

THE FORGING OF A NATION: CULTURAL AND POLITICAL SCOTTISH UNITY
IN THE TIME OF ROBERT THE BRUCE

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While Scotland was politically unified before the First Scottish War of Independence (1296-1328), it was only nominally so. Scotland shared a rich cultural unity amongst the clans, and it was only through the invasion from England, and the war that followed, that Scotland found a true political unity under King Robert the Bruce. This thesis argues that Scotland had a shared cultural identity, including the way it waged war, and how it came to be united under one king who brought a sense of nationalism to Scotland.

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION

The First Scottish War of Independence, waged between the years of 1296 to 1328 AD, created a true sense of national, political unity in Scotland that had before been only a cultural unity with a political unity in name only. The war has been written about ever since with the first ballad of Robert the Bruce sprouting up around 1400. In modern times, it set into a mythos of Celtic nationality, springing up in the late Nineteenth Century as both Scotland and Ireland felt ire once more at being under English rule –in both countries it was illegal to speak Gaelic, their native languages.¹ Nationalism in this essay is defined as an “ideology based on the premise that the individual’s loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests.”²

A quick background is necessary, for to understand my argument on both culture and its effect on the war, to set up the way Scotland was affected politically before and after, and to give a quick detail of what happened. Later on, some of these brief sentences will be elaborated on to provide and support arguments. In 1286, King Alexander III of Scotland passed away. His only remaining heir was his daughter, Margaret the Maid of Norway, who was extremely young at the time. Before his death, the Scots by and large accepted her as the heir, but when Alexander died, it was largely assumed that this young girl, more a Norwegian than a Scot, could not lead them. The Scots called in King Edward I, called Longshanks as he stood over six feet tall, to help them figure out who would be the next King of Scotland, or *Ollam Ri*. The Scots decided on John Balliol, a cousin of Edward, but Edward eventually turned against his cousin, making himself

¹ Today in both countries native Gaelic speakers number under two percent of the population.

² Hans Kohn, “Nationalism,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, February 19, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nationalism>. Accessed: April 26, 2020.

King of Scotland. Edward defeated Balliol in battle at Dunbar on April 27th, 1296 and sent him into exile.

From 1296 to 1305, Sir William Wallace and Andrew Murray led the charge against the English. These men were able to defeat the English in numerous battles and drew to them men from the majority of the clans around Scotland, many of whom had long-running dynastic feuds between them. It would not be entirely inaccurate to say that Scotland at this time was more like many little nations under the clans that shared an ethnic tie, and politically were combined under one High King, or *Ollam Ri*. An argument also broke out between Robert the Bruce and his main political rival John Comyn, both of whom had ties to Balliol and thus had claims upon the Scottish throne. Wallace was defeated in battle at Falkirk, and as Edward made to siege Stirling Castle, the last bastion of the Scottish rebels, he sent out a declaration that any Scottish rebel who laid down his arms would be allowed their land and liberties back. Many, including Robert the Bruce and John Comyn, took him up on this offer. However, Stirling would not receive a similar chance. Edward constructed a massive trebuchet outside their gates, which he dubbed *Warwolf*. Construction on the weapon, as well as the delivery of Greek Fire from Byzantium, elongated the process before which it could be fired, as it had to be built and its missiles prepped. Because of this, Edward refused Stirling's surrender proposal, believing this would make the *Warwolf* a waste of resources, and only after firing the first shot did he allow the besieged to surrender.

With John Balliol in exile, and then Wallace was captured and executed on August 23rd, 1305, his body quartered and sent across the English-controlled regions, Robert the Bruce once again sought the crown of Scotland. He met with John Comyn at the monastery at Dumfries. What the two said will never be known, but it can be assumed it was not pleasant, and though

many stories exist about what happened, the simplest answer is that Comyn said something at Robert's expense, and Robert struck him down for it, killing him on sacred ground.³ Robert went to the Bishop Robert Wishart in Glasgow to turn himself in, and instead of being punished was offered the crown of Scotland, if he would protect the Church's rights. This certainly would not have been allowed to the bishop by the Holy See in Rome, but being charged with leading Scotland spiritually, it is easy to see he might have made an argument that he was protecting the Scottish people's spirits by supporting a Scottish king, though we do not know for certain. Robert the Bruce was crowned on March 25th, 1306. His army was defeated in the Battle of Methven by Aymer de Valance, and Robert withdrew into the wilderness, waging guerilla war on the English, rarely ever committing to open battle until Loudon Hill. Any castle they took was usually through subtlety and subterfuge, and the Scots adopted a scorched earth policy.

Robert fought two very decisive battles: the Battle of Loudoun Hill in 1307, where a Scottish force used the marshland to defeat an English cavalry, a battle between 600 Scots and over 3,000 English; and again, at Bannockburn in 1314 where 10,000 Scots defeated 25,000 English – both times Robert was with the pike men in the front. These battles are critically important to my argument, as both utilized a unique Scottish military tradition, which will be expanded on later. On April 6th, 1320, the Scots met at the Abbey of Arbroath, where they drafted a letter to Pope John XXII, stating their intentions in fighting the war, and the rights they wished to retain on their ancestral homeland. In the letter, they give the pope an ultimatum: side with the British, and all of their collective crimes and sins would be put on the pope's head when he went to the afterlife, as even just merely standing by was giving credence to what they saw as a war of ethnic annihilation; or, to support the rebels insomuch as to not support the English.

³ Bower, Walter. *Scotichronicon*. 1447.

Thirty-eight Scottish nobles signed, and another six attached their seals as a means of signature. This document was later known as the Declaration of Arbroath. The war finally ended with the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton on March 17th, 1328, which declared the Scots an independent kingdom with Robert the Bruce and his heirs their kings – one of these heirs, James VI, would later become James I of England.

While historiography on this subject has been mostly written in recent years, with a rising tide in popular support for Scottish Independence, it has been full of diverse arguments. The main camps of this historiographical survey are people who side with Robert the Bruce and those who do not but still enjoy the independence; those who side and disagree with Edward I of England, and an argument about Scottish nationalism and when it truly started, as well as the legacy and influence of the war on later histories. Nationalism in this piece will not be focused on as the negative connotation that word has gained in the modern day, but rather the historic usage of it, in that the peoples of a nation identify themselves as one nation. This thesis will be constructed thematically, attempting to put similar views together and contrasting those with any opposing views. The arguments we will be addressing will be: was Edward in the right, when Scottish nationalism truly started, why Robert the Bruce was the only correct choice for Scotland, Scottish unity through its cultural background, and a unique way that the Scots waged war that brought them victory and made them distinct from the English. I have organized this segment to be written thematically, with each section being organized chronologically.

Written right before World War I, Evan Barron's *Scottish War of Independence* is the where the first modern historiography of this war takes place. Or as Barron would argue, these wars. Evan's thesis is that there was no singular War of Scottish Independence, as that is a modern name for a medieval conflict. He also points out, maybe rightly, that there was actually

more than one war going on, and one can see the first stages, then the surrender of the Scottish nobles and Wallace's defeat, and then Bruce's part as three separate wars. The wars in Ireland and the eventual invasion of England could count as even more. Conflicts between England and Scotland throughout the medieval era would not end until the 16th Century. This could be seen as similar to how the Hundred Years' War is really more like several wars in a short time span and fought around the same themes and issues. His book ends on the defeat of the English at Bannockburn, denoting that that event could really be seen as the end of this period's struggle. His book lays the foundation for many to come, and if one does away with the historiography of the Celtic Revival Movement in the 19th Century, this could be seen as laying the ground work for the rest.⁴

Edward J. Cowan's *For Freedom Alone: The Declaration of Arbroath, 1320*, is one of the most recent additions to this historiography. In this work, Cowan argues that there was no sense of Scottish nationalism before the war, and nothing really during the war that forged it until the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath. In his examination of both the war and the document itself, he argues that reading the document, one can find a very honest version of the opinions of the Scots on this war and on their homeland. The document also suggests, according to him, a view on their politics and how betrayed they must have felt by Edward I. One of the lines he examines is a line that says that if Robert the Bruce were to encroach upon the Scottish rights, they retained the ability to oust him from office and put someone else there, the exact process they were currently going through with the English. Cowan also writes on how many of the lines were directly inspired by Roman writers such as Cicero or Sallust.⁵ He was also the

⁴ Barron, Evan M. *The Scottish War of Independence*. London: J. Nisbet, 1914.

⁵ Cowan, Edward J. *For Freedom Alone - the Declaration of Arbroath, 1320*. Glasgow: Tuckwell, 2014. Page 118.

first historian to point out that the typical climax of the document, the line “For as long as a hundred of us remain alive, we will never on any conditions be subjected to the lordship of the English” is not the actual highpoint or intended climax of the letter.⁶ Instead, he argued for the first time that the ultimatum to the pope was the intended climax and reading through the whole thing lends credence to this idea, though the power of the aforementioned line is so drawing, it is also easy to understand how this was misread for centuries. Cowan also draws direct routes through the legacy of this Declaration, showing how it helped to forge a Celtic identity through the centuries, through the Jacobite Rebellions of the early- and mid-18th Century and how the American Founding Fathers used lines directly from this Declaration in their own Declaration of Independence; this makes sense when one realizes that the majority of them had some form of Scottish ancestry, and this would make the American Revolution by extension a sort of off shoot or direct descendant of the First Scottish War of Independence.⁷

The next book to look at will be Michael Brown’s *Bannockburn: The Scottish War and the British Isles, 1307-1323*. This book, like Cowan’s, argued that the Scots did not have a sense of nationalism before the war. However, unlike Cowan, Brown says that the primary unifier of Scotland in that it created a true sense of nationalism, was the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. The battle was fought on the river of Bannock Burn, and while the exact place on the river has not been identified, as many parts of it look similar to how the first-hand accounts describe, the marshy landscape gave the Scottish infantry the upper hand and allowed them to beat a vastly superior English army led by Edward II, now King of England. Brown argues that this battle was the last decisive battle of the war, despite it going on for fourteen more years, because the

⁶ *Declaration of Arbroath*. 1320.; Cowan, Edward J. *For Freedom Alone - the Declaration of Arbroath, 1320*. Glasgow: Tuckwell, 2014.

