

FOURTH MEETING—24th January, 1905.

NOTES FOR A NEW HISTORY  
OF STIRLING.

PART VI.

THE BATTLE OF STIRLING BRIDGE—THE  
KILDEAN MYTH.

(BY W. B. COOK.)

Standing, on a September day, on the battlements of Stirling Castle, or on the tower that crowns the Abbey Craig, and surveying with enchanted eye the plain extended beneath, one can hardly realise that the peaceful, smiling valley, with its variegated fields of green pasture and golden grain was, on just such a day over six centuries ago, the scene of a fierce and deadly struggle between hosts of armed men; or that the river, quietly winding its way to the sea, and forming links of surpassing beauty, was choked with bodies of the drowning and the dead, while all around terror and confusion reigned supreme. On that fateful day—Wednesday, the third of the Ides of September, 1297, being the 11th day of the month—was fought the battle of Stirling Bridge, the first great victory achieved by Sir William Wallace and his brave followers in the Scottish War of Independence. Singular to relate, this event, so striking in itself and so momentous in its results, has no contemporary Scottish chronicler—at least, no account of it by a native writer is known to exist. Indeed, so absolute and complete is the silence of the period that until quite recently some shallow critics of Scottish history, assuming a superior air, suggested that Wallace was a mythical or legendary personage, like the English King Arthur, and that his renowned victory at Stirling was a figment of the perfervid imagination of the Scots. Fortunately, the official English Records published by the Government have established not only the existence of Wallace and his services to his country but the fact that he was the only Scotsman excluded from all hope of pardon by Edward I., the "Hammer of the Scots," when that monarch got the upper hand in 1304. The national champion stood alone against the might

and power of England, and when he was betrayed by the "fause Menteith," and taken captive to London, he was, after a mock trial, summarily executed as the greatest and most formidable enemy of the oppressor. One of the noble hero's limbs was sent to Stirling to be hung up (as the sentence sets forth) "for the terror and punishment of the passers by." This relic was probably affixed to a gibbet in front of one of the towers at the old entrance to Stirling Castle, afterwards known as Wallis Tower.(1) Although not noticed in any local history, so far as I know, you will perhaps agree with me that this circumstance confers greater honour and glory on Stirling than any other event recorded in its annals.(2)

Barbour, whose poem of "The Brus" was written about the year 1360, was really the earliest historian of Scotland, and it is a remarkable thing that in his great work he never mentions Wallace's name. His immediate purpose, of course, was to celebrate the achievements of Robert the Bruce, while Wallace nominally served John Baliol, Bruce's rival to the throne, but it is none the less surprising that the poet did not devote a line to the name and fame of the man who foiled the tyrant's power, and rendered possible the ultimate deliverance of his country from the English yoke which was so happily effected by Bruce at Bannockburn. The most feasible explanation of Barbour's silence is that he counted it unnecessary to refer to Wallace, whose feats of arms were the common talk of the country. We know from Wynton's rhyming "Cronykil" that "great Gestis" were made of Wallace's "gud dedis and manhad," although they did not contain everything he "wrocht" in his time, and Wynton himself says that

"Quha all hys dedis of prys wald dyte,  
Hym worthyed a great buke to wryte."

Sir Walter Scott, speaking of Wallace, remarks, "It is a great pity we do not know exactly the

(1) Ex-Rolls, vol. iii., p. 244.

(2) The *Chronicon de Lanercost* (p. 203) states that Wallace's right foot was sent to Perth and his left to Aberdeen, but the official record of the legal proceedings distinctly bears that the third quarter was to be sent to Stirling, and Aberdeen is not mentioned.

history of this brave man, for at the time when he lived every man was so busy fighting that there was no person to write down the history of what took place; and afterwards, when there was more leisure for composition, the truths that were collected were greatly mingled with falsehood." No doubt, Sir Walter had in his mind the wonderful poem composed by Blind Harry the Minstrel, who flourished after Wynton, and, in order to magnify his hero, attributed to him adventures and achievements which legend had attached to his name, but which had little or no foundation in fact. Probably the late Marquess of Bute was right in his suggestion that some of the adventures attributed by Blind Harry to Sir William Wallace were really those of his two brothers,(3) who were also patriots who fought and died for their country. At the same time, Blind Harry's poem is not to be despised, but, on the contrary, is worthy of all praise as having "for four centuries nursed the spirit of independence which has been so conspicuous a characteristic of the Scottish people."(4). The Prior of Lochleven, who wrote his "Cronykil" shortly after Barbour's time, gives a brief but graphic description of the battle of Stirling Bridge. The bridge itself he calls the "bryg off Forth," but Blind Harry is more definite. "How Wallace slew the Treasurer of England at the Bridge of Stirling" is the heading of the chapter devoted to the battle, and it is here that the story is first told of how the wooden bridge was prepared as a trap for the English, and how at the critical moment good John Wright struck out the roller sustaining the bridge, and "The lave gaed down when that the pin out-goes," an incident to which the Wrights of Broom owed their "tee-name" of "Pin-Wright." The Scottish historians, beginning with Fordun, and including John Major, Hector Boece, Thomas Dempster, George Buchanan, and Bishop Leslie, agree in locating the battle at Stirling Bridge; they make no mention of Kildean or of any bridge there.

