

“Braveheart” the Movie – Fact or Fiction

“Braveheart,” the 1995 Hollywood film portraying the life of Scotland’s William Wallace, is filled with historical inaccuracies. As the guide at Stirling Castle told 50 Clan Wallace Society members during our visit in 2005, the movie got two things right about Wallace: his name and his country.

Blind Harry, a poet/minstrel who lived 150 years after Wallace’s death, states that Wallace was betrayed exactly 35 years after his birth to the day. Crawford family documents tell us that William’s date of birth is August 5, 1270¹. Harry’s accuracy misses by two days; Wallace was captured at Robroyston on August 3, 1305.

The Wallace family was not poor farmers. William’s father, Alan², who signed the Ragman Roll in 1296, is shown as a crown tenant in Ayrshire. Hangings portrayed in the movie would have been his mother’s family (Crawford) and other nobles from the Ayrshire region. The Wallace family are said to have come from what is now Wales or Strathclyde, descendants of Eimerus Galleuis. Many residents in the Ayrshire area at the time of William Wallace may have come originally from Normandy.

William Wallace may have been married to a Braidfute, heiress of Lamington (first name may have been Marion), and may have had a daughter. As there are no records, it is not known if the daughter survived the murder of Wallace’s wife. Some historians believe that the daughter may have lived and married a Baillie of Balliol family. The Clan Shaw recorded that she had a daughter who married a Shaw. The male line of this Wallace family, William and his two brothers, were killed by the English, the family property passing to the Adam Wallace line of Riccarton/Craigie, the ancestor of the present Chief of the Clan and Name of Wallace.

As William Wallace was a Knight, a minor noble and a Lowlander, he did not wear the Great Kilt. He wore chain mail and armor. He certainly did not paint his face with woad, a blue tint

1 *In Pursuit of Sir William Wallace*, Page 109, Craufuird C. Loudoun, 1999.

2 William’s personal seal, translated in 1999, states that he is William, son of Alan Wallace.

that was used by the Picts of Roman times (the Roman word for these people was "Picti," which meant "painted ones"). The garments worn in the movie were from the 16th through the 18th century, while the movie depicted events and people of the late 13th and early 14th centuries.

After the death of his wife, Wallace may have had a mistress but it was not Princess Isabella of France, later the wife of Edward II. Wallace was not the father of Edward III. Wallace could not have had an affair with the Princess of Wales, as there never was a Princess of Wales at that time. Edward II married Princess Isabella (c.1292-1358) in 1308, after the execution of Wallace (1305) and death of Edward I (1307).

Edward II was portrayed as gay and may have been but he did father three children: Edward III, born November 13, 1312; Eleanor, born June 18, 1318; and Joan, born July 5, 1321.

Battle dress was *habergione* or armor of a sort of chain or ringed mail. Over it was worn a "gown" or surcoat to prevent the sun from heating the armor, hence, coat of arms. It was a long, loose garment which reached mid-leg, open front and back for convenience of riding. It was belted and hooded. It was also called a tabard. Both the front and back were emblazoned with their arms so as to be known to all.

The *steylle capleyne* or iron hat was rimmed and had a convex crown. It was kept from turning around by cords fastened to the shoulders. Sometimes it was held by chains. It had openings for sight. Wallace never covered his face. Limbs were encased in boiled leather. On them were fixed shin guards and knee plates of iron.

Wallace favored the huge two-handed sword. At times he also used spear and mace. For close encounters in confined spaces he used a dagger in each hand. His sword is now in the National Wallace Monument at Abbey Craig near Stirling. It is 5' 4" long with the blade 2 ¼" at the guard and ¾" at the point. It weighs 6 pounds. This is a reduced size as it has been repaired twice. Blind Harry wrote: "Fit for archangel to wield, but light in his terrible hands."

In 1505 by order of King James IV, the sword was outfitted with new binding with silk cords,

new hilt and pommel, and new scabbard and belt. In 1825, due to an improper appraisal as to age, the sword was sent to the Tower for repair, where the repairs of 1505 were removed and a common 15th century handle was affixed.

We know of his “trial” and execution. He was not taken to the gallows in a cart but dragged face down and naked behind a horse. A crown of thorns was placed on his head at the trial. He was hanged but taken down before he died. When disemboweled, his entrails were burned before his eyes. His head was placed on London Bridge. The quarters of his body, arms and legs, were placed in the leading towns of Scotland to serve as reminders of what fate awaited anyone who opposed the King of England. Edward I did not want Wallace idolized, honored or immortalized.

Wallace’s mother was buried at Dunfermline Abbey. It has been stated that fragments of his body were buried there by his followers. After his execution a rumor quickly swept England that an English monk had a vision of angels taking Wallace’s spirit with much honor.

According to Blind Harry, Wallace was a tall man (6’ 7”) and well proportioned. He was exquisitely beautiful with bright, piercing eyes. His hair and beard were auburn and tended to curl. His brows and lashes were light and his lips were round and full. On the left under his chin was a scar. There may have been others but that was the only visible one. He stood majestically, head and shoulders above the tallest man. He had incredible strength, fleetness and agility. Except on horseback, no one could outrun him or escape him whenever he pursued them. He was unrivaled as an archer and all-powerful as a swordsman.

He was well trained in military tactics and became the teacher for his countrymen. He is supposed to have had dreams and visions of saints and angels who told him to fight the English and how to win. He is said to have been taught by his uncle that: “This is the truth I tell you: of all things freedom’s most fine. Never submit to live, my son, in the bonds of slavery entwined.”