

# **A Report into the association of Sir William Wallace with Ayrshire**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

It is now 700 years since William Wallace made his mark in the struggle against the oppressive regime that ruled Scotland after 1296. His extraordinary story, caused, not least, by his allegedly obscure origins, has led to 700 years of story-telling and myth-making. To begin with, stories about Wallace were told orally and he earned no more than a casual reference in most official chronicles. In the 1470s, however, his posthumous career was given new life by Blind Hary, reputedly a minstrel who sang or declaimed popular tales for his supper. Hary set down this oral history in a climate of rampant anglophobia: the unpopular king of Scots, James III, was pursuing a pro-English policy to the extreme annoyance of many of his nobility, who profited from cross-border raiding and the government offices that went with attempts to keep the peace. Wallace, a man who could not be shown to have ever submitted to the English king, Edward I, even when it was politically wise to do so, was the perfect hero for the times. Interestingly, with regard to this current study, one of Hary's patrons was Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, a leading Ayrshire landowner; it is also remarkable how often Wallace was to be found in Ayrshire, among his kin, throughout the book. However, question marks over the accuracy of these stories have certainly been raised, particularly by academic historians, not least because some of the hero's exploits, such as his army's alleged invasion of England as far as St Albans, are quite impossible. It was Blind Hary who also first stated that Wallace's father was Sir Malcolm Wallace of Elderslie (without actually saying where Elderslie was). In the last few weeks, this has also been shown to be incorrect. As a result, Wallace's connection with Ayrshire, which the poet certainly highlighted, has proved to be much more direct.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The 'story' of Wallace, his origins and valiant deeds are supposedly well enough known, thanks to Blind Hary and, more recently, *Braveheart*, which drew very heavily on the original poem. But, in order to give substance to Ayrshire's links with Wallace – since we should no more accept Hary as the gospel truth than any other document written 150 years after the event – it was deemed extremely important to go right back to the beginning and work forward to where we are now, rather than working back through the swamp of fact and fiction, where uncorroborated statements are repeated

time and again as established truth. It became clear, fairly early on in the research, that Hary's *Wallace* has been used repeatedly by other authors in the centuries since it was written and that the basic story has remained the same. However, strands of other, earlier stories have also found their way into more recent discussions of the hero, to complicate the issue still further.

Documentary evidence contemporary and relating to the real live William Wallace is extremely thin on the ground, though that has changed in one crucial respect in the recent past. However, there was always enough of interest to suggest not only that Wallace himself had an association with the area, but that Ayrshire was extremely important throughout the period known as the wars of independence. These twin strands of investigation will make up the bulk of this report. It must be stated at the start that the issue of Elderslie and its Wallace association cannot be resolved (for anyone) from contemporary evidence; however, there is much to be said from the later fourteenth century onwards, as a result of research in a wide variety of sources, but including, for the first time, the Duke of Portland's papers in the Scottish Record Office. This has resulted in a very exciting study, of interest to Scottish history as a whole, but extremely illuminating for Ayrshire.

### **BIRTHPLACE & FAMILY**

Up until last week, the earliest reference to Wallace's parentage, as opposed to his activities in the national cause, does not come until the *Scotichronicon*, written in the 1440s (30 years before Blind Hary). There are a number of different manuscripts of this work. One manuscript leaves a blank space for the name of Wallace's father, one has an insertion in a modern hand of 'Malcolm Vales', while another has 'Domini Andree Vallace domini Kragge' inserted by the original scribe.<sup>1</sup> This in itself would seem to indicate that Wallace's parentage was not particularly well-known at that date but that the earliest stories named his father as Andrew and that he was associated with the Wallaces of Riccarton, who later became the Wallaces of Craigie. Later stories then asserted that his name was Malcolm. A number of other chroniclers continued to assert that Sir Andrew was Wallace's father: the English writer, Holinshed, working in the 1570s, repeats the story, and it found its way into a manuscript allegedly written by one Arnald Blair, Wallace's chaplain (Blind Hary names this man as John Blair), in 1327 and which only surfaced much later, as part of the *De Gestis Illustrissimi Herois Gulielmi Vallae Scotiae olim Custodis, Collectanea Varia* (A collection of stories illustrating the hero, William Wallace, once guardian of Scotland) brought together by Andrew Simpson in 1705, published again in 1758 and finally by Alexander Brunton in the 1880s. It states:

"Anno gratiae M.CC. LXXXIX inclitus ille Willielmus Wallace, Anglorum Malleus, filius nobilis militis Domini Andrae Wallace, Domini de Kragge capus levavit" (*In the year of grace 1299 William Wallace, hammer of the English, son of the noble knight Sir Andrew Wallace, lord of Craigie, first raised his head*).