⁷ Cowan, Edward J. *For Freedom Alone - the Declaration of Arbroath, 1320*. Glasgow: Tuckwell, 2014.

English were never able to recover after this point. Robert rallied allies to him after this battle, making him popular in the eyes of the everyday Scotsman. Brown also took the time to look at not only the Scottish political climate before and after this battle, but also that of the English domains not only at home, but also in Wales and Ireland. He argues that though the Scots were divided, so were the English. As the war waged on, many Englishmen waned in support of the war, and though Wales and Ireland could, in theory, provide more resources to the war than the Scots could procure, the added stress placed upon these territories by the English provoked more rebellions from them; not always violent, but sometimes shipments and caravans showed up late or not at all. Brown also suggested that the Scots had the advantage in the war, in that they only needed to be defensive. Similar to Washington and his fledgling army in the Revolution in America, Robert the Bruce did not necessarily need to fight the English outright, instead only needing to elude them long enough to draw out the war and tire them out. Brown was also the first author read for this essay who put a massive emphasis on James Douglas, sometimes called the Black Douglas, the only man that I am aware of who had a nursery rhyme written about him while he was still alive that told English children that James Douglas would not eat them in their sleep.⁸

David Cornell wrote *Bannockburn: The Triumph of Robert the Bruce*, which came out the same year as Cowan's *For Freedom Alone*. This book also stands on the lack of nationalism side, but it does assert that the Scots had some sort of idea of nationalism. This makes sense in that the Scots asserted themselves under one *Ollam Ri*, the High King, instead of having the Petty Kings of old, with a High King only present every once in a while, like how it was in

⁸ Brown, Michael. *Bannockburn: The Scottish War and the British Isles, 1307-1323*. Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

Ireland for much longer. Cornell says that the war itself, not any one specific event or another, was the unifying force which let the Scots create their own nation – a military history which forged their national history. Cornell is also controversial in that he asserted that Bannockburn was not the decisive battle that most, if not all, historians claim it to be. Cornell rightly asserts that the war continued for another fourteen years after the battle, but as we have seen while this may have been true, it could be argued that the English not being able to regain ground after this affair would make it a decisive battle. Cornell is also unusual in that his painting the picture of the murder of John Comyn at Dumfries is rather overly complicated, yet he maintains it is quite simple. In his version, Robert struck down but did not kill Comyn, and exited the monastery quite shaken. Later on, hearing that Comyn yet lived, he sent his men back to go murder him and finish the job. While not the first to assert this complicated history and retelling of the tale, he is the most modern historian who claims to believe this aspect of it. The main fault of this book and which makes it an interesting and hesitating inclusion in the historiography of not only this war, but medieval warfare in general, is the small but important errors he makes about medieval combat. Cornell suggests that in his raids, James Douglas' men wore leather, which was a cheaper alternative, in Cornell's eyes, to things like chainmail or gambeson, which was the standard padded armor of the day.⁹

Colm McNamee, for the anniversary of Robert Bruce Day, wrote *Robert Bruce: Our Most Valiant Prince, King and Lord* which casts Robert as anything but that. McNamee's version of the Bruce is of a spineless coward living in the shadow of his grandfather, also named Robert the Bruce, a crusader. He pays respect to the Bruce as the man who unified the nation

⁹ Cornell, David. *Bannockburn: The Triumph of Robert the Bruce*. New Hampton, Yale University Press, 2014. Page 144; Scott, Ronald McNair. *Robert the Bruce (1274-1329)*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993. Page 96-97.

against England, dipping his toes into the debate on nationalism¹⁰. But even this could not be let go, as McNamee puts it, Robert “fumbled over his Rubicon”.¹¹ In his murder of John Comyn, McNamee blatantly says that Comyn merely made a joke that did not go over well, and Robert overreacted, murdering a helpless victim while his men held back Comyn’s men outside, bringing swords to what was supposed to be a peaceful meeting – in meetings like these, and in fact anywhere where weaponry was prohibited, swords were forbidden, but daggers were allowed as they could be used for a variety of work, such as cutting food. Robert Bruce’s Celtic blood is also called into question, as McNamee points out he had Norman blood from his father’s line, making him a sort of faux-Scotsman – this is said in spite of Robert’s mother being of stout Gaelic heritage, and Robert would have grown up with speaking both Gaelic and French equally. McNamee also blatantly makes it obvious that he prefers Wallace to Bruce, and often portrays them as the valiant hero and the opportunist. However, McNamee does do something which is very helpful to historians and the historiography, as he outlines a vast lineage of Bruce, Edward, and Comyn, to show how family histories and issues that presided before these men affected not only their own lives, but how history would be written about them, and the lives of their nations. Oddly enough, McNamee could also be seen as arguing that there was a Scottish nationalism prior to the war. He makes mention that Robert never possessed the Stone of Destiny, as it was taken from the country, and when it could be retrieved, he opted not to do it. The Stone of Destiny dates back to the early stages of Scotland under the Picts and Caledonians, where a High King could only be named if he had the Stone, and when he touched it, according to legend, a chorus would spring up, showing that he was favored by the gods, or later God, to be the High

¹⁰ McNamee, Colm. *Robert Bruce: Our Most Valiant Prince, King and Lord*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006.

¹¹ McNamee, Colm. *Robert Bruce: Our Most Valiant Prince, King and Lord*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006. Page 95.

King. The fact that this was included, despite the fact that Scotland did not have Petty Kings for generations, and any King of Scotland was effectively a High King, shows that there was some sense of unification and maybe nationalism among the Scottish people.¹²

Colm McNamee also published his updated doctoral thesis in *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland 1306-1328*. This book backs up his previous claims but includes interesting things such as the suggestion that Robert Bruce “threw strategy to the wind” when he was in exile.¹³ The book also suggests that Robert’s military might was more accidental and the result of people working below him, rather than he himself. McNamee paints the Scots as a combination of different cultures, though still mostly Gaelic, who were able to work together and utilize their strengths in accordance with each other’s weaknesses. However, this book also occasionally reads as English apologetics. Edward I in the work, is regarded as a tactical and strategical genius, with his son being rather inept, being an outlier rather than the general rule.¹⁴ The Ordinances imposed on Scotland by England which would force them to rewrite their laws are suggested as being received neutrally or well, but not negative. However, this is in spite of the later line which McNamee presents, which says that the conflict around 1310 was in direct opposition to these Ordinances, and that the Ordainers had to be kept safe while they were abroad in Scotland, lest they get attacked.¹⁵ Robert’s successes can also be attributed to the adoption of those invented by Wallace, something that McNamee seems to dislike, but which make tactical sense – borrow the strategies of those who were successful, even if they eventually

¹² McNamee, Colm. *Robert Bruce: Our Most Valiant Prince, King and Lord*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006.

¹³ McNamee, Colm. *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland 1306-1328*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2012. Page 74.

¹⁴ McNamee, Colm. *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland 1306-1328*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2012.

¹⁵ McNamee, Colm. *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland 1306-1328*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2012. Page 47-48; Page 51.

failed, and improve upon them, especially so as to not repeat the failure.¹⁶

G.W.S. Barrow wrote *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, which attempted to reconcile the Celtic Myth and the Norman Myth. The Celtic Myth is that Scotland has historically been a Celtic nation, ruled over by Celtic nobles for Celtic people; the Norman Myth asserts that the Normans came in and took over as these nobles, displacing the aristocracy of the Gaels, or Celts, that came before. Barrow writes that while Bruce was not a full-blooded Gael, he was more Gaelic than Edward I was English. Bruce's father came from a Norman-Gaelic side, and his mother, as has been said, was a full-blooded Gael. Bruce and his brothers grew up speaking French and Gaelic, and later learned and could speak fluent Latin and Scots, the dialect of English heard in Scotland today. Barrow drew mostly from primary sources and was the most primary source-heavy scholar so far besides Cowan in the very beginning, bringing a certain point of authenticity to his input into the historiography. Barrow explained the backgrounds of both Scotland and England up to this point, before talking on the war, explaining each side and what sort of baggage they were coming to the table with. Barrow also explains the difference in how the English and the Scots waged war. English war was focused on cavalry charges and meeting the opponent in a full-blown battle, while their longbowmen rained death upon the field, something more akin to warfare as it was typically conducted. Scottish war was fought with craft, meeting the enemy in ambushes and using terrain to negate the ability of the English to commit their cavalry. Stealth was used in regaining castles and holdings, eliminating the need to post up in front of the walls of the fortification for a long period of time as the English did. He contrasts the success of the Scots under this new form of tactics with the failure of the first rebellion under Wallace. To him, the peace that Scotland had for quite a while before