(3) *The Early Days of Sir William Wallace* (Paisley, 1876), p. 15.

(4) *Sir William Wallace: a Critical Study of his Biographer, Blind Harry* (Aberdeen, 1888), p. 8.

But let us go back to the battle itself. Blind Harry professes to base his poem on a Latin history of Wallace written by John Blair, the hero's chaplain, but if such a work ever existed it is irretrievably lost, with the other "Gestis" referred to by Wynton, and for a contemporary account of the battle at Stirling we have to go to the English chroniclers in the time of Edward I., who died in 1306. The authentic writings of the period include what are known as the Harleian MS., the Cottonian MS., and the chronicles or histories of Walter de Hemingburgh (sometimes called Hemingford) and Nicholas Trivet. Extracts from these are given in the original Latin in "The Wallace Papers," a volume published by the Maitland Club in 1844, but one of them will suffice for my purpose, and I select Hemingburgh, not only because his account of the battle is the fullest, but because his work as a whole appears to be written in a spirit of fairness and with a creditable regard for accuracy. It is true that, in common with all the English writers of the time, he calls Wallace a public robber and other opprobrious names, but this need not surprise us when we find a modern writer, and a Scotsman to boot, asserting that the national hero was a common thief who stole a poor woman's beer. Although I have shown in the public press that Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart., makes this serious charge against Sir William Wallace upon evidence that would not hang a dog, and that there were several contemporary William Wallaces, any one of whom might with much more probability have committed the offence, Sir Herbert has not had the grace to acknowledge that he may be mistaken. He reminds one of the ill-natured gossip who tried to besmirch the fair fame of Burns' "Highland Mary," because he found that a certain Mary Campbell of loose character figured conspicuously in the Kirk Session records of Dundonald Parish. I cry shame on the Scot—unworthy of the name—who used his opportunity as the writer of a volume of a patriotic series to defame the purest as well as the bravest patriot Scotland ever saw!

"A soul supreme, in each hard conflict tried;  
Above all pain, all passion, and all pride,  
The frown of power, the blast of public breath,  
The love of lucre, and the dread of death."

Following, for the most part, the literal translation of Hemingburgh given by the late Mr

William Burns in his work on "The Scottish War of Independence," a history of more value than the productions of some modern historians of greater fame, marks the significance of the heading which the English chronicler gives to the section dealing with the Battle of Stirling Bridge:—"Quomodo decepti sunt nostri et devicti apud *Stryvelyn*"—"How we were deceived and defeated at Stirling." On the fourth of the Ides of September, i.e., the 10th day of the month, the Earl of Warren, after a conference with the Earl of Lennox and the Steward of Scotland, who were hesitating whether they should support Wallace or his enemies, gave orders that all should be prepared on the following day to cross the bridge at Stirling. Early in the morning, more than 5000 (another MS. has 1000, which is more likely) Welsh foot soldiers did, in fact, cross the bridge, but returned because the Earl, sunk in slumber, had not yet left the camp on the Gowan Hills, which at that time sloped gently down to the level of the river bank. When, after a full hour, the slothful Surrey awoke, and all were ready armed, he proceeded on the spot (as the custom was on such occasions) to confer the rank of knighthood upon a number of youthful aspirants, to many of whom the coming field was their last. Hemingburgh then goes on to relate the despatch of two friars of the predicate order, or Blackfrairs, by the English leaders, to the Scots, who, with that robber William Wallace, lay concealed on the other side of the mount above the Abbey of Cambuskenneth (the Abbot's Crag) to see if yet perchance they were prepared to embrace such terms of peace as were tendered to them. But the robber replied, "Carry back to those who sent you this message, that we are not come here to sue for peace, but prepared for battle to avenge our wrongs and liberate our country. Let them come when they please, they will find us prepared to meet them even to their beards" (*etiam in barbas eorum*). If Hemingburgh had done no more than preserve for us these noble and heroic words of Sir William Wallace, we should be thankful to him, and we can easily forgive the hard names he calls Wallace, and his description of the Scottish leader's reply as an "insolent message." It had, according to the chronicler, a great effect on the English soldiers, who almost with one voice cried out, "Let us advance (or ascend) to them in spite of their

threats." A council of war being held, Sir Richard Lundin, a Scottish knight who had surrendered to the English at Irvine a few months previously (although Blind Harry retains him among Wallace's supporters) gave his opinion to the Earl of Surrey in the following words:—"My lord, if we attempt to cross the bridge we are dead men, for we cannot do so unless by two at a time, with the enemy on our flank, and able to attack us at pleasure with one front. But not far from hence there is a certain ford—(*quoddam vadum*)—where we may pass, sixty (another MS. says forty) abreast. Now, therefore, put under my command five hundred horsemen, with a suitable number of footmen, and with them I shall attack the enemy from behind, while meantime you, my lord Earl, and those with you, may cross the bridge in safety." This was sound advice from one who knew the country, but, fortunately, Warren was too proud to take it, taunted as he was by Sir Hugh Cressingham, the King's treasurer, with causing delay and increasing the expense of the expedition sent to extinguish Wallace and the Scots. Hemingburgh suspends his narrative here to exclaim, "Astounding to relate, but terrible in the result, that so many men of wisdom and experience, knowing the enemy to be on the watch, should have crossed a narrow bridge where two horsemen—(Trivet says "two or three")—could with difficulty pass at a time!" Then he shows how completely the English were caught or trapped. "Nor was there," he says, "in the whole kingdom of Scotland a spot so favourable for enclosing (*ad concludendum*) the English in the hands of the Scots, or a multitude in the hands of a few." When we come to consider the topography of the country, we shall see how correctly the historian describes the situation, and we can well believe his statement that he had his information from eyewitnesses of the fight. It appears that those who crossed first carried with them the royal standard and the Earl of Surrey's banner, but the Earl himself waited on the south side of the river, the leader of the advance being a brave knight, Sir Marmaduke Twenge. Only as many were allowed to cross the bridge as Wallace thought himself able to cope with, and while the Scots were emerging from their shelter behind the Abbey Craig, and Sir Marmaduke Twenge was gallantly advancing to meet them, a body of Wallace's men,