The date is wrong and this manuscript has not been seen since. To add to the mystery, John Major, who published his history in 1521, notes that:

This William was one of a family of only inferior nobility in the district of Kyle, in which the surname is common.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bower's *Scotichronicon* Vol. 6, ed. D. Watt (AUP, 1991), p.82

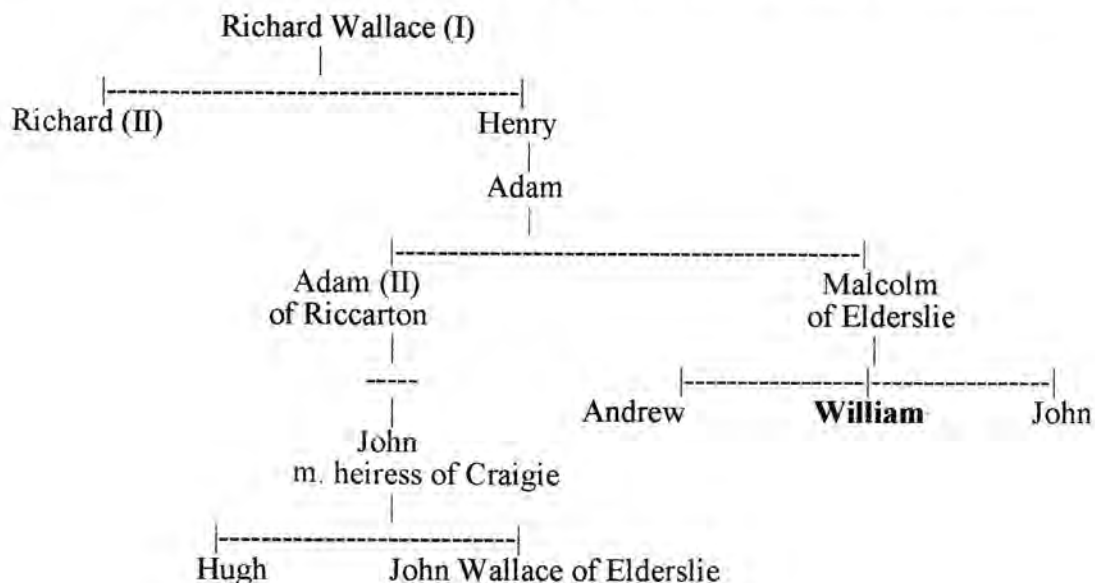
Interestingly, Blind Hary also has one of his characters, Corspatrick (the earl of Dunbar), describe Wallace as 'King of Kyle'<sup>2</sup>.

Brunton's collection of stories about Wallace also contains a transcription of a manuscript supposedly found in the British Museum in London but which, again, has mysteriously disappeared. This details the story of Wallace in a vein similar to Blind Hary, but with some rather different details [p.29]:

Bot efter (the murder of his wife) he made his dwelling in Connok in his owen contrie, wher he was borne, altho the Englishmen as yitt was masteris thaire.<sup>3</sup>

The first reference to the Elderslie connection comes from Blind Hary himself, who, as already noted, says Wallace's father was Sir Malcolm Wallace of Elderslie without saying where Elderslie was; George Buchanan, writing 100 years later in the 1560s says that he "was Laird of Ellerslie beside Paisly and was brother to the Laird of Riccarton now stiled Laird of Cragie, an ancient baron in Kyle".<sup>4</sup> So the Craigie/Riccarton connection is maintained, but at a slight distance. Subsequent writers therefore either repeat the Sir Andrew Wallace of Craigie statement or the Sir Malcolm Wallace of Elderslie statement. If the latter is preferred, then some corroborating evidence, in the way of an early family tree and the lands inherited by the junior, Elderslie branch of the Riccarton family, also tends to be given.

The early genealogy developed and accepted by the 19th century was as follows:



<sup>2</sup> *Blind Harry's Wallace*, ed. William Hamilton of Gilbertfield (Edinburgh, 1998), p.111.

<sup>3</sup> *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland in 6 volumes. Vol. V. Scotland* (London, 1808), p.331; *De Gestis Illustrissimi Herois Gulielmi Vallae Scotiae olim Custodis, Collectanea Varia*, M. Andreas Symson (Edinburgh, 1705); *The Acts and Deeds of the Most Famous and Valiant Champion, Sir William Wallace, Knight of Elderslie*, written by Blind Hary in the year 1361, together with *Arnaldi Blair Relationes* (Edinburgh, 1758); *The Life and Heroic Actions of Sir William Wallace, knight of Elderslie in 3 parts*, by Alexander Brunton (Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1883); *John Major's History of Greater Britain* (Scottish History Society, 1892), p.195.

<sup>4</sup> *Blind Hary's Wallace*, p.1.