¹⁶ McNamee, Colm. *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland 1306-1328*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2012.

this war was their downfall, as they forgot how to fight to their best efforts, and instead relied on the more conventional form of war seen across Europe, which England easily dominated. Finally, Barrow casts Bruce in a realistic light, bringing up both his positive and negative aspects in a fair manner, and never giving his opinion or support one way or another, except for his insistence that despite what one might think of Bruce, one has to agree he was exactly what Scotland needed at the time, and his life overall made the nation not only a nation, but also a better place.¹⁷

In response to Barrow's book, the reviewer Ranald Nicholson argued that the political impact in reality behind Barrow's definition of *communitas* in this argument is not at all present in the history. He argues that there is not actual presence of it that can be measured by scholars.¹⁸ Michael Prestwich argued that some of the historical points brought up by Barrow were not especially true, pointing out in particular English troop sizes, but nonetheless praises him for trailblazing the talks of nationalism back in the original publication, which he claims were a new thing for that time.¹⁹ Maurice Lee also praised the community aspect. Lee also addressed that Barrow had a meticulous eye for detail in his research and presentation of materials.²⁰

The last to include on the nationalism argument would be Robert Bartlett in his book *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950-1350* has, at its heart, the thesis that European hegemony began in the Middle Ages, as these countries became more aware

¹⁷ Barrow, G. W. S. *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

¹⁸ Nicholson, Ranald. *The English Historical Review* 81, no. 320 (1966): 558-60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/561663>.

¹⁹ Prestwich, Michael. *The English Historical Review* 122, no. 498 (2007): 1027-028. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4493995>.

²⁰ Lee, Maurice. *The American Historical Review* 71, no. 2 (1966): 537-38. doi:10.2307/1846376.

of their individual ethnicities, growing into what would later be known as nationalism – as nations did not technically exist yet – and that colonization of Europe into other places happened earlier than the later Early Modern Era. Bartlett, for example, sees the Crusades as a form of colonization. So too, does he see Edward I's grasp for Scotland an example of early English colonization. The disrupting of the local government, the taking money from it, and the military occupation of the land are all things that any British Empire historian would tell you was present in any of their colonies across several continents. In that, the attempted colonialization of Scotland by England allowed Scotland to revolt stronger against it. There was a clear and defined ethnic split between the Scots and the English, and the Scots were aware that the English had no business being involved in theirs. Bruce's battle against the Scots was therefore an ethnic-nationalistic one and formed a Scottish nationhood and national identity that allowed them to band together. Bruce's military campaigns forged his state and allowed his people to be successful against a much larger, and seemingly superior, force.²¹

Michael Penman's *Robert the Bruce: King of Scots* came out only last year and was written as a response to some of the recent criticism of Robert, as well as to build upon and update the work of the previously mentioned *Robert the Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* by G.W.S. Barrow. His looking at Bruce's military life mostly lies on his guerrilla campaigns and the rather dark years of his exile, contrasted with the almost invulnerable Scots after Bannockburn. He paints Bruce as a wise man, fighting only when and where he can,

²¹ Bartlett, Robert. *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950-1350*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. One review pointed out the use of language as the cultural and therefore national divider as the main reason Bartlett gives for the division in places like Scotland and England. Lanes, Richard. "The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950-1350." *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 2 (Winter, 1996): 546-52, <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2165/docview/198938950?accountid=7113>

avoiding combat where he could not, and only needing one military defeat to teach him this lesson. He gains the upper hand by gaining support amongst Scotsmen from all over the country and making allies with Irish Gaelic chiefs. His military victories against Edward I can be attributed to the two vastly different ways of war that the Scots and the English waged, and against Edward II, his victories are often left up to him being an older, wiser man, who could outwit and outfight his opponents, against Edward II's headstrong, almost blundering fashion, into drawing the Scots out in order to be fighting the next decisive battle. His book draws mostly from primary sources and includes sources that both praise and criticize Bruce and the English monarchs – sources which come from both Scotland and England. The push into Ireland is handled as almost military genius, eroding away England's foothold there, and causing the English to have to fight a war on two fronts, neither of them easy – one on an isolated isle, and one in the unforgiving Highlands. He also seems to suggest that Bruce's success not only inspired the Welsh and Irish rebellions, but later rebellions across all three nations against the English, in the same vein that the American War of Independence has inspired many revolutions.²²

Michael Prestwich wrote a biography of the English King in his *Edward I*. This biography is set up in a thematic way, grouping together parts of Edward's life that fit together. Overall, the assertion is that the first two parts of his life were relatively stable, where he was the good king that England still holds him to be to this day. The third part, however, is focused on his more unstable years, mostly focusing on his later life, but not always. In this book, the First Scottish War of Independence is brought up, as it is one of his most famous expeditions. In the book, Prestwich suggests based on sources that the reason that Edward made war on the Scots

²² Penman, Michael. *Robert the Bruce: King of the Scots*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.

and decided to dominate their lands was because he was afraid of an alliance between Scotland and France, England's age-old enemy. Scotland and France were profitable trading partners with one another, and the idea of a military alliance is not that farfetched. Prestwich points out that Edward never himself bore the title of King of Scotland, which is very interesting, although there are primary source documents of the time that refer to him as such, and he certainly did nothing to reject that claim. Edward's handling of war is also shown to be as brutal as has been previously suggested, although there are times where Prestwich seems to try and whitewash it. On the famous, or infamous, *Warwolf* episode, Prestwich declares that Edward's actions were not condemnable by his contemporaries, and as such cannot be condemned by modern historians because of this.²³ This idea can be immediately suggested with the examination of the Declaration of Arbroath, which makes attacks at the handling of war by both Edwards, and the cruel way they carried it out.²⁴ And even a few pages later, Prestwich abandons his own statement, and further explains Edward's rejection of the castle's surrender, and chalks it up to nothing more than a man wanting to use his new toy, completely condemning him himself.²⁵ With this he includes a famous line by Edward at the episode, where when the castle's occupants were brought before him, he at first refused to give them the same surrender conditions he was giving the other Scottish rebels, saying "You don't deserve my grace, but you will surrender to my will".²⁶ This rather confusing work makes up one of the best regarded biographies of the Longshanks, and his side on the Scottish War is one of the most important as it really shows the English part in it.

²³ Prestwich, Michael. *Edward I*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

²⁴ *Declaration of Arbroath*. 1320.

²⁵ Prestwich, Michael. *Edward I*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

²⁶ Prestwich, Michael. *Edward I*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. Page 502.

Seymour Phillips followed this with a biography of Edward II, the son of Edward I, who took the throne when his father died in 1307. While Edward I is sometimes seen as a great man and sometimes seen as a brutal one, Edward II is almost entirely the butt of many a joke by modern historians, though others truly stand with him. For a series on English monarchs, Phillips sought to combine the two extremes. In it, he asserts that Edward II had four attempts at war with the Scots – the first successful and the latter ones less so. This is mostly chalked up to Edward’s boyish nature and letting anger control him. When Bruce rebelled the second time, Edward reportedly was so irate that when he carried into Scotland he spared neither sex nor age, vowing to destroy Scotland from sea to sea; this did not go over well with his father. Edward II took hand in the punishment and execution of several of Robert the Bruce’s brothers, and famously is held responsible for the capture and poor treatment of Bruce’s wife and daughter. Phillips suggests that Edward’s war tactic seem to be a way for him to try and please his father, and that these familial issues helped to spike Edward II’s rather unstable personality, which drove him into military defeat. Rushing into Scotland when the last English garrison was about to surrender, led the King right into the mess that was Bannockburn. While his father received the surrender of Stirling Castle, Edward II’s own rendition would see a massive English defeat, sometimes equated to what happened in 1066 at Hastings. Edward’s fledgling empire in Wales and Ireland was threatened by rebels in the second, and Bruce’s brother, Edward Bruce, landing in Ireland and eventually being crowned King of Ireland – turning two nations against the English in one war with the Scots. This military incompetence is a great part of this historiography, as it can be directly contrasted almost as a third part to Edward I’s and the Scot’s own version of warcraft.²⁷

²⁷ Phillips, Seymour. *Edward II*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

The goal of this thesis is to argue that though Scotland existed as a political entity, it was united more via its cultural identity – through its Gaelic language, its dress, even its way of war, the clan system – than a political one. The war changed that, uniting the people under King Robert the Bruce in a way they truly had not been before. Robert himself, I will argue, was the only person who could have united the country and fought off the English invaders. More background information will be added when necessary, through both primary and secondary sources.

CHAPTER 2

A CULTURAL QUESTION

In Scots Gaelic, the native language of Scotland, *Albannach* literally means “a Scotsman” or “a Scot” without gender. This word comes from the name for Scotland brought out of the 8th Century, Alba, when the Scots settled and founded a singular kingdom in the old region known as Caledonia by the Romans. Before then, the Picts and Caledonians, other Celtic peoples, roamed the highlands and bogs, and the Scots, being from Ireland, intermingled and formed one people with these other groups, though not always peacefully. Thus, was Scotland founded. But as Scotland later was taken by King Edward I, the issue of what being Scottish became larger and larger, as cultural identities and political ones warred with one another, as people were forced to pick sides.

As was mentioned, the Scots were, along with the Picts and Caledonians, Celtic or Gaelic. Their native languages were Celtic, though from different branches, and as far back as the Roman author Tacitus, does one get the typical vision of a red-haired, long-limbed, broad Celt in Scotland.²⁸ The introduction of Picts and Scots into Scotland, brought with it blond and black hair, kept long, or longer than normal European standards, with facial hair.