taking a circuit, succeeded in blocking the north end of the bridge, and formed in schiltrons or wedges to prevent the crossing of any more of the enemy and the return of those who had already crossed. The English standard-bearers turned, and Sir Marmaduke Twenge, after a sharp skirmish, having been led on by a feint of the Scots as if they were retreating, found that his support was cut off. Riding back to the bridge, he cut his way with great valour through the opposing schiltrons, and re-crossed the bridge, which shows that at this stage of the fight it was still standing. Sir Marmaduke's followers were not so lucky. A hundred horsemen and five thousand foot soldiers fell a sacrifice to the victorious Wallace, among them being the royal treasurer, who is said, but not by Hemingburgh, to have been smitten down with one blow of Wallace's mighty sword, now preserved in the National Monument on the Abbey Craig.(5) Hemingburgh, who was a monk, does not scruple to perpetrate a pun at the expense of the unfortunate Cressingham, who was an ecclesiastic and held the cure of many souls, but preferred a more active life. Having in time past, says Hemingburgh, struck others with terror by the spear of his tongue in many parts, he perished at last by the spears of evil men. The Scots are said to have flayed him and made belts of his skin, but it is to be hoped this is merely an exaggeration of the English chroniclers, who regarded the Scots as barbarians. Some of the English who failed to reach the bridge managed to cross the river by swimming, and Hemingburgh mentions that one knight with great difficulty swam the river on horseback in complete armour. Several thousands were drowned, and the rout of the English was complete. The Steward and the Earl of Lennox, who with their followers were concealed in the woods(6) behind the neighbouring heights, on seeing that event, made an attack on the retreating army and slew many, particularly of the fugitives, seizing much spoil and carrying away the loaded waggons among the hollows and marshes.

(5) One of the old chroniclers says Cressingham was slain *ad vicum Craigie*, at Craig Street, or *la chaucee*, the causeway.

(6) *Collis*, in Hemingburgh's Chronicle, is rendered Pollis in Harleian MS., and may stand for Powis or Polmaise.

"Our leader, the Earl," continues our author, "remaining on this side the bridge, immediately on Sir Marmaduke and his party having achieved the passage, ordered the bridge to be broken down and burned, and committed the custody of the Castle of Stirling to that knight, promising faithfully that within ten weeks he would return to his assistance with ample forces. Having made this promise, forgetting his own advanced age, he fled to Berwick in such haste that the horse on which he rode, when put up in the stable of the Minorite friars, was never able to touch food. Thence he proceeded to join the King's son in the south, leaving the north country utterly deserted."

Omitting details, this is the circumstantial account of the battle by the contemporaneous historian, and it is essential that it should be kept in view when we come to consider the question of the site of the bridge over the river Forth, which he calls the bridge at Stirling. Our topography must consist with authentic history, and if any local legend or tradition disagrees with it, such tradition or legend must be set aside.

The carse or level ground lying between the Abbey Craig on the east and the river Forth on the west is over a mile in breadth, if we take a straight line across. This imaginary line pretty equally divides the ground lengthwise. Above the line it stretches northwards for nearly a mile, being bounded on the east and north by the coast line of the primeval ocean, and on the west by the rivers Forth and Allan. Below the line the eastern boundary is, for the greater part, the river Forth, which is also the boundary to the south and west. The south-west corner is a narrow tongue of land opposite Kildean, while another U-shaped peninsula runs almost due south, the point of which is opposite part of the lands of Shiphaugh. An army crossing the river at Kildean would reach an area about 200 yards broad, widening out to nearly double that extent in a distance of 300 yards, and at 600 yards from the river bank the army would find itself in a plain two miles long by a mile broad. Crossing the river at the point to the west of the southern peninsula where the old Bridge of Stirling now stands, an army would land in an area 625 yards wide, but narrowing to 350 in a distance of less than 300 yards. Stirling Bridge is only three-quarters of a mile from the Abbey Craig, while a



bridge at Kildean would be fully a mile and a-half distant.

