

# William Wallace & His Crawford Relations

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William Wallace is Scotland's most beloved son. He initiated the Wars of Independence against England, which, though not able to finish them -- that being left to Robert the Bruce -- provided the impetus that led to Scotland throwing off the English yoke, a circumstance that would persist until the Scottish King James VI (1st of England) assumed the English throne, thus uniting permanently the crowns of the two countries.

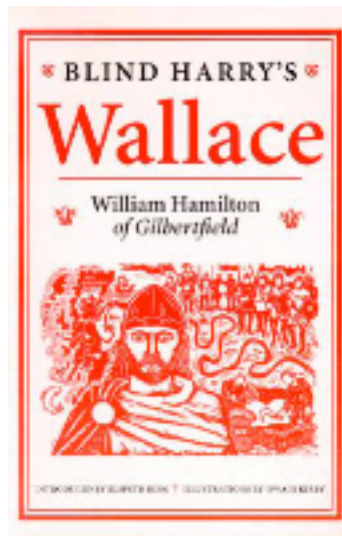


**Portrait of Sir William Wallace**

William Wallace has come down in history as “the hammer of the English.” After interminable skirmishes with English soldiers occupying Scotland, he commanded the Scottish troops along with Andrew Morey in 1297 at the Battle of Stirling Bridge. Following this unexpected but resounding victory against the English, Wallace was knighted and named Guardian of Scotland. The 700th anniversary of the Battle of Stirling Bridge was celebrated in 1997 with many commemorations of Wallace's name and legacy in Scotland, as well as abroad wherever dedicated Scots live.

The earliest surviving comprehensive portrayal of William Wallace's life is the epic poem by Blind Harry known today simply as “The Wallace.” Blind Harry lived and wrote in the last half of the 1400s, about 150 years after Wallace's death. He wrote down many of the popular stories

about Wallace's life and legend, performing at the court of James IV to great appreciation. The poem was written down in about 1477. It was one of the first books published in Scotland around 1508, under the title: *The Acts and Deides of the Illustre and Vallyeant Campion Schir William Wallace*. Current historians tend to challenge the veracity of much of this epic, but the work continues to provide the framework for William Wallace's life and draws its credibility as the narrative closest to the time that William Wallace actually lived (abt. 1270-1305).



**Book cover on *Blind Harry's Wallace*  
(1998 Luath Press edition)**

An adaptation by William Hamilton of Gilbertfield was published in 1722 as *The Life and Heroick Actions of the Renoun'd Sir William Wallace, General and Governor of Scotland*. Hamilton's version of the poem has been widely circulated over the last several hundred years -- as popular in Scottish homes as the Bible. This work is also the source of most of what is known of Wallace's Crawford connections. Wallace's mother Margaret Crawford and his uncle Reginald (or Ranald, according to Blind Harry) Crawford, 4th Sheriff of Ayr and Lord of Loudoun appear prominently. Where there is a deficit of information on the Wallaces, the Crawford family relations are well documented, mainly in genealogical chronicles (Crawfurd, Robertson, Paterson, Anderson, Burke) and local histories.

Mel Gibson's film *Braveheart* (1995) brought William Wallace international recognition. Widely criticized by historians, the movie followed Randall Wallace's novelized version of William Wallace's life, though some scenes did borrow from Blind Harry's epic poem. The movie does not give any acknowledgment or even mention of the extended family that prominently encompassed his Crawford kin. This is singular since the legends about William Wallace give his mother an eminent position. Stories suggest he was close to her and that she was a significant presence throughout his life. He kept a missal with him that she had given him as a child, possibly being the one he is described as reading from on the execution block in London.