Richard (II) Wallace certainly existed and maintained a close relationship with his feudal superior, Walter the Steward. He granted lands in Ayrshire to the abbey of Melrose in the 1170s. However, in the *Melrose Liber*, containing these early charters, it is noted that this Richard was the *son*, not the *brother*, of Henry. There are thus already a number of discrepancies regarding the 19<sup>th</sup> century genealogy and it should not be regarded as in any way reliable.

The issue of Wallace's parentage has now been resolved: thanks to the copy made in 1912 of the Lubeck letter, issued by Wallace and the dying Andrew Moray after the battle of Stirling Bridge, we now have the former's seal which states explicitly that he was "[Wilelm]us Filius Alani Walais" – *William, son of Alan Wallace*. Alan Wallace appears among the crown tenants of Ayrshire who made their submission to Edward I in the so-called Ragman's Roll of 1296. The other crown tenants who sealed the document at the same time were John Crawford, Thomas Winchester, Robert Boyd, Adam fitz Grimbaud, Nicol Slaves and Patrick the Archer. Although a landed gentleman, this Alan was clearly not of sufficient wealth/status to have become a knight, an honour all three of his sons seem to have achieved [see below], although neither were any of the other Wallaces in the Ragman Roll named as knights. This may, in part, have been because they were still too young; this cannot have been the case with Alan Wallace, since his sons were clearly in their twenties (knightly age). It is also important to note that this Alan did not hold his lands of the Stewart family, as did the Wallaces of Riccarton, but directly of the Crown, so they did not have any direct association with the Stewart/Wallace lands in either Ayrshire or Renfrewshire (although other branches of the family did). Unfortunately, there is no indication as to where these crown lands in Ayrshire might have been.

It is also important to note the fact that Wallace's seal on the Lubeck document has a longbow as its centrepiece, clearly indicating that the patriot had been an archer. As a younger son of a man of middling status, he would have been expected to make his own way in the world, and this is corroboration of his military, rather than priestly, background. That Wallace had no lands of his own is also suggested by the grant made by Edward I to Edward Keith, probably in 1304, of "all goods and chattels of whatever kind he may gain from Sir William Wallace, the king's enemy".<sup>5</sup>

### **Conclusion**

To recap, therefore, the earliest reference to Wallace's parentage states that his father was Sir Andrew Wallace of Craigie. This is obviously wrong, both because of the newly-found seal and because the Wallaces of Riccarton did not acquire the Craigie estate till the 1370s, when Sir John Wallace married the Lindsay heiress.<sup>6</sup> We know for certain that William Wallace's elder brother was called Malcolm,<sup>7</sup> while Blind Hary asserts that the latter's name was Andrew. As well as being transmogrified from Alan to Andrew, the name of father and brother seem therefore to have been put the wrong way round by later writers. With regard to William's other brother, there is a reference to a Sir John Wallace in December 1304 when he and Robert Boyd and their

<sup>5</sup> CDS, ii, no.477.

<sup>6</sup> *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scottorum [RMS]*, vol. I (Edinburgh, 1882), no.547

<sup>7</sup> *Facsimile of the National Manuscripts of Scotland*, ii, no.viii. This letter gives a detailed description of the quarrel that broke out at a Scottish council meeting at Peebles in August 1299 between Sir Malcolm Wallace and Sir David Graham, over Sir William's intended trip to the Continent without the Guardians' permission. The Guardians at this point were Sir John Comyn of Badenoch and Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick. Interestingly, Sir Malcolm is named as being in the earl of Carrick's retinue.



retinues were paid money for escorting two English clerks busy assessing Scotland after Edward's reconquest from Renfrew to Ayr. Sir John then accompanied the clerks from Ayr to Wigtown.<sup>8</sup> Boyd is presumably younger than John since he is not yet knighted. Perhaps this was indeed Wallace's brother, although this would mean that the youngest Wallace was busy collaborating with the English while his elder brother was on the run as a fugitive. However, Hary is quite correct in saying that this Sir John Wallace was executed.<sup>9</sup> This reference also corroborates the early connection between the Boyds and the Wallaces, although the former were not yet in possession of Kilmarnock; as already mentioned, this connection is also hinted at in the Ragman Roll itself, given that both were crown tenants. Interestingly, one Adam Wallace, who was probably the laird of Riccarton, sealed the Ragman Roll with Reginald of Kilmarnock, who was probably a Lockhart, so the connection between all these Ayrshire families would appear to have been strong.

It can be stated quite categorically that there is no reference to the Elderslie Wallaces up to and including the period of the outbreak of war with England. It should also be noted that, while three Wallaces – Alan, Adam and Nicholas<sup>10</sup> – turn up in the Ragman's Roll for Ayrshire, there are no Wallaces noted for Lanarkshire or Renfrewshire. It has always been asserted that this was because Wallace's immediate family refused to swear homage and fealty to Edward I in 1296, but this has now been proved to be untrue. We might therefore speculate that the Renfrew Wallaces do not turn up in the documentary record of this period for the simple reason that they did not, in fact, exist. On the other hand, the Ayrshire Wallaces exist in force.

