



William Wallace and Robert the Bruce: The Lives of Scotland's Most Famous Military Heroes

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures *Includes accounts of the major battles of the Scottish Wars of Independence *Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents “A false usurper sinks in every foe And liberty returns with every blow.” – Blind Harry From their very beginnings, England and Scotland fought each other. Emerging as unified nations from the early medieval period, their shared border and inter-related aristocracy created endless causes of conflict, from local raiders known as border reivers to full blown wars between their monarchies. Every century from the 11th to the 16th was colored by such violence, and there were periods when not a decade went by without some act of violence marring the peace. Out of all of this, the most bitterly remembered conflict is Edward I's invasion during the late 13th century. After Edward's death, the English were eventually beaten back at the famous Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, and thus the early 14th century was a period featuring some of Scotland's greatest national heroes, including William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. It still resonates in the Scottish national memory, all the more so following its memorable but wildly inaccurate depiction in the 1995 film Braveheart, which had Scottish audiences cheering in cinemas. William Wallace is one of the most famous freedom fighters in history, and over 700 years after his death he is still remembered as Scotland's beloved hero. But while the movie Braveheart helped make him a household name, and he is commemorated across Scotland as a natural leader and a loyal son of his homeland, he is also “the most mysterious of the leaders of the Scottish resistance to Edward I.” This is because, paradoxically, the very famous soldier is also one of the least well known. In fact, the mystery surrounding Wallace is figuring out precisely, or even vaguely, who he was. Where did this champion of Scottish independence come from? Who was his family? What did he do before emerging from obscurity with the brutal murder of William Heselrig, the English sheriff of Lanark, in May 1297? So little evidence on Wallace's life exists that answering even the most basic questions about him can be a challenge. Piecing together the story of William Wallace's life is an exercise in asking more questions than can be answered, and often in looking at just as much conjecture as proof. This book attempts to separate fact from fiction while looking at the life and fighting of the man who inspired Braveheart. Though it's often forgotten today, Robert the Bruce was a bit shiftier, if only out of necessity. Robert the Bruce has become a figure of Scottish national legend, renowned as the man who threw off the shackles of English oppression, but prior to 1306, this Anglo-Scottish nobleman did little to cover himself in glory or to earn a reputation as a hero of the national cause. A member of one of Scotland's leading noble families, Bruce inherited his grandfather's claim to the right to be King of the Scots. That older Bruce had been one of the two leading competitors in the Great Cause, and the family still held ambitions toward the throne. They also held resentments dating back to that disputed inheritance against the Balliol clan and their supporters the Comyns. Of course, this was all forgiven and forgotten after Bannockburn and Bruce's rise to the Scottish throne, which he held for over two decades. This book analyzes the lives of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about the two Scottish heroes like never before.

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