Who actually was William Wallace? He is certainly Scotland's best loved hero, a natural leader

and fighter, both a general and a guerrilla, a man bigger than life as pertains to physical size as well as spirit and legend. Wallace is described in the *Scotichronicon* (written in the 1440s) as "... a tall man with the body of a giant, cheerful in appearance with agreeable features, broad-shouldered and big-boned, with belly in proportion and lengthy flanks, pleasing in appearance but with a wild look, broad in the hips, with strong arms and legs, a most spirited fighting-man, with all his limbs very strong and firm." Wallace is the man who with very limited resources routed the English, that centuries long enemy of Scotland. The Scots, both psychologically and symbolically, identified themselves as the rival younger brother who was able to defend himself against the bullish elder sibling (England/Edward I). Wallace was and is all of these things. At the same time, William Wallace was a son of Ayrshire, known and loved by his extended family of Wallaces, Crawfords and other related families who formed a relatively close-knit community around the towns of Ayr and Kilmarnock (anciently Kilmaurs) and the surrounding countryside and villages.

Blind Harry's epic poem names Malcolm as the father of William. However, there is evidence that this was not his name. Wallace on becoming Guardian of Scotland sent a letter to Lübeck (Germany) after the victory at Stirling Bridge for the purpose of reopening Scottish trade with the Hanseatic League. It sheds light on the topic. A transcription of the seal on the letter in Latin declares "William, Son of Alan Wallace." In 1911 metal casts were made of the front and back of the Wallace seal that was attached to the letter to guarantee authenticity. In January 1999 the casts were found hidden away in a small green box in Glasgow's Mitchell Library. Of interest is also the fact that the seal has a prominent representation of a long bow suggesting that Wallace was an archer. What seems evident is that Wallace's early weapon of choice was the long bow rather than the sword.

William's father is usually described as a minor landowner in the service of the Stewards. Their ancestors are depicted as having come to Scotland from Wales, thus the source of the surname Walesis. Harry refers to the death of William's father (Malcolm) in a skirmish at Loudoun Hill in 1291, providing a reason for William to return to Loudoun Hill to avenge his death at the hands of the English. However, the Ragman Roll of 1296 lists an Alan ("Waleys, Aleyn, tenant du roi du counte de Are") as a landholder in Ayrshire. He is not named as a knight. Likewise it says he is a royal tenant, not a tenant of the Stewards which the Wallaces of Riccarton clearly were.

If this Alan was William's father then a dilemma presents itself. If William's father did sign the Ragman Roll, it would constitute fealty to the English king. The Ragman Roll is a collection of documents whereby the nobility and gentry of Scotland declared their allegiance to Edward I. It likewise weakens William's defense at his trial when he claimed that he had never sworn fealty to Edward. As his father's son, he would have taken on the loyalties of his father. However, he declared in his defense at his trial in London that he had never sworn such fealty, thus his fight against the English could not be considered treason.



**Loudoun Hill**

On his maternal side, William was the grandson of the Sheriff of Ayr, one of the very prominent landholders in Ayrshire. William's mother was Margaret Crawford, a daughter of Hugh Crawford, head of the House of Crawford, the Third Sheriff of Ayrshire, and who was Lord of Loudoun and Crosbie. Scenes in Blind Harry's epic poem [Book I, Chapter I, pages 1-2] describe Wallace's parentage. The Malcolm on the last line below is the elder brother of William.

Sir William Wallace much renown'd in war;  
Whose bold progenitors have long time stood,  
Of honorable and true Scottish blood;  
And in first rank of ancient barons go,  
Old knights of Craigy, baronets also;  
which gallant race, to make my story brief,  
Sir Thomas Wallace represents as chief.  
So much for the brave Wallace's father's side,  
Nor will I here his mother's kindred hide:  
She was a lady most complete and bright,  
The daughter of that honorable knight,  
Sir Ranald Crawford, high sheriff of Ayr,  
Who fondly doted on his charming fair.  
Soon wedded was the lovely blooming she,  
To Malcolm Wallace then of Ellerslie;  
Which am'rous pair, transported with delight,  
Begot young Malcolm that same joyful night. ...

Sir Reginald Crawford was William Wallace's maternal uncle. William may have had a second maternal uncle whose name is not known, and who is considered by the historian George

Crawfurd in his 1710 MS History of the Crawfurds as the progenitor of the Crawfurds of Baidland and subsequently of the Ardmillan cadet.