## ELDERSLIE

It now remains to deal with the undoubted association between the Wallaces and Elderslie, though it can be stated quite categorically that there is absolutely no contemporary, or even near-contemporary, evidence to associate the place with the patriot. As already stated, the first reference to Sir Malcolm Wallace of Elderslie as Wallace's father was Blind Hary, writing over 150 years after the hero's death.

It is alleged that "from 1390 we are on firm ground both at Craigie and at Elderslie. In that year John Wallace, youngest son of the marriage we heard of between John Wallace, the 6th Laird of Riccarton and the heiress of Craigie, is found in possession of Elderslie"<sup>11</sup>. Certainly, from this point on, the Wallaces of Elderslie can be found in a steady trickle of deeds and charters, although there is nothing to explain how or why this younger son was endowed with these lands. In 1392, for example, John Montgomery, lord of Eaglesham granted the lands of Little Benane to William Blackford: If the latter or his line had no issue, the lands would fall to John Wallace of Elderslie (the most likely explanation being that Wallace was married to Blackford's sister or daughter). The charter was witnessed by, among others, Hugh Wallace, lord of Craigie, presumably Wallace of Elderslie's brother. John Wallace of Elderslie also witnessed a charter by Robert, Duke of Albany dated at Paisley in 1406. In 1413 Albany also granted to Thomas Wallace the lands of Auchenbothie-Wallace, on the resignation of his father, John Wallace of Elderslie. Later writers have asserted,

<sup>8</sup> *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland [CDS]*, ed. J. Bain, vol. ii (London, 1882), p.443.

<sup>9</sup> *Chron. Lanercost*, 207; *Flores Historiarum*, iii, 327.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Wallace witnessed the charter issued by James the Steward somewhere between 1283 and 1298, granting the lands of Hayleys, Wardlaw and Drumchabir to William of the Shaw.

<sup>11</sup> J.O. Mitchell, *The Wallaces of Elderslie reprinted from the Transactions of the Archaeological Society of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1884), p.9.

presumably on the basis of this charter, that Sir Malcolm Wallace, William's father, also had the lands of Auchenbothie. The relationship between the Wallaces of Craigie and the Wallaces of Elderslie, and the fact of this last place being in Renfrewshire, is made more explicit in 1499, when John Wallace of Craigie granted to his cousin, Patrick Wallace, son and heir of George Wallace of Ellerslie, "his lands of Ellerslie in the barony of Renfrew". George Wallace was Wallace of Craigie's grandfather, though presumably on his mother's side, since his paternal grandfather should presumably have been a Wallace of Craigie.<sup>12</sup> This is interesting since, as we shall see in a minute, the lands of Ellerslie in Renfrewshire also seem to have formed part of the ancient barony of Riccarton. The two families were clearly both closely related and in close contact: in May 1583, William Wallace of Ellerslie and his son, Hugh, witnessed a charter at Riccarton. In the same year a whole collection of Wallaces, all of whom seem to have been Ayrshire men, or at least barony of Riccarton or Craigie men, stood surety for a debt of Hew Wallace of Carnell and Robert Wallace, his son and heir, Edward Wallace of Shewalton and John, his grandson, William Wallace of Ellerslie.<sup>13</sup> Despite this Ellerslie being in Renfrewshire, the connection with the Ayrshire branches of the family was obviously extremely close.

The most information about the barony of Riccarton and its relationship to the barony of Craigie comes as a result of a difficult period in the life of the Wallaces of Craigie, when the laird, Sir Hew, and the men who had stood as sureties for him, were taken to court in the 1640s and forced to hand over access to the issues of their lands for the payment of a long-outstanding debt. As a result, a full assessment of the lands belonging to all the various parties was made, providing valuable information about the laird of Craigie's estates, which included the ancient barony of Riccarton.

Despite the fact that nearly three hundred years had elapsed since the Wallaces of Riccarton had succeeded to the neighbouring estate of Craigie, the assessment of Sir Hew Wallace of Craigie's lands makes it clear that the old barony of Riccarton was still an identifiable, and effectively separate, territorial unit.

The 109 merkland barony of Riccarton (compared with the 40 merkland of Craigie), as shown on **Map 1**, is remarkably cohesive - with one glaring exception (though admittedly not all the placenames mentioned have been located). The glaring exception is, of course, the £5 land of Elderslie. Interestingly, the Wallaces of Elderslie seem to have held at least one piece of land in the main part of the barony - at Langlands, to the east of the current burgh of Kilmarnock, in the area of the farm of Caprickhill. Sadly, it has not been possible to identify on any map their 40s. lands of Gillington, which had a manor-house, though it is likely that it was very close to Langlands because there is no money value given for this last piece of land, suggesting they go together.

