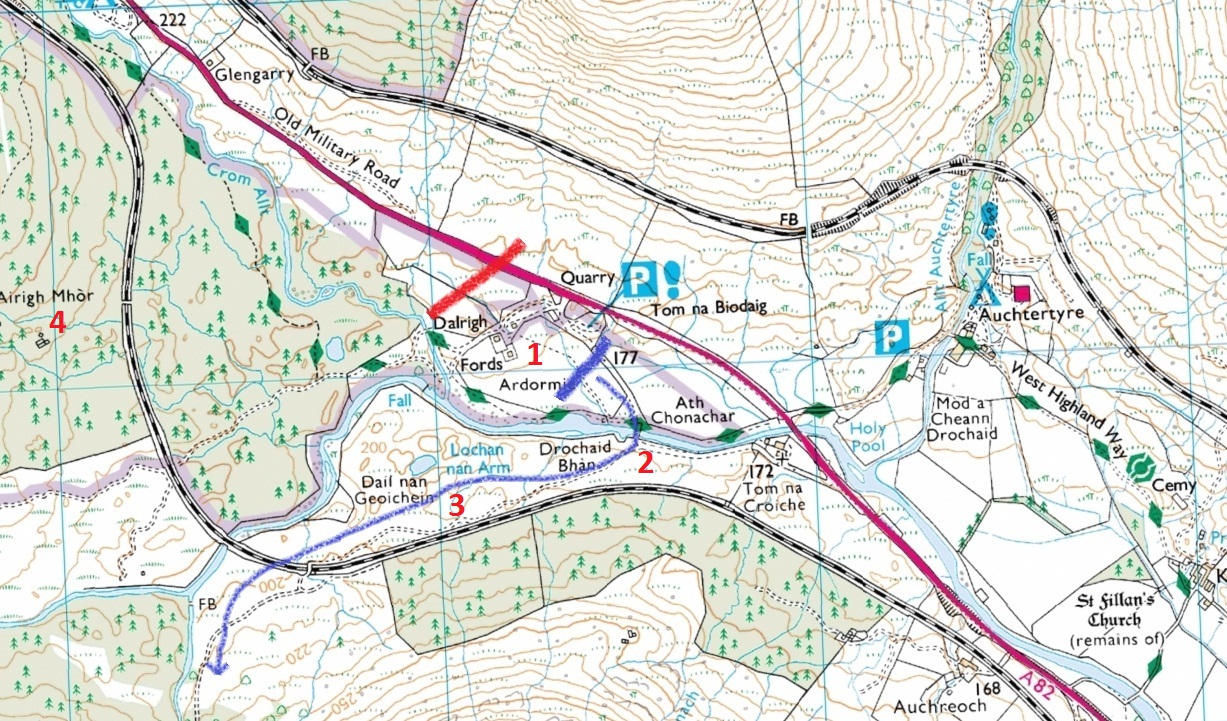
Most of the Clan Macnab histories contain the story that, at the time Robert the Bruce was trying to establish himself as king of Scotland, against the Comyn-Baillol faction, the clan Macnab was allied with the MacDougalls of Lorn, one of Bruces bitterest enemies, and were present with them at Dal Righ.

This map shows one of many possible interpretations of the skirmish at Dal Righ using a modern ordinance survey map, (Bruce – Blue, MacDougall – Red). The battle is said to have begun on the small field at Dalrigh (1) with Bruce’s men retreating over Ath Chonachar (2) before throwing their weapons into Lochan nan Arm (3). Bruce’s rear guard fight may have taken place somewhere near the uneven terrain of Lochan nan Arm. After the battle, Bruce was said to have hid in a goat hut at Airigh Mhor

Dal or Dail comes from the Gaelic word for field while Righ from the Gaelic word “Ri” which is translated into English as “king” though a Gaelic Ri was more like a war leader than our notion of a king. It is noteworthy that though the battle gave its name to this field, descriptions of the battle clearly describe it as a running fight which took place in a narrow pass and probably over a considerable distance.

The facts of the story are as follows: In February 1306 Robert Bruce met John III Comyn of Badenoch, in the Greyfriars Church at Dumfries. A quarrel ensued; Bruce killed John Comyn and six weeks later was crowned king of Scotland at Scone. On 19 June 1306, Bruce was defeated by the English at Methven, near Perth, following which Bruce and his remaining supporters fled west towards Drumalban, hoping to find refuge in the West Highlands. Sometime in July, 1306, at the head of Strathfillan, near Tyndrum at a place now known as Dal Righ, Bruce found his route blocked by the men of Lorn, probably led by John MacDougall, who inflicted a second defeat on the fugitive.

The MacDougalls had good reason to support the Comyn-Balliol faction against Bruce. Alexander MacDougall married a sister of John II Comyn of Badenoch, who was married to Elinor Balliol a sister of King John Balliol. Their son John III Comyn (usually known as “the Red Comyn”) was the closest claimant to the throne after John Baillol.

This was a real turning point in the history of Scotland, had Robert Bruce been killed or captured at Dal Righ the history of both Scotland and England would have been far different. Scotland, like the ancient kingdoms of Northumberland, Strathclyde and Cumbria, could have been absorbed into the English kingdom without the ensuing four hundred years of warfare that devastated the border regions of the two kingdoms.

**Dal Righ as described in the on-line encyclopedia, Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\_of\_Dalrigh**

The account of Dal Righ as found in Wikipedia contains numerous differences in names and spellings from other accounts of the same events and persons.

Note: MacNab’s get a brief mention as giving “probable assistance” to the MacDougalls a story that has been repeated often enough that it has passed from myth to historical fact, though without any proof of same.

Dalrigh is a hamlet in Scotland on the road between Tyndrum and Crianlarich on the river Fillin. Dalrigh or Dail Righ means "King's Field" in Gaelic and its origin stems from a battle fought there in 1306 between the forces of Robert the Bruce and the MacDougall’s of Argyll who had the probable assistance of the Macnab’s.

The exact date of the battle cannot be established but it took place sometime in late July or early August in the summer of 1306 shortly after Robert the Bruce was crowned king of Scots at Scone. The Bruce and his army were reeling westwards after their defeat by the English at the Battle of Methven when they were intercepted and all but destroyed at or near the place now called Dail Righ. The Bruce barely escaped with his life and his bid for the throne almost came to an end.

By the late 13th century, the descendants of Dougal son of Somerled, King of the Isles had emerged as the most powerful of his descendants. Alexander MacDougall, head of this branch of the family, was related by marriage to John Balliol and his nephew, John Comyn younger of Badenoch (known as the Red Comyn). Alexander had attained high office during the short reign of John Balliol as king. He was appointed sheriff of Lorn in February 1293 and had extended his power still further at the expense of the MacDonald’s of Islay and the Campbells of Loch Awe, whom he defeated in battle sometime in the mid-1290s. The outbreak of the War of Independence in 1296 placed MacDougall firmly in the anti-English camp, but this changed in the most dramatic fashion in February 1306, when Robert Bruce murdered John Comyn and had himself crowned at Scone. At this MacDougall and other families with Balliol and Comyn associations, rivals of the Bruce faction for the throne, became firm allies of the English.

The King's Field

In June 1306, Robert Bruce and his army were at Methven to the west of Perth where they were caught unprepared by Aymer de Valence, who was acting as King Edward’s lieutenant in Scotland. Badly defeated The Bruce and the remnants of his army retreated westwards, towards the mountains of Argyll. Reaching Strathfillan they found their path blocked at Tyndrum by a large force of MacDougall’s, said to have numbered about a 1000, commanded by Alexander MacDougalls son, John of Lorn, also known as John Baccach - the Lame. It is likely that Valence was not far to the east in pursuit, so being unable to retreat, the Bruce was forced into battle in disadvantageous circumstances at the place now known as Dail Righ - the King's Field - though it is uncertain if this was the name at the time or added afterwards by the chroniclers.

The only sources we have for the battle are pro-Bruce, and tend at every turn to put a favorable interpretation upon the King's actions. John Barbour has him 'boldly waiting' to engage John in battle, though “his followers were all too few”. However, Bruce's army had just been badly routed and would have needed time to recoup; so it is possible that the MacDougall’s took him by surprise. Barbour provides some justification for such an interpretation, providing no description of preparations or dispositions, just an account of a quick and very close engagement.

Many of The Bruce's remaining horses were killed by the MacDougall axmen, who also wounded many of his men, including Sir James Douglas and Gilbert Hay. Under considerable pressure Bruce did his best to disengage;

They thereupon withdrew. In this

There was no mark of cowardice.

They kept together; and the king

Was ever busy rescuing

The rearmost of his company

With skill and valor there wrought he,

And safely all his men withdrew.

He daunted those that would pursue

So none durst leave their close array,

For he was never far away

Bruce was so heavily involved in action with the rearguard that he found himself at one point alone and under attack between a hill and the loch side, in a pass so narrow that he could not turn his horse. For the king to be placed in such a position, seemingly unsupported, provides some further evidence of the weakness of the royal forces. The enemy was fought off and the Bruce’s army retreated to safety; but not long after it ceased to exist as an organized military force.

After Dail Righ, the Bruce, now styled dismissively as 'King Hob' in English propaganda, was little better than a fugitive, closely pursued by his many enemies, both domestic and foreign. For a time his party took refuge in the mountains of Athol. From here the king sent his wife Elizabeth, his daughter Marjorie Bruce, his sister, Mary, and Isabella MacDuff the Countess of Buchan to the relative safety of Kildrummy Castle, near the River Don in Aberdeenshire. With James Douglas and a few others he then went southwards into the territory of his friend Maol Choluim II, Earl of Lennox. From here he was helped to cross over to the Kintyre Peninsula by way of Bute, where he was aided by Angus Og of Islay, chief of the MacDonald’s and a bitter enemy of the MacDougall’s. Bruce was given temporary refuge in Dunaverty Castle, a location far too exposed and dangerous to remain in for long. He fled from here into a very uncertain future, not fully reappearing on the stage of history until the early spring of 1307. The recovery of his cause from this point counts as one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of warfare. Two years after Dail Righ the MacDougalls were destroyed at the Battle of Pass of Brander.

At right is a photo of the marker at Dal Righ in commeration of the battle



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This account of Dal Righ is adapted from Chapter nine of “*Robert Bruce & the Community of the Realm of Scotland*” by Geoffrey W.S. Barrow, Edinburgh University Press, 22 George Square, Edinburgh, listed as a source for the Wikipedia article quoted above. The author names as one of the chief men of Glen Dochart a “Patrick lord of Glendochart, heir of the ancient abbots of Glendochart who were St Fillan’s successors and custodians of his famous pastoral staff.” He also speculates that because Bruce granted the barony of Glendochart to Alexander Menzies of Weem, this may mean that Patrick of Glendochart was Bruce’s enemy.

We know as a historical fact that the “pastoral staff of St Fillan” was entrusted to the *Mac-an-deoir* one of five Dewars, or custodians of his relics. We also know that the secular Abbot of Glendochart and MacDougall of Lorn were appointed to uphold the law in Atholl by both Alexander III and John Balioll

The abbot’s pastoral staff was the symbol of his authority and it makes sense that the abbots who succeeded St Fillan would in turn receive his staff as the symbol of their office. Thus, “Patrick lord of Glendochart” the custodian of the staff would presumably be a successor of St Fillan as abbot of Glendochart and possessor of the lordship, or barony of that same name, compromising the secularized lands of the now decayed abbey.

In 1314, after Bannockburn, at a parliament at Cambuskenneth, Bruce did grant the barony of Glendochart to Alexander Menzies of Weem in Strathtay. But he did so with lands of all those who had either died in battle against him or had not yet come into his peace. This does not indicate the lord of Glendochart was necessarily one of Bruce’s enemies; he could no longer be alive or for some other reason not have made his peace with Bruce.

This also does not indicate that the lord of Glendochart was present at Dal Righ or Bannockburn, as some of the Clan MacNab histories claim and may be part of the clan history the Reverend Gilles refers to as being “quite fantastic” (fantasy) in the chapter of his book ‘In Famed Bredalbane’, on the MacNabs of Bovain.

**“Robert Bruce & the Community of the Realm of Scotland”**

**Chapter Nine, “The Battle of Dal Righ”**

On February 10, 1306 Robert the Bruce met with John Comyn, younger of Badenoch (known as the Red Comyn) in the Greyfriar kirk at Dumfries. The purpose of the meeting is believed to have been to discuss a power sharing agreement between Bruce and the Red Comyn, the closest claimants to the throne, after the deposed king John Balliol. However, words were uttered, daggers drawn and when it was over the Red Comyn lay dead before the alter.

Although the murder itself was unpremeditated, what followed must have been part of a pre-arranged plan. Six weeks later, on Lady Day, Friday, March 25, 1306, Bruce was inaugurated as King of Scots at Scone.

Bruce began his reign traveling about the country quelling sympathizers of the Balliol-Comyn faction and taking the homage of magnates like the earl of Strathearn and seizing castles.

Edward of England was taken by surprise by these events, but by April 5th had appointed Aymer de Valence, his own half-cousin and brother of Joan de Valence, who was married to the Red Comyn, as his lieutenant in Scotland.

Valence moved with speed and vigor and by early June was at Perth. Bruce judged the moment ripe for an attack in strength and on June 18th approached the town from the mountains to the west to tempt Valance out to fight. Failing to do so Bruce bivouacked at Methven, in a wood on high ground south of the Almond, and unwisely, some of his men went off to forage while others scattered to find sleeping quarters.

Valence came out from Perth before daylight taking the Scots unawares in a fierce onslaught. There was hard fighting at first but Methven was a rout rather than a battle, and ended with Bruce fleeing westward with a few hundred men.

Bruce headed to Drumalban, the mountain country dividing Perthshire from Argyll where he believed that he had the blessing of one of the most celebrated of the ancient Scottish saints, **Fillan of Glendochart** whose shrine lay in Strathfillan. It is likely that as Bruce and his companions made their way westward from Methven they were helped by the canons of Inchaffray Abbey and Maurice its abbot since 1305, who was later to bring Saint Fillan’s relics to Bannockburn and exhort the Scottish army on the eve of that battle.

To travel westward from Strathearn by Lochearnside and Glen Ogle into Glen Dochart was to enter what might be called Saint Fillan’s sanctuary. Here the chief men included Gilchrist and Henry of Balquhidder and **Patrick lord of Glendochart**, heir of the ancient abbots of Glendochart, Fillan’s successor and custodian of his famous pastoral staff. We do not know how they received the new king of Scots; we know only that in later years Bruce granted the barony of Glendochart to Alexander Menzies of Weem in Strathtay, one of those with him in 1306. This may mean that Patrick of Glendochart was Bruce’s enemy.

An appreciable portion of the nobility including the earls of Sutherland, Ross, Buchan, Angus and Dunbar was hostile to Bruce at this time; while Caithness and Fife were at best neutral. Alexander MacDougall of Argyll, and his son and heir John, respectively uncle by marriage and cousin of the murdered John Comyn and related by marriage to Edwards lieutenant in Scotland Aymer de Valance, were fiercely opposed to Bruce.

So, for different reasons, were the leading men of Galloway. The majority of them opposed Bruce not because they were pro-English and held English estates but because they could accept neither the overthrow of the Comyn, leading supporters of the government for nearly a century, nor the claims of Bruce, who, in their view, was a plain usurper. John Baloill the crowned king was still alive and living in France

Sometime between mid-July and early August, Bruce halted at the shrine of St Fillan, in Strathfillan, on his way west and northwards through Glendochart, to pray at the shrine receive the blessing of its abbot. A short distance beyond at the head of Strathfillan, at a place called Dail Righ (also spelt Dalry or Dalree), near Tyndrum, Bruce found his route barred by John MacDougall lord of Lorn, at whose hands he met a second defeat. As a result Bruce and his men ceased to form an organized military force and scattered throughout the highlands.

**The Abbot of Glendochart - an essay by David Rorer**

To those who are only familiar with an Abbot as celibate ruler of an abbey, a “hereditary Abbot” seems a contradiction in terms. However, prior to the unification of the Celtic church with Rome, it had lay and clerical Abbots and both were allowed to marry. These abbots acted as secular lords, Crinán, Abbot of Dunkeld, son-in-law of Malcolm II and father of Duncan, both kings of Scotland, was killed in battle against Macbeth in 1045 and may also have been Mormaer of Athol.

Knowledge of ecclesiastical organization in Scotland between the ninth and eleventh centuries is limited. It was the custom in the Celtic church for the head of an abbey to be chosen from the family of the founder. Several old Gaelic manuscript genealogies trace the mediaeval Macnab chiefs through some twenty generations to Ferchar mac Feradach, the Red Abbot of Glendochart, also known as Ferchar Og (Young Ferchar) one of many Irish missionaries in the 7th Century A.D. who converted the pagan Picts to Christianity.