On the other side of the Scottish War of Independence, were the English. The English at the time were of a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Norman stock²⁹. The Anglo-Saxons had been in England since the 5th or 6th Century and had supplanted the Brittonic Celts living there, who mostly later became the Welsh. The Normans followed Duke William, later known as William the Conqueror, in 1066 AD, when he invaded England to slay King Harold. Some Normans did

²⁸ Tacitus. *Agricola*. I.11.

²⁹ Stock here is used to distance this paper from the all-too-political ideas of race.

also settle in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and this further serves to confound the problems with identifying a cultural division.

Another people who settled in Scotland to further confuse the issue were the Scandinavians. Also called Northmen or Normans, though not in this thesis to reduce confusion, or sometimes called Danes although that is not the most accurate word, these people came as raiders, traders, and settlers to the British Isles. Famously, Dublin was founded by these people in Ireland, and in Scotland, these people settled in the region called Caithness. There, the Norn language and the language of the Gaels bled together, as the two people became one. This is mostly brought to us through the sagas left behind by these Scandinavians.³⁰

This brings the first big problem, and that is, the Scots themselves were confused about their own cultural identity. This has made it difficult in the past to ascertain if the Scots even thought of themselves as having a unique cultural identity. They referred to Caithness as *Gallaibh*, which in Scots Gaelic means ‘Among the Strangers’, or more loosely ‘belonging to the non-Gaels’. This is also seen in the Declaration of Arbroath. As discussed earlier, the Declaration was essentially a threat to the pope, but the Declaration also adds some insight onto the political and cultural beliefs of these Scotsmen. The lords, or rather their scribe, write that they are descended from the Scots who rooted out the Picts and drove back the Vikings, and that they were utterly a different and unique people from the English, who were on a campaign of total war to wipe them from the face of the earth. The great line, often quoted in later Celtic rebellion songs or literature, and which shows with full clarity the Scottish mindset, is famously “for as long as a hundred of us remain alive, we will never on any conditions be subjected to the

³⁰ *Orkneyinga Saga*.

lordship of the English”.³¹ This ethnic divide between the two served as a major reason for fighting the war to the Scots, as was evident in their own words.³² They saw a need to separate themselves as a unique people, who were under threat of extermination, and had to outline why they would not succumb to English rule, since they themselves were not English.

Robert the Bruce himself had a litany of ancestry, which will be expanded upon later, but saw Scottish tradition as the route to solving the cultural issue. When Robert was crowned King of Scotland he was done so at Scone, even though the Stone of Scone was taken from Scotland at the time. Traditionally, the kings of Scotland were crowned at Scone, near Perth, as the Stone of Destiny, or the Stone of Scone, was there, and according to legend would accept or reject the new king at God’s command, and before that, the gods’ command. Scone was incredibly close to a large English garrison, but Robert insisted on being crowned there, in order to keep the line of tradition alive.³³ Whether or not this was done merely for politics, it had the advantage of aligning himself with the old *Ollam Ri*, and stressed the unique tradition of Scotland and its relationship with its kings.

The Scots were not united in a political movement at all at the beginning of the war, unlike how they were at the end of it. After their king was deposed by Edward I in June of 1296, the clans fought as to who should be king of Scotland. Some backed the Bruce, and others his rival John Comyn, as both had ties to the old king, and had substantial claims to the Scottish throne, as stated before. The clan system is highly iconic of Scotland, even today, as it formed the very foundation of a kinship system, and each clan was like its own little kingdom carved out

³¹ *Declaration of Arbroath*. 1320. Second paragraph.

³² Bartlett, Robert. *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950-1350*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. Page 240.

³³ McNamee, Colm. *Robert Bruce: Our Most Valiant Prince, King and Lord*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006. Page 118.

in Alba. But while the clan system was certainly unique to Scotland, political disunity was not, as it was also rampant at the time in both England and Wales, and later in Ireland.³⁴

Another point of cultural differentiation of the Scots from England is a rather odd one, and that is the way that the Scots fought the war. After losing to a night attack by Sir Aymer de Valance in 1306, Robert was forced into the highlands and islands of Scotland. It was here, after learning that the English had raised the Dragon, meaning that the rules of chivalric combat were dispensed with, and the English began executing prisoners and not sparing women or children, that Robert and his men adopted guerilla warfare. The Scots attacked quickly and without warning, raiding English caravans and cutting off their supply lines. They took castles back by subtlety, not force, and famously, or perhaps infamously, James ‘the Black’ Douglas killed one of his English rivals at Sunday Mass, slitting his throat before the congregation in Douglasdale.³⁵ One particular incident to provide evidence to this point of a unique way of war is James Douglas’ nightly raid on a castle, in which he and his men concealed themselves with black cloaks and moved across a field at night. The woolen cloaks covered their bodies and the sounds of their kit, and as they moved, they were mistaken for livestock left out to pasture. Douglas and his men climbed the castle walls and slaughtered the English garrison, catching them by surprise, with shouts of “A Douglas!” The English officer locked himself in his tower and held out for another day before the much smaller Scottish force took him prisoner. This is just one of many

³⁴ While these systems did exist in these other places, the amount of political freedom each clan had underneath the king was not. Irish and Welsh clans could fight each other, but were not supposed to if they belonged to the same king; in Scotland, this was not the case, and clans were allowed to settle their own disputes with minimal input by a king, unless the Church got involved. Brown, Michael. *Bannockburn: The Scottish War and the British Isles, 1307-1323*. Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

³⁵ The Scottish way of war refers to the preference to wage guerilla warfare, and to sneak into fortifications, than to make direct assault against them or meet armies on the traditional battlefield. Macdonald, Alastair. 2014. “Trickery, Mockery and the Scottish Way of War”. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 143 (November), 319-38. <http://soas.is.ed.ac.uk/index.php/psas/article/view/9807>.

stories about Douglas that earned him his fearsome reputation.³⁶ The other incident in the church mentioned was at Douglasdale, James' ancestral lands which had been captured. James slaughtered the Englishmen inside the church, then moved to the castle, burning it after poisoning the well with the flesh of dead horses and salt. This incident is known, quite morbidly, as "James' Larder".³⁷

Another note on their distinct cultural warfare, nearly every castle the Scots took back, they burned behind them, burning fields, slaughtering livestock, and poisoning water sources. There were some exceptions though. Famously, Robert the Bruce and a band of men climbed the 'hill' – more like a rocky cliff – in the middle of the night upon which sits Edinburgh Castle. The castle, at this point, was ruled by the English, and the hill was the only way to assault it without sieging Edinburgh as a whole; at this time, the Royal Mile was the majority of the city, and the castle was easily defensible, even without the cliff. Bruce and his men slipped into the castle unseen and took it by surprise. This loss, so important as a symbol due to Edinburgh's cultural significance to Scotland, and so close to the English garrison at Perth, the capital of Scotland at this time, won Bruce further status.³⁸

When forced to fight in a field battle, the Scots chose to fight smarter, not harder. In two of the major, and decisive, land battles of the war, that at Loudoun Hill in 1307 AD, and at Bannockburn in 1314, the Scots fielded five times less men than the English and half as many as them in the second battle. In these battles, as the Scots forced the English to come up at them straight, wetting the ground and creating quick-sinking mud on either sides of their army, and

³⁶ Cornell, David. *Bannockburn: The Triumph of Robert the Bruce*. New Hampton, Yale University Press, 2014. Page 144.

³⁷ Scott, Ronald McNair. *Robert the Bruce (1274-1329)*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993. Page 96-97.

³⁸ Scott. *Robert the Bruce*. 103.

putting stakes and caltrops up front, neutralizing the English's greatest advantage: horses.³⁹ This way of warfare was noted by Roman writers concerning Celts all around Europe, and culturally there might be a reason the Scots chose it over other forms of warfare.

Other battles existed in the lead up to the war where the Scots showed this type of guerrilla warfare, such as the Battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297. William Wallace led this battle for the Scots. Stirling is quoted by Alexander Smith as “like a huge brooch, clasp[ing] Highlands and Lowlands together”. Stirling Castle, and Stirling town, are essential strongholds for any army to advance north into the highlands of Scotland and are furthermore essential in order to hold against an army pouring from the north into the lowlands. Wallace ambushed the English army at Stirling Bridge, after accepting battle on the other side⁴⁰. As the English were crossing, and a few had made it over, Wallace rushed in with his limited cavalry and heavy infantry, raining missile fire on the English from the bank of the river. The next closest crossing was many miles away, and the English, caught off guard, were forced to fight in the confined conditions. The English soldiers in the front could not press forward into the Scottish ranks and could not retreat back because their own men were pressed and crowded there. The men at the back tried to push forward to help their comrades, but this only helped to further crowd the bridge. Under the combined weight, the bridge collapsed, and the English army spilled into the river below, most of them drowning or taking more missile fire from the Scots.⁴¹

Scottish weaponry and armor was also distinct from that of the English, and despite

³⁹ Penman, Michael. *Robert the Bruce: King of the Scots*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018. Page 67.

⁴⁰ Meaning that he, Wallace, had set up men on the other side in order to make it appear that a normal field battle would take place between his men and the English. In a normal war, accepting battle was held as a semi-sacred thing – if an army was arranged to accept battle, it meant they were ready to fight honorably. The other army then was able to either accept battle, or refuse it and leave, both with advantages and disadvantages, and potential risks.