We are now in a position to follow and understand the movements so minutely described by Hemingburgh. No catching or trapping of the English such as he relates could have been possible if they had crossed the river at Kildean. The conformation of the ground, as I have shown, would have admitted of their reaching a wide plain 600 yards from the landing-place, where they could easily have executed the flanking movement suggested by Sir Richard Lundin, and probably surrounded the little army of the Scots. Mr Burns aptly remarks, "On the assumption that the bridge was at Kildean, and the Scots posted at the Abbey Craig, then the whole English army might have passed and formed at leisure.

Wallace's army must have traversed a considerable extent of level ground before reaching the bridge, and thus exposed to the English cavalry and archers." (7) But he goes astray when, overlooking the peninsula on which the north end of Stirling Bridge rests, he adds that all the presumptions are in favour of the bridge being connected with the sort of peninsula on which stood the Abbey of Cambuskenneth, while our latest historian, Professor Hume Brown, not only repeats this error, but gives a map showing a bridge over the forth at the Abbey Ferry, where we have all been so anxious a bridge should be erected. No doubt the mistake arises from the fact that some of the English writers mention the Abbey of Cambuskenneth as being near the scene of the battle, which they call the Battle of Cambuskenneth, and to a stranger unacquainted with the winding of the river it would appear as if the Abbey stood on the same loop as the Bridge of Stirling. Certainly, no eyewitness could have fallen into this natural mistake if the bridge had been at Kildean. But there are other military reasons against the supposition that there was a bridge at this point. If a bridge stood there at the time of the battle, and Wallace managed to seize the north end of it, how could that fact, or even the fall of the bridge by John Wright's hammer, stop the passage of the English? The whole army could have easily crossed the bed of the river, as the water would not be more than

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(7) The Scottish War of Independence, pp. 445-453.

two feet deep at low tide. It may be gathered from Sir Richard Lundin's advice that the tide was out and the river fordable, and I have made a computation of the actual state of the water on the day of the battle, which proves this to be the case. I find that high water that morning was at seven minutes past two o'clock, so that when the English began to cross after the delay waiting for their leader and the result of the friars' mission to Wallace (say between seven and eight o'clock), the river must have been almost at low water mark.(8) Wallace would consequently have been wasting his energy and jeopardising his army in resisting the crossing of the enemy at that point. Those who hold the Kildean theory have also to account for the drowning of so many men in shallow water, which a knight in full armour would have thought nothing of riding through. On the other hand, the river at the north end of Stirling Bridge is both deep and dangerous, one hole being about 20 feet deep at low water. Longfellow's Prince Henry in *The Golden Legend* says:—

"God's blessings on the architects who build  
The bridges o'er swift rivers and abysses  
Before impassable to human feet,"

but a bridge over a fordable stream like the Forth at Kildean would scarcely be worth a blessing on its builder. I have no doubt myself that the ford which Sir Richard Lundin advised the Earl of Surrey to use was at Kildean. What ford could he have meant if the council of war had taken

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(8) The process by which this result was arrived at may be briefly explained. Easter Sunday, as shown by the tables, fell, in 1297, on the 14th April, or the 21st of the month according to the present style of reckoning. By ascertaining the golden number of the year and its dominical or Sunday letter, it is seen that it was full moon on the 18th April, and the calculation to the 11th September is easy. The moon was twelve days old on that date, and high water at Leith was at 12.45 a.m., to which has to be added 1 hour 22 minutes for the time at Stirling. The year 1867 coincided in every particular—golden number, dominical letter, changes of the moon, and tides—with the year 1297. The almanac for that year may be referred to for checking my calculation.

place at a bridge situated at Kildean? There is no other within several miles. Mr Burns shows a want of knowledge of the locality when he says: "When we are told of Sir Richard Lundin's proposal to pass the river with a small party by a neighbouring ford, we naturally inquire first, whether such a ford has been known to exist? without finding any trace of it; and, second, if a ford did exist, why should not the whole army have made use of it?"(9) The answer to the first question is that a ford did exist at Kildean, and is duly marked on old authoritative maps. Likely enough it was the ford by which King Edward, directed, as Trivet says, by the Lord, but more probably taught by the experience of 1297, crossed the Forth with his whole army in 1303, when John Comyn attempted to repeat Wallace's victory, but made the fatal mistake of destroying Stirling Bridge, thus forcing the English to find a ford further up the river. It is also the ford which is supposed to have been used by Montrose in 1645 for the passage of his army to the battle of Kilsyth. The answer to the second question is that the English general doubtless considered it prudent, as Hemingburgh says, not to divide his forces, as he would have had to guard Stirling Bridge against the Scots, and if his whole army had passed at Kildean, he would have been dangerously far from his base, as retreat might have been impossible, and Stirling Castle would have been imperilled. Even Surrey's contempt for his foe would not blind him to the necessity for taking ordinary precautions. From the English point of view, therefore, as well as that of the Scots, there are military considerations which negative the idea that there was a bridge at Kildean in 1297.

Let us see, then, in the light of local knowledge, and by the guidance of history, how Wallace contrived to entrap his enemies and defeat them with such a tremendous slaughter.