By the eleventh century, in Scotland, many ecclesiastical posts, through a gradual process of secularization, had become hereditary. Churches sometimes owned extensive and widely distributed lands, a result of piecemeal endowment over time, and the abbot was often the lay administrator of those properties and revenues.

This is probably what happened in the case of the abbey of Glendochart. The title of abbot survived the decay of the abbey itself, while its temporalities became the personal property of the holder of the title.

The Lord Lyon King-at-Arms, Scotland’s chief heraldic officer, still recognizes this and one other such ancient title, the only purpose of which, is to confuse those unfamiliar with the early history of the kingdom of Alba, todays kingdom of Scotland. Though in the opinion of this writer, instead of the Chief of the clan MacNab, the recognition should go to the descendants of the aforesaid Alexander Menzies of Weem in Strathtay

The background of the relationship between the Abbot of Glendochart and the MacDougall lords of Lorn goes back almost a century before Robert Bruce began his bid for the throne. William the Lion (1164-1214), in his efforts to extend royal control into the highlands, made the Abbot of Glendochart and the Earl of Athol responsible for administering law in Argyll, presumably reflecting their status as major local landowners there. Later Alexander III (1249-1286) appears to have erected a sheriffdom in Argyle incorporating agreements with the principal barons, presumably including the abbot of Glendochart. We must assume from this that MacDougall of Lorn and the abbot of Glendochart must have had a long history of working together, the families may have intermarried or executed formal bonds of friendship.

In 1292, John Balliol reaffirmed a sheriffdom in Argyll, and the agreement included Angus Mor (MacDonald) lord of Islay, Alexander de Ergadia (Alexander MacDougall lord of Lorn), Colin Cambel (later Campbell) lord of Lochaw, the Earl of Menteith and Magister (Master) Randulph of Dundee, with seven other Gaelic chiefs, again possibly the lord of Glendochart.

The Clan Macnab histories state that a John de Glendochart signed the Ragman Roll and that Angus of Innishewen, also known as Angus de Glendochart was a brother-in-law of John III Comyn of Badenoch. But this is incorrect. John III Comyn the Red Comyn, had only one sibling, a brother named William. However, his father, John II Comyn of Badenoch, had four sisters (names unknown), none of whom married anyone named Angus, but one did marry Alexander MacDougall of Lorn. John II Comyn was also married to Eleanor de Balliol a sister of the king, John Baliol.

The killing of the John III Comyn by Bruce automatically made the Baillol and Comyn families along with the MacDougalls of Argyll and presumably the lord of Glendochart, enemies of the Bruce family, forcing them into alliance with King Edward of England.

This account of the MacDougalls of Lorn and the battle of Dal Righ (spelled in this instance as “Dalree”) is from “*Historical Tales; Wars of Scotland and of the Border Raids, Forays, and Conflicts*” Vol. Il, Edinburgh, London, and Dublin: A. Fullarton & Co. The original from which this is taken was found at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) The date of publication is not shown but the author; John Parker Lawson is noted as having died in 1852.

Note: The author mentions a tradition that a Finlay MacNab engaged in a personal encounter with Bruce and came away with his cloak and broach but does not give the source. Possibly this came from the clan history referred to by The Rev. Gilles as: “The fantastic genealogy prepared by John Macnab and his brother in this remarkable way bears on its face the marks of inaccuracy.” It is perhaps the basis of the story in the later clan histories of the MacNabs participation in the battle but the story appears to be a myth as it is not collaborated by any other account of the battle. (see: “In famed Bredalbane,” chapter six, The Macnabs of Bovain)

**MacDougal of Lorn**

The chiefs of Lorn were descended from Dougal, a son of Somerled, Lord of the Isles, slain near Renfrew in 1164, and a daughter of Olaus, King of Man. They assumed the patronymic appellation of Mac-Dougal, by which they are distinguished in subsequent centuries. This ancient and once powerful family, the chiefs of which were petty princes rather than feudal barons, is still represented by their descendant, MacDougal of Dunolly in Argyleshire.

The Lord of Lorn, with about a thousand Argyleshire Highlanders, attacked Bruce at the locality now called Dalree in Glen-Dochart, and the conflict was unfavorable to the latter. Many of the horses belonging to Brue's party were killed by the long pole-axes, of which the followers of Lorn had learnt the use from the Norwegians[[1]](#footnote-1); nevertheless the King's adherents behaved with such great gallantry as to command the admiration of Lorn himself, and successfully confronted the Argyleshire Highlanders, although greatly inferior to them in numbers.

At length Bruce sounded a retreat through a narrow and difficult pass, bringing up the rear in person, and repeatedly turning and driving back the more adventurous assailants. Lorn, while admiring the prowess of the King, and observing his skill in protecting the retreat of his followers, exclaimed to one of his men that he resembled Gaul, or Gol, the son of Morni, celebrated in Celtic tradition. Two brothers, the strongest among Lorn's followers, whom Barbour designates Maclndrosser[[2]](#footnote-2), interpreted Durward or Porterson, resolved to rid their chief of his formidable enemy, and a third person, named MacKeoch, associated himself with them for this purpose. Watching an opportunity until Bruce's party had entered a pass between Loch-Dochart, and a precipice where the King had scarcely space to manage his steed; those three persons threw themselves upon him. One seized his bridle, but Bruce dealt him a blow which struck off his right arm; a second grasped him by the stirrup and leg, but the King, putting spurs to his horse, threw him down, and dragged him along the ground still holding by the stirrup; a third, taking advantage of an acclivity, sprung up behind him on his horse, yet Bruce extricated himself from his grasp, threw him to the ground, and cleft his skull with his sword. By a similar exertion he killed the one holding by the stirrup.

MacNaughton, a baron of Cowal, could not refrain from pointing out to Lorn the valor displayed by Bruce in this memorable retreat, and spoke of him in terms of the highest admiration. “It seems to give thee pleasure," said Lorn, “that he makes such havoc among our friends."

“Not so, by my faith," replied MacNaughton, "but be he friend or foe who achieves high deeds of chivalry, men should bear faithful witness to his valor, and never have I heard of one who by his knightly feats has extricated himself from such dangers as have this day surrounded Bruce.'

Connected with this unfortunate skirmish is the celebrated Brooch of Lorn, a jeweled brooch of silver, and not of gold, as stated in Sir Walter Scott's “Lord of the Isles," as a means of keeping together the plaid and mantle which covered his armor. The tradition in the Family of the MacDougalls of Lorn is that their chieftain engaged in a personal conflict with Bruce while the latter was protecting the retreat of his men. MacDougal was struck down by the King, and would have been slain on the spot, if two of his vassals, father and his son, named MacKeoch, had not rescued him by seizing Bruce's mantle, and dragging him from above his adversary. The King rid himself of those foes by two blows of his battle-axe, but he was now so closely beset by the other followers of Lorn that he was compelled to leave the mantle and the brooch which fastened it in the dying grasp of the MacKeochs. The brooch continued for centuries in the possession of the MacDougals of Lorn as a proud trophy of their victory in Glen Dochart.

Another tradition states that Finlay MacNab, chief of that clan, who was present at the conflict on the side of Lorn, engaged in a personal encounter with Bruce. Throwing down his sword, MacNab grappled with Bruce, and being a man of great strength[[3]](#footnote-3), a quality in which the King also was not deficient, he was about gaining the advantage. When Bruce felt himself likely to be overpowered, he contrived to escape from the grasp of MacNab, leaving his mantle and the brooch in his hands.

The King and his followers were permitted to retire, and he is said to have taken refuge that night in a cave at the head of the glen of Balquidder still designated Craigree, or the King's Rock. There is also a tradition that Bruce took shelter in a cave at Craig Royston on the side of Loch Lomond, having crossed the Falloch, which runs into the lake, and comes down thither on the north side. It is farther ludicrously added, that during the night Bruce slept in this cave his companions were a fock of mountain goats, who were in the habit of resorting to it for shelter. He found himself so comfortable with those animals, who were of gentler mood than the biped followers of Lorn, that he afterwards made a law, in compliment to his nocturnal associates, that all goats should be exempted from grassmail or rent, as if the animals could be conscious of this mighty boon conferred on them On the following day Bruce fell in with the Laird of Buchanan, who introduced him to the loyal Earl of Lennox. That nobleman welcomed him with tears, but could render him no effective assistance. In this district the King and his few followers subsisted by hunting and fishing, until the weather compelled them to seek better shelter and sustenance than that which Highland mountains and lakes afforded. The Lord of the Isles[[4]](#footnote-4), at that time in possession of a great part of Kintyre, received the fugitive monarch into his castle of Dunnaverty, but he was even compelled to leave the hospitable roof of this loyal chief, and he embarked with the remnant of his followers for a small island almost opposite the shore of Ballycastle, on the coast of Ireland, called Ratherin[[5]](#footnote-5), or Rachrine. Here he resided until the approach of the ensuing spring, when he returned to Scotland with the resolution of achieving its independence, or of dying in the attempt.

But the brooch of Lorn, worn by Bruce at Dalree, must not be forgotten, as it is still in existence. There is a model of it in the Museum of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland in Edinburgh, but the brooch itself is carefully preserved in Dunolly Castle, the seat of MacDougal of Dunolly, the representative of the ancient Lords of Lorn.

Sir Walter Scott makes the minstrel in the LORD OF THE ISLES exclaim:

“Whence the brooch of burning gold,

That clasps the chieftain's mantle fold,

Wrought and chased with rare device,

Studded fair with gems of price;

On the varied tartans beaming.

As, thro' night's pale rainbow gleaming,

Fainter now, now seen afar.

Fitful shines the northern star?”

But the brooch, as already intimated, is not of gold, and we must view the above statement either as a poetical license, or as proceeding from misinformation. It is of silver, and is described as consisting of a “circular plate, about four inches in diameter, having a tongue like that of a common buckle on the underside. The upper part is magnificently ornamented. From the margin rises a neatly formed rim, with hollows cut in the edges at certain distances, like the embrasures in an embattled wall. From a. circle within this rim rise eight round tapering obelisks, about an inch and a quarter high, finely cut, and each studded at top with a river pearl. Within this circle of obelisks there is a second rim, also ornamented with carved work, and within which rises a neat circular case, occupying the whole center of the brooch, and slightly overtopping the obelisks. The exterior of this case, instead of forming a plain circle, projects into eight semi-cylinders, which relieve it from all appearance of heaviness. The upper part is likewise carved very elegantly, and in the center there is a large gem. This case may be taken off, and within there is a hollow which might have contained any small articles upon which a particular value was set."

This precious memorial of the great restorer of the Scottish monarchy is immortalized by our national minstrel. The Lord of Lorn is supposed to be the person who secured the brooch, and the song is in praise of his achievement, the whole being a vituperation of Bruce for the murder of Comyn.

Gem! ne'er wrought on Highland mountain,

Did the fairy of the fountain,

Or the mermaid of the wave,

Frame thee in some coral cave?

Did in Iceland's darksome mine,

Dwarfs' swarthy hands thy metal twine’

Or, mortal moulded. come't thou here,

From England's love or France's fear?

No! thy splendors nothing tell

Foreign art or faery spell,

Moulded thou for monarch's use

By the overweening Bruce,

When the royal robe he tied

O’er a heart of wrath and pride;

Thence in triumph wert thou torn

By the victor hand of Lorn!

While the gem was won and lost,

Widely was the war-cry toss’d!

Rung aloud

Bendourish Fell,

Answering

Dochart’s sounding dell,

Fled the deer from wild Tyndrum,

When the homicide o'ercome,

Hardly 'scaped with scathe and scorn,

Left the pledge with conquering Lorn!

Vain was then the Douglas brand,

Vain the Campbell's vaunted hand,

Vain Kilpatrick's bloody dirk,

Making sure of murder's work:

Barendoun fled fast away,

Fled the fiery De la Hay,

When this brooch, triumphant borne,

Beam'd upon the breast of Lorn.

Farthest fled its former lord,

Left his men to brand and cord,

Bloody brand of Highland steel,

English gibbet, axe, and wheel,

Let him fly from coast to coast,

Dogg'd by Comyn's vengeful ghost.

While his spoils, in triumph worn,

Long shall grace victorious Lorn

The poet represents this song in praise of Lorn, as giving mortal offence to a warrior who heard it, who turns out to be Bruce himself, and the following fine historical passage occurs:

As glares the tiger on his foes,

Heram'd in by hunters' spears and bows,

And, ere he bounds upon the ring,

Selects the object of his spring

Now on the bard, now on his Lord,

So Edward glared and grasped his sword;

But stern his brother spoke”

Be still!

What! art thou yet so wild of will,

After high deeds and sufferings long,

To chafe thee for a menial's song?

Well hast thou framed, old man, thy strains,

To praise the hand that pays thy pains.

Yet something might thy song have told

Of Lorn's three vassals, true and bold.

Who rent their Lord from Bruce's hold,

As underneath his knee he lay,

And died to save him in the fray.

I've heard the Bruce's cloak and clasp

Were clench'd within their dying grasp,

What time a hundred foemen more

Rush'd in and back the victor bore,

Long after Lorn had left the strife,

Full glad to 'scape with limb and life.

Enough of this. And, minstrel, hold,

As minstrel-hire, this chain of gold.

For future lays a fair excuse

To speak more nobfy of the Bruce.'

"Now by Columba's shrine I swear,

And every saint that's buried there,

'Tis he himself!" Lorn sternly cries,”

And for my kinsman's death he dies."

As loudly Ronald calls “Forbear!

Not in my sight while brand I wear,

O'ermatched by odds, shall warrior fall,

Or blood of stranger stain my hall 1

This ancient fortress of my race

Shall be misfortune's dwelling place,

Shelter and shield of the distress'd,

No slaughter-house for shipwreck'd guest."

"Talk not to me," fierce Lorn replied,”

Of odds or match! When Comyn died,

Three daggers clash'd within his side

Talk not to me of sheltering hall,

The church of God saw Comyn fall!

On God's own altar streamed his blood,

While o'er my prostrate kinsman stood

The ruthless murderer e'en as now

With armed hand and scornful brow.

Up, all who love me! Blow on blow!

And lay the outlawed felons low!”

The adventures of the Brooch of Lorn form an appropriate conclusion to the present narrative, and they are given in a well-known and popular periodical. The ultimate ascendancy of Bruce proved ruinous to this great family, on the ruins of which rose the Campbells and other clans. In the seventeenth century the MacDougalls, once styled of Argyle, afterwards of Lorn, but now of Dunolly, while boasting of a most distinguished ancestry, and the chiefs of their clan, possessed but a comparatively small estate. Dunolly Castle, which overlooks the sea near Oban, and Goalen Castle in the neighboring island of Kerrera, were their chief seats. In the civil war, the MacDougal of that day adhered to the royal cause, and suffered as much thereby as his ancestor had done by opposing it. In 1647 he was besieged in Dunolly by a detachment of General Leslie's troops under Colonel Montgomery. From the impregnable nature of the situation, he was successful in holding out this strength, but Goalen Castle was taken, sacked, and burned. Campbell of Inveraw, who took part in the latter affair, secured the brooch of King Robert, or, as it was now commonly called, the Brooch of Lorn, which he took into his possession as fair spoil, though he did think proper to make his good fortune too well known, lest the MacDougal might have thought it necessary afterwards to attempt the recovery of the highly valued relic by force. Time rolled on; the MacDougal of the early part of the last century lost his lands in consequence of embracing the cause of the Pretender in 1715, but his son regained them in consequence of keeping loyal in 1745. Meanwhile the brooch won at Dalree continued safe, amidst all the vicissitudes of the family fortunes, in the strong chest at Inveraw. To the MacDougalls themselves it was not even known to exist. At length this precious relic passed into the hands of a cadet of the Inveraw family, who at a subsequent time appointed it by testament to be sold, and the proceeds divided among his younger children. It was accordingly, about the year 1819, sent to Messrs Rundell and Bridge in London, to be exposed for sale, the price put upon it being one thousand pounds. The late King George IV, then Prince Regent, is said to have offered £500 for the brooch, but without obtaining it, and no customer appeared who was willing to give the large sum put upon it by the possessor. It must be understood that, when thus laid before the public, it was openly described as the Brooch of Lorn, originally the property of King Robert Bruce, yet the fact of its existence and exposure for sale did not become known to the representative of the MacDougal family till after it had been withdrawn from the market. Ultimately, in the year 1825, the late amiable General Campbell of Lochnell, being anxious to bestow some mark of grateful regard on his esteemed friend and neighbor MacDougal, purchased the brooch, and caused it to be presented to that gentleman by his chief, the Duke of Argyle, at a social meeting of the landholders of that county. It thus, after an interval of more than a century and a half, found its way back to the family, who, next to King Robert, and his heirs and representatives, were certainly its most rightful owners. It is at present kept with great care in Dunolly Castle."