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<sup>12</sup> *Historic Manuscripts Commission [HMC]*, vol. 10 (1885), no.10; *RMS*, I, no.874; *HMC*, vol. 4, no.528; *RMS*, ii, no.2527. See, for example, James MacKay's *William Wallace: Braveheart* (Edinburgh, 1996), for an acceptance of this, despite the author's general belief that Elderslie was in Ayrshire. His case is not particularly well-argued, because of the tendency to accept uncorroborated statements in other books that have remained unprovable or can be shown to be wrong.

<sup>13</sup> *RMS*, ii, no.2527; Scottish Record Office RH6/2666.

**Map 1: The Barony of Riccarton**



The barony of Riccarton comprised 54 separate landholdings and included the coal-heuchs of Riccarton, and all the buildings, orchards, gardens, woods, mills, fishings (salmon and others), together with the services attached to them. The two mills of Riccarton and Shawsmill were also included, the former being situated immediately to the west of Kaimshill. Although Wallace of Craigie's creditors were allowed access to the issues of almost all of his estate, the £17 lands of Kaimshill, Auchindinnane and Hunthall, the £5 land of Elderslie itself, the 4 merklands of Inchgotrig, the 2 merkland of Holme and a few others which were leased out were excepted.

**Map 2: Pont's description of the Irvine valley**<sup>14</sup>



It is curious, the fact that the barony of Riccarton seems so cohesive, but has the not-insubstantial £5 land of Elderslie, in - as is explicitly stated - the sheriffdom of Renfrew. It is tempting to explain this anomaly by suggesting that Elderslie was acquired by the Wallaces of Riccarton at a later date than the granting of the rest of the barony. However, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the Stewarts, who had extensive landholdings in both Ayrshire and Renfrewshire, gave the Wallaces of Riccarton a toe-hold in Renfrewshire. Finally, and most tantalisingly, there is an early reference to Elderslie near Kilmarnock, apparently in Timothy Pont, the mapmaker's notebooks written in the final decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (which are now lost) [see **Map 2**] and collected by Walter MacFarlane, who died in 1767. It should be noted, however, that the Pont notebook places Dreghorn on the south bank of the river Irvine, whereas, in reality, it is on the north bank; it might not therefore be 100% accurate. Nonetheless, it is the only mention of an Elderslie near Kilmarnock. In any event, there is certainly no proof that there was a separate branch of the family known as the Wallaces of Elderslie in the 13th century and it seems most unlikely, given that we now know who Wallace's father was, that there is any connection between the patriot and Elderslie in Renfrew. However, there clearly is a connection between that place and the Wallaces of Riccarton; perhaps, therefore, there was ultimately a family connection between Alan and Adam Wallace, the echoes of which were - inaccurately - recorded later as the fact that Sir William was a son-of the laird of Elderslie. This is, however, complete speculation.

## AYRSHIRE IN THE WARS OF INDEPENDENCE

Ayrshire suffers from the dominance of the Edinburgh-Glasgow axis and is often regarded by the rest of central Scotland as peripheral. In tourism terms, the area also suffers from the curious irony of not being remote enough, since the highlands tends to serve as the focus of the image of Scotland as a land of wild untamed beauty.

This has by no means always been the case. In the middle ages, Ayrshire played a crucial role in accessing the Irish sea - an important and underestimated element of Scottish politics in the past. The area also formed the access point to Galloway, a

<sup>14</sup> Sir Arthur Mitchell (ed.), *Geographical Collections relating to Scotland made by Walter MacFarlane*, volume ii, Scottish History Society, volume li, p.589. The placenames in italics indicate those which can no longer be found on any map, including, of course, the infamous Elderslie. Their situation is therefore only a case based on the extremely rough distances given by Pont [see **Appendix 4**].



region with strong independent tendencies even once war had broken out with England. It must be remembered that the current road system may well not reflect long-established routes - in this respect, as well as in many others, the landscape has been fundamentally altered in the recent past. The main north-south route through the county ran through Cumnock - hence the strategic importance of the castle there. The east-west link from Clydesdale came past Loudoun hill and along the Irvine valley - hence the number of skirmishes supposedly taking place in that area. Kilmarnock stands at the crossroads of all these routes and guards the approach to the important ports of Irvine and Ayr on the coast.

In political terms, too, the area was certainly not peripheral, containing as it did the estates of many important noblemen. The Bruce earls of Carrick and the Stewards of Scotland were the most prominent members of the Ayrshire aristocratic community, but there were many others - Crawford, Lockharts, Boyds, Mures, Wallaces - who provided vital leadership at the local level. Indeed much of the action in both the medieval epic poems written about the wars with England - John Barbour's *The Bruce*, written in the 1370s, and Blind Hary's *Wallace* 100 years later - took place in Ayrshire and the west.

