Border Reiver who, in fear of his life after many raids against his own countrymen, was befriended by the Armstrongs of Liddesdale

On the English Scottish Border in the reiving times, national identity was often dismissed should joining forces result in a lucrative pay-off for the clans or individuals involved. The story of Hobbie Noble of the Crew, an English Reiver of renown, is one such example of Scots and English coming together. He would aid the Armstrongs of Liddesdale, a Scottish Border clan in their hour of need, yet be eventually betrayed by one of their own.

### Hobbie Flees to the Scottish Borders

Hobbie was from Bewcastle in Cumbria, his home being Crew Castle of which little remains today. He spent many years raiding in Tynedale (Northumberland) and even parts of Cumbria. It would seem that allegiance to his countrymen was of little concern to a man bent on raiding wherever the opportunity presented itself. Eventually his own people disowned him as they were tired of the retribution exacted on them by the clans he had raided. He fled to Liddesdale in the Scottish Borders where he was well received by the Laird of Mangerton, head of the Armstrongs. Anyone on the run from the law, irrespective of nationality, was welcomed by the Armstrongs of Liddesdale.

### Hobbie is True to his Scottish Hosts

When Jock Armstrong of the 'Side', a stalwart of the Scottish clan was captured and thrown into gaol in Newcastle to await a fate which would inevitably see him dangle at the end of a rope, Hobbie was a major force in planning and achieving his rescue. He was lauded by the Armstrongs of Mangerton for the sterling part he played in the rescue of Jock but there were other Armstrongs within Liddesdale who resented the popularity of the Englishman.



The Remains of Mangerton Tower.

### Hobbie is asked to lead a raid into England by the Armstrongs of the Mains

Sim Armstrong of the Mains had grown to hate the great English Reiver whilst the English Warden was bent on wresting Hobbie from the Scottish Border lands and bringing him to account for his crimes in England. Sim and the Warden made a deal whereby, in return for English gold, Sim would betray Hobbie into the Warden's hands. Accordingly, on the pretext that Hobbie knew the English ground better than he, Sim persuaded Hobbie to lead a raid south of the Border.

### **Hobbie is betrayed by Sim of the Mains**

Hobbie led the Armstrongs of the Mains into England but at the same time Sim Armstrong sent word to the English Keeper of Askerton that Hobbie was back on English ground. Hobbie and the Armstrongs had rested overnight before their final assault on their target. At the first light of the following day Hobbie woke to see the English confronting him. He was not unduly concerned because he knew the ground right well. His fertile mind instantly recognised the path in which he and the Armstrongs could evade any confrontation. But it was not to be. The Armstrongs at his back suddenly voiced their allegiance to the English and Hobbie was betrayed for gold.



Askerton Castle.

### **Hobbie is bound and taken to Carlisle**

Hobbie was bound with his own bow-string and led ignominiously to Carlisle and thrown in the dark damp cells of Carlisle castle. He was told he would hang next day unless he would confess to stealing Peter of Winfield's horse. He denied the allegation and prepared himself for death. Next morning he was hanged. There was a lot of sympathy in the watching crowd for the man who had risked life and limb to rescue Jock of the 'Side' from Newcastle.

### **English Gold was no benefit to Sim of the Mains**

When the Laird of Mangerton, head of the Armstrongs heard of Hobbie's fate and Sim's involvement, he was furious. He planned a great retribution against the Armstrongs of Mains even though they were a sect of the clan. Sim fled to England but within two months, thanks to intelligence furnished to the English by Mangerton, Sim of the Mains also dangled at the end of a rope on Harrabee Hill, the killing ground of Carlisle. No tears were wept by a crowd who were pleased that he had got his come-uppance for the betrayal of Hobbie.

### **Sources**

*The Border Ballads*

*The 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border'* by Sir Walter Scott.

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