A paternal uncle Richard Wallace also figures in Blind Harry, but is considered by some current scholars as a later figure from a different line. He is mentioned as the landholder of Riccarton with whom William seeks refuge while on the run.

Three Wallaces are listed on the Ragman's Roll for Ayr, none for Renfrewshire. They are Adam, Aley and Nicol. Since all landholders were required to sign the oath of allegiance, if Alan is William Wallace's father, his uncles names were quite likely to have been Adam and maybe Nicol though we have no separate reference to Nicol as a relation. Men of the church would not have been listed unless they also held property, so the above does not clarify the identity of uncles who were clerics.

William Wallace had two brothers: Malcolm (elder) and John (younger), and a sister whose name has not come down. She married into the Bailies of Lamington. A genealogy accepted during the 19th century, which today is acknowledged as having several discrepancies, gives William as descending through his father from grandfather Adam, great-grandfather Henry and great-great grandfather Richard who is described as having come from Wales in the retinue of Steward. An uncle Adam of Riccarton is listed. However, some historians (specifically Watson) consider that there is no close familial relationship between the Wallaces of Riccarton and William Wallace's family.

In the Loudoun papers a maternal uncle is claimed to have been responsible for William's primary education. Other sources say his primary educator was a paternal uncle. A younger brother of his father is reported as being a cleric at the chapelry of Cambuskenneth Abbey (others have said Dunipace). Some confusion exists regarding this figure since the familial educator is sometimes identified Sir Reginald Craufurd already mentioned above, sometimes another maternal uncle, a granduncle also named Reginald (brother of his grandfather Hugh) who is known to have been a priest at Kerse.

Blind Harry reports William as having been born at Ellerslie (Ayrshire). Though disputed with an Eldersly in Renfrewshire (near Glasgow), the first location is more likely since it is close to the known residence of his maternal Crawford relatives (Loudoun and Crosbie). It is also near Riccarton, Wallace lands near Kilmarnock. The above information from the Ragman Rolls would tend to support this, also. It is thought that Wallace spent considerable time at his maternal uncle Sir Reginald's residences, Crosbie and Loudoun, especially after the death of his father who was ostensibly killed when William was about 12. Above is a picture of the ruins of Loudoun Castle. Uncle Sir Reginald is reported to have built the rampart.

A sword claimed to have belonged to William Wallace hung above the staircase at Loudoun for centuries. It is contended that upon Wallace's death a Boyd of Kilmarnock returned it to his mother, though this conflicts with the commonly held belief that she died several years before

William. The sword came into the Campbell's possession when the Crawford heiress of Loudoun married into that family. It is 4'4" and is double-edged. This sword was sold at auction in 1930, and its current whereabouts are unknown. What is supposed to be a different sword was purportedly held at Stirling Castle for some 700 years. It is a broad sword weighing 6 lbs. and is 5'4" tall. This sword is now located in the Wallace monument near Stirling. Parts of this sword were identified as having been made at least 160 years later. Some claim that the second sword may have belonged to William Wallace's uncle Sir Reginald Craufurd. This sword was refurbished by order of James IV.



**Loudoun Castle**

Craufurd C. Loudoun tells of having looked at papers in the Loudoun collection at Dumfries House in Ayrshire containing information about the marriage of "Lady Margaret de Lambinus Craufurd of Arclowdun Castle to Malcolm Wallace of Ellerslie, in the ancient Parish of Kilmaurs." Arclowdun Castle was located about 900 meters east of Loudoun Castle. The site is next to the mote, whether existing at that time as part of Arclowdun or being part of the fortifications of the new castle of Loudoun is unclear. Arclowdun may have been the place where William grew up, though he is also reputed by Paterson to have lived at Crosbie Tower (known as Corsbie in Blind Harry), an estate a mile from West Kilbride granted to his great-grandfather Hugh Craufurd by King Alexander III for his role in defeating the Norse Vikings at Largs (1263). In any case, Sir Reginald possessed both Loudoun and Crosbie at that time.