The loss sustained by the MacDougals of their extensive possessions is given in a lucid and condensed manner by Mr. Donald Gregory, in the Introductory Sketch to his History of the Western Highlands and Isles of Scotland. “In the series of struggles for Scottish independence which marked the close of the thirteenth and the opening of the fourteenth centuries, the Lords of Lorn, who were closely connected by marriage with the Comyn and Baliol party, naturally arrayed themselves in opposition to the claims of Bruce. On the other hand, the Houses of Isla and the North Isles supported with all their power the apparently desperate fortunes of King Robert I; and thus, when he came to be firmly seated on the throne, had earned the gratitude of that prince, in the same proportion as the family of Lorn, by the inveteracy of their hostility had provoked his resentment. On the forfeiture of Alexander Lord of Lorn, and his son and heir John, these extensive territories were granted by Bruce to various of his supporters; and among others, to Angus Oig, or junior, of Isla, and to Roderick or Ruari MacAlan, the bastard brother and leader of the vassals of Christina, the daughter and heiress of Alan MacRuari of the North Isles. The Isles of Mull, the possession of which had for some time past been disputed between the Lords of Isla and Lorn, Jura, Coll, and Tiree, with the districts of Duror and Glenco, fell in this way to the share of Angus Oig. Lorn Proper, or the greatest part of it, was bestowed on Roderick MacAlan, to whom his sister Christina gave at the same time a large portion of her inheritance in Gamoran and the North Isles. The lordship of Lochaber, forfeited by one of the powerful family of Comyns, seems to have been divided between Angus Oig and Roderick. The former likewise obtained in this reign the lands of Morvern and Ardnamurchan, which seem previously to have been in the hands of the crown. But while Bruce thus rewarded his faithful adherents, he was too sensible of the weakness of Scotland on the side of the Isles, not to take precautionary measures against the probable defection of any of the great families on that coast, who might with ease admit an English force into the heart of the kingdom. He procured from Angus Oig, who was now apparently the principal crown vassal in Kintyre, the resignation of his lands in that district, which were immediately bestowed upon Robert the son and heir of Walter the High Steward, and the Princess Marjory Bruce. At the same time the fortifications of the Castle of Tarbert between Kintyre and Knapdale, the most important position on the coast of Argyleshire, were greatly enlarged and strengthened, and the custody of this commanding post was committed to a royal garrison. Following out the same policy in other places, the keeping of the Castle of Dunstaffnage, the principal messuage of Lorn, was given by Bruce, not to Roderick MacAlan, the High Chief of Lorn, but to an individual of the name of Campbell, who was placed there as a royal constable."

It appears that John, the son and heir of Alexander MacDougal of Lorn, who encountered Bruce in Glen-Dochart, received a great portion of his family possessions from David II., consisting of the Isles of Isla, Gigha, Jura, Scarba, Colonsay, Mull, Coll, Tiree, and Lewis, and the districts of Morvern, Lochaber, Duror, and Glenco. The representatives of the MacDougals of Lorn had married a niece of the King, which facilitated his restoration to these portions of his family estates. His daughter and heiress carried Lorn Proper to her husband Robert Stuart, founder of the Rosyth branch of the House of Stuart, by whom the lordship was sold to his brother, John Stuart of Innermeath, ancestor of the Stuarts, Lords of Lorn.

Yet Bruce did not subdue the indomitable MacDougals without infinitude of trouble. After his return from the exile occasioned by his defeat at Dalree and the unbending opposition of the Lord of Lorn, he resolved to take the first opportunity of requiting the latter for the injuries he had received. Marching into Argyleshire, he laid waste the country, carrying everything before him, until he came to the formidable and narrow pass between Dalmally and Bunawe, along the verge of the vast and precipitous mountain Cruachan-Ben, and guarded on the other side by a precipice overhanging Loch Awe. No position is apparently stronger, but the genius of Bruce overcame the difficulty. While his main body engaged with the men of Lorn, and kept their attention directed to the point, Bruce ordered James of Douglas, Sir Alexander Fraser, Sir William Wiseman, and Sir Andrew Gray, to ascend the mountain with a select band of archers, who obtained possession of the heights commanding the pass. A volley of arrows intimated to the men of Lorn that resistance was now useless, and they betook themselves to a precipitate flight. Barbour informs us that the deep and rapid river of Awe was even in that early period passed by a bridge, which the Argyleshire men attempted to demolish; but the followers of Bruce were too close upon their rear, and they were dispersed with great slaughter. John of Lorn, anticipating the issue of this conflict, had early betaken himself to his galleys upon Loch Awe. After this decisive engagement Bruce laid waste Argyle and besieged Dunstaffnage Castle, which he compelled to surrender, and, as already intimated, placed a royal garrison in that principal stronghold of the Lords of Lorn.

Notwithstanding all the vicissitudes of fortune, owing to their hereditary enmity to the house of Bruce, the MacDougals of Lorn continued to survive the loss of power, and, says Sir Walter Scott, they " afford a very rare, if not an unique, instance of a family of such unlimited power, and so distinguished during the Middle Ages, surviving the decay of their grandeur, and flourishing in a private station. The Castle of Dunolly, with its dependencies, was the principal part of what remained to them, with the right of chieftainship over the families of their name and blood. Nothing can be more wildly beautiful than the situation of Dunolly. The ruins are situated upon a bold and precipitous promontory, overhanging Loch Etive, and distant about a mile from the village and port of Oban. The principal part which remains is the donjon or keep, but fragments of other buildings, overgrown with ivy, attest that it had been once a place of importance, as large apparently as Artornish or Dunstaffnage. These fragments include a court-yard, of which the keep probably formed one side, the entrance being by a steep ascent from the neck of the isthmus, formerly cut across by a moat, and defended, doubtless, by outworks and a drawbridge. Beneath the castle stands the present mansion of the family, having on the one side Loch Etive with its islands and mountains, on the other two romantic eminences tufted with copse wood. There are other accompaniments suited to the scene; in particular, a huge upright pillar, a detached fragment of that sort of rock called plumb-pudding-stone, upon the shore, about a quarter of a mile from the castle. It is called Clach-itacau, or the Dog's Pillar, because Fingal is said to have used it as a stake to which he bound his celebrated dog Bran. Others say that when the Lord of the Isles came upon a visit to the Lord of Lorn, the dogs, brought for his sport, were kept beside this pillar. Upon the whole, a mere delightful and romantic spot can scarce be conceived, and it receives a moral interest from the considerations attached to the residence of a family once powerful enough to confront and defeat Robert Bruce, and now sunk into the shade of private life

The following account of the Macnabs and MacDougalls and their participation in the battle at Dal Righ is taken from “The Clan MacNab, a short sketch” published by John McNab of Callander in 1907.

According to this version, Angus Mor, chief of the Macnabs, incensed by the murder of his brother-in-law, John III Comyn of Badenoch (usually referred to at the Red Comyn) by Robert Bruce, joined the Red Comyn's son-in-law, Alexander MacDougall, lord of Lorn, and helped defeat Bruce at the Battle of Dal Righ. Unfortunately this is completely false. Angus Mor was the name of the MacDonald lord of Islay in the Isles, who died sometime between 1294 and 1296. He was not chief of the Macnabs nor was he a brother in law of John III Comyn of Badenoch. In fact Alexander MacDougall was a brother in law of the Red Comyn’s father, the Red Comyn had no sisters only a brother named William.

He also claims the “Brooch of Lorn” for the MacNabs. But again this part of the story is false; as it was always in the hands of the MacDougalls, it was never in the hands of the MacNabs. The Rev. William A. Gillies, in the chapter on the Macnabs of Bovain, in his book “In Famed Breadalbane,” states that much of the early history of the clan is fantastic (i.e. fantasy) and this may be part of what he is referring to. These falsehoods call into question the story of the MacNabs presence at not only Dal Righ but Bannockburn as well.

**The Skirmish at Dal Righ**

In 1306 the Macnab’s and their followers, along with the MacNaughtans[[6]](#footnote-6), joined MacDougall of Lorn in an attack on the Bruce. The two parties met at Dalrigh, near Tyndrum, and in the conflict which ensued, the Macnabs, under their stalwart chief, Angus Mor, are said to have displayed great prowess and ferocity. It was in this battle that the celebrated Brooch of Lorn was lost by the Bruce.

Barbour speaks of Bruce's assailants as “Makyn Dorsers," and, if such they were, then they were followers of Macnab, as they were the hereditary door-keepers of St. Fillan's Church.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The Lorn tradition varies somewhat from Barbour's account; but, strange to say, there was also a Macnab tradition which agreed with Barbour's version, and there was a Macnab brooch which was said to have been won from the Bruce.

The tradition that is generally accepted as correct is, that Bruce was suddenly attacked by three powerful followers of Macnab. The King dispatched two of his opponents, and hurled the third backward; but the man in falling seized the King's mantle or plaid, and to save himself the King was obliged to abandon his garment, and with it the brooch which secured it. It was a moment for haste, too, for Angus Mor was coming up in hot pursuit, and had he and the Bruce met in mortal combat, it is probable that Scottish history would have been changed. For Angus was herculean in stature and strength and in swordsmanship he ranked with Wallace.

The Macnab brooch remained in the possession of the family of the Chief until the time of the Common- wealth, when it passed into the hands of the Campbells of Glenlyon, whose descendants retained it until a few years ago, when it was purchased for the British Museum. (See above – this is completely untrue!)

Many of the place names in the neighborhood of Dalrigh owe their origin to this battle. About this time Barbour ascribes to a Macnab the credit of seizing and delivering Christopher Seton, brother-in-law of Bruce, into the hands of the English.

In 1308 the cause of Bruce was prospering, and he resolved to wipe off all old scores against the Lord of the Isles[[8]](#footnote-8) and his allies. Collecting a strong force, he marched into Argyleshire in quest of his enemy.

John, the son of Alexander MacDougall of Argyll, had timely notice of the King's intentions, and accordingly prepared to give him a warm reception. He posted his men and their allies in ambush in the Pass of Brander, where the road was so narrow that only one person could pass at a time. It was the scene of M'Fadyean's defeat; but Bruce was acquainted with the country, and he was, moreover, an abler and a craftier soldier than the Irish adventurer. He divided his force into two portions; one of these he sent under Douglas to scale the heights which commanded the Highlanders' position, and the other he led in person into the Pass.

The King, on entering the defile, was at once attacked by Lorn and his men, who hurled rocks and arrows upon his force. It seemed a critical moment, but Douglas, having reached his appointed place, in turn attacked the Highlanders, and threw them into confusion.

The fighting was sternly contested, but eventually the allies had to seek safety in flight. They attempted to secure their retreat by breaking down a bridge over which they passed; but in this endeavor they were foiled, as the victors were too close upon their steps.

This defeat, sharp and decisive though it was, did not suffice to overthrow the power of the MacDougall’s and Macnabs, nor did it subdue their martial ardor. For, in 1314, we find them once more along with the Comyns arrayed under the English Standard at Bannockburn.

This latter defeat placed the Macnabs in a rather delicate position; but concentrating their strength round a portion of their once great possessions, they were able to maintain themselves by their swords until the arrival of better and more tranquil times.

“The Bruce’s Rivals: The Comyns, 1212-1314” ISBN 1862320179 by Alan Young, Tuckwell Press, East Linton, Scotland

Though the Comyns, MacDougalls and the Scottish earl of Atholl are known to have been with the English forces at Bannockburn, there is no mention of their having actually engaged in battle. Atholl did attack the Scottish supply depot at Cambuskenneth Abbey and if the MacNabs participated in that raid. they certainly would have headed for home with their booty and been long gone before the English offensive came apart.

To fully explain the enmity between the Comyns and the Bruces, one must look at the broader scope of the history of that time and understand that the Scottish War of Independence was not simply a war between the Scots and the English; it was also a civil war between two powerful factions of the Scots nobility. Patriotism and nationality did not have the same meanings that these concepts now have, and self-interest and loyalty to family took precedent over any notion of nationality.

A fascinating book, which backgrounds the period that led up to the Scottish civil wars between 1306 and 1314 is “The Bruce’s Rivals: The Comyns, 1212-1314” ISBN 1862320179 by Alan Young, Tuckwell Press, East Linton, Scotland. The author is Principal Lecturer in History at the University College of Ripton and York St. John

The aim of “The Bruce’s Rivals: The Comyns, 1212-1314” is to examine critically the “bad press” gained by the Comyn in post Bruce Scotland. The name Comyn has been associated in Scottish tradition with treachery—the family was involved in the infamous kidnapping of the young king Alexander III in 1257, were accused of treachery against William Wallace at the battle of Falkirk in 1298 and of betraying Robert Bruce to Edward I of England in 1306. This reappraisal of the role of the Comyns concludes that the period 1212-1319 should be regarded as the “Comyn century” in Scottish history. The author, Alan Young, highlights the Comyn’s role as pillars of the Scottish monarchy and leaders of the political community of the realm in this formative century. The families’ interests and influence extended into every corner of Scotland and their castles controlled key lines of communication, especially in Northern Scotland.

The Comyns had been the most powerful baronial family in 13th century Scotland, gaining an earldom and being prominent in the government of the kingdom since the year 1212. Yet they have long been overshadowed by the legendary heroes of Scottish medieval tradition, Robert Bruce and William Wallace.

It is against this background that the political ambitions of the Bruce families’ in Scotland and the attempts of Edward I, of England, to influence Scottish affairs in the late 13th century are set. Comyn dominance of the Scottish political scene adds a new twist to the murder of John Comyn by Robert Bruce in the Greyfriars’ Church of Dumfries in 1306 and to the impact of the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 on the power struggle within Scotland.

A non-Bruce view of 13th century Scottish history, the Anglo-Scottish war and the development of a national consciousness is fascinating. For the general reader, the issue of power politics within Scotland and between England and Scotland is a positive and constant central theme.

This account of the **Broach of Lorn** is taken from Wikipedia. As noted above it was always a possession of the MacDougalls, never in the hands of the MacNabs. The broach itself has been dated to the 16th century so in its current form it could not have belonged to Bruce. The charmstone itself could have been part of a more ancient broach which possibly could have had some connection to the Bruce family.

**The Brooch of Lorn** or Braìste Lathurna in Gaelic, is a medieval "turreted" disk brooch that was supposedly taken from Robert the Bruce (Robert I of Scotland) at the Battle of Dalrigh in 1306. However the brooch is today dated long after this period. The brooch is centered on a large quartz charmstone, and it is not implausible that this stone had belonged to the Bruce; the brooch also acted as a reliquary. The brooch is owned by the MacDougall of Dunollie Preservation Trust. It was rarely seen in public until it was loaned to an exhibition in the British Museum in London in 2012. The brooch is one of three West Highland 16th-century silver turreted brooches centered on charmstones, though the brooches are thought to be resettings of stones which already had reputations. The others are the Lochbuy or Lochbuie Brooch in the British Museum, and the Ugadale or Lossit Brooch, also still in private hands. All three were exhibited together in the British Museum's exhibition Shakespeare: Staging the World in 2012. In the following months a replica made in recent years was exhibited in six local libraries in Argyll.

The silver disc at the back of the brooch is about 4.5 inches across, and the brooch is secured by a hinged pin (a later replacement) and catch behind it. Underneath the central stone is an empty compartment (said in 1905 to contain fragments of human bone), probably designed to hold a relic; the stone is set well above the base disc, and is surrounded by eight detached chatons or turrets, about 1.25 inches high, and each topped by a Scottish freshwater pearl. There is "a profusion of filigree work in the form of stellate appliqué ornaments and cabled borders". The style of decoration appears influenced by European workshops, and the brooch lacks the post-Insular motifs seen in the Lochbuie Brooch and other late medieval West Highland objects in various media. The use of "turrets" as decoration was popular in late medieval jewelry, but usually in far less elaborate forms, with brooches having a number of small projecting turrets around a ring forming the brooch.

The dating of the Brooch of Lorn varies somewhat, though all contemporary specialists are clear that it is from well after Robert the Bruce's lifetime. The British Museum describes it as "dated on stylistic grounds to late 16th century, but incorporating an earlier rock crystal charmstone in which there was revived interest in the 16th C.", and dates its own Lochbuie Brooch, which it believes was by the same hand, to "1600 (circa)".

However David Caldwell, curator of the Scottish medieval collections at the National Museums of Scotland is quoted as saying: "It is a very important piece of west Highland art, but it dates from the mid-15th century, so cannot be Bruce’s. Maybe the original brooch fell to pieces and this one was substituted ".

Findlay in 1999 preferred the earlier part of the 16th century, and Catherine Gillies, curator for the clan, says "The re-setting has been narrowed by style and historiography to roughly the third quarter of the 16th century", but still uses the description "medieval".

The following is based on chapter six of “The Kingdom of The Isles, by R. Andrew McDonald, Tuckwell Press. The text has been edited to concentrate on the story as relevant to MacDonald of Islay and MacDougall of Lorn, with whom the Macnabs were supposedly allied at the time Robert Bruce was making his bid for the throne of Scotland. It is included here in an effort to explain the complicated political situation at the end of the 13th century, between the death of Alexander III and the accession of Robert Bruce.