⁴¹ “The Chronicle of Lanercost 1272–1346”, ed. H. Maxwell, 1913.

having similarities, carried with it its own unique cultural traditions. In both nations, mail hauberks and large kite shields were the norm. Coat of plates are also documented by archaeologists on both sides—these were garments typically made of wool and having sown in between layers of fabric, multiple small plates. These plates would protect against thrusting attacks, as well as slashing or cutting ones, unless struck somehow in the narrow crevices between the plates. The fact that the plates were not connected as one massive breastplate kept maneuverability up and allowed the garment to bend and form to the human body. Later this was replaced by overlapping plates in the brigandine, and by the end of this century, plate armor – like with what is typically thought of when one thinks of the Middle Ages – was common enough that most foot soldiers had some form or diminutive of plate armor.

Both armies were also known to use mercenaries from other parts of Europe. Flemish crossbowmen were a staple across Medieval Europe and were considered skilled shots. Irish conscripts were also not uncommon on the English side, and some Irish men joined the Scottish side of the war of their own volition to repay England for occupying Ireland and uprooting Irish people and placing English ones on their old lands.

The English famously utilized the Welsh longbow, a massive piece of medieval artillery. Working similarly to a modern-day high-powered rifle, a Welsh longbow – sometimes called an English longbow after the Battle of Agincourt, but during the time period of the first Scottish War of Independence, was mainly used by Welsh conscripts and mercenaries – fired at a minimum of a hundred-and-sixty-pound draw. What this means is that it took a massive amount of strength to draw and fire the weapon, launching the velocity of the point high enough to deeply penetrate mail, padded armor or gambeson, cloth, and flesh. The bows could go up to over two hundred pounds, and an archer was expected to fire around eight arrows consistently a

minute. These arrows were not fired in volleys, as is often depicted, but rather straight on target, meaning that no velocity was lost in the firing. Archers did not aim at a bullseye, but rather for center mass, as an arrow could hinder a man even if he was not killed by it, and stressing out the enemy with overwhelming firepower was considered a viable tactic.⁴² The English also equipped their cavalry with lances, long spears meant to be used in a cavalry charge and left in their victims. Knights were also equipped with swords and shields for the melee, and daggers to catch open rings in the mail, split them, and kill their foes. English helmets often enclosed the whole face to protect from enemy fire, and occasionally a soldier or knight might carry an axe or war hammer with them to circumvent armor. Swords at this time were also changing, so they often came down to a needle-like point from a broad base for slashing, and this point could work in penetrating armor.⁴³

The Scots, however, were armed differently. Scottish missile troops did use bows, but nothing as powerful as the Welsh longbow. However, they still had a heavy hitter in the form of mass-produced crossbows. These crossbows were easier to train troops with, as they did not require great strength to load – in fact, they had a lever type mechanism called a windlass which was responsible for cranking back the string to load a new shot – and so anyone could use it. While the bows had several hundred-pound draw weights, the small size of the bow made them roughly equivalent of the Welsh longbow in terms of penetrating power, but they fired at a far smaller maximum distance of accuracy. The Scots too moved on to the new needle-like swords, but they put their own Scottish flair on them. The blades were typically produced in France, Spain, or Germany – the Holy Roman Empire then – and were imported to Scotland, since none

⁴² Capwell, Tobias. *The Real Fighting Stuff: Arms and Armour in Glasgow Museums*. Glasgow: Glasgow Museums, 2006.

⁴³ Oakeshott, Ronald Ewart. *A Knight and His Weapons*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1964.

of these nations had outstanding issues with Scotland. The blades were then fitted with a unique V-shaped cross guard, not the flat one commonly thought of. Why this shape was decided upon is unclear – perhaps to better catch and control an opponent’s blade slipping towards the hand in the bind, or maybe for aesthetic reasons alone. What is interesting is that earlier Iron and Bronze Age finds both in Scotland and in Europe as a whole, show Celtic swords carrying a similar aesthetic, though sometimes with anthropomorphized figures. This could indicate that it is a Celtic cultural thing, and that reason seems sufficient in demonstrating further cultural differences between the Scots and the English. The Scots also used other types of weapons more commonly. Robert the Bruce is well known for wielding an axe, as his memorial at Bannockburn proudly demonstrates, and this would have been used to chop through mail armor – far from the more romanticized and heroic sword seen in modern depictions.⁴⁴ Scottish troops also used pikes, possibly taking inspiration from the Macedonian Phalanx crafted by Alexander the Great, and used these sixteen-foot tall spears against English cavalry, and even formed themselves into a similar formation called a schiltron.⁴⁵ These spears easily outreached the lances and swords of the English knights and men-at-arms – mounted troops who were not part of the nobility like knights were. Pikes were used to bring down rider or horse alike, despite horses being highly valued by medieval people, and once on the ground, a soldier could jump atop a knight who had fallen or was trapped underneath their horse and stab them with a dagger in the gaps in their armor.

Another indication of cultural difference, or separation, from the Scots and the English is how they dressed. While fashion in both nations was entirely dependent on what one did as a

⁴⁴ *Robert the Bruce Memorial*, Bannockburn, Scotland.

⁴⁵ Linklater, Eric. *The Survival of Scotland*. London: Heinemann, 1968.

job, contrary to popular belief, the Middle Ages saw people dressed in bright colors.⁴⁶ Not only did medieval people find bright colors appealing, but dyes were hard to dilute, and so often came out very bright. England, particularly in London, had an extensive trade system overseas, and so imported dyes from all over. Scotland did as well, but they also produced their main dye locally – not to say that England did not either, but this dye is important to the discussion of the war. Yellow was the most common dye available in medieval Scotland. It was cheap and easy to produce from the local ecosystems, and so was very prominent.⁴⁷ Perhaps because of that reason, it was adopted as one of the royal colors of Scotland. The Scottish Royal Flag bears a red lion on a yellow or golden field. Perhaps because of this and the easy access nature of the yellow, it was not uncommon to find Scottish soldiers wearing yellow. This was before the age of kilts that we see in the Late Medieval Period and Early Modern Era, and so yellow was likely invaluable in recognizing friend from foe on the battlefield. On the other hand, England was known for its bright red colors, even up until the Early Modern Period with the redcoats in the American War of Independence. Red and gold are also the royal colors of England, like in Scotland, but they are represented as three golden lions on a red field. Lions were associated with royalty, nobility, and power. But the extensive red color made them visually distinct, which is important in a time period where England was involved often in wars in France, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, and so troops needed to identify each other, and the mass of a single color would make their army seem more solidified to an enemy.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Cartwright, Mark. “Clothes in Medieval England.” Ancient History Encyclopedia. Ancient History Encyclopedia, April 29, 2020. <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1248/clothes-in-medieval-england/>.

⁴⁷ Clarkson, Tim. *The Makers of Scotland: Picts, Romans, Gaels and Vikings*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011. Page 103.

⁴⁸ Probably the most famous item from Scotland also provides a clear cultural difference between them and the English. This would, of course, be the bagpipes. Bagpipes are a lot older than Scotland. Bagpipes are first recorded in Anatolia in around 1000 BC and are mentioned in the Bible. Nero, despite popular perception as playing the fiddle, played the pipes, though not as Rome burned. These pipes were different than the Scottish pipes that are thought of today whenever bagpipes are mentioned. The pipes thought of now are called Great Highland Pipes and

However, there is another factor to consider when it comes to identifying friend from foe on the battlefield. As has been presented more recently in the popular media, the Middle Ages were well known for incorporating noble standards on the battlefield. In Medieval Europe, until the Renaissance, there were no national armies. Instead, under feudalism, a king gave his lords lands in return for their running them, paying their taxes to the king, and supporting him with troops.⁴⁹ This meant that every lord essentially had a private army or militia. During war, a king would call his bannermen, or lords, and they would present their smaller armies to the king, who had his own private army, and would often give most of the leadership over to the king. Lords also did not often equip their own soldiers, and soldiers bought their own gear, or borrowed for it in the hopes of finding loot on campaign to make themselves rich. In the best of times, this system worked, like it did for Edward I, whose supreme military tactical mind allowed him to use his armies effectively and bring soldiers and lords alike a lot of income. In the worst of times though, a lord could rise up against their king and fight them with their own private army. Famously, William I of England, William the Conqueror, fought his old king, the King of France, a lot with his Norman army – part of the reason he wanted to be King of England was to have more resources to fight the French King, despite the French King being his sovereign.⁵⁰

The reason this is brought up here is to demonstrate that it was not uncommon for both the Scots

were first recorded around the mid-15th Century. Before that, ancient and medieval pipes were all over Europe, the Near East, and North Africa. The bagpipes were popular in medieval music, and its well recorded of their use in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, England, among other places. However, even in the 14th Century, the Scots still had a special connection to the pipes, culturally. Quoted in a famous song in Scottish Gaelic, one Scottish war cry goes “My, it’s a pity I don’t have three hands, two hands for the pipe and one for the sword”. This cry shows a clear connection between the Scottish people and the bagpipes was prevalent enough that it could be shouted to rally the Scottish troops and be used against the English soldiery. *Uamh An Oir (The Cave of Gold)*.

⁴⁹ There is an existing argument about how exactly feudalism worked, and if it was inherently different for each country it existed within. In Scotland, a king was presented as a servant, rather than a ruler, and had very little power compared to the lower lords, from barons to clan chiefs.