Blind Harry (Book X, Chapter III) describes Margaret Craufurd fleeing to Dunfermline as a pilgrim when remaining in Ayrshire became too perilous. She died and was buried there. She must have been a formidable woman: tall, stately in carriage and strong in faith. A commemorative plaque dedicated to Margaret Craufurd is to be found on the grounds near the Abby under a thorn tree. Traditions surrounding Dunfermline tell that Sir William wanted to erect a monument to his mother after her death, but did not have time to do so, thus he planted a thorn tree instead. The Dunfermline Abbey Kirk Session Burial Register records burials by marking them from that Thorn Tree, a singular honor. The thorn tree stands on a small mound on the northern side of the Kirkyard.



**Margaret Craufurd's grave at Dunfermline Abbey**

During 1303 William Wallace hid in the forest of Dunfermline. It was then an impenetrable woods surrounding the abbey on several sides. There are various spots that bear names like "St. Margaret's Cave" and "Wallace Well" which commemorate places that may have provided shelter to Wallace and his men as they alternately fought and hid from Edward Longshanks' soldiers.

In 1304 Edward I occupied Dunfermline Abbey. He burned it when he left. It is generally thought that Margaret was buried there shortly before his arrival. That may have been the reason she was buried outside, providing an anonymous grave safe from a rageful revenge which would likely have ensued had she been buried in the consecrated area inside the church, as would have been expected in more peaceful times.



**William Wallace -- Stained glass window in Dunfermline Abbey Kirk**

Today a four paneled stained glass window honoring Wallace, Bruce, Malcolm Canmore and Queen Margaret (pictured above) is to be found at the rear of the cathedral. Robert the Bruce lies buried inside that church as is Queen Margaret. Dunfermline Abbey is thus a national monument consecrated to Scotland's most notable leaders. It was built by King David as a memorial to his mother Queen Margaret, later canonized.

Many passages of Blind Harry center on Wallace's mother and her family [Book I, Chapter III, pages 10-11], One passage describes the loss of Margaret Craufurd's husband and elder son Malcolm, her despair and sorrow, and the caring support and protection of Sir Reginald, her brother. Sir Reginald's response when finding out that Wallace had survived a confrontation with English soldiers while fishing at the nearby Irving River is how a loving uncle would respond [Book I, Chapter VI, pages 12-13]:

The news did so surprise the ancient knight,  
He almost fainted in his nephew's sight:  
Then bids keep the secret: "For such fishing sport,  
If it be known, you might pay dearly for't."  
"Uncle," said Wallace to the good old man,  
"I'll push my fortune now where best I can,  
Since I no longer may with you abide.  
I'll try these English geldings how they ride."  
A purse of gold the knight unto him gave.  
Wallace kneel'd down, and humbly took his leave.  
"When that is done, pray nephew send for more."

It was the killings in 1297 at the Barns of Ayr (Blind Harry, Book VII, Chapter I) that most likely set in motion the Wars of Independence, though some recent historians have questioned it happening. According to Blind Harry, William's uncle Sir Reginald was the first Ayrshire nobleman who answered the call of the English for a peace conference. He was hanged at the Barns of Ayr upon entering as were seventeen (some sources say 117, another 360) other noblemen as they each arrived. This event was to be known thereafter as The Black Parliament. William had been en route with Sir Reginald when asked by him to go to Crosbie to retrieve papers pertinent to the conference. On his return, Wallace received warning from a Crawford woman (other sources simply say a friend) and was able to avoid the trap. In rage, he retaliated burning the Barnes of Ayr with the English soldiers barricaded inside. The killing of his uncle and the other Ayrshire noblemen is what likely propelled Wallace into organizing the resistance to the English.

William's second in command was John Graham. His third in command was a maternal cousin William Craufurd. Upon John Graham's death at Falkirk in 1298, William Craufurd became his second, accompanying him on the trip to the Continent where they met Baliol and fought for the French King Philip le Bel. He also met with the Pope requesting and obtaining the Pope's



acknowledgment for the Scottish cause of Independence.