Note: Neither the lord of Glendochart nor the Macnabs are mentioned. John Macnab of Callander and James Charles MacNab of Macnab, authors of the Macnab clan histories have made Angus Mor, the MacDonald lord of Islay, who died prior to 1295, the chief of clan MacNab. They also mistakenly title Alexander MacDougall of Lorn, Lord of the Isles, a title which was first assumed by John MacDonald, son of Angus Og, and grandson of Angus Mor, in 1334, after his accession to the MacDonald lands and marriage to the heiress of the MacRuari lands, thus uniting the Hebrides and Argyll and recreating Somerled’s kingdom of the Isles.

They also claim the Broach of Lorn for the Macnabs when it was never in their possession; it has always been a MacDougall possession. In fact there is serious doubt that it was ever possessed by Robert Bruce as it has been definitely dated to the 15th century, though the central charm stone could be from an earlier broach.

This calls into question this portion of the MacNab clan history and the claim that Macnabs participated in the battle at Dal Righ or at Bannockburn. It may be part of what the Rev. Gills refers to as fantasy. David Rorer

**The MacDougalls and MacDonalds**

Yis Ihon off Lorne hattyt ye king

For Ihon Cumyn his emys sak

\*\* \*

Angus off lie yat tyme wes syr

And lord and ledar off Kyntyr,

Ye king rycht weili resawyt he

And wndertuk his man to be

This John of Lorn hated the king

For John Comyn his enemies sake

Angus of Isles that time was sovereign

And lord and leader of Kintire

The king right well realized he

And undertook his man to be

(John Barour, c. 1375)

In the decades between the Treaty of Perth and the first parliament of John Balliol, the western seaboard was brought in from the margins and integrated into the community of the realm of Scotland A byproduct of this integration was that the West would be, almost for the first time, directly affected by events unfolding beyond Drumalban, in the Scottish kingdom itself; and, conversely, that Hebridean chieftains would play a prominent role in the Anglo-Scottish conflicts that characterize the later thirteenth and early fourteenth century in Scottish history:

…the most important political consequence [of the cession of the West to Scotland by Norway] was that the Lords of the Isles and their followers now became much more involved in the internal affairs of the kingdom of Scotland. Very soon we find them taking sides in the wars of Independence.

Some of Robert Bruce’s most implacable enemies were the MacDougalls of Argyll, while he received considerable aid from the MacDonalds of Islay and the MacRuairis of Garmoran.

By 1296 Alexander Og, son of Angus Mór the MacDonald lord of Islay in the was in the forefront of events in the western seaboard. It is not however, Alexander Og, but rather his younger brother, Angus Og, who is best known for his role in the Anglo-Scottish conflict and who is generally regarded as a consistent supporter of Robert Bruce. Although he was certainly instrumental in the Bruce cause from about 1306, his early allegiance was not to Bruce but rather, with his brother Alexander Og, to Edward I of England. The struggle between the MacDonald’s of Islay and the MacDougalls of Lorn must be viewed within the context of the dynamics of both the Scottish civil conflict and the Anglo-Scottish wars.

How it started:

In March 1286, King Alexander III was killed in a night-time riding mishap. His son and heir, Alexander, and his daughter, Margaret, queen of Norway both had predeceased him, leaving his infant grand-daughter, Margaret, the “Maid of Norway” the sole surviving representative of the ancient Scottish royal line. Margaret had been acknowledged, as Alexander’s heir at a council in 1284, and by the summer of 1290 her marriage to the heir of Edward I of England had received the consent of the Scottish nobles in the treaty of Birgham which contained safeguards for Scottish independence. But, in September 1290, the little girl died at Kirkwall, Orkney, en route to Scotland, turning a simple accident on a stormy night in 1286 into a dynastic tragedy and a succession crisis that would shatter the relatively peaceful conditions of the thirteenth century.

Within a few weeks of Alexander’s accident Margaret’s claim was challenged in parliament by Robert Bruce “the Competitor” the aged lord of Annandale, grandfather of the future King Robert Bruce, who advanced his claim as a descendant of King David I. Soon afterwards John Balliol, Lord of Galloway, another descendant of David I, advanced his own claim bringing Scotland to the brink of civil war.

Following the death of Margaret, in 1290, Edward I of England, as an experienced ruler and arbitrator, was invited to arbitrate in the dispute. By June 1291, he had secured recognition as overlord of Scotland by the competitors, who promised to abide by his decision. With these preliminaries out of the way, the first session of the drawn-out lawsuit known as the “Great Cause” got underway in August 1291. After several lengthy recesses and long and convoluted legal discussions, Edward delivered a judgment in favor of John Balliol in mid-November 1292. John was inaugurated King at Scone on 30 November and on 26 December, did homage to Edward at Newcastle

John’s doing homage to Edward was not an unreasonable act, as previous Scottish kings had done so, and of course that was a precondition of Edward’s acting as arbitrator in the dispute over the succession. But ominously, he was made to repudiate the terms of the Treaty of Birgham and all of the other safeguards of Scottish liberty.

Appeals were now permitted to go directly from Scotland to England, undermining the authority and independence of John Balliol, whose kingship lasted scarcely four years. His position made increasingly difficult by demands he appear in person at parliament in England to answer for his own court’s decisions. Finally Edward demanded that King John and his nobles provide feudal military service in France.

In 1295, the Scottish government was taken out of John’s hands, and in early 1296, the Scots ratified a treaty with France, actions that implied war between Scotland and England. In March 1296, the Scots army, led by John Comyn, Balliol’s kinsman, attacked Carlisle; Edward responded by sacking Berwick at the end of May and massacring many of its inhabitants. On 27 April, the Scottish army was overwhelmed at Dunbar, and many Scottish nobles submitted to Edward. On 2 July 1296, John Balliol was forced to append his seal to a document admitting wrongdoing and surrender his kingdom and people to Edward I. Stripped of his royal attire he left Scotland, never to return. During the summer of 1296, Edward made a triumphant progress through Scotland, as far north as Elgin, collecting the fealty of many Scottish nobles. At the end of August more submissions were made in Parliament at Berwick and Edward appointed governors to rule Scotland.

The MacDonalds, MacDougalls and the Bruces:

It is possible, in the years between 1286 and 1296, to discern a polarization in the allegiances of the MacDougalls and MacDonalds. In 1286, Angus Mór lord of Islay and his eldest son, Alexander Og, were members of the “Turnberry Band”, with the Bruces, James Stewart, and two Scottish earls. The context of the document not easy to discern but its wording reflects a Bruce claim to the kingship.

Whatever the context, the inclusion in the agreement of Angus Mor, Macdonald lord of Islay, one of the most powerful magnates of the western seaboard, was natural. Moreover, an alliance between Bruce and the MacDonalds made sense in geopolitical terms. The Bruce chief castle, at Trunberry on the Ayrshire coast, made them west-coast magnates, and their power base lay in proximity to the MacDonald lords of Islay. But more than simple geography, the Bruce’s were well integrated into Gaelic society. Many Bruce supporters were neighboring lords like the Louleses, Linsays and Biggars as were Angus Mor and his son thus It is not surprising to find the MacDonalds associated with the Bruces.

The MacDougalls the Comyns and Balliols:

Alexander MacDougall was married to a sister of John II Comyn father of John III Comyn, who would be killed by Bruce in 1306. In turn, John III Comyn was married to a sister of John Balliol, the king – therefore it was natural for Alexander MacDougall to support the Balliols along with his kinsmen, the Comyns

At John Balliol’s first parliament, in February 1293, Alexander MacDougall was appointed sheriff of Lorn, the king’s representative in a large part of the western seaboard. He had also held a wide-ranging lieutenancy in the West during the reign of King Alexander III, though this position probably depended more upon his status as a prominent landholder in the region than upon his support for Balliol, it must have owed something to his allegiance and service to the king.

At the same time, Angus Mor, head of Clan Donald, absented himself from the same parliament. A few weeks later, Alexander MacDougall was ordered, in his capacity as sheriff, to summon Angus Mor and several other western landholders, to perform homage. It is tempting to speculate that Angus Mor was following the lead of the Bruces, in November 1292, Robert Bruce Earl of Carrick, son of Robert Bruce the Competitor, refused homage to Balliol, tried to transfer the earldom to his son, the future king, and went to Norway.

MacDonald vs MacDougall:

The way that MacDonald and MacDougall adhered to opposite sides during the period of the Guardianship, the Great Cause and Balliol’s kingship neatly mirrors the wider division of the Scottish nobility during these troubled years.

It was the appeals to King Edward, of which the most important was one by Alexander Og, eldest son of Angus Mor. This appeal and the dispute that underlay it is the key to understanding the politics of the later 1290’s in the western seaboard.

The roots of the dispute and appeal lie in a marriage alliance between MacDonald and MacDougall. Sometime before 1292, Alexander Og married Juliana, a sister or daughter, of Alexander MacDougall. This marriage sparked a dispute between the kindred and in 1292 the two Alexander’s referred a territorial dispute to John Balliol, although neither the identity of the lands nor the outcome is known. In 1295, Alexander Og appealed to king Edward, alleging that John Balliol had occupied part of Lismore and was refusing to hand it over to Alexander Og and his wife Juliana. Since Alexander Og was joined in his complaint by Juliana, Lismore may have been her dowry; and that it was occupied by John Balliol, means the judgment had gone against the MacDonalds.

King Edward:

The decade of the worst Anglo-Scottish warfare, between 1296 and 1306, was also one of extreme unrest in the western seaboard and the impression left by the surviving documentation is that Edward I had very little control over the West. Alexander MacDougall had, like most Scottish nobles, sworn loyalty to Edward I in the, summer of 1296 at Elgin, and his name appears in the so-called Ragman Rolls, from the parliament at Berwick in late August. But he seems to have been distrusted by Edward either because of his Comyn and Balliol kinship or the ongoing dispute with Alexander Og. Whatever the case, for some five years between late summer 1296 and June 1301, Alexander MacDougall was clearly out of favor. Thus, on 10 September, 1296, Alexander, Earl of Menteith, was granted a commission to take possession of the “castles, fortresses, islands and all the lands” belonging to Alexander MacDougall and his son, John, who, “have not yet come into our peace”.

It would appear that Edward’s wishes were successfully executed, for we next hear of Alexander MacDougall as a prisoner at Berwick Castle. Edward I authorized his release in May 1297, and in that same month Alexander MacDougall’s son, John, was named among those magnates invited to accompany Edward on a military campaign in Flanders. The invitation to John, coming so close on the heels of his father’s release from incarceration, has all the appearance of the son serving as a hostage for the good behavior of the father. But almost immediately upon his release Alexander MacDougall was the prime mover of unrest in the western seaboard again.

Alexander and John MacDougall:

Alexander and John MacDougall were pursuing an aggressive policy of expansion in the 1290s, which both fed on the lawlessness in the western seaboard and added to it. Two reports written by Alexander Og to King Edward I in the summer of 1297 claim Alexander MacDougall had been plundering and devastating MacDonald lands. He complained that, having come to the king’s peace at Elgin (in the summer of 1296) and then having been released from captivity (May 1297), Alexander MacDougall had lain waste the writer’s lands, “and the men living in the same lands were killed fires were set, and many other evils were done”. At the conclusion of the letter, Alexander Og begged Edward to instruct the nobles of Argyll and Ross to aid him in keeping the peace. According to a second letter, Alexander MacDougall was guilty of providing refuge to other enemies of Edward in the West.

The MacDonalds were not the only kindred to feel the threat of MacDougall expansion in the l290s. Sometime around 1296, John MacDougall defeated the Campbells and killed their leader, Cohn Mór. It may be as a result of this victory that we find Alexander MacDougall in control of revenues of the Campbell lands of Lochawe and Ardskeodnish in 1304-5; the fortunes of the Campbells took a downturn at this time. So did those of the MacSweens; in 1301 we find John MacSween making a complaint to the English king that John MacDougall had entered his lands with an armed band and was preventing him from inhabiting them.

The MacDonalds of Islay:

Alexander Og, and his younger brother, Angus Og, were, by contrast to their MacDougall kinsmen, willing agents of king Edward I between early 1296 and at least 1301. As early as April, 1296, Alexander Og was appointed bailiff, and in this capacity he was ordered to seize Kintyre, which had been escheated by John Balliol, and to give possession of it to Malcolm “le fiz Lengleys”.

It is also at this time that Alexander Og’s younger more famous brother, Angus Og, appears on the scene. Like his brother, he was active in the cause of the English king. In 1301 he lent assistance to naval operations against the MacDougalls. In a letter to Edward I from that same year, Angus Og asked whether Alexander MacDougall had submitted, and, if he had not, Angus requested instructions so that he could assist Hugh Bisset in destroying Alexander MacDougall, along with Edward’s other enemies in the West; in this letter Angus refers to himself as Edward’s humble and faithful servant

In striving to understand the relations between the two Alexanders in the years from 1295 to about 1300, the dispute over Linsmore, which had been simmering since at least 1292, is crucial. In the first instance, this dispute ensured that MacDonald and MacDougall were polarized to opposite sides of the Scottish civil conflict. The successful pursuit of Alexander Og’s claim would have been wholly dependent on his own efforts. In these circumstances, he would have been eager to act as Edward’s agent against MacDougall. But even more importantly, the activity of the MacDonalds and MacDougalls is only intelligible when seen as an extension of this conflict. it is tempting to view the west-coast warfare of 1297-1301 as a continuation of the dispute that had apparently begun in 1292 and flourished in the environment of relaxed royal authority in the West brought about by the Scottish civil war and foreign conflict with England.

Certainly patriotism seems to have had little to do with the allegiances of MacDonald and MacDougall in the 1290s; the former was using Edward I to help obtain their lands on Linsmore; and, if kinship with the Comyn-Balliol faction was a motivating factor in the actions of MacDougall, then the fury of their attacks on the MacDonalds and others in 1297 looks very much like the settling of old scores.

The situation between 1301 and 1306 in the West is relatively clear for MacDougall, but much less so for MacDonald. It was, in all probability, the naval activities of MacDonald and others that eventually forced Alexander and John MacDougall of Argyll to submit to king Edward. The submission of MacDougall had certainly been made good by 1304, in which year Edward I wrote to John MacDougall to excuse him from coming to Parliament at St Andrews by reason of his illness. Alexander MacDougall also appears to have entered the king’s peace as in 13O4-5 he rendered account for some Campbell lands in Argyll, and in September 1305, when Edward I appointed John of Brittany his lieutenant in Scotland, Alexander MacDougall was among those named to his advisory council. From about 1304—5, then, MacDougall was an adherent of Edward; a position that was to be buttressed by the murder of his kinsman, John Comyn, by Robert Bruce in 1306.

In contrast to the MacDougalls, there is little evidence for the MacDonalds between 1301 and 1306; both Alexander and Angus Og vanish from the record during these years. It is difficult to determine when Alexander Og passed from the scene and was replaced by his brother, Angus Og.

The Annals of Ulster record, under the year 1299, that:

Alexander MacDomnaihl, the person who was the best for hospitality and excellence that was in Ireland and in Scotland, was killed together with a countless number of his own people that were slaughtered around him, by Alexander MacDubghaill.

He was dead, and his demise at the hands of Alexander MacDougall was the final act in the ongoing dispute over, which played out with particular violence in the chaotic years 1296—7. The death of Alexander Og at the hand of his kinsman and namesake in 1299 explains the intensive naval activities of the MacDonalds, Bissets, and MacSweens in 1301 to subdue Alexander MacDougall. Moreover, there is other contemporary evidence to support the view that Alexander Og had passed by 1301. In a letter to Edward I in 1301, Angus Og styles himself “de Yle” (of the Isles) the designation for the head of the kindred; it is apparent from the content of the letters that he had taken over the campaign against the MacDougalls from his brother, thus indicating that Alexander Og had been removed from the scene by 1301.

Robert BruceL

On 10 February 1306, when Robert Bruce killed his rival, John Comyn, in the Greyfriars church at Dumfries, the underlying motivation behind the meeting of the two men remains problematic. But the event, followed by Bruce’s inauguration at Scone on 25 March, changed the complexion of the conflict and added a new dimension as well. The murder of John Comyn made the Comyns and their kinsmen bitter foes of Bruce. From 1306 there was civil war between the Balliol-Comyn and Bruce factions as well as war between England and Scotland.

To Bruce’s Scottish enemies, an English overlord was a lesser evil than a Bruce king, so the Balliol-Comyn faction, hitherto upholders of Scottish independence, allied with the English. As long as Balliol was king, MacDonald was pro-English and MacDougall had upheld the Scottish cause. But the events of 1306 changed all that. Alexander and John MacDougall, kinsmen of Comyn and Balliol, were thrown into the English camp by the murder of John Comyn, and remained Bruce’s foes until their deaths.

