

# William Wallace

## Roar For Freedom

Although hushed by the passing of seven hundred years, the legend of William Wallace still echoes the roar for freedom over Scotland. The tale describes a shadowy figure who, without wealth or noble birth, rose to become Guardian of Scotland. William Wallace, with an undying spirit, led a country with no former warlike traditions to glorious victory over superiorly armed and trained English forces. Because of his passion for freedom and willingness for self-sacrifice, William Wallace, gave the Scottish people the courage and will to fight for their freedom and stand against the grip of injustice clenched on them by the English throne.

On March 19, 1286, King Alexander III's death plunged Scotland into a state of chaos. The confusion escalated when death struck once more, the last heir to the throne, three-year old Margaret, Maid of Norway, Queen of Scotland, died before ever standing on Scottish soil. With no king, Scotland was in a vulnerable position. The Guardians of Scotland took control and two prominent families, the Bruces and the Ballios, claimed their right to the throne, saying they were descendants of the royal family. Each family knew that if they could gain the support of King Longshankes of England, then the other would have to yield to them. Longshankes had other ideas. He wanted to gain control of the Scottish lands, so as a "favor" to the two families, he appointed himself as "Overlord of Scotland land" and declared that anyone who claimed the right to be King must abide by the governing of the English courts and accept the English King, Longshankes, as their superior. While the houses continued their arguments over the throne, Longshankes had sneakily secured a grip on Scottish lands. If everything went according to Longshankes plan, Scotland's future King would rule under the control of England.

Civil rivalry burned over the hills of Scotland adding chaos to the building resistance of English control. During this turmoil, there arose a brave-hearted hero in the highlands of Ellerslie. A passionate, well-educated young man, William Wallace, picked up his sword for the first time. He had grown tired of watching the people around him being split by the rivalry induced by England's occupations of land. The cruel treatment of his oppressed country by England gave William Wallace a deep yearning for freedom. He was branded an outlaw by English authorities, yet his only crime was aiding the Scottish people against English Lords who starved and raped the Scottish families. His continuing fight for freedom against the English forces inspired many of his kinsmen and other Scots to rally around him as the leader who would free Scotland.

After defeating the English in many battles, the legend of William Wallace rippled throughout Scotland. Men from all over Scotland flocked to join him. Before long, Wallace commanded three thousand men, all rallying under the banner of freedom for the Scottish people. As Wallace fought for freedom, he lit a fire inside the hearts of the Scottish people that continued to burn even after his capture and execution at Falkirk in 1305. Wallace had brought pride and courage to his fellow Scots and, with his memory in their hearts, they would not give up their fight. "In the year of our Lord 1314, patriots of Scotland, starving and outnumbered, charged the fields Bannockburn. They fought like warrior poets, they fought like Scotsmen, and won their freedom, forever."<sup>1</sup> Today, in Aberdeen, Scotland, a statue of William Wallace stands in memory of his fight for freedom. On the base are the simple words of Wallace's uncle, "I tell you a truth, liberty is the best of all things, my son, never live under any slavish bond."

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace, Randall. Braveheart. Mass Market, 1995.