With the outbreak of war in 1296, Ayrshire, like the rest of Scotland, was occupied with English troops at key strategic points, although private castles usually remained in the hands of their Scottish owners. All the main offices of state, including the vast majority of sheriffs, were English appointees, providing a visible symbol of Scotland's altered status to all. Unusually, however, the sheriffdom of Ayr was not, initially at least, granted to an Englishman but kept under the control of Sir Reginald Crawford, reputedly, and quite possibly, Wallace's uncle (see below).

With the outbreak of revolt spontaneously and throughout much of Scotland in the spring of 1297, the west of Scotland played a crucial role. Wallace, of course, began his activities in Clydesdale, at Lanark, but was soon, according to Blind Hary at least, busy in Ayrshire itself. More importantly, the rebellion which the English authorities certainly took most seriously was also centred in Ayrshire and led by Robert Wishart, bishop of Glasgow, James the Steward (Wallace's feudal superior) and Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick. Indeed, their activities were taken so seriously that a force was despatched from Berwick under Sir Henry Percy, the warden of Galloway and Ayrshire, and Sir Robert Clifford. After a month of negotiations, the Scots repledged their allegiance to King Edward at Irvine on 7 July, though a number of English commentators at the time believed that the Scots engaged in a degree of time-wasting to allow Wallace to move east to Selkirk Forest and organise his troops. Full-scale revolt broke out soon after and even after Edward's victory at Falkirk in July 1298, Scotland west and north of Stirling remained outwith his control.

From 1298 onwards, the west of Scotland was very much the focus of Edward's attention and he went on campaign there in both 1300 and 1301. The 1301 campaign saw two English forces in operation, one led by the king and the other, ostensibly at least, by his son, Prince Edward. The latter worked his way up from Carlisle into Ayrshire, capturing Ayr itself and the earl of Carrick's castle at Turnberry before going back into Galloway. This meant that the English now had direct control of a western Scottish port, a considerable strategic advantage. King Edward's army had concentrated on taking Bothwell castle, on the Clyde and it was originally intended that the two forces would meet up in a pincer movement. The Scots were determined to prevent this and a force under John Comyn, earl of Buchan and Sir John Soules, the guardian, positioned itself at Loudoun, guarding the east-west route. Another force

under Sir Simon Fraser, Sir Alexander Abernethy and Sir Herbert Morham lay at Stonehouse near Strathaven. This clearly indicates the importance attached by the Scots to preventing the English from making any more inroads into western Scotland and gaining access to the western seaboard and again illustrates again the importance of the Loudoun route.

With the outbreak of war after the seizure of the Scottish throne by Robert Bruce, earl of Carrick, Ayrshire was still of crucial importance, again most particularly in enabling either side to maintain control of south-western Scotland and the sea-routes of the Irish sea. A number of Ayrshire landowners, including Sir Reginald Crawford, Simon Lockhart, Gilbert Carrick (Kennedy), Alexander Lindsay of Barnweill, Robert Cunningham, John of Knockdolian, John Montgomery and Robert Boyd were all forfeited for supporting Bruce. The English forces at Ayr and Turnberry sought desperately to maintain their position and it should again come as no surprise that a skirmish took place at Loudoun Hill on 10 May 1307. Despite Bruce's apparent success there, the English remained in control of the area - even Edward Bruce's campaign in Galloway in 1308 failed to eject them. However, it became only a matter of time and a Scottish parliament was held in Ayr castle in 1312. Ayr also served as the launching pad for the Scottish invasion of Ireland led by Edward Bruce, now earl of Carrick, between 1315 to 1318. Again, it cannot be stressed enough how important the west was in general, and Ayrshire in particular, in terms of maintaining long-established links with the Irish sea and Ireland itself. Arran, just off the Ayrshire coast, was also crucial in this respect.

## **SITES AND SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH WALLACE AND AYRSHIRE**

### *Old Auchans*

No documentary evidence has been found for this place during the wars of independence, or to associate it with Wallace directly. It does, however, find a link with Sir William in folklore, perhaps indicating a degree of local knowledge about the man which has been lost over the last 700 years.

### *Bickering Bush*

The site of one of Wallace's earliest skirmishes with the English. Blind Hary does not give the name 'Bickering Bush' to this place - it was merely recorded that Wallace was fishing in the Irvine Water while staying with his uncle, Sir Richard Wallace, at Riccarton<sup>15</sup>. The lands of Maxholm - the farmhouse of which lies next to the supposed site of the Bickering Bush - certainly formed part of the ancient barony of Riccarton.