The MacDougall desire for vengeance was not long in coming, within three months of his inauguration at Scone, Bruce was a fugitive. On 19 June he was defeated by the English at Methven, near Perth, and many of his supporters captured. Bruce and his remaining supporters fled west to Drumalban, the mountainous region dividing Perthshire from Argyll, to find refuge in the West Highlands. At the head of Strathfillan at Dalry (Dail Righ) near Tyndrum, Bruce found his route blocked by the men of Lorn, probably lead by John MacDougall, who inflicted a second defeat on the fugitive king. It seems likely, based on the evidence of subsequent movements by the English, that the encounter between John MacDougall and Robert Bruce must have taken place in July, either the 13th or the 30th. The impact of a second defeat, about a month of Methven, sent Bruce and his men to the mountains as fugitives no longer an organized fighting force. The defeats at Dalry and Methven led to the capture and imprisonment or execution of many of Bruce’s followers, including his wife and daughter and his brother, Neil. Thus, MacDougall played a prominent role in the opening stages of the Scottish civil conflict, dealing Bruce a crippling blow, which forced him to flee from Scotland in the closing months of 1306.

But if the murder of John Comyn had earned Bruce the enmity of the Comyns, Balliols, and their allies, including the MacDougalls, it also ensured that other families were his supporters. We have seen that Angus Og, the brother of Alexander and the son of Angus Mor, succeeded his brother as lord of Islay around 1299, following the death of Alexander Og at the hands of his MacDougall namesake in that same year. Angus Og was still active in 1301 in the service of the English king against the renegade MacDougalls, but from then until 1306 he disappears from the scene. When and why did Angus Og shift allegiances?

Angus Og MacDonald:

Writers from at least the nineteenth century have explained Angus Og’s shift into the Bruce faction on so-called noble grounds, or else, at the very least, as representing the “traditional” Bruce-MacDonald alliance that stretched back to the Turnberry Band of 1286. But, there was no traditional alliance between the MacDonalds and the Bruces: both Alexander and Angus Og had acted as Edward I’s agents in the West.

To explain the shift in the MacDonald position, it is best to explore the issue in terms of Hebidean politics of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The dispute over Lismore had thrown the MacDonalds behind Edward I in 1296; because they hoped that would advance their claim. That Angus Og continued to serve Edward after the death of his brother in 1299 should come as no surprise; Angus Og was still operating against his enemies, the MacDougall’s, and regarded service with the English king as the most effective manner in which to pursue his feud. It is hard to believe that Angus Og would not both have taken up the pursuit of his brother’s claim to Lismore, and to have sought vengeance for his death. It seems certain that from 1299 until about 1301 the interests of the English king and the MacDonald lord of Islay coincided, namely the taming of the MacDougall’s. But the events of 1304-6 must have put an end to this partnership between the English king and the MacDonald lord of Islay.

By 1304-5 MacDougall, pressed by the MacDonald’s and other agents of Edward, had entered the peace of the English king. By early 1306, John Comyn was dead, and they had become the foes of Bruce. The submission of MacDougall meant that Angus Og would have lost his use for the English king and the claim to Lismore might even have become an embarrassment. But, it was the killing of Comyn by Bruce that detached Angus Og from the English king: it meant that the Comyns, Balliols, and their allies were firmly in the English camp, and, since MacDougall and Macdonald had been at odds for over a decade, it would have been natural for Angus Og to go over to the Bruce to pursue his feud.

Robert Bruce, King of Scotland:

In May 1307 Bruce routed the English at Loudon Hill, and then on 7 July, Edward I died, “an event from which Bruce’s cause could draw immeasurable encouragement.” The initiative in the struggle passed to Bruce, but for several years his chief opponents were not the English but rather the Comyn-Balliol faction in Galloway, the Northeast, and Argyll. In late 1307 Bruce concluded a truce with the earl of Ross that secured Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness in the far North; in May 1308 the Comyns were decisively defeated at the battle of Inverurie, the North-East was subdued and in June 1308 James Douglas brought Galloway under Bruce control.

These successes against his domestic foes form the backdrop to Bruce’s conquest of Argyll, by which the power of MacDougall was shattered and the way cleared for further campaigns against the English

By March 1309, when Bruce held his parliament at St. Andrews, Alexander MacDougall was a prisoner or a hostage, and John MacDougall was at least temporarily out of the picture. The Balliol-Comyn faction was defeated and leaderless, while Bruce controlled most of Scotland north of the Forth and much of the south-west. By late 1309, Bruce was free to establish his rule throughout the whole of Scotland by capturing those strongholds that remained in English hands.

It is probable that the battle of Ben Cruachan was followed by the temporary submission of Alexander MacDougall and by a truce with John in 1308, while a second campaign in the late summer of 1309 finally succeeded in taking Dunstaffnage by October and in forcing the MacDougalls out of Scotland by the end of the year. In March 1309 Alexander MacDougall was present at Roberti’s St. Andrews parliament. In December of that same year both he and John were in Ireland, where they are also recorded in April 1310. In the summer of 1310 they were in England. Thus the final fall of the MacDougalls had taken place by late 1309.

Alexander and John MacDougall in exile:

Alexander and John MacDougall, now joined the Comyns, as refugees at the English court, and although John MacDougall remained a peripheral figure in the West the period of MacDougall dominance was over.

Alexander and John MacDougall, were never again prominent in Scotland, and appear largely as pensioners of the English king, although John MacDougall was active in the service of Edward II until his death in 1317. Alexander MacDougall was probably already an old man by the time of the Argyll campaign of 1308 and 1309. He also seems to have been infirm, In 1310, the treasurer of Ireland was commanded to pay £100 for the sustenance of his men in Ireland, and officials in York were instructed to pay him and his sons 50 Marks each for their own sustenance. But he was dead by 18 January 1311, when the king commanded the treasurer of Ireland to pay his son John MacDougall a further £100 for the support of those troops of his father’s that had now fallen under John’s command.

John MacDougall outlived his father by only seven years. A long trail of payments and letters shows John as an expatriate in the service of the English king. In May 1316, when having returned from Ireland to London, and being described as impotent in body, he was granted 200 marks yearly by the king “for the support of himself and his family”. English wardrobe accounts reveal that he died on pilgrimage to Canterbury in September 1317.

Bannockburn and after:

The defeat of the last of the Comyn-Balliol faction by late 1309 paved the way for the establishment of Bruce’s rule throughout Scotland between 1310 and 1314. By the spring of 1314 only five strongholds remained in English hands, including Stirling, which by an arrangement between Edward Bruce and the commander of the garrison of the castle was due to surrender if not relieved by midsummer. This was a challenge that Edward II could not ignore, and he invaded Scotland with a massive force of cavalry and infantry with which to relieve Stirling Castle. The resulting conflict at Bannockburn, on 23-24 June 1314, saw the English routed in what had been called “a complete victory for Bruce’s army and the greatest humiliation of English arms since the loss of Normandy over a century earlier.

Five months after the battle of Bannockburn a parliament at Cambuskenneth enacted that those who had died in battle against the king or who had not come into his peace, “are to be disinherited forever of lands and tenements and all other status within the realm of Scotland. And they are to be held as foes of the king and kingdom.” The estates of those who suffered forfeiture were used to reward Bruce’s supporters, and Angus Og was one of those who so benefited.

It seems certain that Angus Og was confirmed in Islay and the other MacDonald territories, including parts of Kintyre, although no charters to this effect survive, and other men were also rewarded with lands in Kintyre. But Bruce did grant Lochaber and the adjacent lands of Morvern and Ardnamurchan to Angus Og, along with Duror and Glenco. And Alexander MacDonald of Islay, possibly Angus Og’s son and successor, was the recipient of a grant of Mull and Tiree, formerly MacDougall possessions.

Argyll, most of which had been held by the MacDougalls, was parceled out as fiefs to King Robert’s supporters, including Angus Og MacDonald and the Campbell’s, propelling the latter into the foremost ranks of the Scottish nobility. The barony of Glendochart was given to Alexander Menzies of Weem, who had been with Bruce in 1306.

**After the Bruce**

King Robert I - died in July 1329, succeeded by his five year old son David II. Scotland was independent and its people looked forward to a long period of peace after the years of constant warfare, both internal and external. But no sooner was Bruce in his grave than it all came undone.

Bruce’s loyalists soon died, a child sat on the throne and of Scotland was once more in the hands of Guardians. Furthermore the Scots now had an opponent almost as implacable and aggressive as Edward I had been - his grandson - Edward Ill.

Edward III resented the “shameful peace” of 1328 signed in his name under the regency of his mother. In 1330, as he reached the age of eighteen, he deposed his mother, Isabella of France and repudiated the treaty on the grounds that it had been arranged when he was under-age and against his will.

Edward Balliol, son of the exiled John Balliol was waiting to lay claim to the Scottish crown. In 1331 he was brought to England, from his family estates in Picardy, and with the compliance of Edward III, gathered support among Scottish and English nobles who had been deprived of their estates by Robert Bruce. On 6 August 1332 they landed at Kinghorn, on the coast of Fife. The Guardian, Donald, Earl of Mar, had mustered a large army - much larger than the invasion force - and took up position on Duplin Moor on the banks of the Earn, near Perth.

The battle of Duplin Moor ended in a dreadful carnage. The Scots had superior numbers but were charging uphill in blazing sunshine and the armies soon became clenched in one massive melee. English archers poured in volleys of arrows and by noon the attack turned into a retreat. Balliol sent in his small mounted reserve to harry the fugitives. The Guardian was killed, along with two earls, several lesser noblemen, sixty knights and nearly two thousand spearmen against only thirty for Balliol.

Edward Balliol had himself crowned as King of Scots at Scone on 24 September 1332. Two months later, at Roxburgh Castle, he swore homage and fealty to Edward III, as lord superior of all Scotland.

**Two Kings**

The Eight-year-old King David was a fugitive holed up in Dumbarton Castle, Scotland was again a province of England and in the grip of civil war. In May 1333 Edward III came north to support Balliol who ceded the town of Berwick on Tweed, which had been in Scottish hands since 1318. The new Guardian, Archibald, lord of Douglas (brother of Bruce’s comrade, the ‘Black’ Douglas), mustered an army to come to Berwick’s aid.

The Battle of Halidon Hill took place northwest of Berwick on a site well chosen for both defense and offence, high at the rear with a slope to the front leveling out into boggy ground at the base. Edward deployed his forces in three brigades of dismounted knights and men-at -arms, each flanked by archers. The Scots occupied the high ground at Witches Knowe, facing the English in three massed schiltrons, each of thirteen thousand spearmen, and a division of 1,200 knights.

At noon on 19 July the Scots launched a disorderly massed charge; but bogged down in the wet ground below the slope of Halidon Hill. As they struggled forward the English, archers unleashed a deadly crossfire. The charge was spent before the Scots reached the English lines and then the English knights crashed into them. Douglas fell, along with the earls of Ross, Sutherland and Carrick, seventy barons, five hundred knights and thousands of foot. It was one of the worst of Scotland’s long, sad litany of military disasters- and once again it had been the English archers who had done the damage. Edward occupied Berwick, the other disputed lands and castles of southern Scotland soon fell and the whole country lay at the mercy of Edward Ill.

The position of the supporters of the boy king was now so perilous that David II and his wife Joan were sent to France, to stay as guests of King Philippe IV. A Bruce king was once more fleeing to escape destruction by his Scottish and English enemies.

When the king and his entourage set sail to France, Robert Steward, Duke of Albany, his uncle and the presumptive heir to the throne, did not go with him as might have been expected. Instead, he remained behind to serve as guardian or ‘king’s lieutenant’. Robert Steward, now seventeen and already blooded at the battle of Hallidon Hill, had barely escaped with his life to join his royal uncle in Dumbarton Castle and he now turned to the support of his western allies such as the Campbells of Lochaw.

Robert Steward’s early success was impressive. He recovered Rothsay and Bute then pressed on to link up with the men of Renfrew, Lanarkshire, Annandale and Carrick sweeping into the hotbed of the civil war, the southwest and much of this region now began to submit to Robert in David’s name. It was during this period that the Campbells of Lochaw received a charter for the lands of Glenorchy from Robert the Steward, in the king’s name, as a reward for supporting the Bruce cause.

After Bannockburn the *Macnab Oire* - of Innishewan, the heirs of the Abbot and senior line of the family seems to have disappeared. In 1336, one Gilbert Mac-an-abba, was given a charter for the lands of the barony of Bovain, presumably from Robert the Steward in the name of King David II who was then in exile in France. The relationship of Gilbert Mac-an-abba to the Abbot of Glendochart, is unknown. The granting of this charter came a generation after the barony of Glendochart was given to Alexander Menzies of Weem in Strathtay by Robert Bruce in1314. Gilbert Mac-an-abba or of Bovain, as he became known, is the first confirmed ancestor of the family and enumerated as the first chief of the Clan Macnab by the Lord Lyon king-at-arms, the chief heraldic officer for Scotland,

His grandson, Alexander Macnab of Bovain had a charter for the lands of Ardchoiletir, Innermonechele, Bothemeghan, and Dovinche, in the Barony of Lochdochart, from Robert, Duke of Albany, to himself and to John MacNab his son and their heir’s male in around 1398.

His son John Macnab of Bovain additionally had a Precept for infeftment in the lands of Bovan, Ardchoille, Duffince and the office of Farbalschip of the lands of Auchlyne on 16 December, 1407.

The Macnabs acquired more lands, largely by marriage, but Finlay Macnab of Bovain, resigned the entire extent of his lands, held of the Crown, in favor of his father-in-law Sir John Campbell of Glenorchy, to be held in future from the said Sir John, as superior, on 3 November, 1552.

The Campbells married into the house of Stewart, eventually became the Earls of Bredalbane and displaced many other, less prudent families in Perthshire, including MacGregor and Macnab. In 1828 the Earl of Bredalbane, as principal creditor of the Bovain estate finally acquired all its lands and a few years later evicted the last of the Macnab so the lands could be converted into a grouse moor.

**Alexander III** (reigned 1249-86) was born in 1241, the only son of Alexander II and his second wife, Marie de Coucy, became king at the age of seven. On Christmas Day 1251, at the age of ten, he was knighted at York by Henry III of England, and the following day was married to his eldest daughter Princess Margaret. Alexander proved a strong-willed king who, despite the English influence in his youth, refused to swear homage for his kingdom.

Alexander III enjoyed good relations with his brother-in-law King Edward of England and on 19 August 1274, Alexander and Margaret attended his coronation in Westminster Abbey. Margaret died six months later, leaving three children. Within the next few years, Alexander suffered a series of family tragedies. His younger son David died in 1281 at the age of eight, his daughter Margaret, who had married King Eric of Norway, died in childbirth in 1283, and his elder son Alexander died childless in 1284 after a long illness. A week after prince Alexander’s death, the Scottish Parliament recognized Margaret, the little daughter of Eric of Norway and Margaret of Scotland, as the heir presumptive to the Scottish throne.

Alexander III was only 44, and so he decided that the best way to avoid a constitutional crisis was to remarry and have more sons. On 14 October 1285 he therefore took as his wife Yolande de Dreux, Comtesse de Montfort, daughter of Robert IV, Comte de Dreux in France. Five months later, on 19 March 1286 Alexander determined against all advice that he must go to her. The night was dark and stormy, he became separated from his guide, his horse stumbled and he fell from a cliff near Kinghorn, Fife. Next morning he was found dead upon the shore, leaving the Scots to mourn an energetic, effective monarch who had brought them peace and prosperity, but one who had no male heir.

**Princess Margaret**, “the Maid of Norway”

Margaret (reigned 1286-90) was three years old at the death of her grand-father so the Scottish Parliament appointed six Guardians to rule on her behalf. On 18 July 1290 the Scots agreed in the Treaty of Birgham (Berwickshire) with Edward of England that she should marry his eldest son, the future Edward II[[9]](#footnote-9). At the end of September, 1290, the then eight-year-old Queen set sail for Scotland, escorted by Bishop Narve of Bergen. She was taken ill on the voyage and her ship put in at Orkney, where she died in the arms of the Bishop. The Norwegians took her body back to Bergen, where she was buried beside her mother.

**The competitors**

The death of Margaret plunged Scotland into a complicated dynastic crisis, for there was no obvious heir to the throne. The four surviving Guardians were ruling the country and one of them, William Fraser, Bishop of St Andrews, wrote to King Edward of their fears that civil war would ensue, since rival claimants were already assembling armies. Edward offered himself as arbitrator, on condition that the various claimants acknowledge him as the feudal superior of Scotland. In the end, fourteen competitors put their names forward, and nine of them made the acknowledgment required by Edward. They also agreed that possession of the lands and castles of Scotland be given to him to pass on to the rightful king, when the choice had been made.