Arriving from Dundee early in September with the intention of checking the English invasion at the Forth, the Scottish general kept his forces concealed behind the Abbey Craig, so that the garrison of Stirling Castle might not discover their number. Those of the Highland clans favourable to the national cause who had not joined the army before its march south came

(9) The Scottish War of Independence, p. 457.

down through the pass at Keir, and, according to local tradition, crossed the Allan at Nether-ton ford, and passed through Cornton Vale and Spittal to the Abbey Craig. A careful inspection of the ground showed Wallace that if he once got the English over Stirling Bridge into the peninsula of Bridgehaugh, he would have them at his mercy. No doubt, he relied on their ignorance of the country and its deceptive appearance when viewed from the Gowan Hills, to lead them into a trap. We must conceive the flat land as a vast marsh or bog, bordered by trees and rank vegetation on the river banks, which served to hide the windings of the Forth, perplexing enough even to-day to anyone who tries to follow them without a map, and, to a stranger, utterly bewildering. In the short time Wallace had to spare before the arrival of Surrey and Cressing-ham, he would do what he could to prepare for their reception, but that the bridge was tampered with on this occasion is doubtful. It was not necessary for carrying out the skilful tactics of Wallace. How anxiously must he have watched the movements of the enemy on the morning of the 11th, to see whether his plan was likely to be successful. His scouts kept a sharp eye on the opposite bank of the river, and when they reported that there was to be no crossing at Kildean, but that the English were to come by Stirling Bridge, the Scottish chief must have felt confident of victory. His enemies were entering the trap he had hoped they would do. But he did not hurry to catch them. The thousand Welshmen who crossed the bridge in the morning while their general was sleeping in his tent were not sufficient to tempt him from his secure base behind the hill. He flew at higher game. The retreat of the Welsh vanguard would cause a fear that the English plan had been changed, and that after all their forces were to be divided and the river crossed at Kildean. If this had been done, Wallace, with only 10,000 men against 30,000 or 40,000, would scarcely have ventured to give battle, but would have waited for a more favourable opportunity. There was, however, no alteration of the English tactics; the advance by the bridge was only delayed by the laziness of their leader. Again the Welsh soldiers crossed the river, followed by the English cavalry under Sir Marmaduke Twenge and Treasurer Cressing-ham. Mr Alexander Brunton of Inverkeithing,

who compiled a most instructive "Life of Sir William Wallace" from old histories, says that the bridge, being the great passage from the south and north of Scotland, and having to carry large wagons with provisions to the army and warlike instruments, such as battering rams and other munitions of war, must have been of respectable width—very likely as broad as an ordinary cart road, say fifteen feet, and eight foot soldiers could have marched abreast over it.(10) The width of the roadway over the Old Bridge is only thirteen feet, and that of the older bridge is more likely to have been less than greater, while the absence of parapet walls would tend to reduce the number that could walk safely abreast, and, consequently, the rate of progress. Mr Brunton makes a curious calculation that 500 soldiers must have marched across the bridge per minute, but, according to his own allowance of a yard for each rank of six men the bridge could not hold more than 500, and it would surely take more than a minute to land that number on the opposite side, even if there was a constant stream. Taking the rate at 100 per minute, 15,000 would cross in two hours and a half, and it is not likely Wallace allowed so many to get over. When he saw that the large body massed in the thirty acres of Bridgehaugh were making preparations to advance against him, he sent a strong force round by the open ground on his right, with orders that whenever the van of the English army moved off, they were to seize the end of the bridge and prevent any more from crossing. The impetuosity of Sir Marmaduke Twenge and Cressingham favoured this manœuvre, the Scots feigning to give way in order to draw the enemy forward. When they saw that the bridge had been gained, they charged the foe with furious vigour, closing them in on the west, in which direction only they could escape, and driving them back towards the bridge to their utter destruction.(11) They would not be allowed to get much beyond the narrow neck

(10) P. 142.

(11) In a "History of Wallace and Scotch Affairs," written in the reign of James V., and published by Mr Brunton in 1881, the author says, "The battell being joyned, the worthy Scotties owerthrew their enemyes vterlie that day, haweing inclosed thame upon the riwer syd neir to the bridge."—P.41.

of land shown on the map, and we see now how true is Hemingburgh's remark, although made to excuse the English defeat, that there was not in the whole kingdom of Scotland a spot so favourable for enclosing the English in the hands of the Scots, or a multitude in the hands of a few. It may be asked what was to prevent the English, when they found passage by the bridge impossible, to cross at Kildean and attack the rear of the Scots army? The answer is that it was too late to attempt such a thing. The tide was steadily rising, and by the time a large army could have got round as far as Kildean, the ford would be impassable. Wallace, therefore, had his enemies in the hollow of his hand as the reward of his able strategy and masterly disposition of the force at his command. It is needless to dwell longer on this part of our subject. We can picture the humiliation of the English general, reduced to the position of a helpless spectator at the south end of Stirling Bridge and forced to fly for his personal safety; and we can also imagine the wild rush of the hangers-on to the Scots army—men who would not fight but were always ready to plunder—across the fords at Kildean, Chirmerlands (now corrupted into Sheriffmuirlands), and Maner, to join in the pursuit of the panic-stricken invaders. No doubt there were as many lives lost in the flight as in actual conflict and in the deep and sullen waters of the Forth. Wallace's victory over the English was so complete that they were compelled to evacuate the country, and Scotland was free for a time. In the words of the poet Wordsworth, this

“High-souled man, if unnamed  
 Among the chronicles of Kings,  
 . . . . . Left the name  
 Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower,  
 All over his dear country, left the deeds  
 Of Wallace, like a family of ghosts,  
 To people the steep rocks and river banks,  
 Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul  
 Of independence and stern liberty.”