### *Boyd, Robert*

The Boyd family rose in the world through their connection with Robert Bruce, who granted them Kilmarnock. However, Blind Hary does seem to be quite correct in making a connection between the Boyds and Wallace's family. In the first instance, Robert Boyd and Alan Wallace were both crown tenants. Secondly, Robert Boyd and Sir John Wallace were in each other's company in 1305.

### *Craigie Castle*

Craigie Castle is not, of course, directly associated with Wallace since the estate belonged to the Lindsays at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, a considerable

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<sup>15</sup> *Blind Hary's Wallace*, p.11.

amount of evidence has been gathered relating to the Craigie estate and it is clear that the Wallaces of Craigie were considerable landowners. With regard to the lands pertaining directly to the castle itself, these comprised, according to the 17<sup>th</sup> century evidence, "the whole 10 merkland of Craigie Mains with the manor place, houses, biggings, yards, orchards, parts, pendicles and pertinences thereof".<sup>16</sup> It is interesting that Craigie castle seems to be described here as a manor, rather than a tower or fortalice, words used to describe other buildings, including those pertaining to the Wallaces of Ellerslie. One might presume that the main purpose of this residence was to provide comfort and style for the owner, his family and their associates, rather than protection.

#### *Crawford, Sir Reginald*

After the conquest of Scotland in 1296, as Blind Hary says, the hereditary sheriff of Ayr, Sir Reginald Crawford, continued in office; Crawford was formally appointed by Edward on 14 May, a few weeks after the Scottish defeat at Dunbar, but before King John had formally abdicated. This early appointment suggests that this was a reward for Sir Reginald having been, like the Bruces, in King Edward's army against King John Balliol. He performed homage and fealty, along with the majority of the Scottish landholding community, in August 1296.<sup>17</sup> On 8 September 1296, Sir Henry Percy was granted the wardenship of the land of Galloway and the county of Ayr, and presumably Crawford continued to occupy the office of sheriff under him. Percy correctly features as one of the English against whom Wallace fought in Blind Hary's poem.

In the summer of 1297, Sir Reginald seems to have been in England, since he was granted a safe-conduct by Edward I to travel back to Scotland on 11 June. A month later, on 23 July, Robert Wishart, bishop of Glasgow received a letter from Hugh Cressingham, Edward's treasurer of Scotland, via Crawford. The latter was clearly a trusted member of the English regime, at a time when Ayrshire was by no means reconciled to English rule - indeed Wishart, along with the Steward and the young earl of Carrick, had formally resubmitted to Edward a mere 16 days earlier at Irvine (see above) and the letter which Cressingham sent to the bishop almost certainly related to the terms of the latter's submission.<sup>18</sup>

Loyalty in this period was a difficult ideal to live up to, not because people were less honourable, but because there were many conflicting loyalties at work in this wartime situation: loyalty to country (by no means the strongest element); loyalty to one's lord (theoretically extremely strong); loyalty to the men whom one served as lord (also theoretically significant); and loyalty to family. Sir Reginald could certainly not be regarded as unpatriotic - although he disappears from the record for nearly ten years, he reappears in 1306, when his lands were forfeited because of his support for Robert Bruce. A year later he was captured and hung.<sup>19</sup> Although he did pay the ultimate price for fighting against the English, he was certainly not, as Blind Hary asserts, killed in the Barns of Ayr in 1297. However, he may well have been hanged somewhere similar since Ayr castle had been burnt out by the Scots in 1307. As is so often the case, historical fiction contains a grain of truth: the period after the rebellion

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<sup>16</sup> GD163 Box 5 Bundle 17/1

<sup>17</sup> CDS, ii, nos.739,808

<sup>18</sup> CDS, ii, no.961; CDS, ii, p.443.

<sup>19</sup> CDS, ii, no.1915, G.W.S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, p.325.



of Robert Bruce was indeed a killing time on the scale described by Blind Hary and just because it does not, in reality, refer specifically to Wallace does not mean it didn't happen at another place, to another person, at another time.

#### *Craufurdland Castle*

No evidence has been found to substantiate the relationship between Wallace and this castle.

#### *(New) Cumnock castle*

Owned by the eastern nobleman, Patrick, earl of Dunbar, Cumnock castle played no obvious role in the first phase of the wars with England, probably because it remained in Scottish hands and there is no documentary evidence to account for it. However, once Robert Bruce had seized the Scottish throne, it was manned by an English garrison under Sir Ingram d'Umfraville, once a Scottish guardian, and Sir William Felton.<sup>20</sup> The castle also had the dubious honour of being the point at which the dying Edward I, desperate to bring Robert Bruce to book, was forced to turn back into England in 1307 due to his ill health. Edward II also stayed there during his campaign in August 1307. The castle was restocked immediately after Bruce's skirmish with an English force at Loudoun Hill, suggesting that it was regarded as strategically critical in this period, as the English sought, unsuccessfully, to encircle the Scottish king.