The fourteen competitors for the throne were:

King Edward of England – descended from Edith, daughter of Malcolm III

Floris V, count of Holland - descended from Henry, Earl of Huntingdon through his daughter Ada

Patrick of Dunbar, 7th Earl of Dunbar - descended from William “the Lion through his illegitimate daughter Ada

William de Veschi, descended from William “the Lion” through his illegitimate daughter Margaret

William de Ros, 2nd Lord Ros – descended from William “the Lion” through his illegitimate daughter Isabel

Robert of Pinkeney – descended from Henry, Earl of Huntingdon through his illegitimate daughter Marjory

Nicholas de Soules – descended from Alexander II through his illegitimate daughter Marjory

Patrick de Galithly – descended from William “the Lion” through his illegitimate son Henry de Galithly

Roger de Mandeville – descended from William “the Lion” through his illegitimate daughter Aufrica

John de Comyn, Lord of Badenoch – descended from Domnall III, king of Scots 1094-1097 through his daughter Bethoc

John de Hastings, 2nd Lord Hastings – descended from David, Earl of Huntingdon through his second daughter Ada

John de Balliol, Lord of Galloway – descended from David, Earl of Huntingdon through his eldest daughter Margaret

Robert de Brus or Bruce, 5th Lord of Annandale (grandfather of “the Burce” – descended from David, Earl of Huntington through his younger daughter Isabel

Eric II, King of Norway as father and heir of Margaret of Norway

The thirteen claimants were reduced to the three with the strongest claims: John Balliol, Robert Bruce and John Hastings, all descendants of the three daughters of David, Earl of Huntingdon, youngest son of Malcolm IV and grandson of King David I.

Robert Bruce (the “Competitor”) could claim a greater nearness of degree than his rivals. He was the *grandson*, thru his father, of Isabella, the *younger* daughter of David, Earl of Huntingdon.

Of the thirteen John Balliol had the senior claim: he was the *great-grandson*, thru his mother of Margaret, the *eldest* daughter of Earl David. The argument would center on which was more important, proximity or primogeniture. Although Robert de Bruce was descended from the second daughter, he was a generation nearer David I.

After a period of deliberation Edward of England awarded the throne to John Balliol; primogeniture, it was decided was more significant than proximity.

Two days after the verdict was given, Robert Bruce (the Competitor) formally resigned his claim to his son and heir, Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick so that it would not be lost after his death. The Earl of Carrick, in turn, surrendered his earldom to his own son, Robert the Bruce (the future king), who was now eighteen years old to maintain the Bruce claim to the throne.

**John Balliol** (reigned 1292-96) born about 1250, son of John, 5th Baron de Balliol and Devorgilla, daughter of Alan, Lord of Galloway, great granddaughter of Earl David. The crown was awarded to him at Berwick, 17 November 1292. Swearing fealty to Edward, he was installed as king at Scone and on 26 December at Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland, did homage to Edward for the kingdom of Scotland.

Edward regarded the country as his vassal state and Balliol who never expected to assume the throne was unprepared to resist Edwards’s demands. In 1294 when John and the nobles of Scotland were instructed to attend him for his war with France, a council of ecclesiastics and noblemen was set up to rule Scotland in his name. The council made a defensive alliance with Philip IV of France against England. This Treaty marked the formal beginning of the “Auld Alliance” between Scotland and France, which was to last for nearly 300 years.

Balliol renounced fealty to Edward on 5 April 1296, whereupon Edward marched north, defeated the Scots at the Battle of Dunbar in East Lothian and captured the castles of Roxburgh, Edinburgh and Stirling. On 10 July, in the churchyard at Stracathro, Balliol surrendered himself, his kingdom and his people to Edward. He was forced to seal a document confessing that he had wrongly allied himself with his overlord's enemies. His subsequent nickname, “Toom Tabard” [empty coat] is thought to refer to the ceremonious removal of heraldic insignia from his coat as part of his submission. Taken to England as a prisoner, in 1299 he was allowed to go to France, where he lived on his family estates at Bailleul until his death in April 1313 at about the age of 63.

**William Wallace, Guardian of Scotland**

Despite the events of 1296, most Scots continued to regard John Balliol as the rightful king, and the following year William Wallace, son of Sir Malcolm Wallace of Elderlsie in Renfrewshire, raised a revolt against the English. After killing the English sheriff of Lanark, he waged guerrilla warfare against Edward's army and on 11 September 1297 joined forces with Sir Andrew Moray to rout the English at the Battle of Stirling Bridge. He then recaptured Berwick and invaded the north of England.

Wallace was knighted and acted as Guardian of the realm in the name of John Balliol, but he lacked the support of the nobility and Edward continued to wage war implacably against the Scots. On 22 July 1298 Wallace was defeated at the Battle of Falkirk, Stirlingshire. His later movements are unclear but it is known that he resigned his Guardianship, traveled to France in an unsuccessful attempt to enlist support, and then returned to Scotland. Seven years later, he was betrayed to the English and captured near Glasgow. Tried for treason at Westminster Hall, Wallace was hanged, drawn and quartered in London on 23 August 1305.

**Robert I** (reigned 1306-29) on 25 March 1306 Robert de Brus, 7th Lord of Annandale, he was crowned King of Scots[[10]](#footnote-10) and lead the fight for Scottish independence against Edward of England. Born in 1274 in Ayr, the son of Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, he was the grandson of the Robert Bruce who had been one of the competitors for the throne after the death of the Maid of Norway. He had fought with the English when Edward moved against Balliol, but subsequently joined Wallace's revolt. When Wallace gave up the Guardianship of Scotland in 1298, Robert became joint Guardian with Sir John Comyn, younger of Badenoch (King John Balliol's nephew known as “the Red Comyn”).

Robert killed his rival for the crown and joint Guardian in the church of the Grey Friars in Dumfries, during the last of many arguments between them. After this he had no choice but to seize the throne since he could gain it no other way. For this murder, Robert was outlawed by Edward and excommunicated by Pope Clement V.

His reign did not begin well. He was defeated by the English at Methven and Dal Righ in Perthshire; his wife, daughter and sisters were imprisoned; and three of his brothers were executed by the English.

However, he persevered and he was helped by the fact that in 1307 Edward, the self-styled “Hammer of the Scots”, died to be succeeded by his less effective son Edward II. From 1307 onwards Robert waged successful guerrilla warfare against the English, establishing control north of the Forth, and gradually winning back his kingdom; by 1314, Stirling was the only castle in English hands.

His campaign culminated in resounding victory over Edward II (whose larger army of 20,000 outnumbering Robert's forces three to one) at Bannockburn, near Stirling on 24 June 1314. Bannockburn confirmed the re-establishment of an independent Scottish monarchy. However this was not the end of the fighting which raged onwards for years afterward and repeatedly devastated the border marches.

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Below – statue of Robert the Bruce



This account of the battle is adapted from Chapter nine of “*Robert Bruce & the Community of the Realm of Scotland*” by Geoffrey W.S. Barrow, Edinburgh University Press, 22 George Square, Edinburgh 1988.

The Broach of Lorn

The stone in the Brooch of Lorn is clearly mediaeval. So the story of the brooch being torn from the shoulder of Robert Bruce at Dalri or Dal-Ri near Tyndrum when he and the remnants of his force were attacked by the men of the Lord of Argyll in 1304, need not be fictional. The present mounting is later. Twenty-two such crystal charm-stones are on record among Highland families[.](#p1)[[11]](#footnote-11)

After his killing of the ‘Red’ Comyn, Bruce had, in effect, arranged to have all the most powerful enemies set against him: The Pope, Edward of England, the Comyns the most powerful Norman family in Scotland, and the Lords of Argyll whose power was considerable in the west. After his crowning at Scone, Bruce had been attacked in a wood near Methven by Sir Aylmer de Valence, a captain of Edward I of England.

Due to the trees inhibiting the attackers chargers, Bruce and his closest allies escaped. They moved west and found sanctuary at St. Fillans below Dalri. For the rest of his life Bruce held that saint in affection. But news had travelled west and the (MacDougall) Lords of Argyll, kin by marriage to the Comyns, attacked and seemingly came away with the charm-stone in a setting of the time, torn from his cloak while Bruce and his men escaped east and south to the shores of Loch Lomond. There is still an ancient yew tree on the western shore where they are said to have landed when they crossed the loch. The poet Barbour who chronicled the life of Bruce has Sir Neil Campbell, father of Colin, first Campbell lord of Lochawe, go from there to the Campbell lands in Cowal to raise boats. In the hills east of Caenloch Coalispuirt in Knapdale there is a broad hollow draining through a narrow ravine withby the name of Lon-Ri and local tradition, Bruce is said to have mustered his army before his fight to make Scotland his kingdom. But at Dal-Ri the loss of the crystal charm-stone brooch cannot have been a happy omen.

The old Lords of Argyll were descended from Dougall, eldest surviving son of Somerled (c. 1100-1163). After his father’s death, Dougall or his son Duncan gained the heartland of Somerled’s sphere of influence with a base at the dun of Dunollie. Duncan later built a castle at Dunstaffnage and founded the Priory at Ardchattan. Younger sons of Somerled gained more peripheral lands, Ranald (father of Donald) based in Islay, Angus initially in Kintyre and grandson Ruairi in Garmorran, or Ardnamurchan and north. Somerled was called upon to make Dougall as Ri or king of the Isles following a victory over Godfrey the Norse king of Man in a long-ship or galley fight in the Sound of Islay in 1156.

The Lord of Argyll in 1304 was Alexander, son of Ewen and grandson of Duncan MacDougall. So it would likely be that Dunstaffnagewas where the charm stone brooch was brought as a spoil of war by the men of Argyll in 1306. What is likely also is that the name Dal-Ri, vale of the king, was named for the event which resulted in the brooch of Lorn coming to Argyll.

The defeat of the Dougall Lords of Argyll –called in Latin ‘de Ergadia’ – by Bruce and his Douglas, MacDonald and Campbell allies in the Pass of Brander in 1308-9 is well known, yet the Argyll family seem to have retained the charm-stone brooch. And after that there were the generations of exile at the English court. Yet even there, their princely status and seamanship was recognized and the son of Alexander of Argyll was made the first Admiral of the English Navy and captured the Isle of Man from the Scots. One suspects that the stone returned to Argyll with their descendant John Alanson or John gallda of Lorn when he and his line were reinstated as Lords of Lorn by David II, King of Scots. David and John/Iain had likely met when David was a captive at the English court.

If John Alanson or gallda married Christina of Craignish as some historians believe, although the lordship of Lorn passed to John’s royal daughters by his second wife who was Robert Bruce’s grand-daughter, he must have passed the charm-stone to his son Alan Ruadh by Christina, along with the lands of Dunollie where it remained until the Civil Wars of the 17th century. Although the lordship of Lorn had passed by marriage to the royal Stewarts, they realized the great power that the MacDougalls held in the culture of the Gael at that era. Although gradually that would be superseded by the rise of the MacDonald Lords of the Isles after the forthright Angus Oig of Islay’s support of Bruce set his family on their further rise to power. The first MacDonald of Islay to proclaim himself Lord of the Isles was John, or Iain of Islay, in 1334. But the first Stewart Lords of Lorn made the MacDougalls of Dunollie the bailies of almost all the lordship and gave them the right to foster the Stewart heirs. That retained for the MacDougall family considerable influence[.](#p3) The shifts of power in Argyll in the 14th and 15th centuries are ably outlined in Stephen Boardman’s The Campbells 1250-1513, John Donald 2006.

In the second half of the 16th century, after the Reformation of 1560 when a great release of energy had taken place, the era of Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth of England when even the bitterness of John Knox, born of his time as a galley slave, failed to dampen the exuberance of life. Dunollie may have been seen by Lowlanders as an alien Highland fastness, but the Renaissance also came to Argyll. Over the time of the Reformation, Bishop John Carswell had built the splendid palace-castle at Carnassarie. And not long afterwards Duncan, younger son of MacDougall of Dunollie, would create the miniature brilliant jewel of a castle at Gylen on the southern end of Kerrera. But first, perhaps he had been allowed by his elder brother to have the old charm-stone. This he had re-set in a manner fashionable for the third quarter of the 16th century, as was done with the charm-stones of the Ugadale and Lochbuie families. The stone stands above a scallop-edged reliquary setting that screw into the base of the brooch. The circular base is cast Scottish silver, from which tapering cones rise about the stone, each displaying a small freshwater pearl. The MacLeans of Lochbuie and the Mackays – now descended to McNeills of Ugadale - have brooches of a similar period and style that has led some to see these as the work of itinerant descendants of the earlier court jewelers, from the days when there were a number of courts, as in Ireland. But this has been questioned due to the European rather than Celtic style of the patterns. When, a few years ago, a precise copy was commissioned of the brooch for exhibition at Dunollie, the original being too valuable to risk on display, the Edinburgh jeweller Hamilton & Inches discovered that, being used to making cast silver but not to the soldered creation of the cones supporting the pearls, they had to do extensive research into historical methods and explore new ways of working. This is not to say that earlier craftsmen did not have such skills, they must have had them to create the three brooches surviving in Argyll families. This has led to the belief that these brooches were urban made.

A carved stone figure saved from Gylen is believed to be of the one who commissioned the castle, Duncan himself. He is a trim-bearded man with his hair worn of a natural length; about his neck is a ruff in the fashion of that time, and on his chest, gathering a cloak about his shoulders, is a large brooch. About his waist is what looks like a chain belt holding the flaring folds of his pantaloons or belted coat. The stone is broken above the knees. The reasonable assumption is that this was Duncan MacDougall’s likeness when the castle was constructed, and that the brooch shown could have been meant to depict the ancient charm-stone in the new setting. He eventually succeeded his brother at Dunollie and from him that family descends[.](#p4) RCAHMS Argyll Inventory, vol.2 , Lorn, pp. 217-223

The charm-stone brooch in the late 16th century setting next appears during the Civil Wars of the 17th century. Montrose’s Lieutenant, Alastair MacColla, deserted the royal general to his defeat at Philliphaugh and had re-entered Argyll, burning and destroying as he went.

General Leslie and his forces caught up with Alastair at Rhunahaorain in Kintyre, but MacColla himself escaped to Gigha and later to Islay, abandoning a garrison of MacDougalls and others at Dunaverty near modern Southend. He left no boats in Kintyre, so Leslie sent Dougall Campbell of Inverawe north to find and bring boats. Meanwhile Leslie led the army south to attack Dunaverty. Upon the garrison there refusing to surrender, the castle was besieged and, at the exhortation of the Covenanting representative of the Kirk, many of the prisoners were killed. Only the son of Dunollie and his followers were spared, whom he was allowed to lead into exile in France. News of the slaughter at Dunaverty spread throughout Argyll.[[12]](#footnote-12)

After Inverawe arrived in Kintyre with the boats, Leslie and his army crossed to Gigha and then Islay, but although they captured Alastair MacColla’s father at Dunivaig, the son escaped to Ireland where he was killed. Meanwhile Dougall of Inverawe was sent north again to join Leslie’s commander who was about to besiege Dunollie. He in turn sent Dougall with a smaller force to attack the little garrison at Gylen on Kerrera, who were called upon to surrender and then to set the castle on fire, which they did.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The brooch of Lorn had evidently been sent to Gylen for safekeeping and it would not have been left in the burning tower. It seems likely that it was found on one of the prisoners. The Statistical Account states that it was taken by Inverawe but although it may have been handed to Inverawe by one of his men, it passed immediately into the hands of John Campbell of Bragleen. There is no Inverawe tradition or record of holding the brooch.

John Campbell of Bragleen was a hero in his day. Known as Iain Beag MacIain ’ic Dhòmhnuill, there are a number of legends about his prowess against MacColla. During the initial ravaging of Argyll by MacColla and his Irish in 1645-6, the house of Bragleen had been surrounded, with John himself inside. He burst through the thatch with his sword. MacColla called to him ‘How would you act to me if I were you?’ John answered that he would set him in a ring of his men and give him the chance to break out if he could. At that he leapt off the roof, sword in hand and dodged about looking for the weakest place in the ring of men. Suddenly he flung his sword in the air, and as all looked up to see upon whom it might fall, he made his escape. Perhaps the brooch came to Bragleen at Gylen as a kind of reward for his courage. That of course is legend and conjecture. But Gaelic legends often are found to have a basis in fact[.](#p6)

Lord Archibald Campbell (Ed.) Records of Argyll, 1884, Traditions of Alasdair MacDonald, pp. 193-197, gives a series of Bragleen – MacColla legends. Followed by a MacDougall – MacColla legend.