I am quite aware that while the reasoned inferences from the foregoing facts and circumstances are favourable to the view I take of the scene of this memorable battle and the site of the bridge which helped so much to decide the issue, it is necessary, in order to complete my case, that three things should be proved to your

satisfaction. First, that there was a bridge over the Forth at Stirling in 1297; second, that it was situated at or near the site of the present Old Bridge; and third, that there was not then, or at any time, a bridge over the river at Kildean. Disregarding the legend of a Roman bridge at Stirling, and also the tradition that the original bridge was built in the year 856, we find authentic evidence of the existence of the bridge in the reign of William the Lion (1165-1214), (12) a law of that monarch providing that in the event of cattle being stolen north or south of the Forth, the offender was to be challenged to restore within six months, at the Bridge of Stirling, what he had wrongfully taken. (13) The centre of the bridge was the dividing line between north and south, and here debts were ordered to be paid and other legal acts performed under the ancient statutes of the Bretts and Scots. It was not until the year 1305 that King Edward I. of England decreed "that the usages of the Scots and Bretts be abolished and no more used," but it is not likely this prohibition took effect for long. By a law passed in the reign of Alexander II. (1214-1249), knights and freeholders might fight by deputy at the Brig of Stirling, in cases where trial by battle was allowed. (14) The bridge of Stirling also appears in a deed to be afterwards referred to, dated not later than 1245, and probably as early as 1220, and there can be no doubt it is this bridge of seven arches which forms the obverse of the ancient burgh seal attached to the secret treaty between John Baliol and Philip, King of France, dated 7th March, 1296, eighteen months

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(12) Lord Kames, in "The Art of Thinking" (p. 97) says, "There is no tradition about what time the bridge of Stirling was erected; but there is a stone in it marked with the year 1211. Would not one conclude this to be the date of the bridge? But tradition says that there was a former bridge which became ruinous, and that the stone mentioned, with many others, were applied to the new bridge." Careful search has failed to find this stone, but one of the angler's marks in the river near the bridge is said to be a white stone with something cut on it. A flood may have dislodged the stone from the bridge.

(13) Act. Parl. Scot., I., 372.

(14) Act. Parl. Scot., I., 400.

before the battle of Stirling Bridge. Although it may be doubted whether the bridge was broken on the occasion of this battle, it is extremely probable that in the troubles which followed some such stratagem as Blind Harry mentions was actually carried out, as we find that about that time a ferry was substituted for the bridge. In a writ for the repair of the bridge of Stirling, issued by King Edward on 20th October, 1305, it is set forth that the bridge was broken down and destroyed (*dirutus et confractus*), and that the dues of the ferry were to be applied to the repair and improvement of the bridge. I give the text of this important writ in a footnote,(15) as it may be taken as proving not only the existence of the bridge, but its situation in Wallace's time. You will observe the document refers to a ferry (*passagium*), and from a confirming charter by Robert II. in 1389, we know that his uncle, David II., granted to St Laurence's altar in the Parish Church of Stirling, *passagio de batellaz aque de Forth juxta Strivelyn*, a passage or ferry-boat on the water of Forth, near Stirling, and a croft annexed to the same, together with certain other annual duties mentioned in the charter.(16) The locality of the Ferry Croft, afterwards called St Laurence Croft, is not a matter of doubt. It is that part of Winchelhaugh nearest the river, on the north side of the bridge. Through it ran an old passage to give access to the town's fishings. It is mentioned in numerous title deeds recorded in Stirling, and may be found in such deeds at the present day. Mr J. S. Fleming, who inclines to the Kildean theory, apparently

(15) DE PONTE DE STRIVELYN REPARANDO.

Rex delecto suo Johanni de Sandale camerario sue Scotiæ, salutem. Volentes quod exitus provenientes de custuma cujusdam passagii apud Strivelyn convertantur in reparationem et emendationem pontis ibidem, qui dirutus est et confractus, vobis mandamus quod omnes exitus prædictos ad reparationem et emendationem pontis prædicti per visum et testimonium delicti nobis Willelmi constabularii nostri de Strivelyn assignari facias. Exitus enim prædictos in computo vestro allocari faciemus.

Teste rege apud Westm., xx die Octobis.—*Hist. Doc. Scot.* 1286-1306, vol. ii., p. 491.

(16) Reg. Mag. Sig., 1306-1424, p. 170



thinks that the dues of the ferry at Stirling were applied to the re-building of a bridge at Kildean, which is, to say the least, a most unlikely thing. The situation of the bridge is also clearly proved by the earlier deed to which reference has been made, and which expressly mentions the bridge of Stirling and the causeway leading from it, afterwards called the Lang Calsey, now Causewayhead Road.(17). The old roads on the south side of the river, such as the Hill Wynd, which led from the bridge up to the Castle, and of which Glencoe Road is a part, and the main road from the south by St Mary's Wynd and "The Sclaittis" (now Bridge Street), all testify to the situation of the Bridge of Stirling, which was entirely within burgh territory. Indeed, to suppose that Stirling Bridge was nearly a mile outside the burgh boundary is ridiculous. It is astonishing (if also a little amusing) to find historical writers taking so much trouble to locate the Bridge of Stirling everywhere but in its natural place, and ignoring the town which gave it its name. This has always been something of a mystery to me, and it shows the influence of an assumed local legend which, as we shall see, has not a particle of proof to support it.

