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REGULATIONS INTRODUCED IN SCOTTISH CITIES DURING THE FOURTEENTH TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE PLAGUE

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Early incursions of the plague into Europe during the years 550 to 560 and again in 660 do not seem to have had a great effect in Scotland. During the first part of the 14th century, the plague, spread westwards throughout Europe. It arrived in England in 1348 by a ship calling at the port of Melcombe in Dorset, although there was probably more than one port of entry. By the year 1350 it had spread through out the country, brought to Scotland by members of the Scottish army that had been fighting in England.

Leprosy and its infectious nature had been known in Scotland from early times. Regulations restricting the movement of those infected with leprosy had been introduced at an early date. It is surprising that legislation concerning those infected with the plague was not introduced until much later. The first record is in 1468 when the town of Peebles, introduced regulations restricting the movement of people and goods. In 1498, after a particularly severe outbreak in Edinburgh, the Council passed laws banning visitors to the city, without permission from the Baillie's.

From this time onwards increasingly restrictive legislation was introduced throughout Scotland. This paper looks at the acts passed and the effect they had on the citizens and the country.