The Campbells, now Robertsons, of Bragleen were a branch of the Campbells of Lochnell, who are next heirs of the Campbell chiefly line should that fail. In 1819, John’s descendant, Major Campbell of Bragleen in Scamadale died, leaving no male heir but a widow and three daughters. This was after a period when so many families had lost responsibility for the communities on their lands following the Disarming Act after the 1745 emergency. Heritable jurisdictions were cancelled, so that the reasons for local leadership for defence or justice were removed. The linking of the Highland cattle economy with the richer Lowland economy had brought in cash rather than barter. The kindly custom of providing widows with liferent worked well until these were obliged to support more than one generation, when they upset the fragile balance of subsistence agriculture. Lands were being turned into estates and sold. One imagines that Bragleen’s widow looked into their charter chest and saw the brooch. She may have been in touch with Lochnell for advice as the head of their kindred. He was a trustee for his kinsman the late Major, who’s instructions had been that the brooch was not to be sold unless for the children’s education.

Colonel, later General, Duncan Campbell of Lochnell was also MP for Argyll and the Ayr boroughs. In 1794 he had raised the 98th, later renumbered the 91st Highland regiment that would become the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. He is said to have bought the brooch from the Bragleen family in order to provide for the education of the daughters, the eldest of whom married Mr. Robertson from whom the present Robertsons of Bragleen descend.

This was the ‘romantick’ era of Byron, Scott and MacPherson. While the paternal lands were passing into other hands and began to be seen as ‘property’ or ‘estates’ rather than as a responsibility for the support of communities, where the senior Tacksmen gave local leadership, this disjunction tended to encourage an interest in a romantic view of the hardships of the past. Whatever motivated Colonel Campbell of Lochnell, it was surely a kindly and even statesmanlike spirit that suggested that he donate the Brooch of Lorn once again to the MacDougalls of Dunollie, heirs of Somerled and erstwhile Lords of Argyll.

Due to the age of his father William of Dunollie, it was his son, Captain John MacDougall, younger of Dunollie, who accepted the brooch from Lochnell at a ceremony at Inveraray Castle in October 1824. One imagines them all dressed in the full regalia of the time, plaids, dirks, hunting horns and silver dags.

Today the Brooch of Lorn is seen as a focal icon for MacDougalls all over the world who, as if exiles, find their inheritance in their history far more interesting than many of those who live with it as an every-day experience. Their awareness of that history happily extends their sense of self and often results in support for the conservation and preservation of a rich inheritance to which we local people do not always give the same priority. The brooch, with those of Lochbuie and Ugadale, is also a unique part of the artistic culture of Scotland and Great Britain.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to Catherine Gillies of the MacDougall of Dunollie Preservation Trust for allowing me to use material from a draft of her paper on the subject of the Brooch of Lorn. That paper will ultimately provide the authoritative source for information on the Brooch of Lorn. I also thank Catherine Gilles for sending the photographs of the brooch, which are published by permission of the Trust.

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The Brooch of Lorn was mentioned by Sir Walter Scott in his narrative poem: “The Lord of the Isles”

Gem, ne’er wrought on Highland mountain,

Did the fairy of the fountain,

Or the mermaid of the wave,

Frame thee in some coral cave?

Did in Iceland’s darksome mine

Dwarf’s swarth hands thy metal twine?

Or, mortal-moulded, comest thou here,

From England’s love, or France’s fear?

Thy splenders nothing tell

Foreign art or faery spell,

Moulded thou for monarch’s use,

By the overweening Bruce,

When the royal robe he tied

O’er a heart of wrath and pride;

Thence in triumph wert thou torn,

By the victor hand of Lorn!

Acknowledgement: The above verses were sent in by Alison Blackwood, Oban.

The Battle of Bannockburn is usually hailed as “the” defining moment in Scottish history when Robert the Bruce’s victory over the English, confirmed the re-establishment of an independent Scotland. What is not usually mentioned in accounts of this battle, and the events leading up to it is that support for the Bruce was not universal and a sizable portion of the Scottish people including the Comyn’s, MacNabs and MacDougal’s, were his enemies, and with good reason. A sizable contingent of Scots were known to have been present, at Bannockburn, with the English forces including the above mentioned Comyns, MacNabs and MacDougals. The mention of the Macnabs can be found on the next page

This account of the battle of Bannockburn is taken from “Scottish Battles from Mons Graupius to Culloden” by John Sadler. Published in Great Britain in 1996 by Canongate Books Ltd, 14 High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1TE

The text and maps are presented as printed in the book, without alteration. The footnotes, however, are my own.

**THE ROAD TO BANNOCKBURN**

With Wallace dead, the mantle of leadership passed to Robert though, in the early years, the future king lived - as had his predecessor - the life of an outlaw. Bruce, however, had the inestimable advantage of noble birth and a legitimate claim to the throne. On 10 February 1306 he met with his arch-rival John Comyn in sacrosanct cloisters of Greyfriars' Church in Dumfries Harsh words passed between the two men, neither noted for his patience, and Bruce settled the argument with his dirk. Within five weeks, he was enthroned at Scone.

Experience had tempered the hot-blooded passion of the king's youth. He was dogged, single-minded, courageous, a superb warrior and natural leader who had the rare gift of being able to combine generalship with statesmanship; he would need both in abundance. He could be both violent and ruthless whilst capable of compassion; his conviction and charisma won over old enemies and promoted fierce loyalty. He chose his subordinates well. The names of Edward Bruce, Douglas and Randolph became synonymous with valor.

Edward of England, though aging, had not forgotten Scotland and he chose as his lieutenant his half-cousin Aymer de Valence, who also happened to be brother-in-law to the murdered Comyn. De Valence was given a free hand in his treatment of the Scottish rebels and set to work with a will. By June he had secured Perth and left a trail of gallows and grieving widows in his wake. Bruce rashly decided to take the offensive and on 18 June approached the town from the west but the English refused to be drawn and the Scots made camp in Methven Wood, an elevated position south of the Almond. Both discipline and intelligence were singularly lax. Men were scattered either in billets or foraging parties. Seizing the opportunity de Valence led his men out in a pre-dawn sortie and though Bruce and his partisans fought hard the Scots, were utterly routed and many made captive.

The king's fortunes were now at their lowest, a fugitive, hunted, his family dead or in chains, his wife and sister held, like captive birds in iron cages hung suspended over the battlements of Berwick and Roxburgh.

The very savagery of the repression guaranteed support for the rebels and, in the following year, the old tyrant died almost literally in the saddle as he prepared for yet another campaign. Though dead, his spirit seemed destined to live on - he left instructions for his son, now crowned Edward II, to continue the offensive and that the king's coffin, like some malevolent talisman, be carried before the army. Edward II was not the man his father had been; indolent, pleasure seeking, surrounded by favored catamites; war did not hold the same allure.

As the pressure eased, Bruce rebuilt his army. By the autumn of 1308 he commanded a force numbering some 700. However, worn out by his efforts, he fell sick at Inverurie whilst in the north. It was a dangerous moment, for the earl of Buchan had raised forces from Buchan and the north-east and the invalid had to be carried to safety through the sparse Foudland hills to Slioch in Drumblade, the cold November wind biting as the tiny army huddled in bare woodland. A series of savage little skirmishes, with English shafts flicking through the trees erupted as Buchan's men closed in, but the Scots broke contact, drawing off in good order towards Strathbogie and from there back to Inverurie. On 23 December Buchan made camp at Old Meldrum. His skirmishers pushed forward and ambushed some of Bruce's pickets. Though still weak, the king rose from his sickbed, donned his mail and led out his men. The sight of the king, at the head of his troops, had the desired effect on morale and the rebels swept down upon Buchan's force like the wrath of God.

The victory, though relatively minor and largely bloodless, proved a turning point. Harrying the north, Bruce stamped his will on the region and then turned westward, never allowing the momentum to slacken, the key fortress of Dunstaffnage fell to him whilst Edward Bruce and Douglas, the son of the defender of Berwick in 1296, took control of Galloway. Raiding down the length of the Tweed, they freed young Randolph, a captive since the defeat at Methven. Linlithgow fell by deception in 1313 and early in the following year Douglas stormed Roxburgh, and Randolph, in a lightning attack, seized Edinburgh.

Edward made no effort to stem the rot until 1310 when he came north in force. Declining battle, King Robert pursued a Fabian course until the English withdrew leaving Northumberland to bear the fury of Scottish vengeance. By 1314 Stirling Castle was the only major fortress that remained in English hands, her only significant claim to dominion. Soon Stirling was besieged and, according to custom, the castellan undertook to strike his colors if not relieved by 25 June. Stung into action by the peril attending this last remaining bastion, Edward summoned a vast array of English arms including the flower of his chivalry. The army, which mustered at Wark on 10 June, may have numbered as many as 17,000 including a substantial Scots contingent the Comyns, still unreconciled, MacDougall’s and **MacNabs**. A train of 200 wagons was needed to equip and feed this great host. Though Edward himself commanded in name, he relied heavily on the advice of a council of war made up of such seasoned warriors as the earls of Hereford and Gloucester.

Though King Robert was anxious to prevent the relief of Stirling, he could not hope to match the English numbers, relying, at best, on perhaps 5000 foot and 500 horse, pitifully few of whom were knights. Edward had longbow men drawn from the breadth of his dominions, from Wales, Ireland, and the northern shires. Bruce, by contrast, had but a few of those valiant bowmen from Ettrick, kin to those who had fallen at Falkirk and commanded now by Sir Alexander Keith. Behind the main Scots army came a motley of camp followers and barely armed militia, stiffened by clansmen from the west, mainly Robertsons under their chief Duncan Reamhair. This reserve, technically termed the 'small folk’, remained concealed, some way to the rear of the main position in a valley behind Coxer Hill. In total they may have numbered 2000.

The Scottish foot were deployed in four divisions; the first was commanded by Randolph, now Earl of Moray, and comprised the men of the north, from Ross, Moray, the citizenry of Inverness, Elgin, Nairn and Forres. Next came Edward Bruce who led the men of Buchan, Mar, Angus, the Mearns, Strathearn, Menteith and Lennox with a sprinkling of wild Galwegians. The third division was nominally under the command of Walter the High Steward, but as Walter was a boy the real power devolved on the redoubtable Douglas, whose followers were drawn from the untamed borderland and from Renfrew, Lanark and the west march. The last, and most powerful, brigade was the direct orders of the king, and beneath his standard fought the Highlanders led by Angus Og MacDonald of the Isles. Clans (if they may so be called at this early date) Cameron, Campbell, Fraser, Gordon, MacKintosh, MacLean, Macgregor, Ross and Sinclair were represented---the Pride and fury of the Gael allied to the cause of liberty.

On 17 June the English army marched from Wark, a dazzling array of the hot spring sun glancing from burnished plate and mail, a forest of pennons proclaiming the pride of English knighthood, the greatest host ever to cross the border. Edinburgh was reached without opposition and a halt was called to await revictualling by sea. On the 22nd the army marched on to Falkirk. The next morning the old Roman road echoed to the tramp of marching feet and the ring of hoof beats as the English set out for Stirling. They had two days left before the deadline expired.

23 JUNE 1314

One of the greatest failures of the English command, which may be said to have led to all of the rest, and these, were numerous, was their residual contempt for the Scots. Neither the defeat at Stirling Bridge, the dogged valor of Falkirk, nor, Bruce's inexorable rise had managed to dent this condescension.

Keith's light horse operated as a screen, the king's division formed the rearguard whilst the rest labored to improve the natural advantages of their position astride the road from Falkirk. The Bannock Burn, with its many feeders and uncertain ground between, created a strong base made stronger by lines of concealed pits and traps, sown with ghastly triangular spikes or caltrops designed specifically to maim horses.

The Scots occupied an elevated position overlooking the low ground known as the Carse of Balquhiderock, whilst the line of the road lay inside the wooded area called New Park, the actual track passing between the Borestone and the Bannock Burn[[14]](#footnote-14). The right front of the Scots was protected by scrubland and forest; the left followed the natural line of the escarpment swinging back towards St Ninian's Kirk[[15]](#footnote-15). King Edward had come to relieve Stirling Castle but the despised battalions of the rebel king now effectively barred his further advance. To overrun them meant a frontal assault on a strongly posted position over ground disturbingly unfavorable, especially to heavy cavalry. If he sought to outflank the Scots the only viable line of march lay through the Carse where the ground appeared scarcely more encouraging.

The previous evening King Robert had pulled his own brigade out of their earlier position at Torwood and redeployed along the fringe of trees crowding New Park. His brother's division was stationed on ground to the left, and to the left of him Randolph was drawn up by St. Ninian's, overlooking the Carse. Douglas took the rear by the Borestone whilst the light horse patrolled and the lightly armed followers remained hidden in dead ground.

Despite the difficulties posed by the terrain an English council of war determined upon a frontal assault combining both horse and foot, the latter mainly archers. A commanded party of between 500 and 800 strong under two proven knights, Clifford and de Bowmont, was to attempt a flanking maneuver by the margin of the Carse to interpose themselves between the Scots and the Castle. If the enemy were pushed back then they would be well placed to complete the rout.

As the English advanced one of their number Sir Henry de Bol spotted King Robert, ambling in front of the Scots line, doubtless giving a word of encouragement to his men. Spurring forward, lance level the fully armored de Bohun charged towards Bruce, an ungallant act considering the King was without mail and mounted only upon a humble garron[[16]](#footnote-16). He did, however, have his battle-axe and with matchless skill turned, almost at the last moment, to avoid the Englishman's thrust and standing in the stirrups, deal him a mighty blow cleaving helmet and skull.

The incompetent de Bohun was not the only English knight to have miscalculated. The whole advance was soon in difficulties. Order began to dissolve as obstacles, both natural and manmade, took their toll. The Scottish horse darted like kingfishers and the attack foundered. The Earl of Gloucester, attempting to restore order, was unhorsed and obliged to retire, ignominiously, on foot.

Clifford and de Bowmont, trotting briskly by the fringe of the Carse, had somehow escaped notice and the king was obliged to send a sharp rejoinder to Randolph. Once awakened, Randolph strove to make amends leading his brigade, spears bristling, towards the lower ground. Clifford could not resist the urge to strike a blow at these despised rebels and gave the order to charge. In doing so he not only missed his objective but also committed the cardinal folly of attacking whilst unsupported. English riders lapped around the solid phalanx, men and horses going down; at least one English knight, Sir Thomas Grey, was unhorsed, dragged unceremoniously beneath the Scottish spears and made captive. As the cavalry faltered the spearmen pushed forward, throwing the English back in disorder.

At around three o'clock King Edward called a further council of war, undoubtedly a somewhat chastened gathering. Further offensive action was ruled out, the king preferring instead to concentrate upon his primary concern, the relief of Stirling. Sir Robert Mowbray, the castellan, had slipped out of the fortress, and, at least in theory, may have considered his position relieved. Edward ordered that the army move more circumspectly towards Stirling fording the middle reaches of the Bannock Burn. It is unlikely that any of the English commanders seriously considered the possibility the Scots might attack.

The Carse, towards which the English advanced, was, at this time, an area of low-lying agricultural land, traversed by the Bannock Burn, the Pelstream and innumerable drainage ditches, some of which were affected by the ebb and flow of the tides. As the afternoon wore on the English struggled over the fords and ditches, the weight of men and horses jamming and slithering, chewing the soft ground into a quagmire. It is unlikely that any of the supply wagons were able to follow and the commissariat broke down altogether. As the light thickened it was a tired, hungry and dispirited army crammed into an area no more than half a mile square.

Bruce was inclined to let them go; to chance all on a single throw would daunt any general. The younger men, Randolph and Douglas, were all for attacking and legend relates that it was the urging of a recently defected knight, Sir Alexander Seton, that completed the King's resolve: 'Now's the time.' So be it.

24 JUNE 1314

The northern nights are short at this time of the year and usually mild. Sunrise on Monday, 24 June, the Feast of St John the Baptist, would be around 3:34 a.m. Swallowing down a hurried meal, those who had the stomach to eat, the Scots army heard Mass before 2.00 a.m. By 2.30 a.m. a pale light was already showing, as the Scots began their advance, the forest of spears giving dreadful note of their intent. As there was insufficient room for the schiltrons to advance in line the attack was delivered with the brigades deployed in echelon. In front and on the right marched Edward Bruce’s brigade, then Randolph, and Douglas; the king followed, his own strong division forming the rear with Keith’s horse as a reserve. Each division comprised eight files of 188 men, each warrior leaving one foot bare to ensure a sound grip. The “small folk” were moved up from their previous position to the rim of the high ground, ready to exploit any opportunity.

The night had been an unhappy experience for the English, few of whom had found either food or rest, though one of King Edward’s Scottish allies, the earl of Athol, had used the cover of darkness to “beat up” Bruce’s depot at Cambuskenneth Abbey, scoring a minor success and leaving Sir John Airth and his slender guard dead at their posts. The English king was not quite the fool he has been portrayed and though the sight of the Scots advance may have been startling the outcome was far from certain. The right of the English position was protected by the Bannock Burn itself and the English army still enjoyed numerical superiority. What they lacked was space, and by attacking in echelon the Scots could exploit any area of weakness so that, if the invaders were forced to give ground, they would be pushed back towards the morass around the Pelstream.