⁵⁰ Jones, Kaye. *1066*. Bath: Shortlist, 2013. Page 53.

and the English soldiery to wear the standard, or colors of the standard, of their local lord in a fight. Like wearing yellow or red, this would allow troops to quickly identify one another, and would allow for a soldier on one army to recognize all the different standards of his nation from his enemies. According to the English, this is what the Scots were doing – that is, using their own local lords' armies against their rightful king. When William Wallace was captured, he was tried for treason. This charge, refuted by him as he considered himself to be a citizen of Scotland, not England, and so he found Edward I not to be his king, led to his death by hanging, drawn and quartering, and the distribution for his body parts across the British Isles – which helped to turn popular opinion in Scotland further against the English, and lead to a second rebellion which ended with the Scots winning their independence again. Wallace had formed an army, as was his right as knight, and as Guardian of Scotland, used this army against the English.

Another place this happened in the war and its background was with King John Balliol of Scotland. Balliol, being related to Edward, followed Edward's lead and took orders from him. Balliol gave Edward and his men land in Scotland, and in turn Edward basically allowed Balliol to have a title with no real power. However, when Edward went to war against the French, he needed more men. He requested that Balliol give him Scotsmen to fight, and due to pushback by the Scottish nobility and populace, Balliol told Edward that no, he would not send Scots to die in France – this may have also been related to the fact that Scotland and France had very good political relations, but it is known that the popular and noble support for this was not present.⁵¹ Edward requested the troops again, and this time added that it was not really a request and more of an order, and still Balliol refused. This is commonly accepted as one of the main reasons that Edward stepped in as King of Scotland and dethroned Balliol and is probably the only reason

⁵¹ Barron, Evan M. *The Scottish War of Independence*. London: J. Nisbet, 1914. Page 33.

why Balliol is remembered with any positive thought in Scotland presently⁵².

The question has been raised of if there was such a thing as Scotland, or a Scottish identity, before the English invasion. If England made Scotland, in unifying the lands against them, and more than just politically, can it be said then that the English made Scotland? The Declaration of Arbroath does not treat it so, of course, saying that they were their own people before being attacked by England, the descendants of the Gaels, who took over after the Picts, and who have defended their own against the Norwegians and English in turn, however this could be countered by bringing up that it is politically biased. But at the same time, the impact that the Britons and the English had on Scotland, as well as these outside peoples, cannot be underestimated. Like the Romans, and the Vikings before them, these people and their aspirations for controlling Scotland has made the people inside the latter nation have to defend their own. This sets them apart, quite dramatically, from the rest of Europe, besides Ireland – during this time period, Robert the Bruce's brother, Edward, went to Ireland to help them fight the English and was named High King of Ireland; even today, the Irish adopted the bagpipes and tartan as a national symbol, and the Scots the clover and harp as a way of showing their cultural connections.

Politically, these invasions brought all of Scotland under Robert the Bruce, named King of Scots – of the people, not the land – a man whose actions made him a polarizing figure in his own day and age, who led them against their oppressors. This led to further Scottish cultural differences from England, such as adopting kilts and Great Highland Pipes, and made Scotland distinct from the nations around it, even though the modern era. To say there was no true Scotland or Scottish cultural or national identity before the war, I think, is incorrect, though it

⁵² National Gallery of Scotland.

has some merit to it. But to say current Scotland, or modern Scottish identity, was born from the war, I think, holds more water.

Of course, it is always impossible to say if there was this distinct identity unless one was to go back and ask the people themselves. But I think a decent argument has been made here, that there was a cultural distinction, and that this distinction was all too prevalent in the First Scottish War of Independence. The Scots would remain their own people, of course, after the war, and their philosophers would illuminate Europe, and lead directly into the formation of the United States of America later on, like with Adam Smith. The Scots would become tied with England when Robert the Bruce's descendant, James VI became James I of England, and his family would rule both nations, as well as Ireland and Wales, until William of Orange deposed James II in 1689. This cultural distinction is still present today, as many Scottish people identify themselves with being Scottish and not part of the greater United Kingdom encompassing Scotland, England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Exhibits in the National Museum of Scotland, as well as other museums I visited while there, have language present that are formed as "we" statements, as in "we fought against the English at this period", despite being currently politically attached to the hip of England. Modern culture surrounding the issues with Brexit have many Scots wanting to be their own separate nation, identifying cultural differences and different goals than England, much of which was argued back in the Fourteenth Century, and it is in this fashion that a separate and distinct Scottish identity was present then and now.

CHAPTER 3

ROBERT THE BRUCE, KING OF SCOTS

Robert the Bruce VI was in a unique position to be King of Scots, and to be the one under whom Scottish nationalism was created. He was born on July 11th, 1274 to Robert the Bruce V and his wife, the Countess Marjorie, the eldest of five brothers: Edward, Neil, Thomas, and Alexander. His father, Bruce the Elder, was, as stated before, of Scoto-Norman descent, while his mother was a full-blooded Gael. Robert, the Younger, was then, in essence, a representative of the whole of Scotland's inhabitants, leaving out those of Scandinavian descent, if one does not count the original Norman's ancestry.⁵³ He grew up speaking Scots, French, Latin, and Gaelic, though the later part has been disputed, and some have even claimed he was more Norman than Scottish.⁵⁴ However, the lack of his speaking Gaelic makes little sense, when one considers that one of his top lieutenants, to use a modern word, Aonghus Óg Mac Domhnaill, who came from Islay, would have only spoken Gaelic, shows that Robert could communicate properly in it, despite if he was more Norman or not.⁵⁵

Bruce the Elder had ties to Edward I of England, as both had gone on crusade together in 1270, and were likely good friends.⁵⁶ This is probably what spared Robert the Younger, when he joined Wallace's rebellion – when Wallace was defeated at Falkirk, and the Scottish nobility

⁵³ By taking the title of King of Scots, he may have found himself a representative of his people, even if it was merely for political gains. Here, I am outlying that for our purposes, in hindsight, he is a representative of the whole of Scotland, at least genetically speaking.

⁵⁴ Colm McNamee is the main person to say he was more Norman than Scottish, though I think discounting one or both parts of his genealogy is unfair, and McNamee himself states that Bruce's mother was a through and through Gael, and his father was half. McNamee, Colm. *Robert Bruce: Our Most Valiant Prince, King and Lord*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006. Page 52.

⁵⁵ *The Annals of Connacht*. 1562. What I am outlining is that it does not matter if he was more Scot or Norman by his parentage, rather that he was able to use both to appeal to people of both or mixed sides within Scotland.

⁵⁶ Duncan, A. A. M. "Brus [Bruce], Robert de, earl of Carrick and lord of Annandale (1243–1304), magnate." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 4 May. 2020. <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3753>.

thought it in their best interest, and the interest of their people, it is possible this deal was brought to Edward via Bruce the Elder, who sought to appeal to their friendship. A better indicator, is how Robert was not punished more severely than any other noble, despite his quite open stand against Edward, and the only real punishment he had to endure was the humiliation of not being given the crown and that English soldiers were made to garrison his holdings. However, this last part also applied to most Scottish nobility as well.⁵⁷

Robert remained docile for many years until two events happened within one year of each other: his father's death, and that of William Wallace. Robert would have been thirty when the first event happened, making him the head of the Bruce line, and more importantly, putting him in his father's place for a claim to the throne. The Bruce's were related to both John Balliol and King Alexander, and thus had an established line with the last two Scottish kings. When Wallace died, and pieces of him were sent north to Scotland, it stirred again the people against the English, and in 1306, Robert decided to work against the English yet again, this time lacking his father's probable penchant for peace. The sources are exactly unclear as to what his reasoning is, whether it be a chance to take the crown he thinks he deserved, or to help the Scottish people be out from under English rule, or perhaps for both reasons.

Supported by his wife, daughter, and brothers, Robert first sought to bind Scottish nobles to him. This was his first great act as a potential king and shows that he knew what must be done to cement Scottish power against the English. Meeting with John Comyn, the other claimant to the throne was both a wise and unwise move: wise because if the meeting turned out well, it would allow him to solidify Scottish popular and elite support into one person; unwise, because it did not go well. Robert killed Comyn on holy ground, then fled to face judgment by the

⁵⁷ Barron, Evan M. *The Scottish War of Independence*. London: J. Nisbet, 1914. Page 102.

archbishop, who offered him clemency. Robert was devout Catholic, as was all of Scotland, as far as can be told, and as a moral choice, this would have endeared him to people. If it was a political one, it is very politically savvy.⁵⁸ When Robert was crowned, he chose to do so at Scone, the crowning place of all Scottish High Kings since the days of the Picts. He chose to do this, as even though Scone was close to the English garrison at Perth, as noted earlier, it seems he preferred tradition to his own safety.

