

Edward I and the Conquest of Scotland

War & Rebellion B1 or B2 - (War against a foreign country)

1 Background to the Conquest



- You will remember from our study of Edward I and Wales that Edward wanted to be master of Great Britain and create a United Kingdom.
- From William I, English kings had often claimed overlordship over Scotland. The border areas had always been in dispute. When England was weak, the Scots would invade.
- In 1286, Alexander III, the king of Scotland, was killed in a riding accident. He left no son to succeed him. However, his granddaughter, Margaret, the 'Maid of Norway' was named as his heir.
- Edward I was involved in the negotiations. Margaret was very young, and it was agreed that when old enough she would marry Edward's son. They would then be King and Queen of England and Scotland, and their eldest son would succeed to the throne of a united English and Scottish Kingdom. Sadly, Margaret died in 1290, whilst on the journey from Norway to Scotland.
- Edward's plan to be master of Britain was in danger of collapsing.
- Thirteen Scottish nobles felt that they had a claim to the throne of Scotland. Amongst the thirteen were **John Balliol & Robert Bruce (senior)**. Edward I was asked to settle the matter in what was called '**The Great Cause**'. He elected a council of 84 Scotsmen and 24 Englishmen to choose the next king. The council chose John Balliol who Edward believed to be the weaker and more compliant of the two Scottish claimants.
- With his choice crowned King of Scotland, Edward I now started to make demands of Balliol who he believed would be his puppet king.
 - a) Edward expected John Balliol to recognize him as his feudal overlord and to do homage to him.
 - b) Edward wanted legal authority over the Scottish king in any disputes brought against him by his own subjects.
 - c) Edward wanted a contribution towards the costs for the defence of England.
 - d) Edward expected military support in the war against France.



2 Why did Edward invade Scotland? (Plans A and B have failed)

First Campaign

- In 1294, feeling that Wales and Scotland were now under his control, Edward went to war with France. He asked John Balliol for help, but under pressure from Scottish nobles, Balliol refused and made an alliance with France.
- Edward was very angry at this breach of feudal duty.
- Edward invaded Scotland with a large army and crushed Balliol's army at the Battle of Dunbar in 1296. Balliol surrendered was stripped of his kingship and sent into exile. Scotland was now placed under English rule with Earl de Warenne elected Governor of Scotland.
- To rub further salt into the Scottish wound, Edward removed the 'Stone of Scone' and took it to Westminster Abbey where it was fitted into the coronation chair. This stone had been used in the coronation of Scottish Kings. (The stone was returned to Scotland in 1997.) Edward now earned himself the nickname '**Hammer of the Scots**' - (Maleus Scotorum)



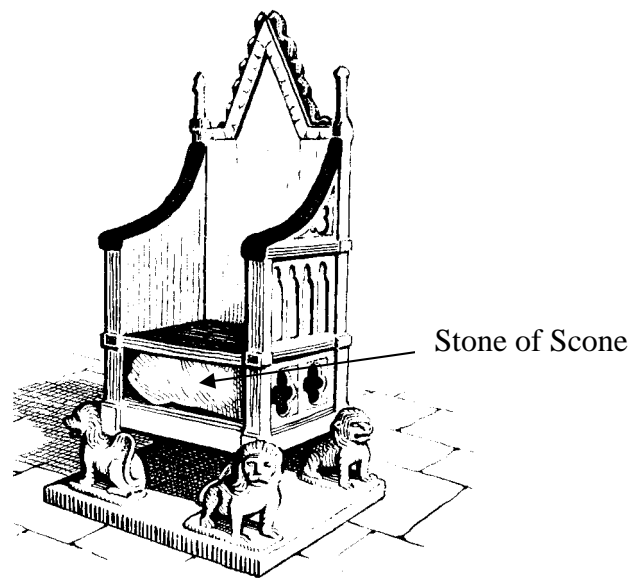
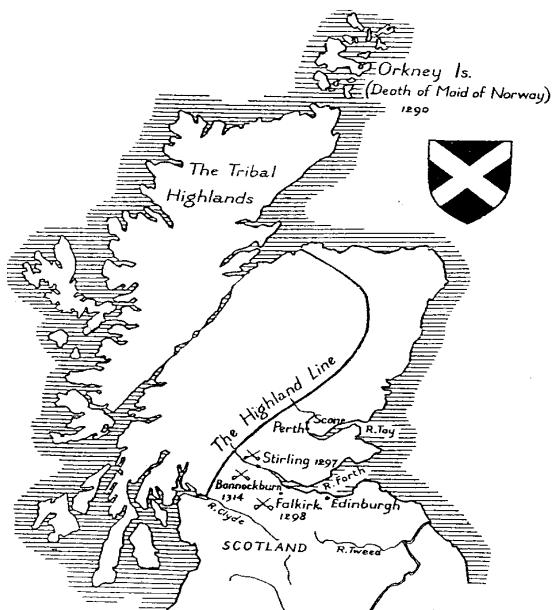
3. William Wallace's Rebellion 2nd campaign