Both sides threw out skirmishers; English longbow men swapped missiles with Scottish slingers and archers. Though the longbow had the advantage of range the Scots were soon to close. Hungry for glory and having learnt nothing from the previous day’s debacle Gloucester swept forward at the head of his knights, compounding this folly by riding out without full armor, a mistake that cost him his life. The English crashed into Edward Bruce’s brigade, making little headway until, taken in flank by Randolph’s division, they precipitated a headlong flight scattering their own, already disordered skirmishers.

Packed as tightly as they were the solid mass of English foot utterly halted the advance and a savage melee ensued, English bills hacking Scottish spears with scarcely room for the dead and injured to fall. A body of King Edward's archers worked their way around to the left of the Scots and poured a deadly barrage into the massed ranks. The Scots’ own bowmen failed to make any effective response, casualties mounted. Keith's mounted reserve smashed into the unprotected flank of the English archers, driving the survivors back behind the struggling mass of foot.

For an hour the ranks remained locked, like two battered heavyweights, neither giving ground, though the Scots, better fed and less heavily accoutered tired less quickly. Douglas's brigade had been weakened by the flank attack from the English archers and the foot began to lap around his depleted files. For another twenty minutes or so the slaughter continued with undiminished fury, the Scots urged on by their officers chanting, ‘Push, push, push...’ as the relentless press continued. Ominous gaps began to appear in the English ranks, the first cracks as the dam prepares to give way, dead and dying choked the Carse, and defeat was near. Though he had fought bravely and well, King Edward had failed singularly to demonstrate any spark of generalship and was persuaded, guarded by 500 knights, to flee the stricken field.

Sir Giles D'Argentan, a renowned paladin, is said to have led the king towards the refuge of Stirling Castle, whereupon having seen his royal charge safe he returned unhesitatingly to the fight and spurring into the mass of Scots there met his death. As the Royal Standard vanished English morale foundered, at which point, with matchless timing, the final Scottish reserve, the 'small folk', appeared, sweeping jubilantly against the thinning ranks, picking up weapons from the fallen. This was too much. The English broke, though small groups continued to fight on with the fury of despair. Hundreds of fleeing men stumbled, fell and died in the churned waters of the Forth, Pelstream and Bannock Burn. The Carse became a butcher's yard. Before its confluence with Pelstream the Bannock Burn flowed swiftly through a narrow passage and here the press of struggling men and horses became truly dreadful. Many an English knight who, the day before, had glanced contemptuously at the ragtag Scots, ended his life here. 'Bannock Burn betwixt the braes of horses and men so charged was that upon drowned horses and man one might pass dry over it.'[[17]](#footnote-17)

The Battle of Bannockburn was over and the English army lay ruins; between 3000 and 4000 perished, 100 men of rank and their entire magnificent equipage fell into Scottish hands. Casualties amongst Bruce’s men were perhaps a tenth of those suffered by the English. De Mobray, accepting the reality of defeat, handed over the keys to the Castle whilst Edward and his retainers spurred south in ignominious flight. Bruce valued the Highlanders’ contribution so much so that he awarded the MacDonald’s the honor of holding the right flank of royal armies, (over 400 years later they would need to remind a Jacobite Pretender of this proud tradition.)

**Schiltron**: from Wikipedia:

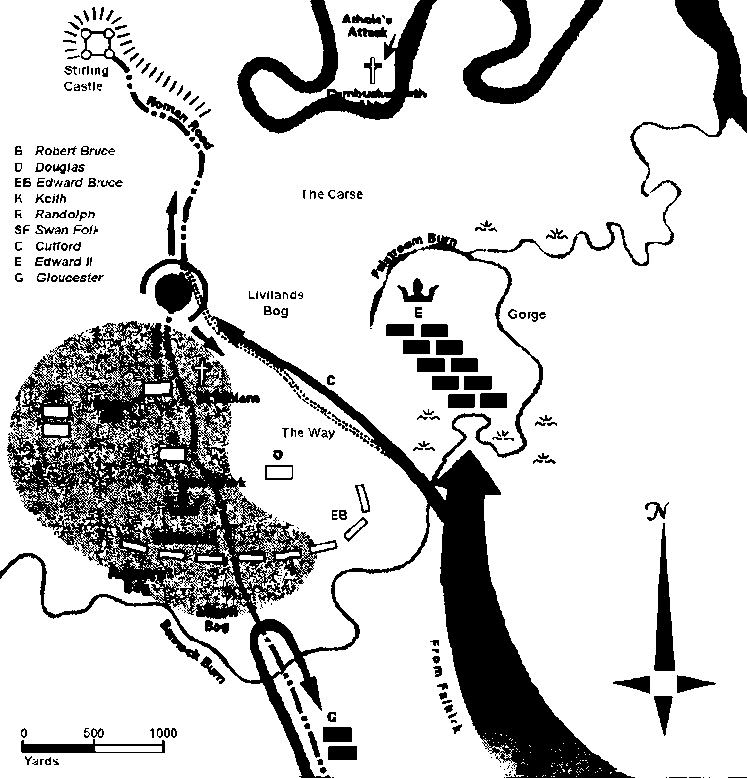
A compact body of troops forming a battle array, shield wall or phalanx. The term is most often associated with Scottish pike formations during the Wars of Scottish Independence in the late 13th and early 14th centuries

The offensive use of the schiltron is a tactical development credited to Robert the Bruce at Bannockburn. He had drilled his troops in the offensive use of the pike (requiring great discipline) and he was able to fight the English forces on flat, firm ground suitable for their large force of cavalry. Bruce's new tactic was a response to a crushing defeat for the Scots at Falkirk when the first recorded use of the schiltron by a Scottish army failed in the face of a combination of Welsh longbows, English archers and English cavalry.

Detailed descriptions of the formation are rare but those given by English chroniclers of Bannockburn demonstrate the essential features:

"They had axes at their sides and lances in their hands. They advanced like a thick-set hedge and such a phalanx could not easily be broken."

"They were all on foot; picked men they were, enthusiastic, armed with keen axes, and other weapons, and with their shields closely locked in front of them, they formed an impenetrable phalanx ..."[

Battle of Bannockburn

23 June 1314 (above)

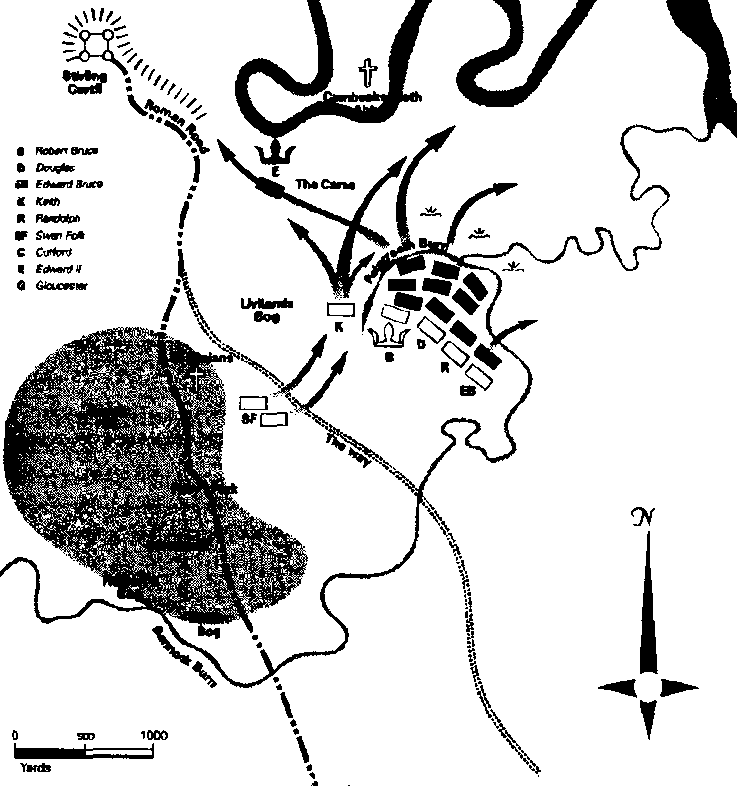
24 June 1314 (below)

The crowns indicate the position of the two kings. The English forces under Edward are to the right, the gray area at left that of the Scots under Bruce.

The Scots Schiltrom at Bannockburn

Scottish infantry at the battle of the Standard,in 1138 were described as carrying “lances of extraordinary length.” The source is most likely Aelred, Abbott of Rievaulx, who had been educated at the Scottish court and who is the primary source for this battle.

This would not mean that such weapons were as long as they were to become by the 14th century in Scottish hands, but they were noticeably longer than those carried by English infantry in the 12th century. Individually long spears and pikes are not handy weapons, but are formidable used en masse. Descriptions of Schiltroms vary particularly in the number of ranks in which they were formed. The longer the spear or pike, the deeper the formation could be, anything from three or four ranks deep, to a column of perhaps twice or more of that depth.

Unless such a formation has its flanks well protected by supporting troops, it is vulnerable to attack on its flanks. It can be very formidable going forward, if well-led, well-trained, well-disciplined and well-supported, but it is slow to maneuver. Defensively, with secure flanks, it was pretty much invulnerable except to sustained missile attack supported by infantry or cavalry to exploit disorder and gaps.

Scottish cavalry suffered from the absence of anything much bigger than a pony and Scots archery was not much either. Highland troops were usually unavailable and much of Scottish history is about lowland kings trying to control Highland Chiefs.

The wars for Edward I were triggered by the Treaty of Corbeil and his determination the Scots were failing to live up to their obligations to him, laid out during the Great Cause at the beginning of the 1290's, when he settled the vacant Scottish throne on John Balliol. There is some consideration of the Scots allying with the French, but the general trend of Edward's actions, indicated a wish to enforce as tight a control over Scotland through Balliol as possible.

The Scottish Pike formations, unlike the Swiss, were not very successful and Bannockburn is the exception to the rule, after which battle Robert Bruce still relied on his old guerilla tactics.

The English were able to draw on a pool of manpower six times the size of the Scots, due to population sizes and monetary resources. While this does not always translate into superiority in numbers on the battlefield, it does have an effect, on morale and the type of troops that show up. The Scots knew the English could field larger armies, and that set-piece battles were not likely to go their way.

The English knew they could field larger armies and could rely on reasonably good combined arms tactics. They recruited a large proportion of archers as well as infantry and cavalry. The two battles the English are renowned for losing - Stirling Bridge and Bannockburn - are where they were constrained by geography (and bad generalship) to fight on the best terms possible for the Scots. Most other battles resulted in the Scots getting shot full of arrows, then crushed (literally, as was the case at Dupplin Moor).

The English also liked set-piece battles because it gave them a target. The Scottish wars are full of contrasts, the English trying to create foci and the Scots trying to disperse them. The English built castles, keeps, and fortifications to give them strong points, places to centre their administration. The Scots dismantled most of them, leaving administration dispersed amongst magnates, and not locked down to specific places to be defended. The English try to get set-piece battles, where they could get as many enemies as possible together to mow them down and overawe them. The Scots rarely saw a purpose in this, as it rarely benefited them. So they bided their time, striking here, there, wherever the English weren't, undermining the foundations so that the strong points would fall from lack of mutual support, and make the campaigns the English were mounting an exercise in frustration and emptying the Edwards' purses.

Pike men are not good for pursuing this policy, they move too slowly, are not good for small-unit actions and require tight cohesion rather than the dispersal that characterized the Scottish methods for handling the English. Their only use is those situations where a large fight is inevitable, and then only when they are either well-supported by other types of troops such as cavalry and archers, or their enemy refuses fight in any way other than to the pike men’s strengths.

Big battles are a risk, if the Scots could pick and choose and drastically increase the damage their attacks were doing while losing negligible casualties, they were going to do so. Picking the battle usually goes to whoever can move the quickest.

The star of the wars for the Scots isn't the schiltrom, it is another type of fighter, the hobelar. A light horseman, spear-armed, they were the antithesis of the heavy infantry pike. They were poor at taking on heavy cavalry or heavy infantry, but that wasn't their job. They depended entirely on their mobility - the ability to get in quickly, do the job, and get out. The only real counter to this is to develop hobelar forces of your own, which the English did. The Scots Schiltron came along just before the English Longbow. Both were a solution to the problem of dealing with the heavy horsed cavalry of the time.

The 'pike' needs reasonably high quality infantry who are both disciplined and reasonably well drilled. The longbow requires training as well, but it doesn't need to be in a military context and can be fitted in on a Sunday morning disguised as social activity. Pike drill needs a lot of people, trained officers and a level of motivation way above that needed to do some archery.

A couple of hundred years later the English town militias were able to produce pike units of reasonable quality, because they had to. Before that any pike units were regular, and there aren’t any regulars in fourteenth century Scotland...

Schiltroms don’t tend to move, and are defensive formations, but there were just enough examples - Stirling Bridge, Bannockburn, the Weardale campaign in 1327, Culblean in 1335 - to tell the Scots they could win. That special circumstances existed at all of them and one (Weardale) was a raid that managed to avoid engagement, didn't matter, it was the perception of the victories.

At [Dupplin Moor] the Scots hit hard, nearly every chronicle refers to the English being forced back from the impact of the charge, about twenty or thirty paces. However, the English were similarly armed,

the English didn’t only use bowmen. Their tactics always required a core of heavy infantry or dismounted men-at-arms, though usually a far smaller proportion to that of the Scots or French. Especially at Dupplin - they had captured several hundred Scottish pikes at Dunfermline abbey and were using them at the time. The weapons would have been similar regardless, as the same result ensued at Halidon Hill. After that initial push back, the English managed to hold the line. Columns aren’t gauranteed to break what they hit, after all.

1. By Norwegians the author means those Norse primarily from Norway, many of whom settled in the western Isles. The “long pole-axes” would be the so-called Danish Axe which had a wide, thin blade, with pronounced "horns" at both the toe and heel of the bit and a haft usually between 4 and 6 feet long [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This seems to be an attempt to render Mac-an-deoir or Dewar. The Mac-an-deoir or Dewar was the hereditary custodian of the *Bachuil*, crozier, or *cuigreach* of St. Fillan. The “interpretation” of the name as Durward or Porterson may arise from the, incorrect, notion that they were hereditary door keepers (porters) of St Fillans Chapel in Strathfillian. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The chiefs of the Clan Macnab are consistently referred to as being big men and of great strength, witness Francis the 16th chief who was over six feet and of large proportions. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Angus Og MacDonald lord of Islay. The title of Lord of the Isles was first assumed in 1334 by his son John after he married the heir to the MacRuari lands uniting them with Argyll and the MacDonald lordship to recreate Somelieds kingdom of the Isles [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Rathlin Island (Irish and Scottish Gaelic: Reachlainn, also Reachra in Scottish Gaelic) is an island off the coast of County Antrim in Northern Ireland, and is the northernmost point of the region. Six miles from the mainland, Rathlin the only inhabited offshore island in Northern Ireland, and is the most northerly inhabited island off the Irish coast. The L-shaped island is 4 mi from east to west, and 2.5 mi from north to south. Rathlin is located only 15.5 mi from the Mull of Kintyre, the southern tip of Scotland's Kintyre peninsula. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Goffrey Barrow in “Robert Bruce & the Community of The Realm of Scotland” names MacNaughton of Cowal as being with MacDougall of Lorn at Dal Righ. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Mac-an-deoirs or Dewar, is the designation of the hereditary custodian of the crozier of St. Fillan. Dewars were not followers of MacNab or the hereditary door-keepers of St Fillan’s church but associated only with St. Fillan as keepers of his relics. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The title Lord of the Isles was first used by John MacDonald, son of Angus Og MacDonald in 1334 when he inherited all of the MacDonald lands, along with those forfeited by the MacDougalls after Bannockburn, and married Amie MacRuari, sole heir to the MacRuarie lordship. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Had this marriage taken place and produced an heir who lived to rule and produce an heir, the two kingdoms would have been united some 250 years before the ascension of James the VI and I to the throne of England. Both kingdoms would have been spared centuries of warfare and economic destruction. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Because John Balliol was still living, seizing the throne in this manner makes the Bruce a usurper, in spite of Balliol’s having been deposed by Edward. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Alastair Campbell of Airds, A History of Clan Campbell, vol.1, Appendix 5, pp. 299-304, Crystal Balls and Brooches, Edinburgh University Press, 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Inverawe Papers in NLS, an account of the siege of Dunaverty by and Englishman present. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. David Stevenson, Alastair MacColla and the Highland Problem in the 17th Century, John Donald 1980, and Inverawe Papers in NLS. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Burn = in Scots a small stream [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Kirk - in Scots a church [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. I.e. Bruce was riding a pony not his warhorse [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The Bannock Burn was so filled with the bodies of men and horses that it was possible to walk dry shod from bank to bank. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)