We are not restricted to the evidence of records and roads as to the site of the thirteenth-century bridge. When Dr Hay Fleming, of St Andrews, a well-known antiquary, was examining the Old Bridge some years ago, he was particularly struck with a solid bit of masonry projecting at right angles to the south end of the bridge. Dr Hay Fleming thought this might be a remnant of the older bridge, as the masonry, which is 5 ft. 6 in. thick, seemed to be as old as the Wallace period. I afterwards discovered that the chapel of St Roche, which was founded by James IV. about the year 1500, stood on the adjoining plot of ground (not on the opposite side of the road leading to the bridge, as shown in Mr J. S. Fleming's drawing), and my opinion was that the old building referred to was probably part of that chapel. I now think, however, that both Dr Hay Fleming and myself may be right, and that in building the chapel part of the Wallace bridge was utilised for its north gable.(18) A low arch

(17) Reg. de Dunfermlyn, No. 216, p. 131.

(18) A small ancient chapel is built on one of the piers of a bridge at Bath.—*Athenæum*, 17th December, 1904.

further up the river bank, and now built up, may have led to the old access to the salmon fishings through the ground to the north of the bridge afterwards called the Ferry Croft. My idea is that the first of the seven arches of the older bridge may have sprung from this fragment of the original pier on the bank. No doubt some of the older piers were used in building the present bridge. The presence of oyster shells in the low arch referred to indicates that it is not very modern, and the thick wall nearer the river has every appearance of being much older. This is a point that is worth further investigation.

Coming now to Kildean, Bailie Ronald supposes that this place is the "Cuilteadounald" mentioned in an instrument of excambion of the reign of William the Lion, one of the boundaries set forth in the deed being the high road leading to Cuilteadounald. If this supposition be correct, which I think is very probable, we may find in "Cuilteadounald" the origin and meaning of the modern name. It is the nook, shelter, or refuge, of Donald, and it would be an interesting speculation which of the many Donalds who figure in early Scottish history is commemorated by the place-name. Abbreviation and corruption during the intervening centuries might easily evolve from "Cuilteadounald" the Kildean of to-day, and certainly this is a more likely origin of the name than any of the guesses recently made by the Rev. Mr Johnston and others. It is a remarkable fact, and one which has a particular bearing on the question of whether there was ever a bridge at this place, that even the name Kildean does not occur in any authentic document of an old date. In a wide search I have never come across it, and surely, if there was a bridge here for the public use, it could not have escaped mention in the local records during six hundred years. Of course, the existence of a bridge at Stirling in 1297 is in itself a strong, if not conclusive, argument against there having been at the same time a bridge at Kildean. Bridges were not so common then as they are now. They were first erected at populous places where the natural fords in the river were found to be inconvenient for the inhabitants, and they took the place, not of fords, but of ferries, where the water was too deep to ford. The idea that there was a bridge over the shallow water at

Kildean, scarcely a mile distant from the bridge over the deep water at Stirling, is nothing short of preposterous—to use the popular phrase of the day, it is utterly unthinkable—for it presupposes a multiplication of bridges which it is safe to say was unknown in the Scotland of the thirteenth century, and even to-day would be considered unnecessary.

The holders of the Kildean theory who attempt to argue the question, point to the Roman Road as supporting their contention, but, rightly regarded, this is an argument which tells against them. If the Roman Road crossed the river at this point, and it is not my purpose to dispute it, although most writers assert that the crossing was higher up the river at Craigforth mill, then it is certain it did not cross by a bridge but by the natural ford. In a very dry summer in the early eighties, I carefully inspected this ford. I was able to walk dry-shod a good part of the way across, the water was so low, and I observed that in the bed of the river there were some large flat stones mortared together. Donald King, the miller at Kildean in the middle of last century, told the late Mr James Lucas, writer, that though he never saw anything like pillars in the river — Donald's imagination, you see, was not quite so strong as that of others who had not his opportunities of examination—he recollected of many of the stones being taken out for the purpose of repairing the piers on each side of the river in the line of the supposed bridge—these piers, by the way, are just two of what anglers call the "wee piers," constructed for the purpose of throwing the flood water into the middle of the channel to save the banks from being washed away—but that several of them were so firmly built into the bed of the river that it was impossible to raise them. These are no doubt the stones I saw on the occasion I speak of, and, I presume, they are still visible. The popular idea is that they are the remains of the piers of the ancient bridge, but they are clearly the pavement of the ford, and as one of the Roman methods of making a road was to use flagstones laid together as seen here, I should not be surprised if these stones turn out to be part of the Roman Road. They convinced me, at any rate, that there never could have been a bridge there. Nimmo, who mistakes Kildean ford for the Drip, whers there never was a ford,

but a ferry coble from time immemorial till the building of the bridge in 1769, says, "The ford had a firm and solid bottom, and during the summer season carried a little over two feet of water. There was thus no occasion here for a bridge to transport those hardy sons of Rome, whom much more stately rivers did not intimidate from their darling project of subduing the world." Quite true; yet it is Nimmo who asserts without qualification that the bridge across the Forth in the time of Wallace stood at Kildean, and it is this assertion, made without any proof whatever, that is the sole basis of the "tradition" assumed to exist by Lord Hailes, that the bridge was higher up the river than Stirling Bridge, and of the statements to the same effect contained in local histories and guide-books.