- Edward's harsh actions had left many Scots feeling bitter and angry. **William Wallace** led a revolt against English rule in Scotland.
- In 1297, he defeated Earl de Warenne at the **Battle of Stirling Bridge**. From there he invaded the North of England.
- Edward led a combined English and Welsh army and met Wallace at the **Battle of Falkirk** on 22nd July 1298. (see notes below).

- Wallace was defeated and fled the battlefield and escaped to France.
- In 1303, he again led a revolt but in 1305, he was treacherously betrayed by one of his followers who handed him over to the English.
- He was taken to the Tower of London, and suffered the death of a traitor by being hanged, drawn and quartered. In death he became a Scottish hero.
- Wallace's failures were due to the lack of support that he received from the Scottish nobles who were jealous of his success and believed him to be inferior.

In 1306, Robert Bruce (junior) led yet another rebellion. Bruce was defeated at the Battle of Methven and went into hiding as Edward and his troops sought his capture. Whilst in hiding in a cave, he observed how a spider spent hours spinning its web, never giving up. This inspired Robert Bruce to try again for the Scottish independence. Edward, now an old man marched north but died in 1307 before he could achieve a final victory against the Scots. His final goal had eluded him.



4. Battle of Falkirk 22nd July 1298 2nd campaign

The powerful English army was hungry. Its supply chain had broken down and disease was spreading. Edward was considering withdrawal to Edinburgh, when two traitorous Scots lords brought him word that Wallace's was with his army near Falkirk, a short march away.

On 21st July, King Edward had fallen from his horse and broke two ribs. Bravely, (like Simon de Montfort at Lewes 1264) he hid the fact from his men and rode out with them the next morning.

- 1) Despite outnumbering the English forces, William Wallace was forced to face Edward I, who force was made up of 12,500 footsoldiers and 2,000 knights.
- 2) William Wallace has chosen a strong position 25 km east of Falkirk with Callendar Wood behind him and with a swamp in front of him. Here the Scots formed a number of closely packed formations called **schiltrons**. In each of the four schiltrons the leading rank knelt, while those behind stood, and every man held his long pike at an angle of 45 degrees. Behind the schiltrons stood Wallace's small force of cavalry, while between them were his few bowmen.
- 3) Wallace made no impassioned speech to his men but said simply, "I have brought you to the ring, dance if you can." He was no fool and it seems likely he knew that with no natural feature, no river or bridge to give him an advantage his men were doomed.
- 4) The English attack was as usual for that time. Edward's army was divided into three sections. The left flank was commanded by the Earls of Norfolk and Hereford, the right flank by the Bishop of Durham, and the centre by the King himself.
- 5) As the English advanced, they saw the swamp before them. This forced the Earls to swing farther left and the Bishop farther right until they found drier ground where they could cross the stream. Edward's division remained behind the swamp.
- 6) The Scottish horsemen now fled, while Wallace's few bowmen were ridden down and killed by the English cavalry. But even now Edward's heavily armoured knights could not break through the Scots' steel tipped schiltrons.
- 7) Unfortunately for Wallace, Edward also had a new weapon - the longbow. His Welsh archers now fired hail upon hail of arrows into the schiltrons, while the pikemen had no way of hitting back. Gradually their ranks crumbled until the English cavalry were able to break their formations apart.
- 8) Scottish losses were appalling and, while Wallace and his commanders escaped into Callendar Wood, many hundreds of his followers lay dead. The English it is said "lost more horses than men."



Sixteen years would pass before the Scots gained revenge, but when it came it would be the sweetest moment in their history. It happened in 1314 at a place called Bannockburn.

