1325  Probable date of the birth of Archibald Douglas, surnamed "the Grim". The place of his birth is unknown, as is the identity of his mother. What is known is that he was of illegitimate birth and that his father was James Douglas, also known to history as "the Black Douglas" or "the Good Lord James" (c 1286-1330).

1342  Archibald first mentioned in the Charter of Entail or Tailzie set up by his uncle Hugh Douglas "the Dull". This meant that if the legitimate male line of the Douglas family were to die out, Archibald could succeed to the estates and titles.

1356  Archibald served in France against the English armies of Edward, the "Black Prince". He was present when the French and their Scottish allies were defeated at the Battle of Poitiers, but managed to escape capture.

1357  Archibald Douglas returned to Scotland. While travelling in England under safe conduct, during a period of truce, later in the same year he was again captured, but again released.

1361-64  Archibald Douglas served as Governor of Edinburgh Castle at an annual fee of 200 merks. During this period he also served as Sheriff of Edinburgh and is spoken of as a "trusted familiar" of King David II (1329-1371).

1362  Archibald Douglas married Lady Joanna de Moray, widow of the last Moray Lord of Bothwell. This gave him control of the Lordship of Bothwell and other Moray Lands in other parts of Scotland.

It also marked the beginning of his rise to prominence as a great landowner and magnate of the Kingdom.

1364  Archibald Douglas became acting Warden of the West March, that area of the border comprising modern Dumfriesshire, Galloway and Wigtownshire.

1369  In this year, King David II granted to Archibald Douglas the eastern part of Galloway between the rivers Nith and Cree. It was probably in this year that he built or began the building of Threave Castle, which was to be his main stronghold for the next 30 years.

It was probably also in the later 1360's that he began to build the Banqueting Hall and the other parts of Bothwell Castle which are attributed to him.

It was also in the year 1369 that Archibald Douglas, at their own request, was appointed "auditor and executor" of the monks of Melrose Abbey, and given power to collect on their behalf, dues granted to them from various sources, by King Robert the Bruce.
This is the first indication we have of his cordial relations with the Church which were to continue throughout his life. It was also sometime between 1369-1372 that he made a special grant to the Abbey of Holywood in Dumfriesshire for the benefit of the souls of King Robert the Bruce (d. 1329); Edward Bruce, King Robert’s brother (killed in Ireland in 1318); King David II (d. 1371); and, most interesting of all since it gives us the only positive information we have about Archibald’s parentage “my father, Sir James Douglas” (killed in Spain in 1330).

This donation also provided for the foundation of a hospital at the monastery of Holywood for poor and infirm persons.

1369-1371. Archibald Douglas was sent on embassies to France, firstly by King David II, and then by his successor, King Robert II (1371-1390).

1372 Archibald Douglas bought the lands and rights of the Earldom of Wigtown from Thomas Fleming, grandson of the first Earl of Wigtown. He then became the first man since 1234 to rule all the lands of the old Lordship of Galloway.

He also became one of the most important noblemen in Scotland and guardian of Scotland’s “back door”

Galloway remained the main centre of Black Douglas power until 1455.

1377-78 Archibald Douglas joined with the Earls of Douglas, Carrick, Fife and Menteith, March, and Moray in an attack on the English-held zone in the South of Scotland—much of which area was, as a result, regained for Scotland.

It is from this period of his career that the by name of “the Grim” first appears, and it refers to his ferocity in battle. His favoured method of fighting was apparently to ride to the battlefield, then to go into battle wielding a large two-handed sword.

1384. Archibald “the Grim” seized and later destroyed Lochmaben Castle, the last of English-held Annandale retaken by the Scots.
Archibald “the Grim” and Robert, Earl of Fife and Menteith raided the North of England (June-July 1388)

In August 1388, Archibald’s cousin, James, Second Earl of Douglas was killed at the Battle of Otterburn in Northumberland.

In December 1388, Robert, Earl of Fife and Menteith became Guardian of the Kingdom of Scotland for his ailing father, King Robert II. In return for the support which he had received from Archibald the Grim in his power-struggle with his elder brother John, Earl of Carrick, whom he replaced as Guardian, Earl Robert supported Archibald “the Grim”’s claim to the Earldom of Douglas.

At a General Council held in April 1389, Archibald “the Grim” was recognised as 3rd Earl of Douglas.

Archibald reformed the organisation of Lincluden Priory and secured its elevation to the status of a Collegiate Church.

In May 1390, John, Earl of Carrick succeeded to the throne as King Robert III (reigned 1390-1406). For some years, Archibald “the Grim”’s relations with the Royal Family were somewhat strained as the new King remembered how Archibald had supported his brother Robert, Earl of Fife against him in the struggle for the Guardianship in 1388.

On 21st February 1398, Archibald “the Grim” received from Pope Benedict XIII a mandate ordering the Bishop of Glasgow to erect Bothwell Parish church into a Collegiate Church with a Provost and 6 Chaplains or Prebendaries.

By the time of the Reformation there were 9 prebends: Crookburn, Hassilden, Kittymuir, Netherfield, Newton, Overtoun, Stonehouse, Strathaven, and Hawick.

In this year also took place a meeting of the greatest noblemen in the Kingdom, including Archibald “the Grim”, David, Duke of Rothesay, the heir to the Throne and Robert, Duke of Albany (formerly, Earl of Fife and Menteith). Its purpose was to decide the future government of Scotland as King Robert III was becoming increasingly infirm.

Archibald’s presence at this meeting indicates the extent of his power and influence.

In February or March of the year 1400, David, Duke of Rothesay and heir to the Throne, married Mary, daughter of Archibald “the Grim” in the Collegiate Church of Bothwell.

On 24 December 1400, Archibald Douglas “the Grim” died at Threave Castle, aged about 75 years.