There is an old legend of a bridge in this locality which I may notice briefly, although the probability is that it did not occur either to Nimmo or Lord Hailes. When St Kentigern quitted Culross, he came along the north side of the Firth of Forth, which had carried his mother in her coracle to St Serf, and continued his journey westwards. Here I will allow the Rev. Dr Stevenson, who translated the legends of St Kentigern from the Aberdeen Breviary and the Arbutnot Missal, to tell the story (19). "Retiring secretly, he (Kentigern) came to the river Mallena, which, overflowing its channel through the influx of the sea line, entirely extinguished all hope of crossing. But the Lord who divided the Red Sea, and once led the people of Israel through the midst of it with dry feet, He himself divides the river Mallena for His servant, and there were as if it had been walls on his right hand and on his left. Then having crossed the narrow area of the sea by a bridge (*per pontem*; here, however, Dr Stevenson says *pontem* must be understood to denote the miraculous ford), he saw the waters fill the channel with a sudden rush and deny a passage for anyone. And the place was for the future impassable; and thenceforth the bridge (*i.e.*, the ford), covered over with water, no longer afforded anyone an opportunity of crossing. Moreover, the river Mallena, forsaking its course, thenceforth twisted itself about into the channel of the river Leder; and

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(19) P. 74.

thus two rivers which had until then been divided, have since that day been commingled." All which, being reduced to plain English, means that St Kentigern crossed the water at Kildean, a little below the junction of the Allan and the Forth. I take it that this *pons Servani*, the legendary bridge of monkish invention, was the only one that ever existed at Kildean, if we except the small bridge over the burn leading into the old mill dam, where the farm-house now stands.

Let it be noted that Nimmo does not seem to have visited the spot, and though he quotes Hemingford in his account of the battle of Stirling Bridge, he does not follow that writer very intelligently, and he gives the date of the battle as the 13th, instead of the 11th September, a blunder which has been copied from him into Randall's and some later histories. The late Rev. Mr Sawers, Free Church minister at Gar-gunnock, who wrote a little work entitled "Foot-steps of Sir William Wallace," perceives what he calls the "absurd mistake" of placing the word Kildean before bridge, but he himself commits as great an absurdity in placing the bridge at the Abbey, thus anticipating Professor Hume Brown's error, which obliges him to carry the battle as far inland as Logie Kirk, and make a second fight at the bridge. Mr Sawers, whose marked and well-thumbed copies of the Latin text of Hemingburgh and Trivet are in my possession, rather twists the contemporary chronicles to suit his own theory, for he makes Hemingburgh say that the ford which Sir Richard Lunding advised the English to cross was lower down the river than Stirling Bridge, whereas the historian says nothing of the kind, his words being "*non longe abhinc*"—not far from here. Sawers, however, is a model of scrupulosity as compared with the late Rev. Dr Charles Rogers, who, in "The Book of Wallace," coolly interpolates Kildean Bridge and Manor Ford in Hemingburgh's narrative to bolster up the Kildean theory, the fact being that the first occurrence of the name anywhere is, as Bailie Ronald has observed, in Nimmo's History of Stirlingshire, published in 1777, the source and origin of all the confusion that exists with regard to the situation of the Wallace Bridge.

In concluding this lengthy paper, I cannot help feeling that an apology is due for entering so

much into detail, and repeating, perhaps *ad nauseum*, the reasons which have convinced myself that the Kildean theory is a myth. These, indeed, are so obvious that the mere process of setting them forth seems to me like using a steam-hammer to crush a fly. Still, when we find in the Government Ordnance Survey map a line across the Forth at Kildean marked "Site of Bridge," and the north-west part of Cornton Carse marked "Site of the Battle of Stirling Bridge," it does appear necessary that a serious effort should be made to correct a blunder originating in carelessness, and thoughtlessly repeated by writers who have not taken the trouble to study the old records and the topographical facts, from which alone the truth of the matter is to be gathered. I do not flatter myself that either historians or map-makers or encyclopædia and gazetteer-compilers will do any better in the future, for one can hardly hope to overtake an error which has the advantage of such a long start, but it is important that the Transactions of the Stirling Archaeological Society, at least, should contain a reasoned account, as fully vouched as possible, of an historical event which took place in our immediate neighbourhood, and which so profoundly affected the destinies of the Scottish nation.

"Search nations' annals—chiefs of every age—  
 A chief like Wallace ne'er displayed the page;  
 A greater patriot ne'er adorned the world,  
 A braver never Freedom's flag unfurled."(20).

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I am indebted to Mr J. G. Murray for the drawings exhibited, and for much other kindly help, and also to Mr John E. Shearer for his trouble in procuring some particulars I was personally unable to look after.

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(20) Strila: a Poem, by James G. Todd. Edinburgh: 1823.