There is an incident described upon their return to Scotland of a narrow escape from English soldiers at the Elcho Park (or Elcho) home of William Craufurd and his wife. The travelers had taken refuge there after their landing near Perth. Elcho farm is located somewhat east southeast of Perth. At one point William Craufurd went into town for supplies. English soldiers followed him back. When the English soldiers approached the house, the two Williams and their men fled into the nearby woods. William Craufurd's wife remained behind and was almost burned alive. Wallace returned, appearing suddenly and managing to draw off the English soldiers into the forest where his party ambushed them. His second's wife was able to be rescued from burning.

William Wallace was betrayed to the English and captured at Robroyston near Glasgow. His informer was Sir John Mentieth, a knight bought off by King Edward. Sir William was taken to London and executed on August 23, 1305. His manner of death, though for the time not unknown for treason, was horrible -- hanging followed by drawing and quartering. Some say that after Wallace's execution, the parts of his body were collected by John Blair, William's confessor, biographer (work now lost) and friend, who became a monk at Dunfermline. It is said that he buried them next to Margaret Craufurd at Dunfermline.

The fight with the English took a severe toll on the Wallaces and Crawford. The English killed William's father and both brothers. Many of his maternal Crawford uncles and cousins likewise lost their lives. The heritable position of Sheriff of Ayrshire and the title and lands of Loudoun passed to the Campbells when all the Crawford males of that line lost their lives to the cause of Independence. This came about through the marriage of the heiress Susanna Crawford, daughter of Reginald, the Fifth Sheriff of Ayrshire, to Duncan Campbell.



**The Bannetyne or Bute Mazer. From left to right - original & copy.**

The Fifth Sheriff's brother, Hugh, survived, and it is on him and his descendants that the seniority of the Crawfords devolved. For his valor at Bannockburn Hugh was rewarded by Robert the Bruce with a grant of the estate of Auchenames near Johnstone, which became the

residence of the Crawford senior line and gave its name to that cadet. The Bute (or Bannetyne) Mazer (quaich), commissioned in 1319, currently on display in the Scottish National Museum, commemorates the contributions of the Auchinames Crawfords along with five other noble families to the Battle of Bannockburn. The cause of Independence was achieved by 1314. The Mazer was a commemoration of the fulfillment of Wallace's cause that was continued by his Crawford cousins and others in his stead.

The principal legacy of William Wallace for us Crawfords is his kinship to our House. His mother was a Crawford and thus Wallaces and Crawfords acknowledge each other as kin. We also, through the centuries, have shared with Wallace his love of liberty learned from bitter life lessons and at his uncle's knee. Sir Reginald is said to have inspired his at the time very young nephew William with the statement:

Dico tibi verum, libertas optima rerum:  
Nunquam Sanville sub nexu vivito, fili.

I tell you true, Freedom is best of all things to be  
won. Never live under the bonds of slavery, my son.

As a leader of his country and the Scottish people, William Wallace is said to have oft repeated this phrase to inspire them in their resistance to the English.

William Wallace is one of Scotland's greatest heroes, a man of integrity, but also a man of his day -- fierce and vengeful. His determination to free his country from a foreign yoke has provided a monumental legacy that essentially transformed the human perspective on government from one based on feudal rights to a government of the people. This legacy is manifest in philosophy, traditions and practices to be found around the world. It is prominent in historical documents related to the struggle for independence, among them the Scottish Declaration of Arbroath (1320) and the later American Declaration of Independence (1776). Many of the signers of both documents were sons and descendants of those earlier revolutionaries of the Scottish Wars of Independence.

We would like to finalize this article with a quote from the Declaration of Arbroath. It poignantly expresses the elemental human dream of freedom which is the basic premiss of democracy -- that people be allowed to be governed through their own choices. This is truly William Wallace's legacy.

**It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting,  
but for freedom -- for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.**

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