#### *Cumnock*

There is no reference to activity at Cumnock itself, though it did undoubtedly suffer from the attentions of all sides during the war.

#### *Dean Castle*

Dean Castle subsequently belonged to the Boyds of Kilmarnock. Robert Boyd was supposedly Wallace's comrade-in-arms, going on to considerable success through supporting Robert Bruce. The castle itself is of late medieval construction and it is not known whether an earlier fortification lies underneath. Whichever, it was not owned by the Boyds until the reign of Robert Bruce.

#### *Elderslie castle*

Despite the fact that the Elderslie associated with the barony of Riccarton was indeed in Renfrewshire, there are two important caveats to the issue of a Wallace castle in the Riccarton area. The first is the manor-house of Gillinton which belonged to William Wallace of Elderslie in the 1640s and which has so far not been located, although the lands of Langlands can certainly be found to the east of Riccarton itself. The other caveat is the potential location of Elderslie mentioned in the Pont notebooks. Although it is almost impossible to present an exact location based on the distances given by Pont, it can approximately be placed between Craigie-Wallace and Caprington. As noted by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, the River Irvine does serve as a significant boundary for the barony of Riccarton (with the exception of Wallace of Elderslie's lands of Langlands and that may be accounted for by changes in the river system); Pont's notes state specifically that Elderslie was on the south side of the river.

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<sup>20</sup> CDS, ii, nos. 1931, 1933.



### *Loudoun Castle*

The old castle at Loudoun stands on 'a natural eminence on the east side of the Hag burn' and is also sometimes referred to as the 'Old Place'. The site itself is extensive, showing 'the remains of a motte and bailey, with ditches and banks and a very long strip showing possible rig and furrow'. The top of the hill on which the motte was situated originally had a diameter of over 30 metres (some of it has fallen away); the ditch surrounding the motte was up to 3 metres deep and 5-7 metres wide. All in all, it is a typical motte and bailey castle and could easily have been the earliest seat of the Loudoun family who gained land in the area during the reign of David I (1124-1153).<sup>21</sup> It was reputedly destroyed by fire in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Loudoun Hill*

There is no new documentary evidence relating to either Wallace or Bruce's battle at this site. Suffice to say that the importance of the road which passes the hill, together with the ambush potential of the topography of the area makes it quite unsurprising that military activity took place there. It is curious, however, that Wallace's rival, Fenwick, took his name from a village in the vicinity – there may have been some local scores to be settled.

### *Mauchline*

Site of another supposed Wallace skirmish. There is no documentary evidence to support this association, which, of course, does not mean it didn't happen.

### *Riccarton castle*

The acquisition of the barony of Craigie by the Riccarton Wallaces in the later 14<sup>th</sup> century put an end to their residence at Riccarton itself. However, the description of the old barony of Riccarton given in the 1640s includes the reservation of 'the £17 land of Kaimshill, Auchindinnane and Hunthall with towers, fortresses, manorplaces' etc.. This is perhaps the heart of the barony, although, unfortunately, with the exception of Kaimshill, none of these places are locateable now.

### *Wallace's cave*

There are innumerable caves associated with Wallace throughout Scotland and it is only fitting that this part of Ayrshire should have its own. However, such associations are part of an oral tradition and do not make their way into contemporary documentary sources.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- It has now been established that Sir William Wallace was a younger son of Alan Wallace, a crown tenant in Ayrshire. As a younger son with no land, Sir William seems to have made his living as an archer. His elder brother, Sir Malcolm, would have inherited their unidentified Ayrshire lands
- The existence of the Wallaces of Elderslie cannot be proved before the later 14<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>21</sup> *An archaeological Field survey of the Irvine Valley, East Ayrshire*, James Mair, Anne Johnstone, Gerry Hearn, Association of Certificated Field Archaeologists (Glasgow University), 1996, Occasional Paper, no.23, pp.11-13.

- Most early writings place Wallace, much of his actions, and his family in Ayrshire in general, and Kyle in particular
- The association of Sir William Wallace with Elderslie dates to several centuries after his death.
- The barony of Riccarton maintained its territorial cohesion for centuries after the acquisition of the barony of Craigie; this included a number of manor-houses and towers, but no castle as such
- The Elderslie associated with the barony of Riccarton was in Renfrewshire
- The Pont notebooks mention an Elderslie between Craigie-Wallace and Caprington but this is the only reference and its exact location is still indeterminate
- Other evidence provides a convincing picture of Ayrshire as a key area in the struggle to exclude English forces from Scotland after the outbreak of war in 1296: its geography, as well as the political importance of many of its inhabitants, made it so
- It is vitally important to our understanding of Scotland's past that the history of areas such as Ayrshire is given full attention