

# The Three Estates

The members were collectively referred to as the **Three Estates** (Middle Scots Thrie Estaitis), or 'community of the realm' (*tres communitates*), composed of:

- the *first estate* of prelates (bishops and abbots)
- the *second estate* of lairds (dukes, earls, parliamentary peers and lay tenants-in-chief)
- the *third estate* of burgh commissioners (representatives chosen by the royal burghs)

A *Shire Commissioner* was the closest equivalent of the English office of *Member of Parliament*, namely a commoner or member of the lower nobility. Because the parliament of Scotland was unicameral, all members sat in the same chamber, as opposed to the separate English House of Lords and House of Commons.

The Parliament also had University constituencies. The system was also adopted by the Parliament of England when [James VI](#) ascended to the English throne. It was believed that the universities were affected by the decisions of Parliament and ought therefore to have representation in it.

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Last update: **29 Mar 2007 11:59**