He was crowned on March 25th, 1306, but not as “King of Scotland”. Instead, he was named “King of Scots”, “*Rex Scottorum*”. At first, these two phrases may seem one and the same, but they are not, and Robert surely would have known this. Being named King of Scotland would have made him an authoritarian ruler, with power over the whole nation – like Edward I was or was trying to be.⁵⁹ Instead, he was named King of the Scottish people, as both their sovereign and servant, and was sworn before God and the crowd gathered there to respect the rights of the Scottish people, and to defend those rights to the death. As stated in the Declaration of Arbroath, the Scottish nobles let Bruce know, as well as the pope, that if he did not uphold this oath, they had the legal and moral right to cast him off the throne and find someone else who would:

But from these countless evils we have been set free...our...king and lord...Robert, who, that his people and heritage might be delivered out from the hands of enemies... the succession to his right according to our laws and customs...and the due consent and assent of us all, have made him our prince and king...Yet if he should give up what he has begun...to make us or our kingdom subject to the king of England or to the English,

⁵⁸ I do think it could have been a political choice, but I do not think it was solely a political one. It would have been too easy for this to be used against Robert by the English and could have led to imprisonment or death. If it was solely a political maneuver, it may have made more sense for him to flee to France or elsewhere, and seek help from a ruling monarch there and made a return later in life, similar to what got Harald Bluetooth involved in 1066.

⁵⁹ This challenges the belief that a king in the Middle Ages was a sovereign authoritarian ruler of a “nation” or country. While autocratic authoritarian kings were introduced in the Early Modern period, there exists an idea that it was in the Middle Ages that kings first tried to explore this type of governing. For further reading, see: Myers and Wolfram’s *Medieval Kingship* as well as Mitchell and Melville’s *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*.

we would strive at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own right and ours, and we would make some other man, who was able to defend us...⁶⁰

We know, based on the way history went, that they clearly thought he was a good king, who had kept his word, as he would remain king until his death in 1329.

Robert, we know, brought many people to flock under his banner—people who believed that he had a fighting chance. The aforementioned, Aonghus Óg Mac Domhnaill, and the other Islay lords had previously fought in support of Edward I of England, when King John Balliol had gone against him. However, when Robert rose up against Edward, they switched sides. This could have been done for many reasons, personal wealth or glories would easily explain both actions. However, even if that is the case, they nonetheless switched sides. And evidently Robert did not feel like he could not trust the Islay lords, for he took shelter at their island after being forced to flee following the midnight attack by Sir Amery.⁶¹ Robert, thus, showed an easy ability to gather people to him who would be enemies, for even after his army was decimated, he was still able to gather enough men to him to eventually fight at Loudon Hill.

This is not to say, that every Scot sided with Robert. Comyn's clan, Clan Comyn, obviously did not, and though they did not align with the English outright, they harried Robert as much as they could, fighting him when and where they could. Other Scotsmen who remained loyal to Edward also did not fight alongside Bruce, and though some would come around, others did not.⁶² This seem mostly centered around clan chiefs who had little to gain or lose in the war, or those who were most at risk of English retribution. A few of Clan Comyn's allies also did not join the fight against Edward.

⁶⁰ *Declaration of Arbroath*. 1320.

⁶¹ Brown, Michael. *Bannockburn: The Scottish War and the British Isles, 1307-1323*. Edinburgh University Press, 2008. Page 14.

⁶² *The Annals of Connacht*. 1562.

Robert, however, demonstrated his understanding of the unique Scottish way of war, backing up the claim that though he was placed in a unique position to lead Scotland as their nationalism was born, he was also an effective leader who understood them and could lead them to becoming their own people. He resorted to guerilla fighting, which was effective, if looked down upon by some contemporary writers.⁶³ Learning from Wallace's legacy, as well as maybe those of his far ancestors depicted in the old Roman writings, Robert used hit and run tactics. The army, overall, is hard to track from a modern perspective, and from a contemporary one, impossible. Bruce struck throughout the highlands and lowlands alike, seemingly appearing and disappearing without a trace, sacking garrisons and attacking supply trains wherever he was.⁶⁴ Other groups of men, like those captained by James Douglas, did the same, and this likely would have made him, Robert, seem like he could appear anywhere. A brilliant tactician, he likely would have figured this would lessen the want of the English to come into Scotland. For example, his climbing and taking of Edinburgh Castle would have imposed a feeling of vulnerability upon the English, and though they would take back the castle, it would switch hands many times over the course of the war.⁶⁵ This would no doubt make every English victory feel like a Pyrrhic one, if things were just going to go back to the way they were. It also made it hard for the Scots to lose, for as long as Robert was not captured, and the English lost literally any amount of resources, the Scots could be considered having a victory, and this would have brought more and more support to their cause. Perhaps this is another reason why the Scots under Bruce used this form of warfare: it brought more fighting men, as well as resources, to

⁶³ Grey, Thomas. *The Scalaronica*. 1363.

⁶⁴ Bower, Walter. *Scotichronicon*. 1447.; Grey, Thomas. *The Scalaronica*. 1363.

⁶⁵ Scott. *Robert the Bruce*. Page 103.

them. This was further cemented with such battles like Loudon Hill and Bannockburn.⁶⁶

Robert also made allies amongst the Irish Chieftains, which demonstrated his understanding of the cultural ties between the Scots and the Irish. In 1314, Robert sailed to Ireland alongside his brother, Edward, in the hopes of stirring up trouble for the English there, as the English were occupying Ireland and conscripting the locals to fight against their Scottish cousins. The Irish, for the most part, liked Robert, and wished to support him.⁶⁷ When the pope going to suggest a peace between the Scots and the English, a peace which would have seemed to stop the fighting but not to make Scotland its own independent nation, a letter was written by the Irish Chieftains to the pope, openly declaring their support for Robert, and accrediting him to helping them win back their own freedom from the English.⁶⁸

Robert would set up his brother, Edward, as King of Ireland. It is unknown if this was done as a bargaining chip by him to support the Irish in their pursuits, or if this was brought up by the Irish, or, instead, if it was mere happenstance.⁶⁹ Edward would continue the fight in Ireland, and send his brother support whenever and wherever he could, when Robert sailed back to Scotland. Some, at the time, criticized this move.⁷⁰ However, this difference in response could also be explained by the late nature of this piece, and perhaps there was bitterness there at Ireland still not being independent from England. Though, it is not difficult to throw out the accusation that Robert and his brother chased out the Gaelic chieftains, as their own letters at the time seem to suggest support for what Robert was doing, and so it seems highly unlikely that

⁶⁶ Cornell, David. *Bannockburn: The Triumph of Robert the Bruce*. New Hampton, Yale University Press, 2014.

⁶⁷ Domhnall Ó Néill. "Remonstrance of the Irish Chiefs to Pope John XXII". 1317.; *The Annals of Connacht*. 1562.

⁶⁸ Domhnall Ó Néill. "Remonstrance of the Irish Chiefs to Pope John XXII". 1317.

⁶⁹ Duffy, Seán. *Robert the Bruce's Irish Wars: The Invasions of Ireland 1306-1329*. Stroud: Tempus, 2002.; McNamee, Colm. *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland 1306-1328*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2012.

⁷⁰ *The Annals of Connacht*. 1562.

they would have supported him kicking them out of Ireland.⁷¹

Over thirty years of warfare was waged before Scotland won its independence, starting in 1296 and ending in 1328, and this warfare made Scotland stronger, as it simultaneously weakened England. As the English sought over and over to fight in an open battle, they were harassed and sustained losses over and over again. And when they got their open battles, they lost them. Robert utilized learned tactics against the English, using his homefield advantage and smaller army brilliantly to assure their own victory and the great embarrassment of the English. He humiliated great leaders like Sir Amery, who though he had beaten Robert once before, his utter defeat made the first time seem like a fluke, rather than the second time. Edward I's veterans bled and died to Scottish rebels, and Robert led his troops from the front lines, fighting in the front of their schiltrons. In this way, he would be simultaneously making an example of himself for his people and making a banner for more and more people to flock to him. It expertly wrote his narrative in with that of the warrior kings of old. This further tied him into the narrative of Scotland and what the Scottish people wanted, letting them find a cementing figure in himself.⁷²

Robert the Bruce was also a brilliant tactician outside of the realm of combat, garnering strength for Scotland with both words and the sword. In 1326, in the closing years of the war, Robert commissioned the Treaty of Corbeil. This treaty was sent to the King of France, Charles IV, renewing the Auld Alliance. This would guarantee both nations' involvement if one of them went to war against England. This perhaps could be the reason why two years later, the English and the Scottish would make peace, in order to effectively nullify an eminent threat from both of

⁷¹ Domhnall Ó Néill. "Remonstrance of the Irish Chiefs to Pope John XXII". 1317.

⁷² Barrow, G. W. S. *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. Page 230.

their borders: one from Scotland to the north, and the other from France across the English Channel. This treaty, interestingly enough, was signed despite the fact that Isabella, the daughter of the old king Phillip the Fair of France, was married to Edward II. This perhaps shows that the French may have believed the Scots would now win over the much more powerful English. It also further shows Robert's penchant for tradition.⁷³ By renewing the Auld Alliance, which had been originated by John Balliol against Edward I, Robert was endorsing Edward's position, which was the only popular one he ever had with the Scottish people.⁷⁴

Robert utilized his influence in order to surround himself with loyal people. He was noted as giving great speeches in order to gain popular support, as any great leader would be required to do. His dominant personality was monumental in getting other people to go along with plans he had, more so in the beginning of the war where he had very much to prove himself.⁷⁵ Robert was also known to reward well those around him for their loyalty and support. These rewards could be material wealth or promised lordships, but they could also be less physical things. Robert rewarded James Douglas' support with allowing him to go back and commit Douglas' Larder – letting Douglas' old people to see he still lived and fought against the English, and self-promoting Robert. Bruce was nothing short of cunning, and as many men in his service had similar stories to Douglas, it is not hard to imagine why so many people followed him as far as they did. One story tells of how, after losing a lot of his men, Robert came to Loch

⁷³ Even if one takes this as savvy political maneuvering, rather than honoring tradition, it would still support the tradition of the Auld Alliance. This makes it just as valid to the narrative of a Scottish national identity, since it still serves tradition, even if there was ulterior motivations. If it is argued that it is more politics than anything, it shows Bruce was a competent politician and leader, which is what Scotland lacked with Balliol before him.

⁷⁴ *The Treaty of Corbeil*. 1326.

⁷⁵ Wade, Nick. "LETTER FROM ROBERT THE BRUCE TO EDWARD II REVEALS POWER STRUGGLE IN THE BUILD-UP TO BANNOCKBURN." University of Glasgow, June 1, 2013. https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/archiveofnews/2013/june/headline_279405_en.html.

Dee, and was asked by a local woman how many men he had. When he responded none, she replied that that was nonsense, and her three sons would fight for him.⁷⁶ This shows that despite his literal apparent defeat, the people flocked to him.⁷⁷

Furthermore, this cunning ability of his likely allowed him to make decisions for the desired outcome of strengthening his position. Like mentioned previously, he fought in the front lines with his men, shedding blood with them and endearing himself to them in the same way Wallace had. Edward, on the otherhand, did not fight in the frontlines but oversee with a very detailed eye the deployment and strategies of his troops, and Robert was no different. His sailing to Ireland, while providing some refuge for him and his men, was a brilliant maneuver, as it deprived the English of resources they could gain there, and similar occurrences happened also in Wales. The freedom fighters in Edwardian Wales used the same tactics as Robert, though to an unsuccessful degree. This difference may prove that Robert was more competent than thought, and simply did not blunder into his successes. He was also able to utilize Scotland's lesser economy, especially after all the raiding, as a strength in its own right, as it made it less financially viable to invade Scotland repeatedly.⁷⁸ Scotland had chief advantages, being remote and hard to access, and surrounded by the seas which enabled easy trade, and Bruce was able to use them effectively.

Bruce also clearly respected Wallace, and even looked up to him, at least from a strategical standpoint. Fighting on the battlefield in the front very clearly mimics Wallace, as I

⁷⁶ Bower, Walter. *Scotichronicon*. 1447; Scott, Ronald McNair. *Robert the Bruce (1274-1329)*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993. Page 99.

⁷⁷ While this tale could be fantastical, and does come from a later source, it is possible this story was born from a hundred like it, and whether they were true or not, they may have informed their audience at the time that Bruce was a man for the people, supported by the people. A story does not have to be true to be helpful.

⁷⁸ Traquair, Peter. *Freedom's Sword*. London: HarperCollins, 2000. Page 56.

have mentioned, but the fact he rose up against Edward I in the first place shows he thought Wallace could win. He learned from his tactical errors, unlike Wallace did, and only needed to lose one field battle to realize not to fight like that. After the Methven in 1306, Robert turned towards fighting almost entirely in guerilla warfare, only making stands where he was certain he could gain the advantage and win. Even after winning field battles, he did not rely on them when he had the opportunity to, whereas Wallace had sought battle after battle proper after he gained more confidence. He also clearly learned from Sir Amery in his night attack and realized that was the way to go.⁷⁹

Robert was also able to use this loyalty-reward system to create a spy ring throughout Scotland and into England. It is not without the realm of possibility that it may have even extended into Ireland and Wales as well. These spies would report to him all that went on, and even on one occasion brought to his attention an assassination attempt in the making. Robert punished the would-be assassins brutally, showing a heavy hand beneath the rewarding nature, and demonstrating to all what the penalty would be for going against him. Some of these assassins, as mentioned earlier, were among those who signed the Declaration of Arbroath.⁸⁰

Bruce's military campaigns are what forged his state and allowed his people to be successful against a much larger, and seemingly superior, force. This allowed the Scottish

⁷⁹ Bingham, Caroline. *Robert the Bruce*. London: Constable, 1999. Page 45.

⁸⁰ Grant, Alexander. *Independence and Nationhood: Scotland 1306-1469*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003. Page 225. It may be this account is left out of most books and primary sources, as it makes the base built around Robert seem to erode some; however, it could also be argued it makes it more realistic, and therefore allows for positive outlets too. It showed that he was a man, like any other, which was a big selling point for Wallace – despite him being a noble, we all remember him as the common man who fought back against the oppression. The punishment of the assassins, draconian though it may have been, was not dealt to have his reign be a reign of terror, but rather maybe to paint himself like Phillip the Fair, the so-called Iron King, a king strong and staunch in his beliefs.

people to create a cultural tie between themselves and Bruce's victories.⁸¹ The two parts of the campaign, the outlaw part and the proper war-waging part, were both equally important and valid to Bruce's identity, and that of the Scotland he helped to forge. The first part, before Loudon Hill, showed a flicker of hope no matter how oppressed the people might be, as rebellion and retaliation could be dealt in any manner available. Despite the threat that literally a single military defeat could end his rebellion, again and again Robert attacked superior English forces. After the victory at Bannockburn, the Scots were practically invincible, shaming Edward II in person and causing his own retreat back to Sterling Castle. Robert thought and planned strategically and showed up the younger English king, who repeated Sir Amery's mistake at Loudon Hill in 1307, with charging the Scottish forces in the hope of crushing them swiftly where they were.⁸² Another place to see his military acumen was his ability to hold the northern highlands and islands out against the English. For this he was praised even by English scholars, as to both England and Scotland, the north was seen as being the truly Scottish frontier.⁸³ The natural glens and valleys allowed him to move his entire force stealthily, without really trying. The natural bogs and swamps would prevent anyone from following him, especially with heavy cavalry, and that was purposeful.⁸⁴

Lastly, are the firsthand accounts from those who fought the Bruce show a complete picture of the man I have attempted to outline here. He was cunning, knowing when and where

⁸¹ Bartlett, Robert. *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950-1350*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. Page 240.

⁸² Penman, Michael. *Robert the Bruce: King of the Scots*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018. Page 98.

⁸³ *The Lanercost Chronicle*. 1346.

⁸⁴ Nicholson, Ranald, and Gordon Donaldson. *Scotland, the Later Middle Ages*. Edinburgh History of Scotland. Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1993. Page 28.

to strike, and how.⁸⁵ He was admired for his actions upon the battlefield, and was often contrasted with the actions of Edward II, who frequently embarrassed himself upon the same battlefields. It also shows, in clear contrast, how good of a king he was thought, even by his enemies, who would have seen him as a traitor but a great and courageous leader. His personality notwithstanding, Robert was a clear good choice for a king. Despite his murder of John Comyn, and the horrible way he dealt with his assassins, people still came to him, and he was known to be a good man to his subjects and servants, making himself more human than some retreated medieval lord who was uncaring towards the lay people.⁸⁶ It is even mentioned that he reimbursed the villages that supported he and his men after the war, which he very well did not have to do, especially with how medieval warfare happened at the time. It also shows that the ways that he trained his men worked extremely well, even through the eyes of the people at the time, and that is astounding for one to praise his enemy so much.⁸⁷ Robert truly was a unifying, nationalistic figure, and it was not by luck, but by craft that he became that very thing.

⁸⁵ Grey, Thomas. *Scalacronica*. 1363.

⁸⁶ This perhaps hints at different moralities and sensibilities at the time. These things, which seem perhaps draconian by modern standards, may have been accepted at the time for being necessary actions for the war. It is insufficient to say Bruce was excused these actions because he was a noble, for in both instances it was nobles he killed, and in the first instance, before he was king.

⁸⁷ Grey, Thomas. *Scalacronica*. 1363.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

The First Scottish War of Independence was without a doubt a monumental thing. It united Scotland underneath one king, a king of their own, and separated them in every way from the English rule that had come before. The tendrils of its influence were felt in Ireland and Wales, as rebels there rose against the English, undoubtedly influenced by the legacy Robert and Wallace had left behind.

Robert was a Scottish king, representing the Scottish people. He was much loved by the people, and his line was a permanent lineage stretching throughout the centuries, until the fall of the Jacobite kings in England. When he died, he had been planning to go on crusade, and when James Douglas went, he carried the Scottish king's heart with him. This act, or in this case the intention, of Robert to go on a crusade would have cemented him as a rightful king of Christendom, at least among his contemporaries, and might demonstrate some sort of penitence for waging wars against fellow Christians. Whether this was a feeling he felt, or a faux feeling, the intention at the time would have been enough. Though Douglas would die, his mission was seen as complete for the church.

Robert's legacy is also felt inside Scotland itself. The Scottish people, as I have witnessed myself, love him, and he seems like an unofficial saint in their eyes. As talks have turned back towards gaining their own independence, it is not uncommon to hear people talk of the exploits of Robert and his contemporaries on the lips of the average person.

The Scots who fought for their freedom did so in a way exclusive to them. They were politically, culturally distinct from the English, and they fought with tooth and nail in their own way to prove that. This forged for them their own nation, truly a unique one, which may have

existed in name before, but never before had been so realized as it had at the end of 1328.

Here I have sought to prove this point utilizing both primary and secondary sources. I have examined the cultural aspect in every way, from language to weapons to dress, and even to name, using for example the Lord of Islay, Aonghus Óg Mac Domhnaill. I have examined Bruce as a human, as the only man born into the right condition and with the right military and political acumen under whom Scotland could unite politically. Robert forged his own path, and through that Scotland its own path—from there Scottish nationalism was born.

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